

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2017

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF IRVINE

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Choir Director: Barbara Scholl
Chanters: Jacob Bahbah, Theresa Joubran, Karim Youssef, & Mark Ellis
Church Office Administrator: Lydia Wakileh
Teen's Advisors: Paula Rodriguez & Dana Chade
2016-2017 PARISH COUNCIL
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Antiochian Women of St. Mark President: Denise Nassif (949) 500-8318
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Pastor's Column

Beloved in Christ,

Attributes of the Perfect Church

Written by the Very Rev. Vladimir Berzonsky

"One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the bride of the wife of the Lamb'" (Revelation 21:9)

Here we are near the end of the Bible in the Revelation experience. Is it not odd that one of the angels with the seven bowls with the seven last plagues is here inviting us to witness the glorious marriage of the Lamb whom we know to be our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ as the bridegroom? Also to recognize that the bride is none other than the holy Church all dressed in radiant white, symbol of purity and innocence? It tells us about angels. They are as their name implies, "sent" as messengers by the Holy Trinity to humanity. An angel like this brought the reader to the vision of the destruction of the great harlot, Babylon. Here the angel is announcing the glorious wedding of the Lamb of God and the Bride, the holy Church that the Lord bought with the great price of His Cross. The Bride-Church is a symbol of all who have the following attributes of unblemished flawless virtues radiating from their souls.

St. Paul set forth the attributes of the perfect Church. In Revelation those who dwell in such a Church are among those in the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven to belong to Jesus Christ the Lamb of God who comes to claim His bride. From the apostle to the gentiles, we find their characteristics:

They are people who are devoted to one another: *"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love."* [Romans 21:10] When we read this, how does it resonate on the conscience of each member of the community we call Church?

These are people who can say of their fellow parishioners that they: *"Honor one another above [them]selves."* [Romans 12:10] It means that each member in good standing holds all others in the congregation above themselves. They feel it an honor to be part of such a community of believers. Does this really happen?

It's mandatory to dwell in harmony with one another: *"Live in harmony with one another."* [Romans 12:16] It means that nothing is as important as to preserve peace among the family of Christ. Of course there are differences of opinion in the parish -- everybody understands that -- but they also realize that without the peace of God that passes all understanding, their Eucharist is hollow because their relations are shallow and worldly, not godly.

Love one another: *"Let no debt remain outstanding except the debt to love one another."* [Romans 13:8] Until we can realize the order from the Divine Liturgy: *"Let us love one another that with one accord we may confess...Father, Son and Holy Spirit..."* as Jesus said, we are talking nonsense when we say we love God. Here the expectation is that by the time we approach heaven, we have made love a way of life.

Accept one another: *"Accept then one another, just as Jesus accepted you."* [Romans 15:7] To accept is to realize there are differences, and yet they do not prevent us from forgiving. The French say: *To understand is to forgive.* Acceptance is not approval -- not even tolerance. It is compassion.

Serve one another: *"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge in sinful nature. Rather serve one another in love."* [Galatians 5:13] Is this not the meaning of foot washing? What more powerful an example can there be than the Son of God washing the feet of fishermen? Are we above the Master?

Forgive one another: *"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."* [Colossians 3:13] You will be stopped and forbidden entry into heaven if you come with a grudge defiling your soul.

Encourage one another: *"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."* [I Thessalonians 5:11] We are ordered to build up the confidence and to reinforce the positive images of all your sisters and brothers in Christ. There's no place for a downer or defeatist in Paradise.

Feasts, Special Services and Events for February 2017

Wednesday, February 1 – 6:30 p.m., Evening Liturgy Feast of the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple

Tuesdays, Feb 7, 21, Mere Orthodoxy 7:00 p.m.

Sunday February 5, Super Bowl Viewing Party at St. Mark Church

Saturday February 11, 8:00 p.m. Valentine's Dinner Dance in the Church Hall

Monday February 27, First Day of Great Lent

Advance Calendar for March 2017

March 5 – Sunday of Orthodoxy. Evening Vespers

March 25 – Feast of the Annunciation

Metropolitan Joseph's Schedule

February 4–5

St. Simeon the God-receiver Church of Santa Clarita, CA

Patronal Feast, Fundraising Dinner

February 6–10

Sacred Heart Retreat House of Alhambra, CA

Annual Clergy Seminar for the

Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

February 11

St. Paul Church of Brier, WA

Ordination of Deacon Jeremiah Vollman to the Holy Priesthood

February 12

St. Andrew Church of Arlington, WA

Ordination of Deacon James Robinson to the Holy Priesthood

February 21–26

Antiochian Village in Bolivar, PA

Please call the Church Office after January 1 to schedule your home and/or business for Blessing with the Theophany Water.

WEEKLY SERVICES

Saturday Vespers 4:00 p.m.

Sunday Orthros 8:45 a.m. Confessions heard from 9:00 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.

Sunday Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday Vespers, 6:30 p.m.

Selected Saints of the Month

February 2

THE MEETING [PRESENTATION] OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE

The fortieth day after His birth, the All-Holy Virgin brought her Divine Son into the Temple of Jerusalem, in accordance with the Law, to dedicate Him to God and to purify herself. *Consecrate to me every first-born that opens the womb among the Israelites both of man and beast, for it belongs to me* (Exodus 13:2). *Tell the Israelites: when a woman has conceived and gives birth to a boy, she shall be unclean for seven days, with the same uncleanness as at her menstrual period. On the eighth day, the flesh of the boy's foreskin shall be circumcised, and then she shall spend thirty-three days more in becoming purified of her blood; she shall not touch anything sacred nor enter the sanctuary till the days of her purification are fulfilled. If she gives birth to a girl, for fourteen days she shall be as unclean as at her menstruation, after which she shall spend sixty-six days in becoming purified of her blood. When the days of her purification for a son or for a daughter are fulfilled, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the meeting tent a yearling lamb for a holocaust and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. The priest shall offer them up before the Lord to make atonement for her, and thus she will be clean again after her flow of blood. Such is the law for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl child* (Leviticus 12:2-7). Even though neither the one nor

the other was necessary, nevertheless the Lawgiver did not, in anyway, want to transgress His own Law whom He had given through Moses, His servant and prophet. At that time, the high-priest Zaccharias, the father of John the Forerunner [Precursor], was on duty in the Temple [*serving as a priest before God in the order of his division* (St. Luke 1:8)]. Zaccharias placed the Virgin, not in the temple area reserved for women, but rather, in the area reserved for virgins. On this occasion, two unusual persons appeared in the Temple: the Elder Simeon and Anna, the daughter of Phanuel. The righteous Simeon took the Messiah in his arms and said: *Now, Master, You may let Your servant go in peace, according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation* (St. Luke 2: 29-30). Simeon also spoke the following words about the Christ-child: *Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel* (St. Luke 2:34). Then Anna, who from her youth served God in the Temple by fasting and prayers, recognized the Messiah and glorified God and proclaimed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem about the coming of the long-awaited One. The Pharisees present in the Temple, who having seen and heard all, became angry with Zacharias because he placed the Virgin Mary in the area reserved for virgins and reported this to King Herod. Convinced that this is the new king about whom the Magi from the east spoke, Herod immediately sent his soldiers to kill Jesus. In the meantime the Holy Family had already left the city and set out for Egypt under the guidance of an angel of God. The Feast of the Meeting of our Lord in the Temple was celebrated from earliest times but the solemn celebration of this day was established in the year 544 A.D. during the reign of Emperor Justinian.

February 11

SAINT THEODORA

Theodora, a Greek empress, was the wife of the nefarious Emperor Theophilus the Iconoclast. After the death of Theophilus, Theodora became the ruling empress and reigned together with her son Michael III. At the Council in Constantinople (842 A.D.), she immediately restored the veneration of icons. On this occasion, the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy was instituted which is still celebrated today on the First Sunday of the Honorable Fast [First Sunday in Lent]. This holy and meritorious woman of the Church gave up her soul to God on

February 11, 867 A.D. It was at that time, by the divine and wonderful Providence of God, at the solemn triumph of Orthodoxy over all heresies, that St. Cyril and St. Methodius were sent as Christian missionaries to the Slavs.

February 21

SAINT ZACHARIAS PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

During the reign of the Greek Emperor Heraclius, the Persian Emperor Chozroes attacked Jerusalem in the year 614 A.D. Chozroes pillaged the city, removed the Honorable Cross [of Christ] to Persia and took an enormous number of Christians into bondage, among them was Patriarch Zacharias. The Jews assisted Chozroes in committing evil against the Christians. Among the other Jewish acts of wickedness, this one is mentioned: the Jews purchased from Chozroes 90,000 Christians as their slaves and slew them all. The aged Patriarch Zacharias remained in bondage for fourteen years. Many miracles occurred in Persia as a result of the Honorable Cross, so even the Persians said: "The Christian God has come to Persia." Later on, Heraclius forced the Persian emperor to return the Honorable Cross to Jerusalem, along with the patriarch and the remaining captives. Emperor Heraclius himself bore the Cross on his shoulders into the Holy City. St. Zacharias spent his remaining days in peace and took up habitation with the Lord in the year 631 A.D. He was succeeded on the throne by Patriarch Modestus and followed by St. Sophronius (March 11).

February 28

SAINT BASIL THE CONFESSOR

Basil was a companion and co-suffer with St. Procopius of Decapolis. Basil faithfully followed his teacher Procopius, both in peaceful times and in times of persecution. He suffered many hardships from the iconoclasts. When the iconoclasts were defeated, Basil, according to God's Providence, returned together with Procopius to his monastery, where in fasting and prayer he lived a long life of asceticism. He died peacefully in the year 747 A.D.

Parish & Organizations News

Sunday February 5, Men's Club 3rd Annual Super Bowl Viewing Party 3:00 p.m. At St. Mark

Church Hall, please see flyer included for more information.

Saturday February 11, 7:00 p.m. Please mark your calendar for the Valentine's Day Dinner/Dance, at our beautiful Church Hall. Flyer attached for more information

St. Mark 2017 Stewardship Pledge Drive!

Our parish Stewardship Drive continues and we're asking you to please consider making a pledge commitment to St. Mark for 2017. If you have not done so, please turn your pledge commitment to the white box in the back of the church or mail it.

Thank you to those who have made their 2017 pledge commitment. As of January 28, 2017, we have a total of \$129,180 pledged which is 68% of our total goal of \$205,000. We have also successfully collected 68 pledge commitments.

We hope to reach our goal by the end of February. Your financial pledge and commitment is important and supports the work of the church, the parish itself and those who work for St. Mark. Your support and commitment to St. Mark is appreciated!
In Christ, St. Mark Stewardship Committee

Departed this Life

On November 19, Kareem Aziz Habeeb the husband of Adele Habeeb. His funeral service and interment were on November 26, at Fairhaven Memorial Park in Santa Ana with meal of mercy at the same place. Memory Eternal!

On December 24, Michael Asaly, Husband of May Asaly, and one of the founding members of St. Mark Church.

His funeral service was on December 29, at our church and the interment at El Toro Memorial Park-Lake Forest followed by the meal of mercy at the church hall.

May his Memory be Eternal!

On December 24, Hani Daoud Fanous husband of Salma Qushair and brother in law of Yacoub Qushair. His funeral service was on January 6, and interment service at Westminster Memorial park, flowed by meal of mercy at the church hall. Memory Eternal!

On December 26th, Mary Habib Behna, Mother of Hani & Kareem Youssef. Her funeral was on January 3, and interment at El Toro Memorial Park in Lake Forest, followed by the meal of mercy at the church hall. Memory Eternal!

On January 5, Rose Soffa, mother of Tina Tomeo Storvis, her funeral was on January 10 at St. Mark and interment at Pacific View Memorial Park in Corona Del Mar, followed by meal of mercy at the church hall. Memory Eternal!

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

The Antiochian Women Meeting was held on Sunday January 15, at the church with 14 Ladies in attendance.

It started with a prayer by Father Michael Laffoon.

Treasurer report: by Giselle Awajian and Lydia Wakileh.

Old Business: We still need to collect \$10.00 yearly membership dues from each lady.

Our Women's Christmas Lunch and gift exchange was held on **Saturday January 7** at Darya Restaurant in Costa Mesa at 12 p.m. 39 Ladies attended the event where they had delicious luncheon and fun time opening the Christmas gifts

Sunday January 8, The Ladies served Zalabieh for the whole parish for the Feast of Epiphany.

The Annual Valentine Party will be held on Saturday February 11. Please see flyer included for more information.

Next meeting will be on Sunday February 19 after church, hope to see you all there.

Lydia Wakileh

Men's Club

New Year's Eve Party was a success. 180 people attended.

Our next event is February 5, the Super Bowl viewing in the church hall.

Respectfully submitted by
Don Skaff/Men's Club Secretary

Teen SOYO

Old Business:

SOYO had their annual Christmas/New Year's party on Sunday January, 8th!

Everyone met directly after church and carpoled to "Ice Palace" in Aliso Viejo. After a couple of hours having fun on the ice we went next door for an early dinner and gift exchange at Chili's restaurant!! It was lots of fun and a great way to bring in the New Year.

In January there were two outings that our teens participated in to further their Spiritual development;

Several of our teens joined St. Paul's Pan Orthodox Retreat in Big Bear.

They held Vespers on Friday & Liturgy on Sunday and had fun Skiing on Saturday! It was an amazing experience for all who went!

Another group of our teens participated in the "YES" trip, (Youth Equipped to serve) in Downtown LA on Skid Row. Those teens volunteered their time & energy on helping, integrating, and serving the homeless and needy on "skid row". They made meals for the less fortunate, passed out articles of clothing & gift cards as well as befriended them. They also attended Vespers on Friday & attended church on Sunday at St. Sophia's in LA. It was truly a life changing and enriching experience for those who attended!!

New Business:

We have our next SOYO meeting this upcoming Sunday, Jan. 29th after Sunday school in the Teen classroom. We would like all our teens to join so we can plan our next event for February.

Camp St. Nicholas registration is still open for their SOYO Teen Retreat from February 17th-20th. Please encourage your teens to attend!! It is always a memorable, spiritually growing and uplifting time for all who participate!

This year the Mid Winters Meeting will be held at The Antiochian Village in Pennsylvania from

February 24-26th. Paul Rodriguez-Anter & Grace Bahbah both officers for The Diocese of Los Angeles and the West will be attending to discuss future SOYO events and information Nationwide.

Financials:

Current Balance \$1,401.73
(Some deposits are pending)
Happy & Blessed New Year!

***Yours in SOYO,
Paula Rodriguez***

*BUY SCRIP! Our Ladies Guild buys scrip from many and various stores and restaurants (see list included in this bulletin) at a 3 to 10% discount. When you buy the scrip, which is accepted just like cash at the issuing store, the parish benefits. You pay no more for these goods and services and are making a donation to our parish. **You can purchase this scrip from Saeda Turk at the coffee hour.***

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- Samir Artoul 2/2
- May Asaly 2/15
- Ivana Awayjan 2/27
- Joseph Azzam 2/15
- Mikhail Billeh 2/4
- Sarah Chade 2/17
- Vladimir Chendler 2/3
- Randy Dabbah 2/18
- Samira Eissa 2/1
- Kevin Fortuna 2/22
- George Hanna 2/13
- Ben Hanna 2/29
- Georgie Hanna 2/14
- Jamie Hanna 2/13
- Gellan Kashou 2/20
- Sammy Khamis 2/17
- Diana Khamis 2/19
- Charlotte Khoury 2/15
- Amanda Khury 2/12
- Simon Kishek 2/2
- Adel Munayyer 2/13
- Danice Najjar 2/22
- Tanya Richards 2/2
- Paul Qaquandah 2/26

- Mae Sakhel-Qushair 2/12
- Nuha Qushair 2/10
- Tammy Qutami 2/25
- Robert Ranney 2/14
- Kimla Ranney 2/24
- Paula Rodriguez 2/6
- Najib Saadeh 2/18
- George Saba 2/2
- Siham Saba 2/10
- Yacoub Saba 2/17
- Nabeel Salameh 2/16
- Daniel Scholl 2/10
- Sebastian Skaff 2/6
- Michael Souri 2/25
- Andre Terzian 2/25
- Brenda Tax 2/13
- Melanie Tierney 2/22
- Tina Tomeo 2/19

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

- Fr. Patrick & Nina Irish 2/6
- Antoune & Maysoun Khoury 2/10
- Ramzi & Randa Salameh 2/14
- Don Jr. & Penny Skaff 2/14

*The Apostle is a monthly newsletter of St. Mark Antiochian Orthodox Church. **Parish Organizations are to submit articles by the 15th of the month to the Church office (949-851-8933)***

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