

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

September 2017

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF IRVINE

17840 Sky Park Circle
Irvine, CA 92614-6407
Tel: (949) 851-8933
Fax: (949) 851-0010
Email: frmlaffoon@yahoo.com
Website: www.st-mark-church.org

Very Rev. Father Michael Laffoon, Pastor
Residence phone: (949) 559-6133
Rev Fr. Patrick Irish, Attached
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
Vice Chairman – Barbara Scholl {18} (949) 533-4634
Secretary – Dimitri Kort {18} (909) 529-3671
Treasurer – Marwan Dabit {17} (626)665-1096
Assistant Treasurer- Kyra Pelachik {18} (714) 906-9231
Ghassan Awayjan {17} (951) 454-5429
Joe Daruty {17} (949) 612-7939
Mark Ellis {19}(949) 458-1604
Lori Nour {19} (949) 370-6224
Austin Turk {19} (949) 922-2350
[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

It seems that nearly every day we read or hear about more conflicts in our society. Conflict between political groups, ethnic groups, religious groups, etc. We all have our own differing perspectives on these issues, but one thing is clear: Our Lord told us to love everyone, from the neighbor to the enemy. As we try to live in this conflicted and confused world, let us keep the following in mind.

Love of Neighbor

After the love of God, the greatest commandment is the love of one's neighbor.

Fr. Thomas Hopko

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength. This is the first and great -commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets (Mt 22.37–40, Mk 12.30–31, Lk 10.27, Lev 19.18).

There is no commandment greater than these (Mk 12.31).

Love of neighbor necessarily follows from the love of God, and there can be no true love of God without it.

He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness still. He who loves his brother abides

in the light and in him there is no cause of stumbling. He who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going for the darkness has blinded his eyes.

If any one says “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God, should love his brother also (1 Jn 2.9–11, 4.20–21).

The love of the neighbor and the brother does not mean the love of only those who love us and are good to us. The neighbor and the brother mean anyone near at hand, everyone made by God, all “for whom Christ has died” (Rom 14.15). The neighbor and the brother include also the enemies. This is the point of Christ’s parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10.29–37). It is also the Lord’s specific teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the heathen do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Mt 5.44–48).

But I say to you that hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and selfish (Lk 6.27–35).

This teaching of Jesus is conveyed also in the writings of the apostles.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them. No, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink. Owe one another nothing, but to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,” and any other commandment are summed up in this sentence, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom 12.9–10, 14–20; 13.8–10; cf. Mt 25.31–46).

Genuine love is expressed in deeds, and not in words alone. It is expressed through what one actually does in one’s life. It is manifested in concern for others through kindly speech and generosity with one’s earthly possessions given by God. It is revealed in one’s works of faith in keeping all of God’s commandments.

Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love that Christ laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if any one has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth (1 Jn 3.14–18; cf. Jas 2.8–17).

The love of neighbor “as oneself” is sometimes misunderstood. One should, of course, love oneself in the sense that one is faithful to God and grateful for his life. And certainly one should love oneself in the sense that he sees himself as uniquely important in the eyes of God and the object of God’s own unfailing love and mercy. One should not hate oneself in the sense that he despises the life given to him by God, rejecting his own talents and gifts because he is envious of others. Neither should one hate oneself for being a sinner, since, as the masters teach, such a self-hate is only the subtle form of a more grandiose price which vaunts a person to

stature of judgment greater than that of God Himself, who is merciful, loving and forgiving (cf. Father Alexander Elchaninoff, 20th c. Diary of a Russian Priest; Father John of Kronstadt, 20th c. My Life in Christ).

One should certainly “hate himself,” however, in the sense that he despises and crucifies his “old self” corrupted by sin in order to “put off the old nature with its evil practices” and to “put on the new nature which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its Creator” (Rom 6.6, Col 3.10).

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal 2.20; cf. 5.24, 6.14).

This is also what Christ undoubtedly meant when He spoke those most violent and terrifying words in the Gospel.

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple (Lk 14.26).

This is the extreme and terrifying warning against all passionate attachments stronger and more powerful than one’s passionate attachment to Christ alone. And the greatest passion of all which keeps one from the love of God and the love of one’s neighbor is the sinful passion for oneself. Sinful self-love, says Saint Maximus the Confessor, is the “mother of all evils,” and the “original sin” of man’s heart.

One must “hate oneself” in this sense, even as he must hate his family and friends. He must hate them as objects of his sinful self-love, that he might love them, and himself most truly in Christ.

Feasts and Special Events for September 2017

- Thursday September 7, Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos, 6:30 p.m. Divine Liturgy (Orthros 5:30 p.m.).
- Saturday September 9, Second Annual Hoedown at Strawberry Farm Golf Course
- Thursday September 14, 6:30 p.m. Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross Divine Liturgy (Orthros 5:30 p.m.). This commemoration is a fasting day regardless of the day of the week it falls.
- Saturday September 16, Joint Fellowship Event of Antiochian Women of St. Barnabas, St. Luke and St. Mark at St. Luke Church, Garden Grove.
- Tuesday September 19, Becoming Truly Human series begins.
- Saturday September 23, 12:30 p.m. Ladies Friendship Tea at the home of Denise Nassif.
- Sunday September 24, Church School term begins (registration on September 17)

Advance Calendar for October 2017

- October 6, 7, 8, Fall Diocesan Gathering, Fairfield CA
- October 8, Annual Parish Meeting

Metropolitan Joseph’s Schedule

September 21-24
Holy Resurrection Church of Tucson, AZ
Hierarchal Visit

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.

Selected Saints of the Month

September 1

THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH YEAR, OR THE BEGINNING OF THE INDICTION

The First Ecumenical Council [Nicaea, 325] decreed that the Church year should begin on September 1. The month of September was, for the Hebrews, the beginning of the civil year (Exodus 23:16), the month of gathering the harvest and of the offering of thanks to God. It was on this feast that the Lord Jesus entered the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21), opened the book of the Prophet Isaiah and read the words: The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn (Isaiah 61:1-2). The month of September is also important in the history of Christianity, because Emperor Constantine the Great was victorious over Maxentius, the enemy of the Christian Faith, in September. Following this victory, Constantine granted freedom of confession to the Christian Faith throughout the Roman Empire. For a long time, the civil year in the Christian world followed the Church year, with its beginning on September 1. The civil year was later changed, and its beginning transferred to January 1. This occurred first in Western Europe, and later in Russia, under Peter the Great.

September 14

THE EXALTATION OF THE HONORABLE CROSS

Two events in connection with the Honorable Cross of Christ are commemorated on this day: first, the finding of the Honorable Cross on Golgotha and second, the return of the Honorable Cross from Persia to Jerusalem. Visiting the Holy Land, the holy Empress Helena decided to find the Honorable Cross of Christ. An old Jewish man named Judah

was the only one who knew where the Cross was located, and, constrained by the empress, he revealed that the Cross was buried under the temple of Venus that Emperor Hadrian had built on Golgotha. The empress ordered that this idolatrous temple be razed and, having dug deep below it, found three crosses. While the empress pondered on how to recognize which of these was the Cross of Christ, a funeral procession passed by. Patriarch Macarius told them to place the crosses, one by one, on the dead man. When they placed the first and second cross on the dead man, the dead man lay unchanged. When they placed the third cross on him, the dead man came back to life. By this they knew that this was the Precious and Life-giving Cross of Christ. They then placed the Cross on a sick woman, and she became well. The patriarch elevated the Cross for all the people to see, and the people sang with tears: "Lord, have mercy!" Empress Helena had a silver case made and set the Honorable Cross in it. Later, the Persian Emperor Chozroes conquered Jerusalem, enslaved many people, and took the Lord's Cross to Persia. The Cross remained in Persia for fourteen years. In the year 628 the Greek Emperor Heraclius defeated Chozroes and, with much ceremony, returned the Cross to Jerusalem. As he entered the city Emperor Heraclius carried the Cross on his back, but suddenly was unable to take another step. Patriarch Zacharias saw an angel preventing the emperor from bearing the Cross on the same path that the Lord had walked barefoot and humiliated. The patriarch communicated this vision to the emperor. The emperor removed his raiment and, in ragged attire and barefoot, took up the Cross, carried it to Golgotha, and placed it in the Church of the Resurrection, to the joy and consolation of the whole Christian world.

September 19

THE HOLY MARTYR ZOSIMAS THE HERMIT

Dometian, a Sicilian prince, went hunting in the mountains with his servants. There he saw an old man surrounded by wild beasts as tame as lambs. Asked who and what he was, the elder replied that his name was Zosimas, that he was a Christian, and that he had lived long among the wild beasts, who were better than those who lived in the city and

tortured Christians. This offended Dometian, who was himself a cruel persecutor of Christians. He chained Zosimas and sent him ahead to Nazareth, as he especially wanted to torture him there, to intimidate those who believed in Christ. When Dometian had wounded and bloodied Zosimas with blows, he tied a stone around his neck and suspended him from a tree. Then the prince mocked him, saying: "Command that a wild beast come forth so that we may all believe!" The holy martyr prayed to God, and, indeed, an enormous lion appeared, drew near to Zosimas, and placed his head under the stone to alleviate the martyr's suffering. In great fear, the prince freed Zosimas, but the latter soon rendered his spirit into the hands of his Lord.

September 30

SAINT MICHAEL, FIRST METROPOLITAN OF KIEV

St. Michael was sent to Russia by the Patriarch of Constantinople at the request of the great Prince Vladimir, to baptize the pagan people and establish and organize the Church. St. Michael baptized the people in Kiev, Novgorod, Rostov and many other towns and villages. He organized the Church, appointed bishops and priests, laid the foundation for the Monastery of St. Michael in Kiev, and sent missionaries among the Bulgarians and Tartars, winning many of them for Christ. This saint accomplished all this, and much more of great benefit, in only four years. He went to his reward peacefully, in the year 992. His relics repose in the Monastery of the Kiev Caves.

Parish & Organizations News

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

The Antiochian Women had no meetings in July and August. Some of our Ladies attended the Antiochian Women meeting and lunch at the Parish life Conference in Los Angeles, and brought back some important information to share with our ladies at their meeting in October.

On Saturday September 16th the Antiochian Women of St Mark and St. Barnabas and St Luke

will meet together in Christian Fellowship for a social event to be held at St Luke.

Plan to enjoy an afternoon that will include fellowship, food, wine tasting & chocolate!

Each parish will co-host a table that pairs finger foods, cheeses, wine, chocolates & desserts. Also non-alcoholic beverages will be served. Afterwards, we will end with Vespers together. See flyer included for more details.

Our Annual Friendship Tea will be held this year at the home of Denise Nassif on Saturday September 23, at 12:30p.m. We will have a brief meeting and we will announce our new officers for 2017-18. Please don't miss this beautiful event and reserve with Denise or Lydia. Please see the flyer included for more details.

*Respectfully submitted by
Lydia Wakileh*

Men's Club

No report submitted.

Teen SOYO

Old business:

Our Jr High team came in 4th place at the PLC! Congratulations to Amanda Khoury, Jillian Goson, & Diana Aldada!!!

Our High School team, Nadim Youssef, Youssef Youssef, & Merolla Youssef also did well & we are proud of their participation.

Great job to both teams for their commitment and dedication to studying the Book of Mark! Time well spent!

Election of new Diocese SOYO officers also took place at the PLC at LAX in July and St. Mark's was well represented!

Congratulations to the following newly elected DLAW officers:

Paul Rodriguez-Anter, President

Grace Bahbah-Secretary

George Bahbah-Treasurer

Again, St. Mark's SOYO was well represented at the Convention in Miami Florida! They held elections for new NAC Officers as well. We'd also like to congratulate Paul Rodriguez-Anter again for becoming the newly elected National Vice President for Teen SOYO!

So proud of all of you who are so dedicated to helping SOYO get stronger in a society that makes it very difficult to be an Orthodox Christian. We know you officers will be an asset to our faith and to the growth of the Orthodox Church!

We had good attendance at St. Nicholas Camp! Everyone said it was a great year! They also commented on how nice all of the remodeling & refurbishing looked up at camp, especially the new restrooms in the mess hall! Special thanks to all the donors that contributed to the fundraiser!

Saturday, the 12th we are had a SOYO Beach day at Big Corona! We had a fire pit and enjoyed the day into the evening with a campfire. Unfortunately it was not well attended due to vacations, weddings, & because a few of our teens are volunteering at Special Olympics this week at The Antiochian Village in Pennsylvania.

New Business:

Keep a look out for our end of the summer party when we kidnap and initiate the up and coming teenagers into SOYO. The date and location is still to be determined.

I hope everyone is enjoying their summer! God Bless you all.

In Christ,

Paula Anter Rodriguez
SOYO Advisor

Jeris Hanna 9/8
Zaina Hanna 9/11
Nadia Karkar 9/16
Abe Khamis 9/20
Alex Munayyer 9/14
Giselle Rizkallah 9/4
Heba Saadeh 9/16
Hiam Sayegh 9/24
Alexander Turk 9/26
Christy Wilde 9/13
Theodora Whitehead 9/23

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Ghassan & Geny Bahou 9/6
Youseff & Rita Billeh 9/9
Scott & Diane Daruty 9/4
Norman & Wetcka Haffty 9/2
Haitham and Sahar Hanna 9/9
Michael & Charlotte Khoury 9/11
Nader & Suhair Qoborsi 9/16
Farah & Silvia Saba 9/15
Ibrahim & Lydia Wakileh 9/19
Hani & Marian Youssef 9/5

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

Arij Alchammas 9/9
Andy Bahbah 9/19
Nora Bahbah 9/9
Chloe Dabit 9/15
Joe Daruty 9/21
Rania Debbas 9/19
Nicholas Debbas 9/2
Andrew Ellis 9/14

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)



*You Are Invited
To The 1st Ever
OC Sisterhood Gathering*

*Antiochian Women
A Sisterhood Serving Christ - Through Serving Others*

Saturday, September 16th at 2pm

At St. Luke Orthodox Church 13261 Dunklee Ave - Garden Grove

*In Christian Fellowship, the Antiochian Women of
St. Luke, St. Mark & St. Barnabas*

*will gather together for an afternoon of wine, cheese,
non-alcoholic beverages, appetizers, chocolates & desserts*

*It's an opportunity to get to know one another,
with each parish hosting a themed table!*

We will conclude with Vespers at 5pm

Hope you can join us!

**Please RSVP & see what you can bring for your parish
table to one of the following by September 4th**

Kh. Christina Tassos -- ctassos7304@gmail.com

Denise Nassif -- pearlgrldn@aol.com

C. Sue Braun -- c.suebraun@gmail.com





St. Timothy Orthodox Church
Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
of North America
Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

4593 Central Avenue, Fairfield, CA 94534
www.StTimothy.us
StTimothyFallGathering@gmail.com

TO: His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH, Beloved Clergy and Faithful of the
Diocese of Los Angeles and the West
FROM: Rev. Fr. John Christianson
Date: July 2, 2017
RE: 2017 Fall Gathering

+++

This year we have been granted the honor by His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH, to host for the first time in Fairfield, California, the annual Fall Gathering: **October 6-8, 2017**. We cherish this opportunity to welcome you to our parish to help renew and establish friendships with our "cousins" of the Diocese.

Enclosed with this memo you will find everything needed to register and reserve your rooms at one of the three hotels where we have reserved room blocks. **Please book your room reservation no later than September 6th** to ensure guaranteed rates. This is peak tourist season in Napa and the hotels will release the rooms after Sept. 6th due to demand.

You will find all the needed information for this year's Fall Gathering online at www.antiochianadiocese.org.

Registration and Wine Tasting Reservation Deadlines: September 24th, 2017

We look forward to sharing our hospitality! Make sure to join us and your entire Diocesan family for this wonderful weekend. If you have any questions, please email our committee: StTimothyFallGathering@gmail.com or call our Fall Gathering Chairwoman, Kh. Barbara Christianson at 831-818-7772. We look forward to seeing you in October!

Your Servants in Christ,
Fr. John Christianson & St. Timothy Parish Family

/msb

Dearest Ladies

You are cordially invited to

The Antiochian Women of

St. Mark's Annual

Friendship Tea

Saturday, September 23, 2017

AT 12:30 PM

Hosted by- Denise Nassif

Nassif Residence

64 Summer House, Irvine

Finger Foods only and ready to be served

No preparation in the kitchen please!

Please Bring Your Favorite

Tea Cup!

RSVP to: Denise Nassif (949) 500-8318 or

Church Office 949-851-8933

By Monday, September 18, with the dish you

are bringing....

A-F- dessert O-U-salad (green or pasta)

G-N-main dish V-Z - fruit

**SAINT MARK ANTIOCHIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH
17840 SKY PARK CIRCLE
IRVINE, CA 92614
SEPTEMBER 2017
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