

المسيح قام! حقاً قام!

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

April 2015

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF IRVINE

Christ is Risen, Truly He is risen!

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

2014-2015 PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman - Nelson Mamey {15} (949) 673-7400

Vice Chairman - Randy Dabbah {17} (949) 293-7732

Secretary - Mark Ellis {15} (949) 458-1604

Treasurer - Fouad Tarazi {16} (949) 276-2923

Assistant Treasurer-Richard Jirjis {16} (949) 552-7424

Ghassan Awayjan {17} (951) 454-5429

Afifa Artoul {16} (949) 215-2305

Issa Bahbah {15} (714) 685-8841

Joe Daruty {17} (949) 612-7939

Penny Skaff {15} (949)713-7411

[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 President: Austin Turk (949) 581-2060

Ladies Guild President: Julie Bahbah (714) 335-9166

Teen SOYO President: Grace Bahbah (714) 401-2094

Pastor's Column

On April 12, we will again proclaim the Paschal greeting: Christ is Risen! The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the cornerstone of our Christian Faith. If there is no resurrection, then there is no basis for the Faith. We say that Christ has "trampled down death by death," yet we are all too aware that there continues to be sin, tragedy, injustice, hypocrisy, betrayal and illness, war, murder and the like. How, then, is death overcome in the Resurrection? In this way: death is no longer the end of our hopes and aspirations, rather it is a passage (albeit a difficult one) to life in the Kingdom of Heaven. The Scriptures tell us that Jesus, being both God and man, broke down the dividing wall between humanity and God, making it possible for us to once again have communion with God, as did Adam and Eve before the Fall. This communion is made possible by our Lord's Pascha, that is to say by His Death on the Cross, and third day Resurrection.

The fact that the Crucifixion is inseparable from the Resurrection is most important. When Jesus comes again in glory, the end of earthly suffering and death will come, but in the meantime, Christ tells us that in order to be his disciples; we also must carry a cross. This means that we must expect to have to live with the consequences of sin (ours and others') and of the brokenness of this fallen world, just as Christ did, and to join our sufferings with His in order to share in his glory!

Along the way God does not leave us "on our own," but grants us strength and comfort to continue on the way. Indeed, in his merciful love, he grants us participation in the Kingdom to come even in this

life (Holy Communion is the best, but not the only example of this).

So my dear ones, let us not be overwhelmed by the news of evil which we see and hear all the time. As have Christian believers throughout the centuries, let us remain people of hope. As such we must work for more justice, more peace, more good in the world, anticipating the day when Christ returns and "God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." (Rev. 21:3, 4)

In this hope, in this the light that shines from the Empty Tomb, let us rejoice!

Truly He is Risen!

Fr. Michael

THE LENTEN FAST

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 APRIL 2015

Last days of Lenten weekly services

Wednesday April 1: Liturgy of Pre sanctified Gifts, 6:30 p.m.

Thursday April 2: 9:00 a.m. Lenten First Hour

Friday April 3: Little Compline with Canon of St. Lazarus 7:00 p.m.

Saturday April 4: Divine Liturgy, Lazarus Saturday 10:00 a.m.

Palm Sunday and Holy Week

Sunday April 5, Entrance of our Lord and Savior into Jerusalem {Palm Sunday} 8:45 a.m. Orthros, 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy

Sunday evening, 7:00 p.m. Bridegroom Orthros

Monday April 6, 7:00 p.m. Bridegroom Orthros

Tuesday April 7, 7:00 p.m. Bridegroom Orthros

Wednesday April 8, 7:00 p.m. Holy Unction Service

Thursday Morning April 9, Orthros 9:00 a.m., Holy Thursday Vespers Divine Liturgy, 10:00 a.m.

Thursday Evening April 10: Service of the Twelve Passion Gospels, 7:00 p.m.

Friday Morning April 10: Royal Hours, 9:30 a.m.

Friday Afternoon April 10: Vespers of the Taking Down of our Lord's Body from the Cross, 3:30 p.m.

Friday Evening April 10: Service of Lamentations 7:00 p.m.

Saturday morning April 11 Holy Saturday Vespers Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Saturday night April 11/12: PASCHA Rush, Procession, Orthros and Divine Liturgy 11:00 p.m. Pascha Breakfast following.

April 19, Thomas Sunday

May 2015 Advanced Calendar

May 10, Mother's Day

May 17, Ladies Guild Mother/Daughter Tea

May 21, Ascension of our Lord

May 31, Pentecost Sunday

WEEKLY SERVICES

Wednesday Vespers 6:30 p.m.

Saturday Vespers 4:00 p.m. Confessions heard after service.

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

April 1st

SAINT MARY THE EGYPTIAN

The biography of this wonderful saint was written by St. Sophronius, the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Once, during the Honorable Fast [Lenten Season], a certain priest-monk (Heiromonk), the Elder Zosimus, withdrew into the wilderness beyond the Jordan, a twenty-day trek. Suddenly, he caught sight of a human being with a withered and naked body whose hair was as white as snow and who began to flee from the sight of Zosimus. The elder ran for a long while until this person crouched down in a brook and cried out: "Abba Zosimus forgive me for the sake of the Lord. I cannot face you for I am a naked woman." Zosimus then tossed his outer garment to her which she wrapped around herself and then showed herself to him. The elder was frightened upon hearing his name spoken from the mouth of this woman he did not know. Following his prolonged insistence, the woman related her life story. She was born in Egypt and at the age of twelve began to live a life of debauchery in Alexandria where she spent seventeen years in this perverted way of life. Driven by the adulterous flame of the flesh, one day she boarded a boat which was sailing for Jerusalem. Arriving at the Holy City, she wanted to enter the church in order to venerate the Honorable Cross but some invisible force restrained her and prevented her from entering the church. In great fear, she gazed upon the icon of the All-Holy Mother of God in the vestibule and prayed that she be allowed to enter the church to venerate the Honorable Cross, all the while confessing her sinfulness and uncleanness and promising that she would go wherever the All-Pure One would direct her. She was then permitted to enter the church. Having venerated the Cross she again entered the vestibule and, before the icon, gave thanks to the Mother of God. At that very moment she heard a voice saying: "If you cross over Jordan you will find real peace!" Immediately she purchased three loaves of bread and started out for the Jordan where she arrived that same evening. The next day she received Holy Communion in the Monastery of St. John and crossed over the Jordan river. She remained in the wilderness for forty-eight years in great torment, fear and struggle with passionate thoughts as though with wild beasts. She fed on

vegetation. Afterward, when she stood for prayer, Zosimus saw her levitate in the air. She begged him to bring her Holy Communion the following year on the shore of the Jordan where she would then come to receive it. The following year, Zosimus arrived on the shore of the Jordan in the evening with Holy Communion. He wondered how this saint would cross the Jordan. At that moment, in the light of the moon, he saw her as she approached the river, made the sign of the cross over it and walked upon the water as though upon dry land. After Zosimus administered Holy Communion to her, she begged him to come the following year to the same brook where they had first met. Zosimus came and discovered her lifeless body on that spot. Above her head in the sand was written: "Abba Zosimus, bury the body of the humble Mary on this site; render dust to dust. I died on April 1, the same night of the saving-suffering of Christ, after having received Communion of the Divine Mysteries." From this inscription Zosimus first learned her name and the other and awesome miracle was that, she, on that same night the previous year, when she received Holy Communion, arrived at this brook which took him twenty days to travel. Thus, Zosimus buried the body of this wonderful saint, Mary the Egyptian. When he returned to the monastery Zosimus related the entire history of her life and the miracles which he had personally witnessed. Thus, the Lord knows how to glorify penitent sinners. St. Mary is also commemorated on the Fifth Sunday of the Honorable Fast (Fifth Sunday in Lent). The Church holds her up as an example to the faithful during these fast days as an incentive for repentance. She died about the year 530 A.D.

April 12th

SAINT BASIL THE CONFESSOR

At the time of the Iconoclastic controversy, this devout man was bishop in the town of Parius in Asia Minor. He refused to sign an imperial document against the veneration of icons. For that, Basil was greatly persecuted and severely tortured. He remained as firm as a diamond in His Orthodoxy. He died at the beginning of the eighth century and was translated to the Lord.

April 20th

THE HOLY APOSTLE ZACCHAEUS

At first, Zacchaeus was a tax collector and a sinner. When our Lord saw him in Jericho in a tree and entered his home, Zacchaeus was brought to repentance. "He (Jesus) came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed the sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, Who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him: 'Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.' And he came down quickly and received Him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, 'He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner.' But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over.'" And Jesus said to him, 'today salvation has come to this house because this man is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost' (St. Luke 19: 1-10). Later on, Zacchaeus followed the Apostle Peter who appointed him bishop of Caesarea in Palestine where he faithfully served the Gospel and died peacefully.

April 27th

THE HOLY APOSTLE SIMEON

Simeon was one of the Seventy Apostles. He was the son of Cleopas who was the brother of Joseph, the betrothed of the All-Holy Mother of God. Seeing the miracles of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Simeon believed and was numbered among the Seventy Apostles. He preached the Gospel of Christ with great zeal and courage throughout Judea. When the nefarious Jews killed James, the brother of our Lord and first bishop of the Church of Jerusalem, by hurling him from the heights of the Temple and beat him over the head with a hoe, then this Simeon, a cousin of James, was appointed Bishop of Jerusalem. And Simeon, as the second bishop of the Holy City, governed the Church of God with wisdom and strength until a ripe old age. He was over one hundred years old when he suffered. His suffering was in this manner: during

the reign of Emperor Trajan, a two-fold persecution began: one in Palestine against the descendants of David and the other persecution against the Christians. The wicked people accused Simeon of being both one and the other (a Jew and a Christian). St. Simeon endured enormous pains and finally was crucified on a cross, as was his Lord, Whom he faithfully served on earth.

Parish & Organizations News

Sleep in the Lord

On February 16th Nicola Yacoub Qushair, brother in law of Nuha Qushair.

His funeral was sung on February 21st at St. Mark Church and the burial was at El Toro Memorial Park. May his Memory be Eternal!

St. Mark Feast Day Week End

We will celebrate this year's St. Mark Day with holy services and two talks by Fr. Joseph Morris, Abbot of St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, on Saturday April 25. Please see the attached flyer for details.

Ladies Guild

Our Ladies Guild had their monthly meeting on 3/05/15, which started at 6:30 pm with Father Michael prayers and 13 Ladies in attendance.

The Ladies Officers Julie Bahbah, Barbara Khamis, Lydia Wakileh, Theresa Joubran and Wisam Faraj treated the Ladies during the meeting with a Delicious Falafel Dinner which was enjoyed by all.

The Ladies had the demonstration of how to make the Holy Bread by Theresa Joubran and Katy Turk with Fr. Michael instructions and advice.

Valentine's party profits was \$7070.00 which makes the ending balance in the Ladies account to \$16603.83

The ladies guild donated \$7500.00 to the building fund and \$2500.00 to the upgrading expense and was approved by all the ladies.

Sunshine Report by Khorria Donna Laffoon and get well cards were sent to Lillian Dabbas, Fatin Fakhouri, Michael Asaly, Sara Chade, Elsa Fresh, Vanda Billeh and Jacob Bahbah.

Lenten lunch: was held on March 22 and profits from this lunch will be donated to the Antiochian Women's Project "Nurturing the Seeds of Orthodoxy Across North America" to benefit "Regional Camping and Learning Centers" and "Monastic Communities" Thanks to all the Ladies who helped in cooking, donating, serving, setting up and cleaning for this event.

March was Antiochian Women's month in Our Archdiocese. We thank all the Ladies who participated in Ushering, Reading the Epistle and served during the 5 weeks of March.

Bible Study by Fr. Michael is held on the 2nd Thursday of each month at the church at 10.30 am, please try to attend.

Our Ladies Annual Easter Bake Sale is on April 5th, please sign up to bring baked goods with Barbara Khamis and Marize Benjamine

Our Ladies Guild is holding the Annual Pascha breakfast on April 11th at 2:00 am after our Divine Liturgy at 11:00 p.m
Please Ladies , sign the posting in the Church hall
For the food you will donate for the breakfast.

Our Ladies Guild next meeting will be on **Thursday April 16th at 6:30 p.m.** at the church. Please Ladies join us and come and have fun.

Our upcoming important event is **Mother Daughter tea party on May 17th** at 12:30 p.m at the church hall. More information to follow at the weekly bulletin.

Because your input is very important to us, please take one of the **survey** and tell us what other ideas and teaching you would like to see at the Ladies ministry. Please plan to attend the monthly meeting and share your ideas with the ladies.

Yours in Christ
Ladies Guild Secretaries
Lydia & Wissam

Men's Club

The men had a working day party at St. Mark on Saturday, March 28, at 10:00 am.

Below is a list of what the Men worked on:

1. Touch up painting in hall
2. Cleaned out electrical/utility room
3. Put paving stones in front of storage shed
4. Replaced speaker grills in hall
5. Prepared old "play room" for use as Church School room (clean out and place table and chairs)
6. Washed out trash cans with soap and water
7. Cleared leaves from roof drains.
8. Cleaned glass on framed icons.

The Men's Club sponsored a FOCUS feeding on Sunday March 29. Thanks to all the volunteer who helped with this feeding.

May 2nd , Tarneeb Tournament

Respectfully submitted by
Don Skaff/Men's Club Secretary

Teen SOYO

Our teens joined together with the teens of St. Luke on Saturday March 21 for a service project. The teens assembled food packages for homeless and motel residents. The SOYO will hold their annual Holy Friday Vigil at the tomb of Christ on April 10.

Jay Skaff
Teen's Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Jessica Azzam 4/28
Andrew Azzam 4/17
George Bahbah 4/8
Grace Bahbah 4/8
Julie Bahbah 4/11
Peter Batarseh 4/25
Matthew Daruty 4/25
Diala Debbas 4/11
Liana Debbas 4/16
Selim Debbas 4/22
Mary Dibs 4/27
Samar Elsayegh 4/30
Elaina Fakhouri 4/11
Fatin Fakhouri 4/11
Ian Fortuna 4/27

*15th of the month to the Church office
(949-851-8933)*

Tyler Hilmar 4/25
Theresa Joubran 4/1
Juliette Khamis 4/4
Mary Ann Khamis 4/1
Aida Khamis 4/21
Malvina Kumar 4/2
Sophia Liquete 4/25
Nathaniel Liquete 4/25
Jean Nasrawi 4/26
Jason Nino 4/15
Sammy Nino 4/7
Jeries Qoborsi 4/12
Daniel Qoborsi 2/24
Paul Rodriguez 4/13
Alexander Saadeh 4/17
Michael Saba 4/2
Aaron Scholl 4/11
Jay Skaff 4/8
Sarah Smathers 4/17
Charlie Tarazi 4/7
Carol Tierney 4/24
Stephanie Toubbeh 4/30
Gina Turk 4/26

Happy Anniversary

Michael & Rania Debbas 4/9
Maurice & Nadia Karkar 4/17
Robert & Linda Mokbel 4/23
Sam & Adel Munayyer 4/29
Marwan & Hanan Saba 4/29
Mufid & Salam Samara 4/27

*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

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