

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2017

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH

OF IRVINE

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Pastor's Column

**The Fast of the Apostles:
On being sent into the world
Adapted from an essay by Dr. Alexander Roman.**

The Apostles' Fast is one that was actually engaged in by the Disciples of Christ following the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Having rejoiced throughout the fifty days following Pascha, the Resurrection of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Apostles began to prepare for their departure from Jerusalem to carry Christ's message to the far corners of the world.

As part of their preparation, they began a fast with prayer to ask God to strengthen their resolve and to be with them in their missionary undertakings.

It is this fast that we ourselves participate in when we observe the Apostles' Fast. But we do this not only because we honor the Apostles and their sacrifice. We do this by way of preparing ourselves to be sent as missionaries into our world to reflect and radiate Christ to those around us.

Somewhere along the line, we seem to have disconnected ourselves from the Apostles. We've placed them on a very high plane so that we may admire them and their spirituality while, at the same time, effectively preventing ourselves from ever having anything to do with it as far as our own personal lives are concerned.

When Christ asked his sleeping disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane why they could not watch and pray with Him for one hour, He was actually

giving all of us some real practical advice on how much time we should be spending in prayer at a minimum.

Yet, today we think that His words were only for His apostles and disciples, for those who made a radical commitment to follow Him until the end of their days. And we think that this has nothing to do with us! How wrong we are!

The apostles were people like we are. St Peter was actually so filled with a sense of his own sinfulness that he felt it was inappropriate for him to even speak with Jesus at their first meeting. And it was he who denied Christ three times. Later, through the power of the Holy Spirit, it was into this same Peter's shadow that sick people would try and throw themselves in the hope of receiving healing!

It was St Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, who called himself the "least of the disciples." He considered himself to be a full member of the Apostolic group, notwithstanding that he did not see Christ before His Crucifixion and Resurrection.

St Paul did "see Christ." He saw Him in His heavenly glory. Paul's apostolic zeal was second to none and he was determined to make the whole world be as he was, that is, see with the eyes of the faith he had.

As the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, Christ chose his 12 apostles to represent the New Israel or Church of the New Covenant. That St Paul would be the 13th apostle hearkens to the role that the two sons of Joseph had among the tribes of Old Israel.

In her liturgy, the Church sometimes numbers the two assistants of Peter and Paul among the ranks of the Apostles, the two Evangelists, Mark and Luke.

It was Mark in whose parents' house the Mystical (Last) Supper was held. It was Mark who was the mysterious young boy in the Garden at the time of Christ's arrest who escaped naked from the soldiers. Luke was a Syrian, former pagan doctor, whose great secular education put him right in Paul's league. It was appropriate for the Apostle to the Gentiles to have a Gentile assistant! In addition,

Christ chose 70 disciples, reflecting the choice of 70 judges by Moses who helped him govern Israel.

These 70 disciples went out, two by two, as did the Apostles, and preached, prayed, healed and witnessed.

Added to this Apostolic Choir were the women who assisted Christ throughout his earthly sojourn. St Mary Magdalene was the most famous "Equal to the Apostles."

There is simply no evidence to confirm that she was the "sinful woman" of the New Testament. A sister of Lazarus and Martha of Bethany, Mary Magdalene was a woman of means who used her resources to help the spread of the Christian message.

Throughout the centuries since, others have received the title "Equal to the Apostles," including Sts. Constantine and Helen, Sts. Cyril and Methodius for their apostolic labors to bring others to Christ. So no one has missed the boat, so to speak, on becoming an Apostle. We are all called to be such, as a matter of fact.

We may not be called to witness to Christ as the original Apostles did. We may not be called to die for Christ as they and others did.

But let us remember that the root of the word "martyr" in Greek essentially just means "witness." For the ancient Greeks, to die for one's beliefs was considered a "proof" as to their validity, especially as experienced internally by the martyr.

The Romans were not, primarily, interested in killing the Apostles and other Christians. What they wanted to do is have them deny their beliefs. That was where their sense of victory lay. To this end, the refined tortures they used on the Christians were designed to get them to deny Christ and affirm the gods and social structure of the Roman Empire. But Christians would rather suffer and die than deny Christ.

The Apostles did great work to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and His Church, as did their successors, the Bishops. This is why St Nicholas is commemorated on Thursdays along with the

Apostles for he represents the episcopate of all ages.

The Apostles' Fast is therefore something which should be undertaken with an apostolic vision on our part.

When Christ told His disciples to go and preach to all nations, He had us in mind as well. When He set the standards of "feeding the hungry, clothing the naked" and others, He was also using these in a spiritual sense. How many are around us who thirst for spirituality? How many who hunger for the Word of God? What about those in the prison of their own sinfulness? Or who are naked, that is, unclothed by the Grace of the Holy Spirit?

These are all apostolic opportunities that are presented to us by our Lord Himself.

As St Peter said, our battle is with principalities and dominions etc. the representatives of the Evil One. And they are something that can only be cast out with prayer and fasting.

Fr. Michael

Note: The Apostles Fast runs from the second Monday after Pentecost until Sts. Peter and Paul Day on June 29. With Pascha falling on April 16 this year, Pentecost falls on June 4. Consequently we have at sixteen day Apostles fast this year (from June 12 to 28)

Schedule of Special Services and Events, June 2017

Sunday June 4 - Holy Pentecost, Last Day of Church School

Sunday June 11, Church School Awards

Sunday June 19, Father's Day Luncheon

Saturday June 24, 10:00 a.m. Liturgy for Feast of Birth of St. John the Baptist (Orthros 9:00 a.m.)

Advance Calendar for July 2017

July 4, U.S. Independence Day

July 5 to July 9, Western Diocese Parish Life Conference, (hosted by St. Nicholas Cathedral, Los Angeles)

July 24 to 30, Antiochian Archdiocese Biennial Convention, Miami FL

Metropolitan Joseph's Schedule

June: Travel to Lebanon for the meeting of the Holy Synod of Antioch and other important visitations

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 June 5

BLESSED CONSTANTINE, METROPOLITAN OF KIEV

In the days of Blessed Prince Igor, when there was great quarreling and confusion among the Russian princes, there was also disorder in the Church and frequent changes on the thrones of the hierarchs. Thus, after the death of Metropolitan Michael of Kiev, Prince Izyaslav brought in the famous and learned monk Klim as metropolitan without seeking the blessing of the patriarch of Constantinople, contrary to the age-old tradition. The patriarch sent Metropolitan Constantine to investigate the matter. Constantine removed Klim and deposed all those clerics that he had ordained. Because of this the people were divided: some adhered to Klim and others adhered to Constantine. Then, according to the wishes of the Russian princes, the patriarch sent a third, Theodore, and both Klim and Constantine were removed. When Constantine died, in the year 1159 A.D. they opened his will, and in it he had requested that he not be buried but that his body be thrown in a field to be consumed by dogs, because he considered himself to have been the culprit responsible for the confusion in the Church. Not

daring to disobey his testament, but nevertheless with great fear, men took the body of the metropolitan and threw it into a field, where it lay for three days. For three days there was a terrible thunder over Kiev, lightning flashed all around and struck, and the earth quaked. Eight men perished from the lightning. Three fiery pillars appeared over Constantine's lifeless body. Seeing all of this, the prince of Kiev ordered that the body of Constantine be taken and honorably buried in the church where the tomb of Igor was located. Immediately afterward a calm ensued in nature. Thus God justified His humble servant.

June 13

THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYR AQUILINA

Aquilina was born in the Palestinian town of Byblos of honorable Christian parents. At age seven little Aquilina was already completely versed in the true Christian life, and at age ten she was so filled with divine understanding and the grace of the Holy Spirit that she preached Christ to her female companions with great power and zeal. When Diocletian's persecution began, someone accused Aquilina before Volusian, the imperial deputy, who was more like a beast than a man. Volusian first ordered that Aquilina be flogged and then that a red-hot rod be passed through her ears and brain. To the last moment, the virgin Aquilina freely and openly confessed Christ the Lord, but when her brains and blood began to flow from her head, she fell as though dead. The deputy, thinking Aquilina was indeed dead, ordered her body to be carried outside the city and thrown upon a dung heap for the dogs to consume. But an angel of God appeared to her at night and said to her: "Arise, and be whole!" The virgin arose and was whole, and for a long time she offered up praise of thanksgiving to God, imploring Him not to deprive her of fulfilling the ascetic feat of martyrdom. A voice from heaven was heard: "Go; it shall be unto you as you ask!" And Aquilina set out for the town. The gates of the town opened of their own accord before her, and she entered the palace of the deputy like a spirit and appeared before his bed. The deputy was seized with unspeakable fear, seeing the virgin alive whom he thought was dead. The following day, at his command, the executioners led Aquilina out to behead her. Before her beheading, the virgin Aquilina prayed to God on her knees and gave up

her soul. The executioner cut off her lifeless head. Her relics gave healing to many of the sick. Aquilina was twelve years old when she suffered for the Lord. She suffered and was crowned with a martyr's wreath in the year 293 A.D.

June 19

THE HOLY APOSTLE JUDE

Saint Jude was one of the Twelve Apostles. He was the son of Joseph and Salome^(*) and the brother of James, the brother of the Lord. Joseph the carpenter had four sons with Salome [the daughter of Angeja, the son of Varahina, the brother of Zacharias]: James, Hosea, Simon and Jude. This Jude is sometimes called: "Jude, the brother of James" due to his brother being better-known (St. Luke 6:16 Acts 1:14). St. Jude begins his epistle in this manner: *Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James* (St. Jude 1:1). Even though he could be called the brother of the Lord as much as James, he did not do this, out of humility and shame, for he did not at first believe in Christ the Lord. When the elderly Joseph, before his death, wanted to leave a portion of his estate to Jesus, as well as to his other children, all of them protested, even Jude. Only James voluntarily set aside a share of his portion and intended it for Jesus. Jude is also called Levi and Thaddeaus. There is another Thaddeaus of the Seventy Apostles (August 21), but this Thaddeaus or Jude was one of the Great Apostles. Jude preached the Gospel throughout Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Idumedia, Syria, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Armenia. In Edessa, the town of Abgar, he augmented the preaching of the other Thaddeaus. When Jude was preaching in the regions around Ararat, he was captured by pagans, crucified on a cross and killed by being shot with arrows, that he might reign eternally in the Kingdom of Christ.

^(*) Not the Salome of Bethlehem, but another.

June 24

THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE FORERUNNER AND BAPTIST OF THE LORD

Six months before his appearance in Nazareth to the All-holy Virgin Mary, the great archangel of God,

Gabriel, appeared to Zacharias the high priest in the Temple at Jerusalem. Before announcing the miraculous conception by the unwedded virgin [Mary], the archangel announced the miraculous conception by the childless old woman [Elizabeth]. Zacharias did not immediately believe the words of the herald of God, and thus his tongue was bound by dumbness and it remained thus until eight days after the birth of John. On that day the relatives of Zacharias and Elizabeth gathered for the young child's circumcision and naming. When they asked the father what name he wished to give to his son, since he was mute he wrote on a tablet: "John." At that moment his tongue became loosed and he began to speak. The home of Zacharias was on the heights between Bethlehem and Hebron. The news of the appearance of the angel of God to Zacharias was spread throughout all of Israel, as well as that of his dumbness and the loosing of his tongue at the moment when he wrote the name "John." The news concerning this even reached Herod. Therefore, when Herod sent soldiers to slay the children in Bethlehem, he directed men to the hills, to the dwelling place of the family of Zacharias, to kill John also. But Elizabeth promptly hid the child. Enraged at this, King Herod sent his executioners to Zacharias in the Temple to slay him (for it happened that it was again Zacharias' turn to serve in the Temple of Jerusalem). Zacharias was slain between the court and the temple and his blood coagulated and petrified on the paving stones and remained a perpetual witness against Herod. Elizabeth hid with the child in a cave, where she died soon after. The young child John remained alone in the wilderness under the care of God and His angels.

Parish & Organizations News

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

During the Month of April we planned our Annual Palm Sunday Bake Sale, which was one of our big money makers of the year. Our ladies did so much volunteer baking that we had left-overs to sell and made around \$3000.00 when we were finally through with selling. For this bake sale we also purchased our Spinach Pies from the same bakery again, instead of relying the women to make them (which is so very exhausting for them,) this time purchasing 600 pies,

and sold out in the first 20 minutes! We are learning.... We also planned and organized the Pascha Breakfast after Easter service.

On May 7, we held our annual Mother Daughter Tea themed "Tea at Tiffany's" which was back by popular demand from last year. We have 125 people attending and we opened it this year to husbands and sons to join us.

Our next and final meeting for this year is on Thursday June 22 at 6:30 and place to be announced soon.

Denise Nassif
President

Men's Club

Our Men hosted a delicious Persian luncheon for Mother's Day on May 7th. It was enjoyed by everyone. Thank you Ghassan & Giselle Awyajan for setting up the hall and for Elias Khury, Sam Munayyer and Sleiman Aldada for helping in serving the lunch.

Teen SOYO

Our Teens are busy studying for the Parish Life Conference Bible Bowl. They had a fun afternoon at Boomers on Sunday May 21st. They gave red roses to all mothers on mother's day.

*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

Joanna Aldada 6-2
Adele Bahbah 6-25
Joe Bahbah 6-27
Nicholas Bahbah 6-17
Amanda Bahou 6/23
Firas Billeh 6-5
Edward Chade 6-19

Alexandra Rose Chala 6-13
James Dabbah 6-20
Sally Debbas 6-4
Fadi Debbas 6-8
Gabriel Donovan 6-20
Gregory Ellis 6-26
Barbara Khamis 6-14
Marlene Khamis 6-22
Diana Khury 6-27
Madison Kort 6-14
Fr. Michael Laffoon 6-23
Nader Qoborsi 6-19
Suhair Qoborsi 6-23
Carlos Rodriquez 6-20
Rhonda Rodriquez 6-25
Marwan Saba 6-8
Ramzi Salameh 6-11
Salam Samara 6-4
Ramez Sayegh 6-20
Barbara Scholl 6-21
Rima Tarazi 6-8
Chadi Tarazi 6-30
Dave Tax 6-6
Nicholas Tomeo 6-29
Karen Toubbeh 6-18
Austin Turk 6-24
Saeda Turk 6-29

Happy Anniversary

Sleiman & Seham Aldada 6-16
Austin & Saeda Turk 6-24

*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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