

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2017

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF IRVINE

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Rev. Protodeacon George Moubayed
Sub-deacon: Athanasius Fakhouri
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
Chairman - Randy Dabbah {17} (949) 293-7732
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Secretary – Dimitri Kort {18} (909) 529-3671
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[Number in brackets is the member's last year of his or her current term]
Church School Director: Eileen Ellis (949) 458-1604
Men's Club Acting President: Ghassan Awayjan (951) 454-5429
Antiochian Women of St. Mark President: Denise Nassif (949) 500-8318
Teen SOYO President: Grace Bahbah (714) 401-2094

Pastor's Column

Beloved in Christ,

During Great Lent, the Church calls us to do what we should be doing all year round. We are instructed to fast, pray, do charitable works, worship in the church, and so on. We must also include in the list participation in the Sacrament of Holy Confession. In his book, "The Lenten Spring," Fr. Thomas Hopko (Dean Emeritus of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary) addresses some of the questions and issues regarding this neglected sacrament.

It is not enough for us to know our sins and hate them. We must also confess them before God and man. We must acknowledge them before heaven and earth. We must expose them to the whole of creation in order to be rid of them from within our secret hearts. Confession is part of the spiritual life. Indeed it is part of life itself. There is no authentic existence for human beings without it. And there is certainly no authentic repentance. "If we say we have not sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." (1 John 1:8-10)

Some say that there is no need to confess sins openly and publicly. They say that people can confess directly to God. Such an idea is total nonsense. Confession to God in secret is no confession at all. It

is simply the acknowledgment before the Lord that we know what He knows! Confession by definition is open and public. If it is not, it is simply not confession.

When the people were repenting in preparation for Jesus at the preaching of John the Baptist, it is written that they were baptized “confessing their sins” (Mark 1:5). This does not mean that they were telling God in the privacy of their hearts what He already knew. It means that they were proclaiming the evils that they had done for all to hear. And St. James commands Christians: “Confess your sins to one another!” he is not advising them to be aware of their transgressions in the secrecy of their souls. He is ordering them to reveal their wickednesses to each other so that they might be healed (James 5:16)

If confession is by definition the open and public acknowledgment of sins, why then do the Orthodox confess privately to their priests? It is not because the priests have some special power which others do not have... Priests have no power personally to forgive sins. Only Jesus Christ has such power. But the pastors have the ministry of witnessing the confession and repentance of God’s people, and of officially sealing that confession and repentance with the assurance of divine forgiveness through the prayers of absolution.

The reason why people now confess to their pastors in private is because of the weakness of the body of Christians as a whole. Confession used to be public. It was done openly in the presence of all the members of the Church. Anyone willing to confess in this manner today is welcome do so. But it would most likely serve only to lead other in temptation rather than to inspire prayerful compassion... When confession is done to the priest alone, it should be understood that it is to him as if it were it were to all. Or to put it another

way, it is to all - God and man and the whole of creation – in the priest’s person as the head of the church community and the sacramental presence within it of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Great Lent is a time for confession. All Christians should make their confession. A person who does not is hardly a Christian. He is certainly not Orthodox.

Fr. Michael

THE LENTEN FAST

(Lent began on February 27)

During Great Lent, the rules of the dietary fast are thus: All of Lent and Holy Week we are to abstain from all meat and animal products (including eggs, milk, animal fats, etc.) The only exceptions are shellfish. In addition, Mondays through Fridays, we are to abstain from wine and other alcoholic drinks and olive oil. This is the "letter of the law." It is important for you and your family to participate in the "spirit of the law", working out this Lenten effort within your household in ways pleasing to God and beneficial for the soul. We all must be reminded that the purpose of the dietary fast is to help us to fast from sin and ungodliness! If you have questions regarding Lenten discipline, please see Fr. Michael.

SPECIAL SERVICES/EVENTS IN MARCH

Sunday March 5 is the First Sunday of Lent – There will be an Orange County Sunday of Orthodoxy Service at St. Luke Orthodox Church, Garden Grove at 6:00 p.m. (flyer attached)

Lenten Week Day Service Schedule

Mondays Great Compline 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday Liturgy of Pre-Sacntified Gifts, 6:30 p.m.

Friday Little Compline with Akathist Hymn, 7:00 p.m.

Saturday March 25, Divine Liturgy, Feast of the Annunciation 10:00 a.m.

April 2017 Advanced Calendar

April 9, Palm Sunday
April 10-15, Holy Week
April 16, GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

Metropolitan Joseph's Schedule

March 5

St. Nicholas Cathedral of Brooklyn, NY
Ordination of Sub deacon Rassem El-Massih to the Holy Diaconate

March 18-19

Holy Cross Church of Yakima, WA
Ordination of Deacon John Phelps to the Holy Priesthood

Please call the Church Office 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

March 5

THE HOLY MARTYR CONON OF ISAURIA

He was brought up in the Christian Faith and baptized in the name of the All-holy and Life-giving Trinity by the Archangel Michael himself. Until his death, the archangel of God invisibly watched over him. Conon was illumined and empowered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that his heart was driven not by anything worldly but only by the spiritual and heavenly. When his parents forced him into marriage, the first evening he took a candle and placed it under a vessel and asked his bride: "Which is better, light or darkness?" She replied: "Light." He then began to talk to her about the Faith of Christ, and about the spiritual life as being far superior and more desirable than the physical. In this he succeeded. Afterward Conon converted his wife and her parents to the Christian Faith. Conon and his wife lived as brother and sister. Shortly

thereafter, his wife and parents died, and he withdrew completely from this worldly life and devoted himself totally to prayer, fasting and divine contemplation. He performed great miracles, through which he converted many to Christianity. Among other examples, Conon compelled evil spirits to serve him. During a time of persecution he was captured, tortured and pierced throughout with knives. The sick anointed themselves with his blood, and they were healed. Afterward he lived for two additional years in his town of Isauria, and then presented himself to the Lord. This glorious saint lived and was martyred in the second century

March 15

THE HOLY MARTYR NICANDER THE EGYPTIAN

Nicander was skinned and then beheaded for his faith in Christ. His crime was that, as a physician, he ministered to Christian martyrs and honorably buried their martyred bodies. He suffered honorably in the year 302 A.D.

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE HOLY MARTYRS AGAPIUS, ALEXANDER, NICANDER AND THOSE WITH THEM

From every state the Lord chooses His army:
Everyone in whom the flame of love and faith
burns;

From among physicians, sages, peasants and
laborers,

From among emperors and fishermen--an army of
martyrs!

The sword beheaded, the Lord received the
wise Alexander;

The sword beheaded, the Lord took the
merciful Nicander;

The sword beheaded eight beautiful, young apples;
Beneath the sword, the All-sustaining Hand
received them.

Those whom the world scoops up and discards from
its sheepfold

The Lord with His tender hand gathers as the most
beautiful blossoms.

Shoveled aside as a weed, the first citizen Agapius
Was received by the Lord as His son.

Ten martyrs, glorious men,
Now sing in eternity in the angelic choir.

Not all deaths are the same; all die, but for what?
Some of the dead are blessed and others cursed.
Who dies for Christ's sake--with him is a blessing;
Who dies persecuting Christ--with him is a curse.

March 21

SAINT JAMES, BISHOP AND CONFESSOR

Neither the place of his birth nor the place where James served as bishop are known. Only this is known: he fulfilled the law of Christ and spent much time laboring ascetically in strict fasting and prayer. During the reign of Copronymos, James endured great hardships and suffering, such as hunger, imprisonment and ridicule of all sorts at the hands of the iconoclasts. Finally, he gave up his soul to God, Whom he had faithfully served in this life. He lived and suffered in the eighth century.

March 26

THE HOLY ARCHANGEL GABRIEL

Gabriel is the herald of the Incarnation of the Son of God. He is one of the seven archangels who stand before the throne of God. He appeared to Zacharias to announce the birth of the Forerunner. Gabriel said of himself: *I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God* (Luke 1:19). His name Gabriel means "man-God." The Holy Fathers, in speaking about the Annunciation, comment that an archangel with such a name was sent to signify Who He was, and what He would be like, Who would be born of the All-pure One. He would be the God-man, the mighty and powerful God. Some of the Fathers understood that this same Gabriel appeared to Joachim and Anna concerning the birth of the Virgin Mary, and that Gabriel instructed Moses in the wilderness to write the Book of Genesis. The Holy Fathers say that Gabriel belongs to the first and greatest order of heavenly powers, that is, the Seraphim, since the Seraphim stand closest to God. He is, therefore, one of the seven Seraphim closest to God. The names of the seven are Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Salathiel, Jegudiel, and Barachiel. To this number some add Jeremiel. Each one has his own particular service and all are equal in honor. Why did God not send Michael? Because Michael's service is to suppress the enemies of the

Faith of God, while Gabriel's is the mission of announcing the salvation of mankind.

Parish & Organizations News

Baptized into Christ

On 1/14/2017 Sarina Sophia Kumar, daughter of Vijay & Malvina Kumar.
Her godmother is Hilary Chala.

Married

On 1/22/2017 Dana Ibrahim Yaghnam and Roberto Velazquez at St. Mark. Their witnesses were Jose Estrada and Sheireen Etemadi

Fallen Asleep in the Lord

On 1/5/2017, Rosa Soffa the mother of Tina Storvis. Her funeral was at St. Mark on 1/10 and the burial at Pacific View Memorial Park in Corona Del Mar, followed by the meal of Mercy at St. Mark Church Hall. Memory Eternal!

St. Mark 2017 Stewardship Pledge Drive!

Thank you to those who have made their 2017 pledge commitment. As of February 23, 2017, we have a total of \$170,730 pledged which is 83% of our total goal of \$205,000. We have also successfully collected 106 pledge commitments. If you have not done so, please turn your pledge commitment to the white box in the back of the church.

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

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

Meeting started with a prayer by the president Denise Nassif. 16 ladies attended the meeting that was held on 2/19/2017.

Sun Shine Report by Lillian Kassicieh,

Get well cards and sympathy cards were sent to our members.

Treasurer Report by Giselle Awayjan.

The ending balance is \$13750.21

Scrip Report by Saeda Turk, Our ladies guild buys scrip at 3 to 10 percent discount

So when you buy scrip the Parish benefits, we made \$2300.00 from the scrip cards.

Old Business:

Our Valentine dinner /dance was held by the Antiochian woman lead by Denise Nassif was a great success thanks to all the ladies who arranged and helped for this great event we made \$5000.00 including the silent auction of \$2300.00

Thanks for all the donations.

New Business:

We need Ladies to volunteer to read Epistles and serve as an Ushers for the month of March.

Hannah's Gift, we would like to send a meal to the Cancer patients of the Children's Hospital of Orange (CHOC) on either 07/20/17 or 07/27/2017 or 08/24/2017. We need volunteers to prepare the meals and deliver them to the hospital.

Antiochian Woman's Lenten retreat of the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West at St Nicholas Camp Frazier Park starts from March 31/2017 -4/1/2017, we would like to see the Ladies from our church to participate in this event. More information to follow in the weekly bulletin.

Good Samaritan fund: Lori Nour, one of our Parish Council members, suggested to the Ladies **that they donate money** to cancer patients and sick people. We voted at the meeting to donate \$1000 a year for this fund and was approved by all the ladies

*Antiochian Women of St Mark Secretary
Wisam Faraj*

Men's Club

The Men Club of St Mark hosted their 3rd annual Super Bowl Viewing Party on Sunday February 5. The event was well attended with over 70 parishioners and friends in attendance enjoying the exciting game and delicious food. Thank you to all those who attended and/or participated in the activity. Special thanks to our cooks and organizers: Ghassan Awayjan, Phillip Bahbah, Tony Rodriguez

and Saeda Turk for all their efforts in making this a successful event. We are happy to announce St Mark's benefit totaled \$2,585. Thank you again for all your support and participation.

Thanks to Austin Turk for running the event.

There is nothing planned for March at this time.

Respectfully submitted by

Don Skaff/Men's Club Secretary

Teen SOYO

During the month of February, SOYO had a meeting on the 12th where they set plans for the month of March and April.

Jillian Goson, Diana Aldada and Amanda Kouri also shared their experiences of participating in St. Paul's ski weekend up in Big Bear. They had a great time and enjoyed meeting fellow Orthodox Christians from our sister parish.

That same weekend George & Grace Bahbah, Marianne Hanouneh, Sami Skaff & Paul Rodriguez-Anter attended the YES trip on Skid Row in LA! It too was an amazing and rewarding experience. They slept over at The Jordan Mission where our youth prepared meals, interacted, handed out backpacks, and gave gift cards to the homeless. There was also discussion on the St. Michael's Parish Life Conference Bible Bowl. Teams are in the process of being created and study sessions planned. SOYO is looking for parents willing to help prepare the kids in the book of Mark. The kids want to make St Mark's proud and are super motivated to do well.

SOYO proudly voted to donate \$1,000 from monies raised from our SOYO checking account to the St. Nicholas Emergency Camp Fund. Funds will be used to update the hall bathrooms and other necessary items. The kids were excited to give back to St. Nicholas camp for all the years that our kids enjoyed building lifelong friendships and memories there.

Unfortunately due to weather conditions the St. Nicholas Winter retreat had to be partially postponed & relocated to a one day session at St. Barnabas. It proved to be a spiritually fulfilling day & the kids said they had fun!

Some of our girls will also be participating in an all girls retreat with the girls from St. Paul's on Feb. 24 and 25th.

SOYO is also actively selling \$20 CDs produced by The Sacred Music Institute. The CD's consists of songs sang by SOYO kids throughout the states. Please let us know if you are interested in having a CD with beautiful religious songs on it.

On March 10th, SOYO is planning on participating in Friday Vespers, having a Lenten meal and an Ask Abouna session.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Sunday, March 5th.

Yours in Christ, Paula Anter-Rodriguez & Dana Chade

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

Santorine Aarja 3/
Sleiman Aldada 3/11
Diana Aldada 3/4
Joseph Attalla 3/27
Sarah Asaly 3/10
Gisele Awayjan 3/24
Anahid Azzouni 3/19
Jacob Bahbah 3/1
Nicholas Bahou 5/26
Wally Batarseh 3/12
Lucy Billeh 3/20
Samir Billeh 3/3
Nuha Daher 3/23
Lilian Debbas 3/10
Mark El-Hinn 3/30
Dina Elsayegh 3/30

Nicole Fakhouri 3/1
Katrina Fakhouri 3/26
Carole Jo Goson 3/29
Wetcka Haffty 3/19
Sameer Hanna 3/17
Amanda Hanna 3/25
George Hanna 3/21
Fr. Patrick Irish 3/12
Maurice Karkar 3/25
Mitri Khamis 3/6
Tanya Khamis 3/4
Samir Khamis 3/20
Amanda Khoury 3/5
Melissa Khoury 3/19
Najat Khury 3/20
Elena Khury 3/29
Jerri Mamey 3/26
Nabil Mansour 3/24
Linda Mokbel 3/31
Liana Munayyer 3/3
Walid Najjar 3/11
Elizabeth Nassar 3/2
Krya Pelachik 3/2
Daniel Rizkallah 3/16
Deena Salameh 3/23
Ramsey Samara 3/18
Jamal Sayegh 3/3
Samira Skaff 3/29
Juliana Tannous (Turk) 3/4
Richard Tierney 3/2
Martha Toubbeh 3/30
Isabella Turk 3/10
Osama Turk 3/12
Michael Wakileh 3/23
Lydia Wakileh 3/25
Matthew Whitacre 3/19

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Samir & Maysa Azzam 3/4
Carlos & Rhonda Rodriguez 3/1
George & Martha Toubbeh 3/28

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)*

**SAINT MARK ANTIOCHIAN
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