

# ***THE APOSTLE***

## **MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

### **January 2015**

# **SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH**

# **OF IRVINE**

## **HAPPY NEW YEAR**

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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**

Every January 6 we celebrate the Baptism of Christ (Epiphany), and in the days and weeks that follow, the Holy Water blessed that day is carried to the homes of the parishioners to bless them for the New

Year. As we begin this new year, let us use this beautiful custom to rededicate not only our homes, but also our very lives to our Savior, the "only lover of mankind" as we sing in the Church. The Son of God came to redeem all of creation; therefore it is up to us, the people of God to offer everything to Him for His sanctification. This is why water is so important in salvation. Water is necessary for life; it cleanses us both inside and out. Thus in his baptism in the River Jordan, Christ not only sets an example for us of repentance (though he had no sins), but also lays claim to his creation for it's redemption.

Epiphany is also called Theophany (Divine revelation) because at the moment of Jesus' baptism the Holy Trinity of fully revealed to humanity for the first time. The anonymous "Monk of the Eastern Church" writes of this in the book, **The Year of Grace of the Lord:**

*"And there was the divine testimony of the Father and the Spirit. The testimony of the Father was the voice that came from heaven and said: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' The testimony of the Spirit was the descent of the dove: 'The Spirit of God descending like a dove.' This is Jesus's true baptism. The word spoken by the Father and the descent of the dove are more important than the baptism by water that John conferred on Jesus. The baptism by water was but an introduction to this divine manifestation. It is with good*

*reason that in the early Christian liturgy, the feast of January 6<sup>th</sup> was called not a 'theophany' but 'theophanies', in the plural, for it does not only concern one divine manifestation: there are three manifestations. From the time of Jesus's baptism, the Father, the Son and the Spirit are all three revealed to the world; the Father and the Spirit are revealed in the relationship of love which unites them to the Son. We touch here on what is deepest and most intimate in the mystery of Jesus. However great is the redemptive ministry of Christ towards men, the life of intimacy of the Son with the Father and the Spirit remains a still greater reality. Jesus is not truly manifested to us unless we perceive something of this divine intimacy, and unless, inwardly, we hear the voice of the Father: 'This is my beloved Son...' and see the flight of the dove lighting upon the head of the Savior. Only on this condition will the feast of Epiphany be a true Epiphany, the manifestation of Christ. Our devotion must, in the Son, reach to the Father and the Spirit. We need to be able to remember and testify, like John the Baptist: 'I saw the Spirit descending...' In that lies the glory of Epiphany. And that is why Epiphany is not only the feast of the waters. Ancient Greek tradition calls it 'the feast of lights'... The light of Christ at Christmas was but a star in the dark night; at Epiphany it appears to us as the rising sun; it will grow and, after the eclipse of Holy Friday, burst forth yet more splendid, on the morning of Easter; and finally, at Pentecost, it will reach its full zenith. It is not only the divine light, manifested objectively in the person of Jesus Christ and in the pentecostal flame that we are concerned with, it is also the inner light, for, without absolute faithfulness to this, spiritual life would be nothing but illusion and falsehood."*

*In His love,  
Fr. Michael*

### **Feasts, Special Services and Events for January 2015**

January 1, Feast of our Lord's Circumcision and St. Basil's Day (services held on the evening of December 31: 5:30 Orthros, 6:30 p.m. Liturgy)

Monday, January 5 – Evening Liturgy, Feast Theophany and Great Blessing of Waters 6:30 p.m. (Orthros 5:30 p.m.)

Thursday evening January 29 – 6:30 p.m.: Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs (Orthros at 5:30 p.m.)

Saturday January 31, West Coast Enthronement Gala for Metropolitan Joseph (see inside Newsletter for more details)

### **Advance Calendar for February 2015**

February 1, Sunday of Publican & Pharisee – Start of the Triodion

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

February 8, Morning Bible Study

February 14, Valentine's Day Dinner

February 15, Sunday of Judgment

February 21, 31, Parish Education

February 23, First Day of Great Lent

February 24, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

## **Selected Saints of the Month**

### **January 6th**

#### **THE EPIPHANY [THEOPHANY] OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST**

When our Lord reached thirty years from His physical birth, He began His teaching and salvific work. He Himself signified this "beginning of the beginning" by His baptism in the Jordan river. St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, " The beginning of the world - water; the beginning of the Good News - Jordan." At the time of the baptism of the Lord in water, that mystery was declared to the world: that mystery which was prophesied in the Old Testament; the mystery about which in ancient Egypt and India was only fabled; i.e., the mystery of the Divine Holy Trinity. The Father was revealed to the sense of hearing; the Spirit was revealed to the sense of sight, and in addition to these, the Son was revealed to the sense of touch. The Father uttered His witness about the Son, the Son was baptized in the water, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovered above the water. When John the Baptist witnessed and said about Christ, "Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world"

(St. John 1:29), and when John immersed and baptized the Lord in the Jordan, the mission of Christ in the world and the path of our salvation was shown. That is to say: The Lord took upon Himself the sins of mankind and died under them [immersion] and became alive again [the coming out of the water]; and we must die as the old sinful man and become alive again as cleansed, renewed and regenerated. This is the Savior and this is the path of salvation. The Feast of the Epiphany [Theophany in Greek] is also called the Feast of Illumination. For us, the event in the Jordan river illuminates, by manifesting to us God as Trinity, consubstantial and undivided. That is one way. And, the second: everyone of us through baptism in water is illumined by this, that we become adopted by the Father of Lights through the merits of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **January 12th**

#### **THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYR TATIANA**

Tatiana was a Roman whose parents were of great nobility. She was a Christian and a deaconess in the

church. After the death of Emperor Heliogabalus, Emperor Alexander, whose mother Mammaea was a Christian, reigned in Rome. The emperor himself was wavering and indecisive in the Faith for he kept statues of Christ, Apollo, Abraham and Orpheus in his palace. His chief assistants persecuted the Christians without the emperor's orders. When they brought out the virgin Tatiana for torture, she prayed to God for her torturers. And behold, their eyes were opened and they saw four angels around the martyr. Seeing this, eight of them believed in Christ for which they also were tortured and slain. The tormentors continued to torture St. Tatiana. They whipped her, cut off parts of her body; they scraped her with irons. So all disfigured and bloody, Tatiana was thrown into the dungeon that evening so that the next day, they could, again, begin anew with different tortures. But God sent His angels to the dungeon to encourage her and to heal her wounds so that, each morning, Tatiana appeared before the torturers completely healed. They threw her before a lion, but the lion endeared himself to her and did her no harm. They cut off her hair, thinking, according to their pagan reasoning, that some sorcery or some magical power was concealed in her hair. Finally, Tatiana along with her father were both beheaded. Thus, Tatiana ended her earthly life about the year 225 A.D., and this heroic virgin, who had the fragile body of a woman but a robust and valiant spirit, was crowned with the immortal wreath of glory.

### **January 20<sup>th</sup>**

#### **SAINT LEO, BISHOP OF CATANIA**

Beneath the volcanic Mount Etna in the town of Catania lived Leo the saint, a good shepherd and compassionate teacher of the people. He had great concern for the sick and the poor. His zeal for the Faith was as great as his charity toward the less fortunate. Appearing in Catania was a magician named Heliodorus who deluded the people with various illusions and greatly demoralized the youth. At one time during the Divine Services, Heliodorus entered the church of God and began his obscenities. St. Leo approached him, tied him to one end of his pallium and led him to the market place of the city. Here, Leo ordered that a large fire be built and when the fire was burning, he stood in the middle of the fire and pulled Heliodorus into the

## **Parish & Organizations News** **Ladies Guild**

fire. Heliodorus was completely consumed and Leo remained alive and unscathed. All who were bewitched by Heliodorus, and who looked upon him as someone divine, were ashamed. The compassionate and the zealous Leo was proclaimed throughout the entire kingdom as a great miracle-worker who, by his shining miracles, helps men. When Leo ended his course, he took up habitation with the Lord and from his relics flowed healing myrrh [Chrism]. He died in the eighth century.

**January 30<sup>th</sup>**

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

Each of these saints have their 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. At one time a debate arose among the people concerning who of the three is 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 an 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 that he 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 their greatest national school holiday.

**The Ladies Guild had their monthly meeting on Thursday December 11, 2014 at the church Hall, with 13 Ladies attending.**

Father Michael started the meeting with a prayer

**Treasurer report** was presented to all members by Gisele Awayjan with final balance of 10,676.81.

**Sunshine Report** by Fr. Michael on Behalf of Khouria Donna Laffoon. Get well cards were sent to Darlyne Dibs, to Wafa Hanna for her mother's passing and to Vandah Billeh.

Please keep Michael Asaly in your prayers he is having surgery next week.

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

**The Christmas Bake Sale** which was chaired this year by Maryse Benjamin and Barbara Khamis on Sunday December 21<sup>st</sup>, was a great success. Thanks to the chair Ladies and to all the Ladies who helped in baking, donating, setting up and cleaning after the bake sale.

**Special thanks** to all of the Ladies who came to Church on Friday December 19th and helped in making and baking the Spinach pies for the Bake Sale.

**Third Annual Zalabia Luncheon** for the Feast of Epiphany, will be held on Sunday January 4th, 2015. The Ladies will be serving Baked Chicken, Rice with Veggie, Salad, and the Zalabia Dessert. Donation \$7.00 per Adult and \$4.00 per Children under 12 years old.

**The Ladies Christmas Luncheon** will be held on Saturday January 10th, 2015 at the church hall from 12:30 - 4:30 p.m. Mediterranean food will be served with a glass of wine, and other refreshments. Donation is \$25. Please bring a gift value \$20 to play the Gift Exchange Game. Please call Lydia Wakileh (949) 851-8933 for Reservation.

**His Emmince Metropolitan Joseph** will be at our Church the last Sunday of January 2015, the Ladies Guild will be preparing a lunch that day.

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

A fun game of Bunco after the meeting was enjoyed by all the ladies

*Lydia Wakileh & Wissam Farraj*  
*Ladies Guild Secretaries*

### Men's Club

Men's Club had their annual Christmas Party on Saturday, December 13th. Thanks to Jacob and Vera Bahbah for opening their home in Orange.

The Men' Club had their annual New Year's Eve Party in the Church Hall of St. Mark Church. They had a great entertainment, delicious food and fabulous prizes which were enjoyed by everyone that attended. Thanks to Men's Club President Austin Turk and Vice President Jacob Bahbah for all their hard work and to all the men who helped to make this a successful event.

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

### **Teen SOYO**

Teen SOYO had their meeting on Sunday 12/7 after Church and they had their Calendar Planning

- Teen has their Christmas party on December 28 @ the church hall from 6-10. It was enjoyed by all the Teens.
- Sports events with St. Luke possible April 26<sup>th</sup>
- Mathew contacts Taylor Salamone for sports events: Basketball, Volleyball, Ultimate Frisbee, and possibly two towers  
Potluck for both churches
  - Alex Munyner is in charge of organizing the January 23<sup>rd</sup> Ice Skating Event

*Jay Skaff*  
*Teen Secretary*

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY**

Hadel Artoul 1/19  
Samira Attalla 1/1  
Samir Azzam 1/13  
Issa Bahbah 1/3  
Andrew Bahbah 1/4  
Vicky Billeh 1/30  
Sonia Daher 1/4  
Alice De Abdo 1/3  
Michael Debbas 1/22  
Matthew Dabbah 1/5  
Goldie Daruty 1/10  
Adam Erdkamp 1/23  
Elsa Frech 1/28  
Sierra Gordon 1/10  
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  
Hanan Saba 1/15  
Michael Sakhel 1/30  
Georgette Salameh 1/31  
Steve Scholl 1/6  
Leila Sliheet 1/2  
Anton Turk 1/24  
Keitie Turk 1/9  
Ibrahim Wakileh 1/6  
Susan Wilde 1/19

## **HAPPY ANNIVERSARY**

Ken & Adele Habeeb 1/2  
Wael & Louisa Kashou 1/6  
Anton & Itab Kishek 1/18  
Matthew & Sophia Whitacre 1/11

**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 December 31<sup>st</sup>, we have 55 pledges for a total of \$ 95,380 pledged.

*The Apostle is a monthly newsletter of St. Mark Antiochian Orthodox Church. **Parish Organizations are to submit articles by the 15<sup>th</sup> 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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ORTHODOX CHURCH**

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