

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2018

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH

OF IRVINE

HAPPY NEW YEAR

A Parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America
Metropolitan JOSEPH, Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of all North America
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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 Rodriquez & Dana Chade

2017-2018 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

Why Do We Have Our Homes Blessed?
By Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div.

Begin Everything with Prayer

Since we are reminded in Scripture to begin whatever we do with prayer, it has been the practice of Orthodox Christians for centuries to have new dwellings blessed either before or just after settling in. This has been extended to one's business or office, and even college dorm rooms.

Back to "The Fall"

From Scripture we know that whatever God created was good, but with "the Fall", evil entered the world, corrupting the creation. God the Father sent His Son Jesus to save it by effecting a "new creation". This is celebrated at Theophany, specifically with the Great Blessing of Water. "The consecration of the waters on this feast places the entire world - through its 'prime element' of water - in the perspective of the cosmic creation, sanctification, and glorification of the Kingdom of God in Christ and the Spirit." (The Orthodox Faith, Vol. II, Worship, by Fr. Thomas Hopko, p.127.) All the readings, hymns, prayers, and actions of the day speak of God's presence in our entire world and universe, His creation.

Through water all of the creation is once again sanctified by God, becoming good again, the way God had intended.

The Feast Of Theophany

The Feast of Theophany (or Epiphany) commemorates the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. We know from the troparion of the day that "the Trinity was made

manifest" to us. But there's more to it than this. "When Jesus descends into the depths of the river, there occurs a profound upheaval. It is not the one baptized who is purified, for he is spotless; but it is the water that is transfigured and illumined. ... By purifying the elements, by sanctifying matter, Jesus frees the cosmos from the powers of evil." (The Incarnate God, Vol. I, Catherine Aslanoff, French edition editor, translated by Paul Meyendorff, p.163.)

The Great Blessing of Water and the Home

The Great Blessing of Water takes place at the end of that day's Liturgy. Since our homes cannot be brought to the Church, the Church - through the priest and cantor - go to the homes. There the service of blessing, which began in the church, is finished with the sprinkling of water in the home. Traditionally, in most Orthodox parishes, the priest personally visits all his parishioners each year to pray with them in the place where they live, and to bless their surroundings with the newly sanctified water of Theophany... By sanctifying our living quarters, our private place, we extend the grace of God to our individual dwellings.

We also bring the blessed water to our homes to use throughout the year to bless our homes and to drink whether we are ill or as part of our daily prayer life.

Weaving Christ into Our Lives

The blessing of homes by these holy waters maintains the spiritual association between the 'family church' and the parish, as well as again providing for the sharing of God's spiritual gifts. ... This annual blessing is not as elaborate as the blessing of the new dwelling, but because of this it should not be overlooked, for it is in this way that the grace of God is extended to individual dwellings." (Marriage and the Christian Home, p.25.)

If the priest comes to bless the home when the children are present, they have the opportunity to see the parish priest in a different and personal situation. If the priest permits, they can lead the way through the house, or hold a candle. They can show him their rooms or pets or favorite toys. They receive a blessing with water. For children, the

house blessing shows the connection of the Church to the home.

In Summary

What does it mean to ask God to bless something? All things in the world have been spoiled right along with us. God must bless His world again in order for it to be the way that He wants it to be. For this reason God sent His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit to the world: to bless everyone and everything that He made, to make all things good again. When the priest comes to bless our homes, he asks God to have mercy on the house, to rid it of every evil and to fill it with every blessing. What a wonderful way to begin the New Year!

(Abbreviated from an article found at <http://www.antiochian.org/why-do-we-have-our-homes-blessed>)

Please call the Church Office after January 1 to schedule your home and/or business for Blessing with the Theophany Water.

Feasts, Special Services and Events for January 2018

Monday January 1, Feast of our Lord's Circumcision and St. Basil's Day (Civil New Year)
Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m., Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Saturday, January 6 – Divine Liturgy, Feast Theophany and Great Blessing of Waters 10:00 a.m.
(Orthros 8:45 a. m.)

January 28, Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee

Tuesday January 29 – Evening Liturgy 6:30 p.m.,
Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs (Orthros 5:30 p.m.)

Advance Calendar for February 2018

February 2, Feast of Meeting of the Lord in the Temple

February 4, Men's Club Super Bowl Party

February 10, Valentine's Day Dinner

February 19, First Day Great Lent: Clean Monday

February 24, 1st & 2nd Discovery of the Head of St. John the Baptist

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

January 7

SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

Because John's main role in his life was played out on the day of the Theophany (Epiphany), the Church has from earliest times dedicated the day following Theophany to his memory. An incident with the hand of the Forerunner is also linked to this feast. The Evangelist Luke desired to remove the body of John from Sebaste, where the great prophet was beheaded by Herod, to Antioch, his place of birth. He succeeded, though, in acquiring and translating only one hand, which was preserved in Antioch until the tenth century. After this it was transferred to Constantinople, where it disappeared during the time of the Turks.

Feasts of St. John are celebrated several times throughout the year, but this day, January 7, has the most *Svečara*. [That is, those Orthodox Serbs who honor St. John the Baptist as their *Krsna Slava* - Patron Saint. The *Krsna Slava* is the day that the Orthodox Serbs commemorate the baptism of their ancestors into Christianity].

Among the Gospel personalities who surround the Savior, John the Baptist occupies a totally unique place by the manner of his entry into the world, and by the manner of his life in this world; by his role in baptizing people for repentance; by his baptizing the Messiah; and, finally, by his tragic departure from this life. He was of such moral purity that, in truth, he could be called an angel--as Holy Scripture calls him--rather than a mortal man. St. John especially differs from all other prophets in that he had that privilege of being able, with his hand, to show the world Him about Whom he prophesied.

It is said that every year on the feast of the saint, the bishop brought the hand of St. John before the

people. Sometimes the hand appeared open and other times the hand appeared clenched. In the first case it signified a fruitful and bountiful year, and in the second case it meant a year of unfruitfulness and famine.

January 14

SAINT NINA, ENLIGHTENER OF GEORGIA

Nina was a relative of St. George the Great-martyr and Juvenal the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Her parents belonged to the nobility in Cappadocia, and--since her parents were tonsured in the monastic state--Nina was educated under the tutelage of Patriarch Juvenal. Hearing about the people of Georgia, the virgin Nina, from an early age, desired to go to Georgia and to baptize the Georgians. The Most-holy Mother of God appeared to Nina and promised to take her to this land. When our Lord opened the way, the young Nina indeed traveled to Georgia, where, in a short period of time, she gained the love of the Georgian people. Nina succeeded in baptizing the Georgian King Mirian, his wife Nana and their son Bakar who, later on, zealously assisted Nina's missionary work. During her lifetime, Nina traveled throughout Georgia, converting the entire nation to the Christian Faith. She did her work at the time of the terrible persecution of Christians at the hands of Emperor Diocletian. Having rested from her many labors, Nina reposed in the Lord in the year 335 A.D. Her body is entombed in the Church of the Holy Great-martyr George in Bodbe Convent. She worked many miracles during her life and after her death.

January 21

THE VENERABLE MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

Maximus was a Constantinopolitan by birth. At first he was a high-ranking courtier at the court of Emperor Heraclius, and after that he was a monk and abbot of a monastery not too far from the capital. He was the greatest defender of Orthodoxy against the so-called Monothelite heresy, which proceeded from the heresy of Eutyches. As Eutyches claimed that there is only one nature in Christ [Monophysitism], so the Monothelites claimed that there is only one will in Christ [Monothelitism]. Maximus opposed that claim and found himself an opponent of the emperor and the patriarch. Maximus did not frighten easily, but endured to the end in proving

that there were two wills, as well as two natures, in Christ. Because of his efforts, a council was held in Carthage, and another in Rome. Both councils anathematized the teachings of the Monothelites. The suffering of Maximus for Orthodoxy can hardly be described: he was tortured by princes, deceived by prelates, spat upon by the masses of the people, beaten by soldiers, exiled and imprisoned--until finally, with his tongue and one hand severed by the torturers, he was condemned to exile for life in the land of Skhimaris [near Batumi on the Black Sea], where he spent three years in prison and gave up his soul to God in the year 662 A.D.

January 30

THE THREE HIERARCHS: SAINT BASIL THE GREAT, SAINT GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, AND SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Each of these saints has his own feast day: St. Basil the Great, January 1; St. Gregory the Theologian, January 25; and St. John Chrysostom, January 27. This combined feast day, January 30, was instituted in the eleventh century during the reign of Emperor Alexius Comnenus. Once, a debate arose among the people concerning who among the three was the greatest. Some extolled Basil because of his purity and courage; others extolled Gregory for his unequalled depth and lofty mind in theology; still others extolled Chrysostom because of his eloquence and clarity in expounding the Faith. Thus some were called Basilians, others Gregorians, and the third were called Johannites. This debate was settled by divine providence, to the benefit of the Church and to the even greater glory of the three saints. Bishop John of Euchaita (June 14) had a vision in a dream: At first all three of these saints appeared to him separately in great glory and indescribable beauty, and after that, all three appeared together. They said to him: "As you see, we are one in God and there is nothing contradictory in us; neither is there a first or a second among us." The saints also advised Bishop John to write a common service for them and to order a common feast day of celebration. Following this wonderful vision, the debate was settled in this manner: January 30 would be designated as the common feast of these three hierarchs. The Greeks consider this feast not only an ecclesiastical feast, but also their greatest national school holiday

Parish & Organizations News

Fallen Asleep in the Lord

On November 15, Loris Nicola Elqura the mother of Jeries & Mariam Elqura. Her Funeral was held on November 21, at St Mark and the burial at El Toro Memorial Park in Lake Forest. May her Memory be Eternal!

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

The Antiochian Women of St. Mark Church had our annual Christmas Bake Sale. I just wanted to thank everyone for your support with bringing delicious baked goods, donations and purchasing all our traditional Arabic and Christmas treats. The spinach pies sold out in 10 minutes.

I would personally like to thank our Christmas Bake Sale coordinators Maryse Benjamin and Marize Nadim. In addition, I would like to thank Don Nassif for arranging and picking up the spinach pies for us this morning. Thank you to Maryse Benjamin, Tammy Qutami, Gisele Awayjan, Afifa Artoul, Kh. Donna, Kh. Nina, Denise Nassif, Kristen Nassif and Lori Nour.

SAVE THE DATE:

Zalabieh Coffee Hour on January 7, 2018. Ladies Christmas Luncheon will be on January 14, 2018 at Hanna's Restaurant in Rancho Santa Margarita.

Our next Antiochian Women Meeting is scheduled for January 21, 2018 at St. Mark Church.

Upcoming one-day retreat at St. Barnabas on January 27, 2018: "Restoring the Image: Women, Beauty, and the Church" with speaker, Kh. Krista West.

Prepared by Kristin Chala

Antiochian Women of St. Mark, President

Teen SOYO

St. Mark's Teens were very active in December.

They organized the annual Parish Christmas Card (Thank you to all the sponsors!) and they collected over \$700 in donations to make Christmas a special day for needy families through the local charity, Gateway to Housing.

They are planning to go ice skating at Ice Palace and out to dinner at Chili's for a gift exchange in

Laguna Niguel for our Christmas/New Year's party on Sunday January 7th, after church. More details to follow.

We are looking forward to a productive and fun year!

Thank you to everyone for their support and wishing you all the blessings in the New Year!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Hadel Artoul 1/19
Samira Attalla 1/1
Samir Azzam 1/13
Issa Bahbah 1/3
Andrew Bahbah 1/4
Noah Billeh 1/28
Vicky Billeh 1/30
Sonia Daher 1/4
Michael Debbas 1/22
Matthew Dabbah 1/5
Goldie Daruty 1/10
Elsa Frech 1/28
Michael Hanna 1/29
Louisa Kashou 1/22
Lana Kashou 1/7
Lilian Kassicieh 1/29
Helen Kassir 1/6
Isa Khamis 1/11
Andrew Khamis 1/8
Anton Kishek 1/15
Dimitri Kort 1/9
Olga Manneh 1/28
Protodeacon George Moubayed 1/7
Sam Munayyer 1/10
Susan Qaqundah 1/7
Jordan Qutami 1/24
Emad Riskallah 1/25
Ryan Rodriguez 1/17
Andrew Rodriguez 1/24
Farah Saba 1/15
Michael Sakhel 1/30
Georgette Salameh 1/31
Steve Scholl 1/6
Anton Turk 1/24
Keitie Turk 1/9
Ibrahim Wakileh 1/6
Susan Wilde 1/19
Youssef Youssef 1/19

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Wael & Louisa Kashou 1/6

Matthew & Sophia Whitacre 1/11

*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)***

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IRVINE, CA 92614
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