

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2015

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH

OF IRVINE Pastor's Column

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Sub-deacon: Athanasius Fakhouri
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Chanters: Jacob Bahbah, Theresa Joubran, Karim Youssef, & Mark Ellis
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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**
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[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

Beloved in Christ,

Lent begins this year on February 23 and we are even now, in the Church calendar, preparing for it. With this in mind, please read and ponder the article reprinted below!

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE FOR LENT

By Father Vladimir Berzonsky

Before the Great Lent begins the Orthodox Church reserves three weeks in order to encourage in its members a proper mental preparedness towards the season of intense prayer, meditation and fasting [*this year we begin this period on February 1*]. We must learn not merely to accept lent as a spiritual obligation, an intrusion into a life of fun and diversion, but rather we must learn to welcome its discipline if we are to benefit by it spiritually.

Let us first mention certain misconceptions regarding this period: the great danger of keeping a strict Lent is that one tends to become self-righteous. Wisely the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee is put at the very start of the Triodion Cycle to impress upon our minds the distastefulness of self-righteousness. It would be far better not to observe the lent than to have it result in an arrogance, a "holier-than-you" attitude.

Neither is Lent intended for scoring points in heaven. The hairs on our head may be numbered, as the Lord tells us; but it is highly unlikely the angels keep track of whether we had a cheese sandwich or bologna for lunch. We sometimes tend to keep the letter of the Lent and fail to develop an over-view, a general framework for understanding why we deprive ourselves of certain foods and pleasures.

What we are about is to know ourselves. To know ourselves we must withdraw from the world, to go

into the desert as Jesus did following his baptism. It is essential that we extricate our inner selves from our surroundings, if we are to have an over-view of our lives. If we cannot physically retreat, we must at least retreat mentally. This we are able to do by the very fact that we are human beings. For example, a fish in an aquarium is alive in every sense that we are who observe him; with one exception. As far as we know, he is not able to transcend himself, in the way we are. Not only are we able to look at ourselves from a distance, we must analyze and evaluate ourselves to be truly human.

Fasting is simply to make us hungry, enabling us to evaluate the person we really are; how enslaved we are to that drive which draws us against our will to the refrigerator! How we cannot think about anything but the growlings of the stomach! "I'll get a headache, I just must eat something," you say. You've learned something about yourself.

We must see how we've surrendered the gift of freedom God intended for us, as we reach out to our cigarettes or bottle, refusing to evade the reality of our slavery until we hate the fetters enough that we will admit that we are imprisoned by our habits, then make the difficult struggle involved in setting ourselves free.

I am convinced, however, that concentration on ourselves is no longer sufficient. We must mature into a new awareness of life around us, developing a respect for nature and all of God's creatures not previously manifested among us. There is a need for a new attitude towards property, both ours and others, a reverence for living beings over institutions and man-made laws; we must have the courage to analyze and perhaps reevaluate our priority of values. What should be borne uppermost in our minds, nevertheless, is that true, effective and worthwhile change takes place in hearts and consciences, and only their bearers can make them.

*With God's help, let us make this Lent truly a springtime for our souls!
In His love,*

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.

Feasts, Special Services and Events for February 2015
Monday, February 2 – Presentation of the Lord
Thursday February 12, 10:30 a.m. Bible Study
Saturday February 14, 8:00 p.m. Valentine's Dinner Dance in the Church Hall
February 16 - 22, Cheese Fare Week
Monday February 23, First Day of Lent

Advance Calendar for March 2015
March 1, Sunday of Orthodoxy
March 25 – Feast of the Annunciation

Metropolitan Joseph's Schedule
February 8, 2014
New Mission in Santa Clarita, CA
First Episcopal Visit
February 9-12, 2014
Sacred Heart Retreat Center, Alhambra, CA
Diocese of Los Angeles and the West Clergy Seminar

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

February 1

THE HOLY MARTYR TRYPHON

Tryphon was born of poor parents in the village of Lampsacus in Phrygia. In his childhood he tended geese. Also from his childhood he was able to cure illnesses that afflicted people and livestock and was able to expel evil spirits. The Roman Empire at that time was ruled by Emperor Gordian whose daughter Gordiana went insane and this caused her father great sorrow. All the physicians were unable to help Gordiana. The evil spirit spoke through Gordiana and said that no one can cast him out except Tryphon. After many who were named Tryphon in the empire were summoned, by Divine Providence, young Tryphon was also summoned. He was brought to Rome and he healed the emperor's daughter. The emperor lavished upon him many gifts all of which Tryphon, upon his return, distributed to the poor. In his village this holy youngster continued to tend geese and to pray to God. When Decius, the Christ-persecutor, was crowned emperor, Saint Tryphon was tortured and cruelly tormented for Christ. He endured all tortures with great joy saying: "Oh! If only I could be made worthy to die by fire and pain for the Name of the Lord and God, Jesus Christ!" All sufferings did him no harm and finally the tormentors sentenced him to be beheaded. Before his death Tryphon prayed to God and gave up his soul to his Creator in the year 250 A.D.

February 10

THE PRIESTLY-MARTYR HARALAMBOS [CHARALAMPUS]

This great saint Haralambos was a bishop in Magnesia and suffered for Christ in his one-hundred and thirteenth year. When a terrible persecution began during the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus, the Elder Haralambos did not hide from the persecutors but freely and openly preached the Faith of Christ. He endured all tortures as though he were in someone else's body. When they skinned him alive, the forgiving elder said to the emperor's soldiers: "Thank you, my brethren, for in scraping my old body you renew my spirit for a new eternal life." He worked many miracles and converted many to the Faith. Even the emperor's daughter,

Galina, abandoned the idolatry of her father and become a Christian. Condemned to death and brought to the place of execution, St. Haralambos raised his hands to heaven and prayed to God for all people that God grant them bodily health and spiritual salvation and that He multiply their fruits of the earth. "O Lord, You know that men are flesh and blood; forgive them their sins and pour out Your Grace on all!" After prayer, this holy elder gave up his soul to God before the executioner lowered the sword on his neck. He suffered in the year 202 A.D. The emperor's daughter, Galina, removed his body and honorably buried it.

February 20

THE HOLY PRIESTLY-MARTYR SADOK

Sadok was a bishop in Persia, following St. Simeon. At one time, St. Simeon appeared to him in a dream and said: "Yesterday, I - today, you!" Sadok interpreted these words to his flock as meaning: Last year I [St. Simeon] suffered, this year you [Sadok] will suffer. Indeed that year the Emperor Sapor arrested him with many of the clergy and people and brought them to trial. Sapor first ordered them to worship fire and sun as divinity. Sadok replied: "We are eagerly prepared to die for our God, but we cannot worship the sun nor fire." After that, they were tortured and sentenced to death by beheading. Before being beheaded, Sadok uplifted a prayer to God: "Wash us, O Lord, from our sins in our blood!" Sadok, with his priests and faithful gloriously gave up their bodies to death and their souls to the immortal God. They suffered in the year 342 A.D. or 344 A.D.

February 29

THE VENERABLE BARSANUPHIUS

Barsanuphius was born a pagan in Palestine and was baptized in his eighteenth year and immediately was tonsured a monk taking the name of John. When he became known for of his virtuous life, Barsanuphius was elected archbishop of Damascus. He did not remain long at this position. Yearning for the reclusive, ascetically spiritual life, he secretly left Damascus and went to the wilderness of Nitria. Here, he presented himself as the monk Barsanuphius and immediately, was assigned, as an obedience, to be a water-carrier for the monastery. The former archbishop accepts this obedience with

joy. With his wise reflections, meekness and diligence, Barsanuphius soon became a model example to all the monks. Only before his death was it revealed to the monks who this Barsanuphius was. Thus this saint, by his example, served as a reproach to the proud and power-loving and as a comfort to the humble and meek. He died peacefully and took up habitation with the Lord in the year 457 A.D.

Parish & Organizations News

Ladies Guild

The Annual Zalabia Luncheon for the Feast of Epiphany, was held on Sunday January 4th, 2015. The Ladies served baked Chicken, Rice with Veggie, Salad, and the Zalabia Dessert and it was enjoyed by the whole Parish. Thanks and Blessings on all the Ladies who helped and donated for this successful Luncheon

The Ladies Christmas Luncheon was held on Saturday January 10th, 2015 at the church hall with beautiful red and gold covers on the tables and the chairs, and Christmas tree décor from 12:30 - 4:30 p.m.

About 47 Ladies were in attendance and enjoyed the Mediterranean food that was served with a glass of wine, and other refreshments.

After Lunch the Ladies enjoyed and had fun playing the White Elephant Gift Exchange Game.

Thanks to the chair of this event Lydia Wakileh and to all the Ladies who helped; Julie Bahbah, Barbara Khamis, Gisele Awayjan and Theresa Bahbah. Special thanks to our Great Chef Lorice Eadeh for the delicious food.

His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph pleased us by his visit to our Church the last Sunday of January 2015. The Ladies Guild was happy to serve a nice luncheon to the entire parish in this occasion.

Mark your Calendar for the Valentine Party on Saturday February 14, 2015 at 7:00 p. m. At the Church Hall.

Our Ladies next meeting is Sunday February 8 after Church. Hope to see you all there.

March is Antiochian Women Month, the ladies will usher, read the Epistle on Sundays and serve Coffee, and every lady is welcome to be part of this service.

When everyone left our Lord Jesus Christ alone on the cross, the women were there. Can you see how important the women are?

You are the myrrh-bearing women."

By Metropolitan Joseph

36th Annual Spring Retreat at Camp St. Nicholas, Frazier Park Ca

St. Mary of Egypt Weekend –March 27-29, 2015
Southern California Diocesan Antiochian Women Retreat

Lydia Wakileh & Wissam Farraj
Ladies Guild Secretaries

Men's Club

In December Men's Club helped with the hall renovation.

New Years Eve Party was in the Church Hall

The next men's club event is our First Annual Super Bowl Party in the Church Hall on Sunday, Feb. 1 at 3:00 pm. \$10.00 per person. RSVP to Austin Turk.

Your Brother in Christ,
Don Skaff
Men's Club Secretary

Teen SOYO

On December 7th we had our monthly meeting We had our Teen SOYO Christmas party on December 28th at the church. We had members from St. Luke and St. Nicholas at the party.

Our next event is Friday January 23. We will be attending vespers at 6:30. Then, we will be going to The Ice Palace in Aliso Viejo. After Ice Skating, we will be going to dinner at Chili's (26631 Aliso Creek Road, Aliso Viejo, CA 92656) at around 9:45

Jay Skaff
Teen Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Samir Artoul 2/2
May Asaly 2/15
Ivana Awayjan 2/27
Joseph Azzam 2/15
Mikhail Billeh 2/4
Irma Chade 2/5
Sarah Chade 2/17
Vladimir Chendler 2/3
Randy Dabbah 2/18
Zahieh Debbas 2/4
Amanda Eadeh 2/24
Samira Eissa 2/1
Kevin Fortuna 2/22
George Hanna 2/13
Ben Hanna 2/29
Georgie Hanna 2/14
Jamie Hanna 2/13
Gellan Kashou 2/20
Sammy Khamis 2/17
Diana Khamis 2/19
Charlotte Khoury 2/15
Amanda Khury 2/12
Simon Kishek 2/2
Adel Munayyer 2/13
Danice Najjar 2/22
Tanya Richards 2/2
Paul Qaqundah 2/26
Mae Sakhel-Qushair 2/12
Nuha Qushair 2/10
Tammy Qutami 2/25
Robert Ranney 2/14
Kimla Ranney 2/24
Paula Rodriguez 2/6
Najib Saadeh 2/18
George Saba 2/2
Siham Saba 2/10
Yacoub Saba 2/17
Nabeel Salameh 2/16
Daniel Scholl 2/10
Sebastian Skaff 2/6
Michael Souri 2/25
Andre Terzian 2/25
Brenda Tax 2/13
Melanie Tierney 2/22

Tina Tomeo 2/19

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Fr. Patrick & Nina Irish 2/6
Antoune & Mayssoun Khoury 2/10
Ramzi & Randa Salameh 2/14
Don Jr. & Penny Skaff 2/14

We have begun our 2015 Pledge Drive. In your bulletin you should find a Pledge Card for the New Year. Please fill in and place these cards **in the White Box** on the table by the bulletin board, so that we can fulfill the 2015 Budget as passed by the parish at our annual meeting last month.

St. Mark 2015 Stewardship Pledge Drive Progress Report

Thank you to all of you who have made their 2015 Pledge Commitment to St. Mark. As of January 31st, we have 80 pledges for a total of \$ 116,110 pledged.

*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.

**SAINT MARK ANTIOCHIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH
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