

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2018

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF IRVINE

A Parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America
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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 Rodriguez & 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-
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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

St. Andrew of Crete: A Rival Voice

By Fr. Lawrence Farley, pastor of St. Herman of
Alaska Church, Surrey, B.C.

Every year during Lent, we invite into our churches
a great pastor, Saint Andrew of Crete, and listen
while he leads us in a meditation on sin and
repentance. That is, we listen while his Great
Canon is chanted, and in response we reply over and
over again, "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy
on me!" Some things in this long poetic work
might strike some moderns as a bit jarring, if not
downright pathological — all this self-flagellation
over our sins, this torrent of anguish and self-
abhorrence. Is all this really necessary? Is it even
healthy?

A quick and superficial perusal of the text might
leave us wondering. "There has never been a sin or
act or vice in life that I have not committed, O
Savior. I have sinned in mind, word, and choice, in
purpose, will and action, as no one else has ever
done.... I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned
against Thee. Be merciful to me. For there is no
one who has sinned among men whom I have not
surpassed by my sins.... From my youth, O Christ,
I have rejected Thy commandments. I have passed
my whole life without caring or thinking, a slave of
my passions. Therefore, O Savior, I cry to Thee: at
least in the end save me!" Isn't all this self-
condemnation a bit much? And how accurate is it?
Are all those people standing about in church for
hours on end in Lent really as bad as all that?
Such questions miss the point of the Great Canon.
The long meditation from the pen of Saint Andrew
is not offered as an individual's personal confession
of sin. It is not intended to be the sort of thing one
shares with a psychiatrist while lying on his couch,
or with one's confessor while standing before the

Cross. It is not intended as autobiography, but as medicine. Like some medicines, it might seem a little severe, and even taste bitter. But it is exactly the medicine that we need, however it might taste. The disease the medicine is intended to cure is the one now afflicting large segments of our modern secular population — that of careless and serene self-righteousness. We far too easily fall into the assumption that we are pretty sensational spiritually, and that we have racked up an impressive score. We soon enough become blind to our true spiritual state. We can see others' sins clearly enough, especially when they sin against us, but our own failings often seem to elude us.

I remember this kind of delusional approach being expressed on the radio one afternoon. A lady was being interviewed about her life and her life choices, and she said that she really couldn't bring herself to regret anything she had ever done, because all her actions combined to make her the person she was today. Quite the confession! Really—she couldn't bring herself to regret *anything? Ever in all her life?* Speaking personally, I can find plenty of things I regret doing, saying, and thinking in the last twenty-four hours, never mind all my life. The interviewed lady seems to reflect a culture in the last stages of the "I'm Okay; You're Okay" disease. We are just fine spiritually, and we can't bring ourselves to regret anything we have done.

Into this den of insanity comes Saint Andrew of Crete, bearing just the right medicine. We need to hear him, to listen to our conscience afresh, and to submissively receive inner rebuke. Something inside of us is indeed broken and dark, diseased and dying. By confessing the brokenness, by admitting to the darkness, we can begin to separate ourselves from them, and to find healing and soundness of mind and peace. The World with its lies shouts at us every day, all day long, without ceasing. We need a rival voice, the voice of sanity, a voice calling us home. We need Saint Andrew and his Great Canon. Maybe that is why he is so welcome in our churches every Lent.

[The Canon of St. Andrew is heard at Great Compline services in the first week of Lent and again during the 5th week. The text of the Canon may be found here:

<http://www.orthodoxchristian.info/pages/canon.htm>]

Fr. Michael

THE LENTEN FAST (Lent began on February 19)

During Great Lent, the rules of the dietary fast are thus: All of Lent and Holy Week we are to abstain from all meat and animal products (including eggs, milk, animal fats, etc.) The only exceptions are shellfish. In addition, Mondays through Fridays, we are to abstain from wine and other alcoholic drinks and olive oil. This is the "letter of the law." It is important for you and your family to participate in the "spirit of the law", working out this Lenten effort within your household in ways pleasing to God and beneficial for the soul. We all must be reminded that the purpose of the dietary fast is to help us to fast from sin and ungodliness! If you have questions regarding Lenten discipline, please see Fr. Michael.

SPECIAL SERVICES/EVENTS IN MARCH

Lenten Week Day Service Schedule

Mondays Great Compline 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday Liturgy of Pre-Sanctified Gifts, 6:30 p.m.

Friday Little Compline with Akathist Hymn, 7:00 p.m.

Sunday March 25, Divine Liturgy, Feast of the Annunciation 10:00 a.m.

Saturday March 31, Divine Liturgy, Lazarus Saturday 10:00 a.m.

April 2018 Advanced Calendar

April 1, Palm Sunday

April 2-7, Holy Week

April 8, GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

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

March 5

THE HOLY MARTYR CONON OF ISAURIA

He was brought up in the Christian Faith and baptized in the name of the All-holy and Life-giving

Trinity by the Archangel Michael himself. Until his death, the archangel of God invisibly watched over him. Conon was illumined and empowered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that his heart was driven not by anything worldly but only by the spiritual and heavenly. When his parents forced him into marriage, the first evening he took a candle and placed it under a vessel and asked his bride: "Which is better, light or darkness?" She replied: "Light." He then began to talk to her about the Faith of Christ, and about the spiritual life as being far superior and more desirable than the physical. In this he succeeded. Afterward Conon converted his wife and her parents to the Christian Faith. Conon and his wife lived as brother and sister. Shortly thereafter, his wife and parents died, and he withdrew completely from this worldly life and devoted himself totally to prayer, fasting and divine contemplation. He performed great miracles, through which he converted many to Christianity. Among other examples, Conon compelled evil spirits to serve him. During a time of persecution he was captured, tortured and pierced throughout with knives. The sick anointed themselves with his blood, and they were healed. Afterward he lived for two additional years in his town of Isauria, and then presented himself to the Lord. This glorious saint lived and was martyred in the second century

March 15

THE HOLY MARTYR NICANDER THE EGYPTIAN

Nicander was skinned and then beheaded for his faith in Christ. His crime was that, as a physician, he ministered to Christian martyrs and honorably buried their martyred bodies. He suffered honorably in the year 302 A.D.

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE HOLY MARTYRS AGAPIUS, ALEXANDER, NICANDER AND THOSE WITH THEM

From every state the Lord chooses His army:
Everyone in whom the flame of love and faith
burns;

From among physicians, sages, peasants and
laborers,

From among emperors and fishermen--an army of
martyrs!

The sword beheaded, the Lord received the
wise Alexander;

The sword beheaded, the Lord took the
merciful Nicander;

The sword beheaded eight beautiful, young apples;
Beneath the sword, the All-sustaining Hand
received them.

Those whom the world scoops up and discards from
its sheepfold

The Lord with His tender hand gathers as the most
beautiful blossoms.

Shoveled aside as a weed, the first citizen Agapius
Was received by the Lord as His son.

Ten martyrs, glorious men,

Now sing in eternity in the angelic choir.

Not all deaths are the same; all die, but for what?

Some of the dead are blessed and others cursed.

Who dies for Christ's sake--with him is a blessing;

Who dies persecuting Christ--with him is a curse.

March 21

SAINT JAMES, BISHOP AND CONFESSOR

Neither the place of his birth nor the place where James served as bishop are known. Only this is known: he fulfilled the law of Christ and spent much time laboring ascetically in strict fasting and prayer. During the reign of Copronymos, James endured great hardships and suffering, such as hunger, imprisonment and ridicule of all sorts at the hands of the iconoclasts. Finally, he gave up his soul to God, Whom he had faithfully served in this life. He lived and suffered in the eighth century.

March 26

THE HOLY ARCHANGEL GABRIEL

Gabriel is the herald of the Incarnation of the Son of God. He is one of the seven archangels who stand before the throne of God. He appeared to Zacharias to announce the birth of the Forerunner. Gabriel said of himself: *I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God* (Luke 1:19). His name Gabriel means "man-God." The Holy Fathers, in speaking about the Annunciation, comment that an archangel with such a name was sent to signify Who He was, and what He would be like, Who would be born of the All-pure One. He would be the God-man, the mighty and powerful God. Some of the Fathers understood that this same Gabriel appeared to Joachim and Anna concerning the birth of the Virgin Mary, and that Gabriel instructed Moses in the wilderness to write the Book of Genesis. The Holy Fathers say that Gabriel belongs to the first and greatest order of heavenly powers, that is, the

Seraphim, since the Seraphim stand closest to God. He is, therefore, one of the seven Seraphim closest to God. The names of the seven are Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Salathiel, Jegudiel, and Barachiel. To this number some add Jeremiel. Each one has his own particular service and all are equal in honor. Why did God not send Michael? Because Michael's service is to suppress the enemies of the Faith of God, while Gabriel's is the mission of announcing the salvation of mankind.

Parish & Organizations News

Baptized into Christ

On 2/10 Mark Ghassan Mikhail son of Ghassan & Sara. His godparents were Fouad Mikhail & Abla Moubayed.

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

The Antiochian Women of St. Mark had their Meeting Sunday, February 18, 2018

Opening Prayers: Prayer was lead by Kh. Donna Laffoon. There were 15 ladies in attendance including Father Michael.

Treasurer Report by Gisele Awayjan, Gave an overview of our current expenditures.

Scrip Report by Saeda Turk was not available for the meeting.

Sun Shine Report by Lillian Kassicieh, Sent Get well, Sympathy and New Baby cards

Humanitarian Report by Afifa Artoul, The Humanitarian Committee visited different ladies in need of support during the month.

Old Business:

On February 10, 2018 was our annual Valentine Party at St. Mark Church. Thank you to Denise Nassif and her committee for organizing another beautiful event. Thank you for all the donors of our Silent Auction items.

New Business: March is Antiochian Women month so please volunteer to read the Epistle and to serve as an Usher. Sign-up sheet will be emailed to all the ladies.

Antiochian Women will be providing spinach pies each Sunday during Lent.

On Sunday, March 25 will be our Lenten Luncheon for Annunciation so we will have the main dish catered (fish). The signup sheet will be emailed to all the ladies for side dishes, drinks and desserts.

In addition, Antiochian Women will have a Falafel Luncheon on Sunday, March 11, 2018. The signup sheet will also be emailed to all the ladies.

All proceeds will go toward Antiochian Women project "Vocations".

Antiochian Woman's 39th Lenten retreat of the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West at St Nicholas Camp Frazier Park starts from 3/16/2018 - 3/18/2018. More information to follow in the weekly bulletin.

Here is the link to the online registration for the retreat: AW Retreat, Online Registration

SAVE THE DATE:

Palm Sunday Bake Sale will be on April 1, 2018.

Pascha Breakfast will be on April 7, 2018.

Our annual Mother/Daughter Tea at Tiffany's is scheduled for Sunday, May 20th.

Closing Prayer: Father Michael Laffoon

Next Meeting: Sunday March 18, 2018 after church

Prepared by Kristin Chala, President

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

Teen SOYO

Old Business:

We had a blast on Friday, February 9th at Laser Quest in Mission Viejo!!

We had a huge turn out of 37 kids if you include Umo Tony as one of the kids main target!! We had kids from St. Luke's, St. Simeon's, & St. Michael's playing Laser Tag & building stronger bonds, making lots of fun memories!!!

*SPECIAL THANKS to the Tarazi family for generously donating all the pizza for the event & saving the kids the money it was going to cost for them to buy dinner.

*St. Nicholas Winter Camp Retreat was last weekend Feb. 16th-19th. Several of our teens attended and seemed to find it spiritually enriching & a lot of fun especially since it snowed!

*Paul Rodriguez-Anter, President and Grace Bahbah, Secretary for DLAW attended the Mid-Winters Conference at the Antiochian Village in Pennsylvania the same weekend of Feb. 16th-19th. Paul is also the NAC Vice President and had to be the "acting" President for the meetings. By all accounts Paul did a very good job of running all of the meetings. They had a productive and successful time and also found time to go sledding in Pennsylvania snow!

New Business:

Next SOYO meeting, Sunday Feb. 25

directly after Sunday school in the Teen room.

Friday, March 2nd, we are going to have an "Ask Abouna" with St. Luke's Teens at St. Mark's church. We will attend The Akathist Vespers service at 6:30, followed by a Lenten Potluck and then have the Teens ask anonymous questions of challenging issues they are facing in their day to day lives or questions they have about their faith. We hope all our Teens will be able to attend as this is a very good opportunity for our youth to bond with their Priest and share common issues that they may all be facing, & get answers to pressing questions in a non threatening environment.

*Please note April 6th is Good Friday. We would like all parents of Teens to mark your calendars from now to have their Teens participate in the "All Night Vigil". This is a tradition we have had for years and is usually everyone's favorite event of the year! We attend Good Friday services, have some snacks, and read psalms from the Bible and watch over the Tomb of Jesus all night taking turns. Kids bring sleeping bags & sleep in the Sanctuary. Please encourage your kids to attend this spiritually fulfilling event & put it in your calendars now.

*Yours in Christ,
Paula Rodriguez
Teen SOYO Advisor*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Sleiman Aldada 3/11
Diana Aldada 3/4
Joseph Attalla 3/27
Sarah Asaly 3/10
Gisele Awayjan 3/24
Anahid Azzouni 3/19
Jacob Bahbah 3/1
Nicholas Bahou 5/26
Wally Batarseh 3/12
Lucy Billeh 3/20
Samir Billeh 3/3
Nuha Daher 3/23
Mark El-Hinn 3/30
Dina Elsayegh 3/30
Nicole Fakhouri 3/1
Katrina Fakhouri 3/26

Carole Jo Goson 3/29
Wetcka Haffty 3/19
Sameer Hanna 3/17
Amanda Hanna 3/25
Fr. Patrick Irish 3/12
Maurice Karkar 3/25
Mitri Khamis 3/6
Tanya Khamis 3/4
Samir Khamis 3/20
Amanda Khoury 3/5
Melissa Khoury 3/19
Najat Khury 3/20
Elena Khury 3/29
Jerri Mamey 3/26
Nabil Mansour 3/24
Linda Mokbel 3/31
Liana Munayyer 3/3
Walid Najjar 3/11
Elizabeth Nassar 3/2
Krya Pelachik 3/2
Daniel Rizkallah 3/16
Deena Salameh 3/23
Ramsey Samara 3/18
Jamal Sayegh 3/3
Samira Skaff 3/29
Juliana Tannous (Turk) 3/4
Richard Tierney 3/2
Martha Toubbeh 3/30
Isabella Turk 3/10
Osama Turk 3/12
Michael Wakileh 3/23
Lydia Wakileh 3/25
Matthew Whitacre 3/19

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Samir & Maysa Azzam 3/4
Carlos & Rhonda Rodriguez 3/1
George & Martha Toubbeh 3/28

*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.***

**ST MARK ANTIOCHIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH
17840 SKY PARK CIRCLE
IRVINE, CA 92614
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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)