

# **THE APOSTLE**

## **MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

### **June 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

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**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**

**Fast of the Holy Apostles**

*By Archpriest Ayman Kfouf*

### **Origins of the Fast of the Apostles**

The Fast of the Holy Apostles is dated back to early years of the church. The first evidence of this fast is found in the writings of St. Athanasius the Great (†373). In his letter to Emperor Constance, he writes: *"During the week following Pentecost, the people who observed the fast went out to the cemetery to pray."* Some 20 years later, St. Ambrose (†397) writes: *"On the days following his ascension into heaven, however, we again fast"* (Sermon 61).

The famous pilgrim Egeria mentioned the Apostles' Fast also in her fourth-century-writing which records that *"on the day following the feast of Pentecost, a period of fasting began"*. In the same period, the fourth century, the Apostolic Constitutions prescribes: *"After the feast of Pentecost, celebrate one week, then observe a fast, for justice demands rejoicing after the reception of the gifts of God and lasting after the body has been refreshed."*

Until the second half of the 3rd century, the Fast of the Holy Apostles was linked to Pentecost and lasted only for one week (Apostolic Constitutions). Later on, after the martyrdom of the apostles Peter and Paul and following the development of the commemoration of their death around the year 258, the Apostles' Fast became linked to the feast of Saints Peter and Paul on June 29. Consequently, it became a fasting period of preparation for the celebration of the feast of the great apostles. St. Symeon of Thessalonica (†1429) explains: *"The Fast of the Apostles is justly established in their honor, for through them we have received numerous benefits and for us they are exemplars and teachers*

*of the fast ... For one week after the descent of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the Apostolic Constitution composed by Clement, we celebrate, and then during the following week, we fast in honor of the Apostles."*

Subsequently, the duration of the Fast of the Holy Apostles changed from one week to a variable period depending on the date of the Feast of Pascha (Easter).

### **Duration of the Fast of the Apostles**

The fast of the Holy Apostles starts on the second Monday after Pentecost. The duration of this fast varies, depending on the date of Pascha (Easter). The rule is that the Fast starts on the second Monday after Pentecost and ends on June 29, on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. According to the new calendar, the Apostles' Fast could last as short as 8 days and as long as 30 days (42 days according to the old calendar).

### **Fasting Rules of the Fast of the Holy Apostles**

The Fast of the Holy Apostles is not as strict as the Fasts of Pascha and the Nativity of Christ; rather it is more lenient in its duration and rules. The current rules of fasting, during the Apostles' Fast, were established first for the monks of the Monastery of the Kiev Caves by Metropolitan George of Kiev (1069-1072). These rules are still practiced today amongst most Orthodox Christians with minor variations, depending on the jurisdiction.

### **The rules are:**

1- *Red meat, poultry, and dairy products are not allowed during the entire fasting period in all weekdays.*

2- *Fish, wine, and oil are allowed on all days except on Wednesdays and Fridays.*

### **Conclusion**

The Apostles fast has emerged since the very early days of Christianity. It is honored and preserved in the Church as a part of our Holy Tradition. Like all Fasts in the Orthodox Church, the Holy Apostles' Fast aims to help us put on the "armor of light" to against the attacks of the enemy that may befall during our spiritual journey to become united with God through His grace. No better words may express the importance of fasting in our life like the words of St. Abba Isaac the Syrian who says, "*... since fasting is a weapon established by God ...the human race knew no victory before fasting, and the devil was never defeated by our nature as it is: but this weapon has indeed deprived the devil of*

*strength from the outset... As soon as the devil sees someone possessed of this weapon (fasting), fear straightway falls on this adversary and tormentor of ours, who remembers and thinks of his defeat by the Saviour in the wilderness; his strength is at once destroyed and the sight of the weapon given us by our Supreme Leader burns him up. A man armed with the weapon of fasting is always afire with zeal. He who remains therein, keeps his mind steadfast and ready to meet and repel all violent passions."*

*Note: The Apostles Fast runs from the second Monday after Pentecost until Sts. Peter and Paul Day on June 29. With Pascha falling on April 12 this year, Pentecost falls on May 31. Consequently we have at three week Apostles fast this year (from June 8 to 28).*

### **Schedule of Special Services and Events, June 2015**

Sunday June 7 Last Day of Church School

Sunday June 14, Church School Awards

June 21 – Father's Day Luncheon

Tuesday June 23, 6:30 p.m. Evening Liturgy for Feast of Birth of St. John the Baptist

Monday June 29, Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul

### **Advance Calendar for July 2015**

July 1 to July 5, Western Diocese Parish Life Conference, Irvine CA (hosted by St. Andrew Church, Riverside)

July 4, U.S. Independence Day

July 20 to 26, Antiochian Archdiocese Biennial Convention, Boston MA

### **Metropolitan Joseph's Schedule**

June 2-26 Travel to Lebanon for the meeting of the Holy Synod of Antioch and other important visitations

**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  
Parish & Organizations News**

**June 2**

**SAINT NICEPHORUS, CONFESSOR AND  
PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE**

Nicephorus was a nobleman of Constantinople. His father Theodore, a high-ranking official of the imperial court, was wealthy and pious. Nicephorus served at the court for several years in the same profession as his father. Seeing all the vanity of the world, he withdrew to the shores of the Bosphorus and founded a monastery. The monastery was quickly filled with monks and he governed it but was not willing to receive the monastic tonsure under the pretext that he was not worthy, even though, in all things he served as a model to all. Before that, he participated in the Seventh Ecumenical Council [Nicaea, 787 A.D.] as a layman at the wishes of the emperor and the patriarch and the Council benefited greatly by his superior knowledge of Sacred Scripture. When Patriarch Tarasius died, Nicephorus was elected patriarch against his will. Immediately following his election in the year 806 A.D., he received the monastic tonsure and in succession all other ecclesiastical ranks. He was enthroned as patriarch in the Church of the Divine Wisdom of God [Hagia Sophia]. This took place during the reign of Emperor Nicephorus who immediately, after that, went to war against the Bulgarians and was slain. His son, Stauracius, reigned only two months and died. After him, the good Emperor Michael, surnamed Rangabe, ruled but he reigned for only two years until he was overthrown by Leo the Armenian and banished into exile. When Leo was crowned, the patriarch sent him a book of the Orthodox Confession of Faith to sign (according to the custom of all Byzantine

emperors which was considered an oath that they will uphold and defend the True Faith). The emperor did not sign it but rather postponed it until after the coronation. When the patriarch crowned him, Leo refused to sign the book and quickly proved himself to be a heretic; an iconoclast. The patriarch attempted to advise him and to restore him to the True Faith, but in vain. The emperor forcibly banished Nicephorus into exile to the island of Proconnesus where he remained for thirteen years enduring every kind of misery and privation and entered eternity in the year 827 A.D. As patriarch he governed the Church of Christ for nine years.

**June 10**

**SAINT BASSIAN, THE BISHOP OF LODI**

Bassian was born a pagan in Syracuse of prominent and wealthy pagan parents. He was educated in philosophy in Rome. By his earnest desire, he was baptized by the pious Elder Gordianus. This offended his parents and, to escape their wrath, and according to the command of Saint John the Theologian, who appeared to him, Bassian traveled to Ravenna and reported to Bishop Ursus, his kinsman. At the advice of the bishop, Bassian took up residence at the church of the Holy Martyr Apollinarius, outside the city. There he lived a long life of asceticism, of labor, of fasting and of prayer. When the bishop of the city of Lodi in Liguria died, Bassian was elected according to a revelation in a dream even though he did not desire it. He was consecrated bishop by Ambrose of Milan and Ursus of Ravenna. Bassian possessed the great gift of healing and could also resurrect the dead. Bassian was present at the final moments of Saint Ambrose and heard from his mouth how he sees the Lord Jesus Christ. Bassian lived in labor and asceticism to an old age and in the ninetieth year of his life died and was translated into the Kingdom of God about the year 409 A.D. Bassian's holy relics remained miracle-working to witness to the power of God and the greatness of God's saints.

**HYMN OF PRAISE  
SANT BASSIAN**

Saint Bassian, loved the Lord,  
Bassian holy, to the Lord prayed,  
Upon him, the merciful Lord bestowed Grace,  
What all men do, Bassian discerned,

How the demons dance the evil dance,  
 And how, men to evil, they incite.  
 Once Bassian through the town walked,  
 Saw a merchant, as he falsely weighs,  
 And on the scale, stands the devil black,  
 And crookedly weighs and wrongly counts,  
 To the merchant it is dear, that all men he deceives  
 And with a few goods, makes a lot of profit!  
 Bassian holy, toward the store walks:  
 To the merchant cried out: Open your eyes!  
 Because of easy gain, O do not be glad,  
 Open your eyes behold your partner!  
 In that the merchant, his eyes were opened,  
 Noticed the devil and fell backward,  
 Filled with fear, filled with trembling,  
 All gain he saw was cursed.  
 Began to sob bitterly and before the saint knelt  
 To Bassian he said: Pray for me.  
 Repent ye, Repent! Bassian instructs him,  
 That your soul eternally does not suffer,  
 To his accomplice the devil, the money he gives,  
 But he [the devil] his soul seeks in return.

### REFLECTION

It is not the same to eat your meal with a blessing and to eat it without a blessing. Every meal is the table of God, which God Himself has set for us. This is why it is necessary as a householder to thank God and to beg for His blessings. Blessed food is more tasty and more satisfying while unblest food is untasty, unsatisfying and unhealthy. On one occasion, Emperor Theodosius the Younger went for a walk in the surroundings of Constantinople and seeing the hut of a monk stopped and visited. The elder asked the emperor would he desire something to eat? "I do," answered the emperor. The elder brought bread, oil, salt and water before the emperor. The emperor ate and drank and then asked the monk: "Do you know who I am?" "God knows who you are," replied the monk. "I am Emperor Theodosius." The monk bowed down before the emperor silently. The emperor said to him: "I am an emperor and am born of an emperor but, believe me, never in my life have I eaten so tastily as I have today with you." "And do you know why?" answered the elder. "Because," he continued, "we monks always prepare our food with prayer and blessing; it is from that, that bitter food for us is transformed into tasty; with you, however, food is prepared with much labor and you do not seek a

blessing (from God) and because of that tasty food becomes tasteless."

### CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the miraculous healing of the man with a withered hand: "A man with a withered hand happened to be there and they put this question to Jesus, hoping to bring an accusation against him: 'Is it lawful to work a cure on the Sabbath?' " (St. Matthew 12:10):

1. How the Lord said to the man with the withered hand: Stretch out your hand! And he stretched it out;
2. How even my hands are withered when I do not give charity. The Lord continually speaks to me: Stretch out your hand!

### June 23

### THE COMMEMORATION OF THE ICON OF THE ALL-HOLY BIRTH-GIVER OF GOD [THEOTOKOS] OF THE TOWN OF VLADIMIR

When the Tartar King Ahmet besieged Moscow, Prince John Vasillievitch set out with an army to defend the city. Even though the army of Prince John was smaller in number and weaker than the Tartar army, nevertheless, it emerged victorious. All at once, an indescribable fear overcame the Tartars and they became confused and fled. Everyone ascribed this unexpected success to the icon of the All-Holy Birth-giver of God before whom the Russian people prayed for salvation from the Tartars. As a result of this, June 23 was designated in Russia for the commemoration of this miracle.

### Parish & Organizations News

#### Ladies Guild

Our Ladies Guild had their monthly meeting on 5/3/15, started with the Ladies prayers led by Fr. Michael, with 15 ladies in attendance.

#### Sunshine Report by Khoria Donna Laffoon:

get well cards were sent to Saeda Turk for the passing of her aunt, Rima Tarazi for the passing of her cousin, Maha Kureh, Michael Asaly, and Randy Bahbah.

**Treasurer's report by Gisele Awayjan & Theresa Joubran;** Total ending balance 8348.34

Our **Mother Daughter Spring Tea party** was Chaired by Denise Nassif and Lydia Wakileh, on **Sunday May 17<sup>th</sup>** at the church hall. It was a great success, with 120 Ladies and little girls attending They all enjoyed the gourmet lunch, the dessert and the fellowship. The little girls had a very adorable Fashion Show and they enjoyed their Dessert table which was decorated and prepared by Brenda Tax and Kim Ranney.

On **May 31<sup>st</sup>**, the Ladies Guild helped at the **Focus Ministry by Feeding** the people at Valencia Inn, Anaheim. Thanks to all the Ladies who helped in cooking at the kitchen and the ladies who helped in Serving the food at the Valencia Inn.

The Ladies Guild will be hosting a **Father's Day lunch** on **June 21** and they are planning on serving a Fasting menu because we will be in the Apostle Fasting.

**Bible Study by Fr. Michael** is held on the **2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday** of each month at the church at 10:30 am, Please try to attend.

Our Ladies Guild next meeting will be held on **June 18<sup>th</sup>**, please plan on joining us.

**Parish Life Conference** will be held on July 2nd please Join us and support Saint Andrew Orthodox Church and enjoy fellowship with fellow Orthodox Christians from through out the Diocese and beyond.

We would like to hear from you always so please take one of the **surveys** and tell us what other ideas and teaching you would like to see at the Ladies meetings.

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

### **Men's Club**

Men had served a nice Luncheon on Mother's Day to honor all the mothers at our church. Thanks to Austin Turk our president and to Jacob Bahbah for

hosting this luncheon and to all the men who helped at this event.

Next Men's club meeting is Thursday June 11<sup>th</sup>.

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

### **Teen SOYO**

The Teen had a car wash fund raising on Sunday May 3<sup>rd</sup> and the raised over a thousand dollars which they donated towards the Church building Fund Project, Well done! Teen SOYO shared with Mother's day celebration on Sunday May 10<sup>th</sup>, by giving pink roses to all the mothers at church on Mother's day.

*Jay Skaff*  
*Teen Secretary*

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY**

Joanna Aldada 6-2  
Michael Asaly 6-4  
Adele Bahbah 6-25  
Joe Bahbah 6-27  
Nicholas Bahbah 6-17  
Amanda Bahou 6/23  
Firas Billeh 6-5  
Edward Chade 6-19  
Alexandra Rose Chala 6-13  
James Dabbah 6-20  
Sally Debbas 6-4  
Gabriel Donovan 6-20  
Gregory Ellis 6-26  
Nicole Kalache 6/7  
Barbara Khamis 6-14  
Marlene Khamis 6-22  
Diana Khury 6-27  
Madison Kort 6-14  
Fr. Michael Laffoon 6-23  
Nader Qoborsi 6-19  
Suhair Qoborsi 6-23  
Carlos Rodriquez 6-20  
Rhonda Rodriquez 6-25  
Marwan Saba 6-8  
Ramzi Salameh 6-11  
Salam Samara 6-4  
Ramez Sayegh 6-20  
Barbara Scholl 6-21  
Rania Sliheet 6-29  
Rima Tarazi 6-8

Chadi Tarazi 6-30  
Dave Tax 6-6  
Nicholas Tomeo 6-29  
Karen Toubbeh 6-18  
Austin Turk 6-24  
Saeda Turk 6-29

**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY**

Sleiman & Seham Aldada 6-16  
Khalil & Majida Debbas 6-27  
Austin & Saeda Turk 6-24

*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)***

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