

# ***THE APOSTLE*** **MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

## **July & August 2015**

# **SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF IRVINE**

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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 & Jake Bahbah**

**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 Corner**

**A SERMON BY ST. NECTRARIOS, THE BISHOP OF  
PENTAPOLIS (D. 1920)**

Beloved Christian Brethren,

The guileless and pure heart is a great gift. This is confirmed with the confessions of Peter, and Nathaniel. When the Lord asked Peter, "whom do you say that he is", he gave the same confession as did Nathaniel and the Lord said, "flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but your Father in Heaven revealed it" – and, truly, only the Heavenly Father could reveal to Nathaniel the truth that the young rabbi, whom he had just met for the first time, was the Son of God, the King of the Jews.... In any event just as it had happened with Peter, the Heavenly Father revealed to Nathaniel that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God, the King of Israel. He revealed this mystery to him by means of his pure heart.

Knowledge of the Word, which was revealed, is in itself a revelation, brethren Christian. Thus, we are taught that God loves those who have a pure heart. He listens to their prayers. He gives them all that they need for the salvation of their souls. He reveals Himself and He teaches the mysteries of divine nature. Nathaniel was made worthy to enjoy all of the knowledge of divine revelation because he himself had a pure heart.

From the Lord we learn that Nathaniel was sitting under the fig tree and the Lord saw him there. In this regard, we understand that the Lord, as God, saw him and heard the voice of his prayer as he was sitting under the fig tree. As he confessed his faith

in the Lord, divine knowledge was revealed to him even more clearly. From the company he kept with the Twelve, he received from God the Calling to have the high honor of being an Apostle of Christ, the names of whom are written in heaven. (Nathaniel is the same person, Bartholomew).

Note all of the great things that happen to whoever has a pure heart. There is nothing any better than that which is a pure heart. Truly nothing. For, is it possible for something to be even better than that which is the throne of God in the Highest? Nothing. There is nothing which has a greater value than that which a pure heart has, because it becomes itself the throne of God. As for this, the Lord Himself says that He wishes to dwell and walk within such a heart and to live within it. In what other heart other than a pure heart would God remain? Through the Prophet Isaiah the Lord recommends to the Hebrews that they wash themselves and become clean so the Lord could reconcile Himself with them. In which case only to those who have a pure heart does the Lord come and to them does He reveal Himself and with them he remains. The Prophet David (in the Fiftieth Psalm) asked God to give him a pure heart so that he could once again have a close relationship with God. He sought a “clean heart” and “a right spirit” so that he would not think again about evil and mundane things. These two things (the pure heart and the right spirit) go together, but it is impossible for them to be disunited. Nathaniel possessed both of these gifts since he gave his confession of Faith to the Lord.

Therefore, let us love such things and let us constantly ask God to grant to us these things. Let us seek such things, because such gifts make us people who are perfect. Only those virtues (the pure heart and the right spirit) make us people “in the Image of God.” Only in this way we make our hearts to be a throne of the God so that God can be with us always.

*Translated from Greek by Fr. Ted Pantels*

The **Dormiton Fast** begins on August 1 and ends on August 14. During the Fast we will sing the service of the **Paraklesis** (or Supplication) to the Theotokos on Monday and Friday evenings (see

calendar for dates). These services will begin at 7:00 p.m.

During this season the Church prescribes the following fast: we abstain from all meat, dairy products (including eggs), fish, wine and olive oil (in some traditions olive oil is allowed). Shellfish may be eaten throughout the fast. Wine and olive oil are permitted on Saturdays and Sundays only. On the Feast of the Transfiguration on August 6, fish, wine and oil are permitted. Make every effort to fast according to the best of your ability and to come to the Sacrament of Holy Confession during this holy season!

July 1 – 5, Western Diocese Parish Life Conference, Irvine CA (hosted by St. Andrew Church)
July 20 – 26 Archdiocese Convention, Boston MA
Saturday August 1, Procession of Holy Cross
August 1 to 15, Dormition Fast
Wednesday August 5, 6:30 p.m. Evening Liturgy, Feast of Transfiguration (Orthros 5:30 p.m.)
Saturday, August 15, 10:00a.m. Liturgy: Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos (Orthros 9:00 a.m.)
Saturday August 29, 6:30 p.m. 10:00a.m. Liturgy: Feast of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist (Orthros 9:00 a.m.)

<b>September 2015 Advanced Calendar</b>
September 1, Church New Year
September 8, Feast of the Birth of the Theotokos
September 14, Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross
September 20, Ladies Guild Friendship Tea

<b>Metropolitan Joseph’s Schedule</b>
<b><u>July 20-26, 2015</u></b>
Archdiocese Convention, Boston MA

<b><u>WEEKLY SERVICES</u></b>
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**

### **Parish & Organizations News**

**July 5**

#### **VENERABLE ATHANASIOUS OF MOUNT ATHOS**

Athanasius was born in Trebizond of God-fearing parents. He became orphaned at an early age but, by the Providence of God, a commander took him under his care and brought him to Constantinople to be educated. Because of his meekness and humbleness, he was the favorite of his peers. During the children's games, the children chose one to be an emperor, one a commander and Athanasius as abbot as though it was some kind of foretelling! Having completed his education, Athanasius (who before tonsuring was called Abraham) withdrew into the desert of Maleinos near Athos, the Holy Mountain, where he lived the life of an ascetic as a disciple of the then renowned Michael Maleinos. Desiring a more difficult life of mortification, Athanasius settled on Holy Mt. Athos to live in silence (the life of a silentry). But many who were desirous of a life of asceticism began to gather around him and, therefore, he was compelled to build his famous Lavra [monastery]. In that, he was assisted by the Byzantine emperors: at first, Nicephorus Phocas, who himself thought to withdraw and to become a monk and, after him, John Tzimiskes. Countless temptations befell Athanasius both from demons and from men but he, as a brave soldier of Christ, resisted and conquered all by his immeasurable meekness and continual prayer to the Living God. Filled with the Grace of God, Athanasius was made worthy to see the All-holy Birth-giver of God who miraculously brought forth water from a rock and promised that she would also be the abbess [Ikonomisa, the one in charge of the provisions of the monastery]. In work and in prayer, Athanasius surpassed his brethren and loved all with the love of a spiritual father and shepherd. Death came to Athanasius unexpectedly. At one time, he with six

other monks, climbed upon a newly built vestibule of the church to inspect the wall which was being constructed and the wall caved in on them and buried them. Thus, this great beacon of monasticism died in the year 980 A.D. Many times following his death Athanasius appeared to his brethren either to comfort them or to reprimand them.

**July 19**

#### **THE VENERABLE FEMALE MACRINA**

Macrina was the eldest sister of St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nyssa. As a young virgin, Macrina was betrothed to a nobleman. When her betrothed died, Macrina vowed never to enter into marriage saying: "It is not right for a maiden once betrothed to a young man to seek another: according to the law of nature there must be only one marriage as there is but one birth and one death." She further justified this by her faith in the resurrection considering her bridegroom, not dead but alive in God. "It is a sin and a shame," says Macrina, "for a wife not to safeguard her faithfulness when her husband travels to a distant land." After this, together with her mother, Emilia, she received the monastic tonsure in a convent, where they lived a life of asceticism with other nuns. They lived from the labors of their hands devoting a greater part of their time to godly thoughts, prayer and the constant uplifting of their minds to God. In time her mother died and, afterward her brother Basil. Nine months after the death of St. Basil, Gregory came to visit with his sister and found her on her death bed. Before her death, Macrina lifted up her prayers to God: "You, O Lord, Who gives rest to our bodies in the sleep of death for a time, will again awaken them [the bodies] at the last trump. Forgive me and when my soul divests itself of its bodily attire and presents itself before You, pure and without sin, grant that it may be as incense before You." After that she traced the sign of the cross on the forehead, eyes, face and on her heart and gave up her soul. She found rest in the Lord in the year 379 A.D.

**August 10**

#### **THE HOLY MARTYRS LAWRENCE AND SIXTUS, POPE OF ROME, AND OTHERS WITH THEM**

When Pope Stephen was slain (August 2), then St. Sixtus, who was an Athenian by birth, was appointed in his place. At first, Sixtus was a philosopher and, after that, a Christian. At that time, the Bishops of Rome were slain one after the other, so that, to become Bishop of Rome meant to be taken out to death. Emperor Decius was determined to destroy Christianity and Pope Sixtus was quickly brought to trial with two of his deacons, Felicicius and Agapitus. As they were led to prison, Lawrence said to the pope: "Where are you going Father, without your son? Where, O bishop, without your Archdeacon?" The pope consoled him, prophesying to Lawrence that he will undergo even greater tortures for Christ and that he [Lawrence] will shortly follow him [Sixtus]. And indeed, as soon as they had beheaded Sixtus and his two deacons, Lawrence was apprehended. Beforehand, Lawrence had placed all of his affairs and the affairs of the church in order. As treasurer and Oikonomos [steward] of the church, he removed all of the church's valuables to the home of the widower, Cyriacus. On that occasion, he healed Cyriacus of a terrible head pain by the touch of his hand and restored the sight of a blind man, Crescention. Thrown into prison, even there Lawrence healed Lucillus, a prisoner of many years, of blindness and after that baptized him. Witnessing this, Hippolytus, the jailer, was also baptized, and later suffered for Christ (August 13). Since Lawrence did not want to deny Christ but, on the contrary, advised Emperor Decius to reject his false gods, he was beaten on the face with stones and beaten on his entire body with a scorpion [a whip, curved at the end like the tail of a scorpion], i.e., by a chain with sharp teeth. Romanus, a soldier present at the torture, believed in Christ and was immediately beheaded. Finally, they placed Lawrence naked on a gridiron and lighted a fire. Roasting in the fire, St. Lawrence thanked God and mocked the emperor for his paganism. After Lawrence gave up his pure and heroic soul to God, his body was removed at night by Hippolytus and taken, at first, to the home of Cyriacus and afterwards to a cave where Hippolytus honorably buried him. St. Lawrence, with the others, suffered in the year 258 A.D.

## August 25

### THE APOSTLE TITUS

Titus was one of the Seventy [Apostles]. He was born in Crete and educated in Greek philosophy and poetry. Following a dream, he began reading the Prophet Isaiah and doubted all the wisdom of the Hellenes. Hearing about Christ the Lord, Titus travelled to Jerusalem with other Cretans and personally heard the words of the Savior and witnessed His mighty works. His young heart completely adhered to Christ. Later, he was baptized by the Apostle Paul whom he served as a son to a father in the work of evangelization. Paul loved Titus so much that, at times, he referred to him as son: "To Titus, my beloved son" (Titus 1:4) and, at times, brother: "I urged Titus to go to you and I sent the other brother with him" (2 Corinthians 12:18). Titus travelled extensively with the great apostle of the people [St. Paul] and was appointed by him as the bishop of Crete. Titus was present at the suffering and death of Paul in Rome and honorably buried the body of his teacher and spiritual father. After that, Titus returned to Crete where, with great success, he baptized the pagans and prudently governed the Church of God until old age. Titus entered into rest at the age of ninety-four.

### Ladies Guild

The Ladies Guild of St. Mark Church had their meeting on June 16<sup>th</sup> at Mimi's Café restaurant in Costa Mesa. There were 21 ladies in attendance. We started our Meeting with Antiochion Women prayers led by Fr. Michael

Treasurer report by Gisele Awayjan Total ending balance \$8,636

Sun shine report by Donna Laffoon: get well cards been sent to Laurice Kishek recovering from a surgery. Flowers have been sent home to her by the Ladies Guild.

The Ladies Guild hosted a **Father's Day Fish luncheon** on Sunday June 21. It was a great lunch and was enjoyed by all the fathers. The Ladies also gave Fr. Michael a card with a gift card for his birthday during the luncheon.

Thanks for the Ladies Officers Julie Bahbah, Barbara Khamis, Lydia Wakileh, Gisele Awayjan and Theresa Joubran for organizing this luncheon. Thanks to all the ladies who brought

desserts and fruits and to all who helped in setting and cleaning up.

**Parish Life Conference** will be held July 1-5 please join us and support Saint Andrew Orthodox Church and enjoy fellowship with fellow Orthodox Christians from through out the Diocese and beyond.

Our Ladies will meet again in September 20 for the Ladies Fall Friendship Tea. If you are interested in hosting it at your home please let the Ladies President Julie know.

Thank you Ladies for your all hard work and support during the whole year and hope to see you all in Church.

Have a blessed and happy Summer and God bless you All.

***Yours in Christ***  
***Ladies Guild Secretaries***  
***Lydia Wakileh & Wissam Farraj***

### **Men's Club**

Men's Club meeting was held on Thursday, June 11th 7:00 pm in the St. Mark Church Hall. We had a guest speaker, Very Rev. Fr. Josiah Trenham from St. Andrew of Riverside. Fr. Josiah's discussion was on The Apostles Fast: Its Meaning and History.

Dinner was served and enjoyed by all.  
Men's Club Next meeting to be announced at the weekly bulletin.

***Respectfully submitted by***  
***Don Skaff/Men's Club Secretary***

### **Teen SOYO**

Teens have been busy preparing for the Bible Bowl at the upcoming Parish Life Conference. We are preparing three teams this year, two Senior teams and a Junior team. Many of our teens will also be attending St. Our Nicholas Camp this summer.

***Jay Skaff***  
***Teen Secretary***

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**  
**July**

Seham Aldada 7/6

Daniel Attalla 7/21  
Gabriel Attalla 7/24  
Ghassan Awayjan 7/9  
Mayssa Azzam 7/7  
Phillip Bahbah 7/2  
Samir Billeh 7/21  
Rita Billeh 7/26  
Leo Chade 7/14  
George Chami 7/28  
Annabelle Dabit 7/1  
Tony Debbas 7/28  
Huda Debbas 7/14  
Mathew Ellis 7/15  
Natalie Eadeh 7/28  
Sandella Goson 7/27  
Norman Haffty 7/28  
Esperance Hadshiti 7/15  
Wafa Hanna 7/29  
Julia Jirjis 7/6  
Elise Kalache 7/1  
Reem Karkar 7/11  
Wael Kashou 7/1  
Steven Khamis 7/18  
Elias Khamis 7/8  
Donna Laffoon 7/6  
Nicholas Mamey 7/18  
Anne Mansour 7/1  
Nabil Mitri 7/12  
Robert Mokbel 7/18  
Don Nassif 7/15  
Irene Novac 7/2  
Tony Rodriguez 7/12  
Tymour Saba 7/3  
Rocky Sayegh 7/31  
Chloe Shaheen 7/2  
Sophia Skaff 7/27  
Penny Skaff 7/8  
Seth Skaff 7/8  
Simon Sliheet 7/19  
Robert Smathers 7/9  
Rami Tarazi 7/8  
Devon Grace Tax 7/29  
Dave Tax Jr. 7/27  
Tiffany Tomeo 7/27  
Stephanie Turk 7/11  
Brittany Turk 7/8  
Eleanor Wackeen 7/1  
Christopher Wakileh 7/13  
Morella Youssef  
Nour Youssef

Samantha Zadah 7/18

**AUGUST**

Nassrin Artoul 8/14

Salwa Bahbah 8/28

Randy Bahbah 8/13

Ryan Boratynec 8/9

Serene Batarseh 8/17

Dana Chade 8/5

Rania Chami 8/29

Lauris Debbas 8/16

Marwan Dabit 8/13

Rula Dabit 8/1

Victoria Donovan 8/9

Mark Ellis 8/5

Eileen Ellis 8/25

Samira Fasheh 8/24

Majed Fasheh 8/18

Jimmy Goson Jr. 8/6

Joseph Haffty 8/12

Charlie Hanna 8/17

Madeline Hanna 8/19

Charlotte Hanna 8/10

Sandi Hanna 8/15

Salma Hanna 8/21

Kh. Nina Irish 8/1

Natalie Kassir 8/21

Tracy Khamis 8/28

Michael Khamis 8/31

James Kishek 8/21

Vijay Kumar 8/19

Joseph Laffoon 8/5

Johnny Liqueete 8/30

Mary Rose Mamey 8/29

Jamal Qutami 8/8

Rachel Ranney 8/30

Yasmeen Rizkalla 8/22

Stella Saba 8/27

Christopher Scholl 8/1

Perla Shaheen 8/4

Nawal Sliheet 8/25

Roger Tierney 8/22

Christina Tomeo 8/31

George Toubbeh 8/23

William Turk 8/14

James Whitacre 8/28

Robert Whitehead 8/4

Hany Youssef 8/5

Maryan Youssef 8/22

Noriek Zadah 8/4

Leo Zadah 8/5

Ted Zogob 8/12

**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY**

**JULY**

Paul & June Anter 7/30

Samir & Afifa Artoul 7/8

Gabriel & Samira Attalla 7/11

Issa & Julie Bahbah 7/23

Randy & May Dabbah 7/30

Marwan & Rula Dabit 7/12

Omar & Fatin Fakhouri 7/5

Majed & Bunia Fasheh 7/11

Melad & Wafa Hanna 7/9

Isa & Barbara Khamis 7/9

Elias & Hilda Khamis 7/18

Dimitri & Kandy Kort 7/30

Nabil & Susie Mitri 7/16

Steve & Barbara Scholl 7/18

**AUGUST**

Edward & Dana Chade 8/15

Sami & Wissam Farraj 8/31

Abe & Diana Khamis 8/28

Nabil & Anne Mansour 8/15

Elias & Jean Nasrawi 8/29

Sammy & Lana Nino 8/12

Kendall & Ronda Schorr 8/19

Shouki & Majida Soury 8/4

***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 15<sup>th</sup> of the month to the Church office (949-851-8933)***

**SAINT MARK ANTIOCHIAN  
ORTHODOX CHURCH  
17840 SKY PARK CIRCLE  
IRVINE, CA 92614  
JULY & AUGUST 2015  
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