

المسيح ولد ، فمجده !

THE APOSTLE

Christ is Born, Glorify Him

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2017

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH

OF IRVINE

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

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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 Rodriquez & Dana Chade

2016-2017 PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman - Barbara Scholl {18} (949) 533-4634
Vice Chairman – Kyra Pelachik {18} (714) 906-9231
Secretary – Jerri Lynn Mamey {18} (949) 831-5776
Treasurer – Marwan Dabit {20} (626)665-1096
Assistant Treasurers- Melad Hanna {20} (949) 433-1698 & **Richard Jirjis {20}** (714) 404-9002
Dimitri Kort {18} (909) 529-3671
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: Kristen Chala (909) 217-2317
Teen SOYO Co-Presidents: Christina Habeeb, Marianne Hanounch

Pastor's Column

Nativity Fast, 2017: Pastoral Letter of His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH



I behold a strange and wonderful mystery: the cave a heaven, the Virgin a cherubic throne, and the manger a noble place in which hath laid Christ the uncontained God. Let us, therefore, praise and magnify Him. †Hiermos of the 9th Ode of the First Canon of Christ's Nativity

Beloved Brother Hierarchs, Reverend Clergy, and Christ-loving Faithful of our God-protected Archdiocese,

I greet you with love and joy as we begin this season of preparation for the Nativity in the Flesh of Our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Today, the Holy Church calls us to prepare for the feast by fasting, prayer, and repentance. The surrounding culture calls us to prepare as well – but by decorating, shopping, and hosting parties. One of the most common questions our clergy receive during this time of year is: Why are we in a period of repentance when the rest of the world is celebrating?

For a response to that often asked question, let us look to our divine services. During the Nativity

Fast, the Church gives us the triumphant First Canon of Christ's Nativity to strengthen us and urge us on in our journey. In the hiermos of the ninth ode, we are struck by the contrasting images of the cave as a heaven, the Virgin as a cherubic throne, and the manger as a noble place. In the Incarnation of Our Lord, we see all of the *normal* categories of our fallen world turned upside down. His birth reveals power in humility, wealth in poverty, kingship in servitude, and divinity in lowliness.

To fully enter into the mystery of this great act of God, we also must put aside the *normal* of this world. Our society now offers us the fleeting worldly happiness that comes from overindulging at holiday parties and overspending on consumer goods. The Church now offers us the eternal heavenly joy that comes from freeing ourselves from our passions and turning our focus to the love of God and neighbor. In other words, the *normal* way of celebrating according to the world is through satiety, but the true way of celebrating according to the new creation ushered in by Christ's incarnation is through sobriety.

Beloved in Christ, let us strive during this sacred season to truly experience the *new normal* where there is actually *no contrast at all* in a cave truly becoming heaven, a Virgin truly becoming a cherubic throne, and a manger truly becoming noble. This paradoxical experience only comes through our finding joy in repenting, fulfillment in abstaining, and love for God and neighbor through self-emptying.

Praying for all of you to be granted a holy, pure, and grace-filled fast, I remain,

Your Father in Christ,

+JOSEPH

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

The Advent (the Christmas Fast) continues through December 24. 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.

The fasting rules are as follows: on all days we abstain from meat, poultry, dairy (milk, cheese etc. Fish, oil and wine may be eaten on Saturdays and Sundays (some also allow this on Tuesdays and Thursdays). The last four days of the Fast are strict fasting days (as in Great Lent). Fasting should always be combined with increased giving to the needy.

Last, but not least we should strive to fast from sin and come to Holy Confession before Christmas.

Feasts, Special Services and Events for December 2017

Sunday December 3, St. Nicholas Sunday

Monday December 4, Feast of St. Barbara and St. John of Damascus

Wednesday December 6, Feast of St. Nicholas
Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday December 1, 8 & 15, 6:30 p.m. Advent Paraklesis

Sunday December 17, Annual Women's Bake sale

Pre-Feast Vespers, December 20, 21, 22 and 23;
6:30 p.m.

Thursday December 24, 9:30 a.m. Royal Hours of the Nativity

Sunday December 24, Church School Christmas Program

Christmas Paramon (Eve) Liturgy, 10:00 a.m.
Sunday December 24

Monday December 25, Orthros (9:00 a.m.) and Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ

January 2017 Advanced Calendar

January 1 New Year's Day, St. Basil's Day
January 6 Feast of Epiphany
January 17 St. Anthony the Great
January 25 St. Gregory the Theologian
January 30 Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs

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 December 2

THE HOLY PROPHET HABAKKUK

Habakkuk was the son of Asaphat from the tribe of Simeon. He prophesied six hundred years before Christ, during the time of King Manasseh, and foretold the destruction of Jerusalem. When Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, attacked Jerusalem, Habakkuk sought refuge in the land of the Ishmaelites. From there he returned to Judea, where he lived as a farmer. One day he was carrying lunch to the workers in the fields, when suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to him and said: *Go carry the dinner that thou hast into Babylon unto Daniel, who is in the lion's den* (Daniel 14:34*). But Habakkuk responded: *Lord, I never saw Babylon; neither do I know where the den is* (Daniel 14:34-35). Then the angel took him by the hair and instantly brought him to Babylon, over an immense distance, to the lion's den, where Daniel had been cast by King Cyrus as a punishment for not worshiping the idols. *O Daniel, Daniel, cried Habakkuk, take the dinner which God hath sent thee* (Daniel 14:37), and Daniel took it and ate. Then the angel of God again took Habakkuk and carried him back to his field in Judea. Habakkuk also prophesied the liberation of Jerusalem and the time of the coming of Christ. He entered into rest in ripe old age and was buried at Kela. His relics were

discovered during the reign of Theodosius the Great.

December 14

THE HOLY MARTYRS PHILEMON, APOLLONIUS, ARIANUS AND OTHERS

During the reign of Diocletian, a certain judge Arianus cruelly persecuted the Christians of Egypt. He seized Apollonius and threatened him with tortures. Apollonius, afraid of the tortures, bribed a certain well-known pagan musician, Philemon, to offer sacrifices to the idols in his place, disguised in his clothes. When Philemon appeared before the idols, the light of the Christian Faith suddenly shone in his heart, and he made the sign of the Cross. After he came out of the temple, he began to shout: "I am a Christian! A servant of Christ the Living God!" Hearing this, the judge laughed, thinking that Philemon was mocking the Christians. Later, Philemon endured horrible tortures. Rain fell from heaven and baptized him. Finally, Philemon and Apollonius were beheaded by Arianus the judge. Then, because his blind eye was healed in a miraculous manner at Philemon's grave, Arianus himself became a Christian. Arianus was condemned to death by Emperor Diocletian and was slain with four soldiers who likewise declared themselves Christians.

December 20

THE HIEROMARTYR IGNATIUS THE GOD-BEARER

This holy man is called "the God-bearer" because he constantly bore the name of the Living God in his heart and on his lips. According to tradition, he was thus named because he was held in the arms of God Incarnate, Jesus Christ. On a day when the Lord was teaching His disciples humility, He took a child and placed him among them, saying: *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven* (Matthew 18:4). This child was Ignatius. Later, Ignatius was a disciple of St. John the Theologian, together with Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. As Bishop of Antioch, Ignatius governed the Church of God as a good shepherd and was the first to introduce antiphonal chanting in the Church, in which two choirs alternate the chanting. This manner of chanting was revealed to St. Ignatius by the angels in heaven. When Emperor Trajan was passing through Antioch on his way to do battle

with the Persians, he heard of Ignatius, summoned him and counseled him to offer sacrifice to the idols. If Ignatius would do so, Trajan would bestow upon him the rank of senator. As the counsels and threats of the emperor were in vain, St. Ignatius was shackled in irons and sent to Rome in the company of ten merciless soldiers, to be thrown to the wild beasts. Ignatius rejoiced in suffering for his Lord, only praying to God that the wild beasts would become the tomb for his body and that no one would prevent him from this death. After a long and difficult journey from Asia through Thrace, Macedonia and Epirus, Ignatius arrived in Rome, where he was thrown to the lions in the circus. The lions tore him to pieces and devoured him, leaving only several of the larger bones and his heart. This glorious lover of the Lord Christ suffered in the year 106 A.D. in Rome at the time of the Christ-hating Emperor Trajan. Ignatius has appeared many times from the other world and worked miracles, even to this day helping all who call upon him for help.

December 28

THE HOLY MARTYR DOMNA

Domna was a virgin and priestess of the foul idols at the court of Emperor Maximian. Reading the Acts of the Apostles, which she had obtained from somewhere, she came to believe in Christ and was baptized by Bishop Cyril in Nicomedia, together with the eunuch Indes. St. Cyril directed her to a convent, where Blessed Agatha was the abbess. When the emperor began to search for her, Agatha dressed her in men's clothing and sent her to a men's monastery. This was at the time when twenty thousand Christians were burned in the church by Emperor Maximian. Immediately after this, by the emperor's command, Saints Indes, Gorgonius and Peter were thrown into the sea with millstones around their necks; Commander Zeno, who had openly denounced the emperor for his idolatry, was beheaded; St. Theophilus, the deacon of Bishop Anthimus, was slain by stoning and by arrows; Abbess Agatha, the nun Theophila and the nobles Dorotheus, Mardonius, Migdonius and Euthymius were also slain for the sake of Christ. One night, Domna was walking along the seashore and saw fishermen casting their nets into the sea. At that time she was especially grieving for St. Indes. Called by the fishermen to help them, she assisted them and by God's providence drew out three human bodies in the net. Domna recognized in them

Saints Indes, Gorgonius and Peter, and she took their bodies and reverently buried them. When the emperor learned that a young man was caring for and censing the graves of the Christian martyrs, he ordered that the young man be beheaded. Thus, St. Domna was seized and beheaded, and she was crowned with the wreath of glory in the Heavenly Kingdom with the other martyrs.

Parish & Organizations News

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

The Organization had their monthly meeting on November 9, 2017.

Total present was 23

Everyone had a great fellowship and enjoyed the potluck dinner with an Educational session from Iconographer Khouria Randa Azar presentation of "The Sacred Art of the Orthodox."

The ladies were encouraged by Charmaine Darmour, Antiochian Women Diocese President of LA & the West to use the Dioceses Sunshine Ministry if any lady is in need of any prayers. awdlawsunshine@gmail.com

Beginning balance: \$12,801.38

Ending balance: \$12,502.29

Christmas Bake sale is scheduled to take place on Dec 17, 2017; we are in need of bakers to make Anise cookies, Baklava, Ghraibeh, Zaater Bread, Spinach pies, cookies, brownies or cupcakes. Please contact Maryse Benjamin or Marize Eskander to sign up for an item.

Pre-Thanksgiving Luncheon was a huge success. Many thanks to everyone who helped or donated food.

SAVE THE DATE:

Antiochian Women's Christmas Luncheon will be on January 14, 2018 which will be coordinated very soon. Please contact Kristin Chala if you have a venue idea for the Christmas luncheon.

The ladies were encouraged to Subscribe to St. Mark Web site in order for them to receive all

updates promptly. GO TO: <http://st-mark-church.org/subscribe/>

The Humanitarian Committee of the Antiochian Women of St. Mark is now active again, if you know of someone sick and in need to be visited, please let us know.

Our Next Meeting will take place on Sunday January 21, 2018, at St. Mark Church.

*Prepared by Kristin Chala
Antiochian Women of St. Mark, President*

Teen SOYO
Happy Thanksgiving

Old Business:

* We were very proud of the Teens presence and participation in ushering & reading and their follow through of the different assignments and responsibilities during Youth Month (October)! Great job Teens!

*SOYO also hosted a fun and well received Mexican Halloween Luncheon on October 29th! Even though we had plenty of delicious food, and many people had seconds our profit was minimal. Considering 90% of the luncheon was donated, we only profited \$400.00! The younger kids enjoyed the piñata, and seeing Fr. take a swing at it!

*Due to only 4 "yes" RSVP's we had to postpone the Laser Quest event on November 8th.

NOTE: It is important to make mention, that St. Mark's has a significant number of Debutantes and prospective escorts this year rather than in years passed. Although we are excited for those who are participating in the St. Nicholas Debutante Ball, it has and will impact finding open dates and attendance numbers at our various SOYO events.

New Business:

* Teen SOYO is taking Christmas card orders through Dec. 3rd. Please support Teen SOYO! We have a challenging goal to sell 200 cards this year!

* SOYO is hosting a Christmas Giving Tree for the Housing Gateway facility right here on Sky Park

Circle!! It is a nonprofit organization that assists the homeless. This is a great way to remind our Teens the real "reason for the season"!

*We are hoping to have our Christmas/New Year party on either January 4th, 5th, or 7th. Final date will be determined soon.

*Yours in Christ,
Paula Anter Rodriguez
SOYO Advisor*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Christina Aldada 12/1
Ramzi Ammari 12/10
Khalid Ammari 12/6
Naheda Artoul 12/16
Christopher Azzam 12/22
Vera Bahbah 12/19
Daniel Chami 12/29
Darlyne Dibs 12/16
Jerald Donovan 12/5
Charlotte El-Hinn 12/31
Salim Elsayegh 12/21
Mary Fasheh 12/18
Efstathios Geronikolaou 12/15
Adele Habeeb 12/21
Haitham Hanna 12/6
John Jirjis 12/19
Michel Joubran 12/5
John Karam 12/29
Patricia Khamis 12/8
Hilda Khamis 12/6
Antoun Khoury 12/27
George Khoury 12/15
Fayez Khoury 12/18
Melody Khoury 12/16
William Khury 12/15
Mark Kishek 12/22
Susan Mitri 12/27
Claude Mokbel 12/28
Marina Najjar 12/12
Jamil Nassar 12/25
Lana Nino 12/10
Jacob Qushair 12/29
Nour Salameh 12/21
Manuel Salameh 12/25
Elias Sliheet 12/31

Shouki Souri 12/27
Majida Souri 12/11
Christiana Tarazi 12/26
Charlie Wakileh 12/17
Ed Wong 12/31
Michael Yaghnam 12/26

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Ghassan & Gisele Awayjan 12/16
Joseph & Salwa Bahbah 12/27

*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 WOMEN
ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BAKE SALE
SUNDAY DECEMBER 17TH, 2017

Anise cookies (Macaroon) \$8.00/Dozen
Baklava \$10.00/Dozen
Ghraibeh (Sugar cookies) \$ 7.00 /Dozen
Maneish (Zaater bread) \$7.00/Dozen
Spinach pies \$ 10.00/ 10 pieces

Let Us Bake For You

Please Return Your Order Form to the Church Office
By person or by Mail
17840 Sky Park Circle, Irvine, CA 92614
By December 10, 2017

Anise Cookies _____ \$ _____
Baklava _____ \$ _____
Ghraibeh _____ \$ _____
Maneish (Zaater Bread) _____ \$ _____
Spinach pies _____ \$ _____
TOTAL \$ _____

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____

Please make your check payable to Saint Mark Antiochian Women
Check must accompany the order

Orders ready for pick up on Christmas Bake Sale December 17, 2017

Questions? Please call Maryse Benjamin (714)721-7031 and Marize Nadim
(949)600-0145



The Men's Club of St. Mark Orthodox Church in Irvine
invites you to their New Year's Eve Party

*Celebrate the launch of 2018. Toast the New Year in style and enjoy
an unforgettable evening of great food, drinks, entertainment and
fellowship.*

Sunday, December 31st 2017 at 8:00 PM
St. Mark Church Hall
17840 Sky Park Circle, Irvine CA 92614

Enjoy an Evening of Middle Eastern Food, Mezza and Dinner.
Water, Soft Drinks and Champagne will be provided.

Feel free to bring your own beverage.
Dance to the Fabulous DJ Music.
Raffle on Valuable Prizes



Tickets are \$60 Per Seated Adult
\$40 per Seated child 12 years and under
(Seating is limited to 200 people)



Reservations start on Sunday, November 26

For Reservation Contact: Nader Qobori at: 714-813-8884 Elyas Khary at: 714-493-4831

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