



THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2017

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH

OF IRVINE

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

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Choir Director: Barbara Scholl
Chanters: Jacob Bahbah, Theresa Joubran, Karim Youssef, & Mark Ellis
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2016-2017 PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman - Barbara Scholl {18} (949) 533-4634
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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: Kristen Chala (909) 217-2317
Teen SOYO Co-Presidents: Christina Habeeb, Marianne Hanounch

Pastor's Column

What about gambling?

Fr Michael Laffoon

Gambling is a huge enterprise in the U.S. According to the American Gaming Association, gross revenues for all forms of gambling for 2006 were nearly 91 billion dollars. This amount does *not* include internet gambling. Casinos alone employ some 354,000 people. Neither does it include private gambling.

Most people either have or do participate in some form of gambling. According to the website of the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG), "Approximately 85% of U.S. adults have gambled at least once in their lives; 60% in the past year. Some form of legalized gambling is available in 48 states plus the District of Columbia. The two without legalized gambling are Hawaii and Utah."

A fraction of Americans who gamble are problem gamblers. The NCPG site states, "2 million (1%) of U.S. adults are estimated to meet criteria for pathological gambling in a given year. Another 4-6 million (2-3%) would be considered problem gamblers; that is, they do not meet the full diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling, but meet one or more of the criteria and are experiencing problems due to their gambling behavior. Research also indicates that most adults who choose to gamble are able to do responsibly."

So, if these numbers are correct, the majority of adult who gamble do so "responsibly." At the same time 6 to 8 million problem gamblers can and do

cause significant pain and suffering for themselves and their families.

If “only” 6 to 8 million of Americans gamble who gamble on a yearly basis are “pathological” or “problem” gamblers, what then is the problem with gambling? What does the Church teach us about gambling?

Gambling is not mentioned in the Bible by name, although the love of money certainly is. For instance, 1 Timothy 6:10 *For the love of money is the root of all evils*, Hebrews 13:5 *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have*. Getting rich quick is advised against in the book of Proverbs, *Wealth hastily gotten will dwindle* (13:11). The soldiers at the foot of the cross cast lots for the tunic of Christ (John 19:23), giving a negative association with gambling for gain.

There *are* canons against gambling (i.e. “dice”). Apostolic Canon 42 states, “If a bishop or presbyter, or deacon, is addicted to the dice or drinking, let him either give it over, or be deposed,” and Canon 43 “If a subdeacon, reader, or singer, commit the same things, let him either give over, or be excommunicated.” Canon 50 of the Quinisext Council (692 A.D.) is even stronger, “No one at all, whether cleric or layman, is from this time forward to play at dice. And if any one hereafter shall be found doing so, if he be a clergy he is to be deposed, if a layman let him be cut off [from Holy Communion].

Note that Apostolic Canons focus on *addiction* to dice (or drinking) but by the 7th Century the Canon condemns the mere *playing* of dice.

St. John Chrysostom (4th century), the great preacher of Antioch, said this in a sermon, “A passion for dice-playing hath often caused blasphemies, injuries, anger, reproaches, and a thousand other things more fearful still.” (Sermon 15, *On the Statues*). Certainly gambling is too often the occasion of foul and abusive language (out of frustration for losses and in cruel celebration for winnings), anger between friends, and friction between spouses and so on.

Gambling institutions have less than stellar reputations. Las Vegas’ nickname is “Sin City” for a reason. Wherever there are casinos, there is prostitution and, often, organized crime. It is a fact that Las Vegas and Atlantic City as gambling centers were founded by mobsters. So crime and gambling businesses go hand in hand. On a deeper level however, these casinos and gambling “destinations” are temples of crass materialism, cathedrals built to exalt base passions. The sexually charged revues and shows, the flow of free (or inexpensive) liquor on the casino floors, all of this tells us what image of man is being presented here: Man is mere appetite. Another unofficial motto, “What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas” testifies to the immorality that is exalted in such venues. These gambling “resorts” are designed to separate people from their money, hence the cliché, “When you are in Las Vegas, say hello to my money.”

The other negative aspect of gambling is the question of stewardship. As is made clear in Scripture, we will be judged by what we do with the blessings bestowed upon us by God (Matthew 25:31-46). We need to very seriously compare the money we give to and for the needy versus the funds we spend on ourselves for our entertainment. Thousands of dollars thrown away in gambling and a few hundred for the needy (not to mention the Church) is simply sinful. Stewardship of our time is also important. Again, what does it say about someone who claims to be a Christian if he spends hours gambling and little or no time reading Scripture, attending Church services other than Sundays or otherwise learning more about his Faith? Too many make regular trips to Las Vegas, and too few make regular pilgrimages to monasteries.

I can hear some of you now, “But Father I gamble as entertainment, for a diversion.” Certainly God does not wish us to be unhappy. We should enjoy the goodness of God’s creation and the fellowship of our fellow man. In fact this is the idea behind the Sabbath, not only to rest from labor, but to pause and appreciate the goodness of God as seen in nature and in one another.

Am I saying that all gambling is sinful? No, I am not. What I do say, however, is that we need to

apply a test to all of our “leisure” activities. We need to ask ourselves if what we are doing (seeing, hearing, etc.) is *bleisable*. To put it another way, Does it glorify God? Does it make us wiser or better? Does it further the salvation of others or myself?

To make the occasional friendly bet, to play cards with friends for (very) small stakes, these types of activities can be part of our fellowship with our fellow man, but only as long as we avoid anger, resentment, and other passions. Sadly, this is not often the case. Not only do arguments and ill feelings arise over such private gambling, but some people come to love their gambling at the expense of God and family. For instance, I know of cases where the “regular card game” took precedence over attendance at Lenten Services. This is nothing but shameful, and yes, sinful.

All of the negative associations that go along with gambling constitute the reasons that the Church does not use gambling as a fund raising tool. Bingo, casino nights, etc. are not appropriate ways for churches to raise money. The fact that we can point to churches that do so, does not change this. All fund raising has drawbacks, one of which is that parishes easily begin to depend on them and thus the amount of time and energy that is devoted to, say, the weekly bingo game, directly detracts from the time and energy given to the true mission of the Church.

So, on the basis of Scripture, the Holy Canons, the teaching of the Holy Fathers and an honest examination of gambling, I do not gamble and do not encourage others to do so.

Fr Michael

Feasts, Special Services and Events for November

Saturday November 4, St. Mark Wine and Food Tasting

Wednesday November 8, Divine Liturgy, Feast of Holy Archangels Michael & Gabriel Divine Liturgy, 10:00 a.m. (Orthros 9:00 a.m.)

Wednesday November 15, Beginning the Christmas Fast (Advent)

Tuesday November 21, Feast of Presentation of Theotokos in the Temple: Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. (Orthros at 9:00 a.m.)

On Saturday November 15th, Advent (the Christmas Fast) begins. This fast, which lasts exactly 40 days, prepares us to celebrate the Feast of the Nativity (Birth) of Jesus Christ, commonly known as Christmas. During this season we are reminded that the Christian life style must include alms giving (acts of charity), prayer and fasting. Therefore, we are asked to intensify these efforts. During Advent we should be praying more, giving more time and resources to those in need, eat less and more simply, and above all, seek to fast from sin. As usual, Wednesdays and Fridays are strict fasting days (abstention from all meat, poultry, dairy & egg products, alcohol and olive oil). Until December 20, the other days of the week we are to fast from all meat and meat products, with wine and olive oil allowed. As part of our Advent effort Orthodox Christians should also participate in the Sacrament of Confession.

December 2017 Advanced Calendar

December 3, St. Nicholas Sunday

December 4, Commemoration of St. Barbara, St. John of Damascus

December 6, Commemoration of St. Nicholas

December 17, Ladies Guild pre-Christmas Bake Sale

December 24, (Sunday) Church School Christmas Program; after Liturgy

December 25, Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, Jesus Christ

Metropolitan Joseph's Schedule

St. Elias Cathedral of Ottawa, ON
Meetings of the Archdiocesan Bishops, Board of Trustees and Governing Council of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch
December 16–18

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

November 5

SAINT JONAH, ARCHBISHOP OF NOVGOROD

Jonah was born in Novgorod and was orphaned early. A certain God-fearing widow took him and educated him. Seeing him as a child, Michael, the fool-for-Christ of Klops said to him prophetically: "Ivanushka, study diligently, for you will become archbishop in Novgorod the Great." And indeed, following the death of Archbishop Euthymius, Jonah was chosen and consecrated in his place. Jonah was devout and merciful to a rare degree for a mortal man. He built churches and monasteries and cared for his flock as a true good shepherd. He was offered the throne of Moscow as Metropolitan but declined, excusing himself because of his age. He entered into rest peacefully on November 5, 1570 A.D., and settled in the joyful heavenly habitations. One hundred years following his death there was a great fire in Novgorod. The relics of this saint did not burn in the furious flames, but on the contrary, from then on manifested healing power and emitted a wonderful fragrance.

November 14

THE HOLY APOSTLE PHILIP

Philip was born in Bethsaida beside the Sea of Galilee, as were Peter and Andrew. Instructed in Holy Scripture from his youth, Philip immediately responded to the call of the Lord Jesus and followed Him (John 1:43). After the descent of the Holy Spirit, Philip zealously preached the Gospel throughout many regions in Asia and Greece. In Greece, the Jews wanted to kill him, but the Lord saved him by His mighty miracles. Thus, a Jewish high priest that rushed at Philip to beat him was

suddenly blinded and turned completely black. Then there was a great earthquake, and the earth opened up and swallowed Philip's wicked persecutor. Many other miracles were manifested, especially the healing of the sick, by which many pagans believed in Christ. In the Phrygian town of Hierapolis, St. Philip found himself in common evangelical work with his sister Mariamna, St. John the Theologian, and the Apostle Bartholomew. In this town there was a dangerous snake that the pagans diligently fed and worshiped as a god. God's apostle killed the snake through prayer as though with a spear, but he also incurred the wrath of the unenlightened people. The wicked pagans seized Philip and crucified him upside-down on a tree, and then crucified Bartholomew as well. At that, the earth opened up and swallowed the judge and many other pagans with him. In great fear, the people rushed to rescue the crucified apostles, but only Bartholomew was still alive; Philip had already breathed his last. Bartholomew ordained Stachys as bishop for those whom he and Philip had baptized. Stachys had been blind for forty years, and Bartholomew and Philip had healed and baptized him. The relics of St. Philip were later translated to Rome. This wonderful apostle suffered in the year 86 A.D. in the time of Emperor Dometian.

November 20

THE VENERABLE GREGORY OF DECAPOLIS

Gregory was born in Isaurian Decapolis of prominent and devout parents, Sergius and Mary. After he had completed his schooling, his parents desired that he marry, but he fled to the wilderness and was tonsured a monk. He lived in various places: Byzantium, Rome and on Mount Olympus. Wherever he was, he amazed men by his asceticism and miracles. At times a heavenly light illumined him and angels of God appeared to him. He gazed upon the beauty of the angels and listened to their sweet chanting. He lived a long and God-pleasing life and died peacefully in the ninth century in Constantinople, his soul taking up its abode in the joy of his Lord.

November 30

SAINT FRUMENTIUS THE ENLIGHTENER OF ABYSSINIA

In the time of Emperor Constantine the Great, a learned man from Tyre by the name of Meropius traveled to India. He took with him two young Christians, the brothers Edesius and Frumentius. On the journey, their boat was shipwrecked in a storm off the coast of Abyssinia, and the wild Abyssinians killed everyone on the boat except these two brothers. They lived in Abyssinia for several years, and managed to enter into service in the imperial court of the Abyssinian king. Frumentius began to preach the Christian Faith, initially very cautiously, and was convinced that this land would be fruitful for such preaching. The two brothers then took ship: Edesius to Tyre, to his parents, and Frumentius to Alexandria, to Patriarch Athanasius the Great. Frumentius explained the situation in Abyssinia to the Patriarch, and sought pastors for those newly converted to the Faith. St. Athanasius consecrated Frumentius to the episcopacy. St. Frumentius returned to Abyssinia where, by his zeal and his miracles, he converted all of Abyssinia to the Christian Faith in his own lifetime. This great shepherd of the flock of Christ, the enlightener of Abyssinia, reposed peacefully in the year 370 A.D. and went to live in the Kingdom of his Lord.

Parish & Organizations News

Our 2017 Annual Parish Meeting: The 2018 Budget was passed as presented. Marwan Dabit, Melad Hanna and Richard Jirjis were elected to three year terms. Jerri Lynn Mamey was appointed for a one year term. On Monday October 9, the Parish Council met and elected officers for the 2017-18 term. They are: Council Chair Barbara Scholl, Vice-Chair Kyra Pelachik, Secretary Jerri Lynn Mamey and Treasurer Marwan Dabit. Melad Hanna and Richard Jirjis were appointed as Assistant Treasurers. The rest of the Council includes Austin Turk, Dimitri Kort, Mark Ellis and Lori Nour. We will install the new Council today at the end of Liturgy.

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

The ladies had their first meeting on October 15, 2017

Our new officers are the following:

Kristin Chala-President

Tammy Qutami-Vice President

Vera Bahbah-Recording Secretary

Afifa Artoul-Correspondence Secretary, BCA & Hanna's Gift

Gisele Awayjan-Treasurer

Lydia Wakileh-Co-Treasurer

Denise Nassif-Special Event Coordinator

Saeda Turk-Scrip Coordinator

Lillian Kassicieh-Sunshine Coordinator

Old Business:

- Hannah's Gift-On July 20th the ladies served lunch to the people at the hospital.
- Ladies visited the Jourban's due to the fire in their garage with donation and groceries.
- Friendship Tea-Thank you Denise and Don Nassif for hosting our annual tea at your lovely home which was enjoyed by our ladies. We have started the dues collection at the tea party, thank you to the ladies who did it and we hope the rest of the ladies to pay their dues at our next meeting.

- Antiochian Women Wine Tasting at St. Luke Church which some of the ladies attended, was very nice and was enjoyed by all the Ladies attended. Thank you again to Denise and Don Nassif for hosting the wine tasting table for St. Mark church.

New Business:

2018-Antiochian Women Project is Vocations. We will be raising funds for this year's project which is strengthening the vocations of not just the ordained or monastic but many people who carry out Holy work through various ministries. · One-Day Pre-Advent Retreat on Saturday, November 11th from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at the home of Rose Samore.

· Book club-Do you know that we have an Antiochian Woman's Book Club? Join us while we read "Becoming a Healing Presence" by Albert S. Rossi, PhD

.https://www.antiochianladiocese.org/aw_book_club.html

· Blog-Come and visit the new DLAW blog where you will be encouraged and strengthened in your journey of faith. There will be updates every week, Church Father quotes from our spiritual adviser, Father David Hovik, and a new article every month.

· BCA Luncheon was chaired by BCA Coordinator, Afifa Artoul and the BCA walk on Saturday, October 21st, then with a Pizza Luncheon on Sunday October 22nd

Menu for the BCA Luncheon was completed by most of the ladies with their choice of items. SEE PHOTOS ON <http://st-mark-church.org/bca-walk-photos/>

The North American Board ("NAB") gave an icon gift of St. Macrina to display at our meetings and serves as a reminder of all our loved ones battling breast cancer.

· St. Mark's Annual Wine Tasting on November 4th at 7:00 pm which will be chaired by Gisele Awayjan.

Donations of baskets for the silent auction are needed.

Denise Nassif our Special Event Coordinator will chair Mother Daughter Tea Party, Valentine Party, Pascha Breakfast and the Pre-Thanksgiving Luncheon.

Pre-Thanksgiving Luncheon on November 12th will be chaired this year by Denise Nassif our Event Coordinator and she had a Sign up board is located at the church hall with the menu for you to sign.

· Christmas Bake Sale on Sunday, December 17, 2017 will be chaired by The Christmas bake sale committee Maryse Benjamin a& Marize Eskandar. Agreed not to have a baking day by the Ladies and Mrs. Dabbah volunteered to deliver Spinach Pies.

· The ladies agreed to hire Cleaning lady to help in all of the events

Our Luncheon Committee is Gisele Awayjan, which she will be responsible for the following luncheons which are subject to change:

1. December-Parish Council workshop
Parish Council will have a workshop on Saturday, December 2nd from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm with Breakfast and lunch to be served.

2. January-Zalabieh and Lunch

3. March-Sunday Lenten Luncheon

4. Pascha Breakfast/ Gisele Awayjan with Denise Nassif.

5. Father's Day Luncheon

6. Any Potluck dinner

The ladies will meet on Thursday, November 9th at 6:30 pm-St. Mark Church

Recording Secretary Vera Bahbah & Correspondence Secretary Afifa Artoul

Teen SOYO

Teen SOYO Organization Report

October 2017

Old business:

First Official SOYO Meeting was held with new members on Sunday, Oct. 1st.

*We had a full agenda covering subjects from our Mexican Halloween Luncheon on October 29th to the Usher Lists, to future activities etc.

We held a second SOYO meeting on October the 15th to elect SOYO Officers.

CONGRATULATIONS to the following new SOYO Officers!!

2017-18 Teen SOYO Officers;

Co-Presidents: Christina Habeeb, Marianne Hanouneh

Vice-Presidents: Jillian Goson, Nadim Youseff, Youseff Youssef

Treasurer: Diana Aldada

Secretary: Amanda Khury

Public Relations: Rachel Mahshie

Historians: Yasmeeen Rizkallah, Lylac Joellson, Merolla Youseff

8th Grade Representative: Andrew Hanouneh
Rachel Ranney

7th Grade Representative: Nour Youssef, Nicholas Habeeb

We look forward to all of their valuable contributions to Teen SOYO in helping us build a stronger and more productive youth group at St. Mark's! I am confident that this bright group of officers will encourage & support wonderful memories, a strong spiritual bond, and a deeper understanding of Orthodoxy!

New Business;

*SOYO is hosting a special Halloween Mexican Fundraiser Luncheon on October 29th! Please be prepared to stay for our delicious luncheon and support our Teen SOYO! Thank you!

November 8th, directly after Sunday school, we are carpooling from church to go to Laser Quest at The Kaleidoscope in Mission Viejo! We will also eat lunch in their food court and conduct a brief meeting.

Financials:

\$733.66

*Balance does not reflect outstanding balances owed.

***Yours in Christ,
Paula Anter Rodriguez
SOYO Advisor***

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Angelina Alchammas 11/30
Emad Alchammas 11/1
George Aldada 11/1
Amber Asaly 11/7
Yorgo Awayjan 11/22
Andy Bahbah 11/14
Jake Bahbah 11/9
Tarize Bahbah 11/11
Geny Bahou 11/26
Chris Bederov 11/13
Saad Elsayegh 11/6
Spiro Fasheh 11/26
Constantine Geronikolaou 11/17
Paul Habeeb 11/28
Alexander Haftty 11/7
Melad Hanna 11/16
Richard Hanna 11/18
Anthony Hanounch 11/23

Richard Jirjis 11/11
Rania Karkar 11/28
Lana Kashou 11/7
George Kassir 11/3
Grace Khoury 11/19
Violette Khamis 11/17
Lourice Kishek 11/17
George Mokbel 11/17
Elias Nasrawi 11/26
Denise Nassif 11/13
Kristen Nassif 11/16
Leilah Rodriguez 11/17
Anthony Saadeh 11/28
Randa Salameh 11/23
Mufid Samara 11/25
Autumn Schorr 11/16
Ronda Schorr 11/5
Kendall Schorr 11/22
Theodore Skaff 11/24
Don Jr. Skaff 11/5
Sereen Soury 11/11
Patrick Wilde 11/13
Nadim Youssef 11/16

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Vladimir & Joanna Chendler 11/5
Jimmy & Carole Goson 11/28
Tony & Paula Rodriguez 11/7
Fouad & Rima Tarazi 11/3
Dave & Brenda Tax 11/14
Roger & Carol Tierney 11/12
Bob & Theodora Whitehead 11/1

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.

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
ORTHODOX CHURCH
17840 SKY PARK CIRCLE
IRVINE, CA 92614
NOVEMBER 2017
NEWSLETTER**

