

THE APOSTLE

Christ is Born,
Glorify Him!!

المسيح ولد ، فمجدوه !

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2014

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF IRVINE

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

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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

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 **One year appointed by Fr. Michael**

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

Assistant Treasurer - {16} Richard Jirjis (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

Excerpt from "Meditation for Christmas" from **The Year of the Grace of Our Lord** by A Monk of the Eastern Church.

"The feast of Christmas is the feast of the mystical Body, for it is through the Incarnation that men have become members of Christ. Whatever theological interpretation we give to this great spiritual and patristic affirmation of our incorporation into Christ, we must believe that with the Incarnation, an ineffable union – that passes all understanding-- began, in human flesh, between Jesus Christ and men. Beyond the particular historical event that took place at Bethlehem and through which the Son of God took on a visible human body, another event took place that concerns the whole human race: God, in becoming incarnate, in some way weds and assumes the human nature which we all share and creates between himself and us a relationship which, without its ever ceasing to be that between the Creator and his creature, is also that between the body and its members. There is union without confusion. Christmas allows us to become most deeply conscious of what is our true nature, human nature, regenerated by Jesus Christ. 'And the Word was made flesh.' These words summarize and express the feast of Christmas perfectly. If we give them their full meaning, we will understand that they do not only concern the mystery by which the Son and Word of the father became man: this formula also carries an implication of a moral and practical order. Our flesh is often a source of temptation and sin to us. May

the Word of God become flesh in us, may it enter into our body. May the power of this Word (for there can be no question of its being an Incarnation is substance) pass from the exterior to the interior, and so, into our bodies; the law of the flesh. Christmas will have a true meaning for us only if our own flesh becomes transformed, changed and ruled by the Word made flesh.”

In anticipation of the Feast: **Christ is born!**
Fr. Michael

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.

Pre-Feast Vespers, December 19, 20, 22 and 23; 6:30 p.m. (Great Vespers on Saturday the 20th at 4:00 p.m.)

Sunday December 21, Ladies Guild pre-Christmas Bake Sale

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

Wednesday December 24, 6:30 p.m. Vespers Divine Liturgy of Nativity Eve. **Church School Music Program follows this service.**

Thursday December 25, 9:00 a.m. Orthros, 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy, Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ

Wednesday December 31, 6:30 p.m. Evening Liturgy, Feast of our Lord’s Circumcision

January 2015 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

Feasts, Special Services and Events for December 2014

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

Sunday December 7, St. Nicholas Sunday, *FOCUS Feeding*

Wednesday December 10, 6:30 p.m Advent Paraklesis

Wednesday December 17, 6:30 p.m Advent Paraklesis

Metropolitan Joseph’s Schedule

December 5-7, 2014

St. Nicholas Cathedral, Brooklyn, NY

Enthronement

December 22-29, 2014

Three Churches in Alaska

Feast of the Nativity of our Lord

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.

Selected Saints of the Month

December 4

The Holy Great-martyr Barbara

This glorious follower of Christ was betrothed to Christ from early childhood. Her father Dioscorus was a pagan and was renowned for his position and wealth in the city of Heliopolis in Syria. Dioscorus locked up his only daughter Barbara, brilliant in mind and of beautiful countenance, in a high tower. He surrounded her with every comfort, gave her female servants, erected idols for worship, and built her a bathing room with two windows. Looking through the window at the earth below and the starry heavens above, Barbara's mind was opened by the grace of God. She recognized the One True God, the Creator, despite the fact that she did not have a human teacher to bring her to this knowledge. Once, while her father was away from the city, she came down from the tower and, according to God's providence, met some Christian women who revealed the true Faith of Christ to her. Barbara's heart became inflamed with love for Christ the Lord. She ordered that a third window be cut open in the bath so that the three windows would represent the Holy Trinity. On one wall she traced a Cross with her finger, and the Cross etched itself deep in the stone as if cut by a chisel. A pool of water sprang forth from her footprints on the floor of the bath, which later gave healing of diseases to many. Learning of his daughter's faith, Dioscorus beat her severely and drove her from the tower. He pursued her in order to kill her, but a cliff opened up and hid Barbara from her brutal father. When she appeared again, her father brought her to Martianus, the magistrate, who handed her over for torture. They stripped the innocent Barbara and flogged her until her entire body was covered with blood and wounds, but the Lord Himself appeared to her in prison with His angels and healed her. A certain woman, Juliana, upon seeing this, desired martyrdom for herself. Both women were severely

tortured and with mockery were led through the city. Their breasts were cut off and much blood flowed from them. They were finally led to the place of execution, where Dioscorus himself slaughtered his daughter, and Juliana was slain by the soldiers. That same day, lightning struck the house of Dioscorus, killing him and Martianus. St. Barbara suffered in the year 306. Her miracle-working relics rest in Kiev. Glorified in the Kingdom of Christ, she has appeared many times even in our own day, sometimes alone and sometimes in the company of the Most-holy Theotokos.

December 17

THE HOLY MARTYR SOLOCHON

Solochon was an Egyptian by birth and a Roman soldier under Commander Campanus during the reign of the nefarious Emperor Maximian. When the directive from the emperor was handed down that all the soldiers must offer up sacrifices to the idols, Solochon declared himself a Christian. Two of his companions also declared themselves Christians: Pamphamir and Pamphylon. The commander ordered that they be flogged and cruelly tortured from which Saints Pamphamir and Pamphylon died. Solochon remained alive and was subjected to new tortures. The commander ordered the soldiers to open his mouth with a sword and to pour the sacrifices of the idols into his mouth. The martyr broke the iron sword with his teeth and did not consume the foul sacrifice of the idols. Finally, they pierced a quill through both ears and left him to die. The Christians removed the martyr and brought him to the home of a widow where he gradually, by food and drink, became a little stronger and, again, continued to counsel the faithful to be persistent in their faith and in their sufferings for the Faith. Following that, he gave thanks to God, completed his earthly life and presented himself to the Lord in the kingdom of heaven in the year 298 A.D.

December 23

The Ten Holy Martyrs of Crete

They suffered for Christ the Lord during the persecution of Decius in the year 250. Their names were Theodulus, Saturnicus, Euporus, Gelasius,

Eunician, Zoticus, Pompeius, Agathopous, Basilides and Evaristus. They were all eminent and honored citizens, the best among the best. When they were brought to the place of execution they were elated, and they discussed among themselves which of them would be the first to be beheaded, for each one of them wanted to be the first to go to his beloved Christ. Then they prayed: "O Lord, forgive Thy servants and accept our blood, which is about to be shed, as an offering on our behalf and for our kinsmen and friends and for all of our fatherland, that all may be freed from the darkness of ignorance and may know Thee, the True Light, O Eternal King!" They were beheaded and entered into the Kingdom of Glory to rejoice eternally.

December 31

The Venerable Melania the Roman

Melania was born in Rome of devout and very wealthy parents. She was forced by them to enter into marriage with a young nobleman, Apinianus. She became gravely ill in giving birth to her second child, and she told her husband that she would be healed only if he vowed before God to live with her in the future as a brother with a sister. Her husband vowed, and Melania, out of spiritual joy, was physically restored to health. When it was pleasing to God to take both of their children to Himself, they decided to sell all their possessions and distribute the proceeds to the poor, the churches and the monasteries. They traveled through many lands and cities, doing good works everywhere with their wealth. They visited famous spiritual fathers in Upper and Lower Egypt, learned much and were inspired by them. During that entire time, Melania lived an ascetic life of strict fasting, fervent prayer, and the reading of the Holy Scriptures. Melania had the custom of reading the entire book of the Holy Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, three times every year. She lived with her husband as with a brother and fellow-ascetic. Coming to Alexandria, they received the blessing of the Patriarch, St. Cyril. After that, they traveled to Jerusalem and settled on the Mount of Olives. There Melania closed herself off and devoted herself to divine contemplation, fasting and prayer. Thus, she lived for fourteen years, after which she came out to help others to salvation. She founded a monastery for men and a convent for women. At the invitation of her kinsman, Senator Volusian, a pagan, she went

to Constantinople and converted him to the Christian Faith (which even Blessed Augustine himself was unable to do). She then returned to the Mount of Olives, where she presented herself to God in the year 439 at the age of fifty-seven.

Parish & Organizations News

Ladies Guild

The Ladies Guild had their monthly meeting on Sunday November 16th, after church with 18 Ladies attending. Father Michael started the meeting with a prayer.

Treasurer report was presented to all the members with final balance of \$10,926.81

Sun Shine Report by Khouria Donna Laffoon; Get well cards were sent to Darlyne Dibs, Adele Bahbah, Eleanor Wackeen, Irma Chade, and Suhair Quoborsi-Aunt & Uncle passing.

Donna asked for unwrapped toys, puzzles, craft kits or knitting supplies to give for the children on Saint Nichols day.

Scrip Report by Saeda Turk, who encouraged everybody to use scrip cards for the Holidays.

The new business for December was discussed:

The Christmas Bake Sale which will be chaired this year by Maryse Benjamin on December 21st. Please sign up to bring your favorite baked good or join us for baking of the spinach pies on December 19th. Donated money is also welcome.

Third Annual Zalabia Luncheon on January 4th, more information to follow in the weekly bulletin

The Ladies Christmas Lunch on January 11th will be held this year at the church hall. More information and details to follow.

The Church Hall needs to be painted and if anyone wants to donate money to paint the hall we need volunteers

Humanitarian committee: Afifa suggested we will continue to visit and provide food for the sick.

His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph will be at our church the last Sunday of January 2015 the Ladies Guild will be preparing a lunch that day.

Men's Club Secretary

Old Business Report:

Donation of \$1124.00 that was raised from BCA Awareness was donated to Living Beyond Breast Cancer

Ladies Guild served on Sunday November 9th the Third Annual Pre-thanksgiving Luncheon. It was enjoyed by all the parishioners. **Thanks and blessings on Nadia Karkar the chair of the event and on all the Ladies of our Church** who baked, donated, set up, served and cleaned up for the Luncheon. God bless you all!!

Our next meeting will be on Thursday December 11th

Lydia Wakileh

Ladies Guild Secretary

Men's Club

Men's Club met on Sunday November 16th after church and they are excited to announce two annual events that we hope you will attend.

1. Our annual Christmas Party will be on Saturday, December 13th at 7:00 pm. It will be held at Jacob and Vera Bahbah's home in Orange. Please see the flyer included in this newsletter for details. Please make every effort to attend and seek out a Brother in Christ who does not regularly come to our meetings, this is a great first way to get involved with the St. Mark Church Men's Club.

2. Our annual New Year's Eve Party will be in the hall (with fresh paint, looking better than ever!) of St. Marks Church. We will begin taking reservations on Sunday, Nov. 30. We have great entertainment, delicious food and fabulous prizes to give away. This event will sell out. Reserve your seat or table ASAP. All details are on the flyer included in this newsletter.

We are blessed to have a newly remodeled Church Sanctuary, so please make every effort to attend these events for great Christian fellowship, and to give back to the church.

Your Brother in Christ,

Don Skaff

Teen SOYO

Pre order pies for pumpkin, pecan, and apple pie were available for sale and many thanks to all the parishioners who ordered and supported the Teens.

The Teen had a good time at "Ask Abouna", Dinner, and Movie Night on Friday November 14th.

* Christmas party at the Silheet's house. The official date is to be determined, but it may possibly be on December 28th

Jay Skaff

Teen Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Christina Aldada 12/1
Naheda Artoul 12/16
Christopher Azzam 12/22
Vera Bahbah 12/19
Daniel Chami 12/29
Alice De Abdo 12/24
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
Patricia Khamis 12/8
Hilda Khamis 12/6
Antoun Khoury 12/27
George Khoury 12/15
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
Jacqueline Saba 12/27
Alexandra Sakhel 12/11

Nour Salameh 12/21
Manuel Salameh 12/25
Milad Shaheen 12/31
Elias Sliheet 12/31
Shouki Souri 12/27
Majida Souri 12/11
Christiana Tarazi 12/26
Charlie Wakileh 12/17

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

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

*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)***

*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.***

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