

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2015

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH

OF IRVINE,

Pastor's Column

St. Andrew of Crete: A Rival Voice

By Fr. Lawrence Farley, pastor of St. Herman of Alaska Church, Surrey, B.C.

Every year during Lent, we invite into our churches a great pastor, Saint Andrew of Crete, and listen while he leads us in a meditation on sin and repentance. That is, we listen while his Great Canon is chanted, and in response we reply over and over again, "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me!" Some things in this long poetic work might strike some moderns as a bit jarring, if not downright pathological — all this self-flagellation over our sins, this torrent of anguish and self-aborrence. Is all this really necessary? Is it even healthy?

A quick and superficial perusal of the text might leave us wondering. "There has never been a sin or act or vice in life that I have not committed, O Savior. I have sinned in mind, word, and choice, in purpose, will and action, as no one else has ever done.... I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned against Thee. Be merciful to me. For there is no one who has sinned among men whom I have not surpassed by my sins.... From my youth, O Christ, I have rejected Thy commandments. I have passed my whole life without caring or thinking, a slave of my passions. Therefore, O Savior, I cry to Thee: at least in the end save me!" Isn't all this self-condemnation a bit much? And how accurate is it? Are all those people standing about in church for hours on end in Lent really as bad as all that?

Such questions miss the point of the Great Canon. The long meditation from the pen of Saint Andrew is not offered as an individual's personal confession of sin. It is not intended to be the sort of thing one shares with a psychiatrist while lying on his couch,

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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

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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

or with one's confessor while standing before the Cross. It is not intended as autobiography, but as medicine. Like some medicines, it might seem a little severe, and even taste bitter. But it is exactly the medicine that we need, however it might taste.

The disease the medicine is intended to cure is the one now afflicting large segments of our modern secular population — that of careless and serene self-righteousness. We far too easily fall into the assumption that we are pretty sensational spiritually, and that we have racked up an impressive score. We soon enough become blind to our true spiritual state. We can see others' sins clearly enough, especially when they sin against us, but our own failings often seem to elude us.

I remember this kind of delusional approach being expressed on the radio one afternoon. A lady was being interviewed about her life and her life choices, and she said that she really couldn't bring herself to regret anything she had ever done, because all her actions combined to make her the person she was today. Quite the confession! Really—she couldn't bring herself to regret *anything*? *Ever in all her life*? Speaking personally, I can find plenty of things I regret doing, saying, and thinking in the last twenty-four hours, never mind all my life. The interviewed lady seems to reflect a culture in the last stages of the "I'm Okay; You're Okay" disease. We are just fine spiritually, and we can't bring ourselves to regret anything we have done.

Into this den of insanity comes Saint Andrew of Crete, bearing just the right medicine. We need to hear him, to listen to our conscience afresh, and to submissively receive inner rebuke. Something inside of us is indeed broken and dark, diseased and dying. By confessing the brokenness, by admitting to the darkness, we can begin to separate ourselves from them, and to find healing and soundness of mind and peace. The World with its lies shouts at us every day, all day long, without ceasing. We need a rival voice, the voice of sanity, a voice calling us home. We need Saint Andrew and his Great Canon. Maybe that is why he is so welcome in our churches every Lent.

[The Canon of St. Andrew is heard at Great Compline services in the first week of Lent and again during the 5th week.]

Fr. Michael

THE LENTEN FAST (Lent began on February 23)

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.

SPECIAL SERVICES/EVENTS IN MARCH

Sunday March 1 is the First Sunday of Lent – There will be an Orange County Sunday of Orthodoxy Service at St. Paul Greek Orthodox Church at 6:00 p.m. (flyer attached)

Lenten Week Day Service Schedule

Mondays Great Compline 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday Liturgy of Pre-Sacrtified Gifts, 6:30 p.m.

Friday Little Compline with Akathist Hymn, 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday March 25, Evening Liturgy, Feast of the Annunciation 6:30 p.m.

General Lenten service schedule:

Monday Great Compline 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday Liturgy of Pre-Sacrtified Gifts, 6:30 p.m.

Friday Little Compline with Akathist Hymn, 7:00 p.m.

April 2014 Advanced Calendar

April 5, Palm Sunday

April 6, Start of Holy Week

April 12, GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

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

MARCH 3RD

**THE HOLY MARTYRS, EUTROPIUS,
CLEONICUS AND BASILLISCUS**

They were companions of St. Theodore Tiro. When the righteous Theodore gloriously died, they remained behind in prison, and for a long time they were not sentenced due to a change in the emperor's deputy in the city of Amasea. When the new governor arrived, more inhuman than his predecessor, he ordered that these three be brought before him. All three were youths. Eutropius and Cleonicus were blood brothers, and Basilliscus was a kinsman of St. Theodore. All three were like blood brothers in brotherly love. As such, they said before the governor, "As the Holy Trinity is undivided, so also are we by our faith undivided and in love inseparable." In vain was all the flattery on the part of the governor and in vain were his attempts to bribe Eutropius. First of all, the deputy invited Eutropius to dine with him. Eutropius refused, quoting from the Psalms, "Happy the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked" (Psalm 1:1). After that, the deputy offered him a large amount of money, one hundred-fifty litres of silver, which Eutropius also refused and reminded the governor that because of silver, Judas lost his soul. After all attempts at interrogation and torture, the first two were sentenced to be crucified, and Basilliscus was sentenced to be beheaded. And so it was, two brothers crucified on two crosses for which they gave thanks to Christ that He made them worthy of the same death by which He Himself died. The third, Basilliscus, was beheaded. They all entered the Kingdom of Joy where St. Theodore, their commander, awaited them and who before them was glorified by Christ the Lord and Victor. They suffered honorably in the year 308 A.D.

MARCH 16TH

**THE HOLY APOSTLE ARISTOBULUS, ONE
OF THE SEVENTY APOSTLES**

Born in Cyprus, Aristobulus was the brother of the Apostle Barnabas. He followed the Apostle Paul, who mentions him in his Epistle to the Romans saying, "Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus" (Romans 16:10). When the great apostle appointed many bishops throughout the various parts of the world, he appointed Aristobulus as bishop for the British, that is, England. In Britain the people were savages, heathen and wicked. Aristobulus endured many indescribable tortures, misfortunes and evil among them. They struck and beat him mercilessly, dragged him about the streets, ridiculed and mocked him. Finally this holy man succeeded by the power of the Grace of God. He enlightened the people, baptized them in the name of Christ the Lord, built churches, ordained priests and deacons and, in the end, died there peacefully and entered into the Kingdom of the Lord, Whom he faithfully served.(*)

(*). In the Greek Synaxarion the Venerable Christodulos is also mentioned on this day. He lived a life of asceticism on the island of Patmos, where he build a monastery dedicated to St. John the Theologian. He died in the year 1111 A.D. Many miracles ocured over his relics.

MARCH 25TH

THE ANNUNCIATION

When the All-Holy Virgin completed the fourteenth year after her birth and was entering her fifteenth year, after having spent eleven years of living and serving in the Temple of Jerusalem, the priests informed her that, according to the Law, she could not remain in the Temple but was required to be betrothed and enter into marriage. What a great surprise to the priests was the answer of the All-Holy Virgin that she had dedicated her life to God and that she desired to remain a Virgin until death, not wanting to enter into marriage with anyone! Then, according to Divine Providence, Zacharias, the high priest and father of the Forerunner, under the inspiration of God, and in agreement with the other priests, gathered twelve unwed men from the

Tribe of David to betroth the Virgin Mary to one of them to preserve her virginity and to care for her. She was betrothed to Joseph of Nazareth who was her kinsman. In the house of Joseph, the All-Holy Virgin continued to live as she did in the Temple of Solomon, occupying her time in the reading of Sacred Scripture, in prayer, in Godly-thoughts, in fasting and in handiwork. She rarely went anywhere outside the house nor was she interested in worldly things and events. She spoke very little to anyone, if at all, and never without special need. More frequently she communicated with both of Joseph's daughters. When the fullness of time had come, as prophesied by Daniel the Prophet, and when God was pleased to fulfill His promise to the banished Adam and to the Prophets, the great Archangel Gabriel appeared in the chamber of the All-Holy Virgin and, as some priestly writers wrote, precisely at that same moment when she held open the book of the Prophet Isaiah and was contemplating his great prophecy: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son!" (Isaiah 7:13). Gabriel appeared in all of his angelic brightness and saluted her: "Rejoice, highly favored one! The Lord is with you" (St. Luke 1:28), and the rest in order as it is written in the Gospel of the saintly Luke. With this angelic annunciation and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Virgin, the salvation of mankind and restoration of all creation began. The history of the New Testament was opened by the words of the Archangel Gabriel: "Rejoice, highly favored one" This is to imply that the New Testament was to signify joy to mankind and to all created things. It is from this that the Annunciation is considered not only a great feast, but a joyful feast as well.

MARCH 31TH

THE PRIESTLY-MARTYR HYPATIUS THE BISHOP OF GANGRA

Hypatius was born in Cilicia and was the bishop of Gangra. He was present at the First Ecumenical Council [Nicaea, 325. A.D.] and was renowned throughout because of his pious and saintly life and his miracle-working. The Emperor Constantius ordered that a likeness of Hypatius be made during the saint's lifetime. The emperor kept this likeness in his palace as a weapon against all adverse powers. Once upon returning from Constantinople,

Hypatius was attacked in a narrow gorge by Novatian heretics and, along with others, was hurled to the ground in mud. At that moment a woman from that group struck him in the head with a stone and, thus, the saint died. Immediately that woman went insane and took that same stone and struck herself with it. When they took her to the grave of St. Hypatius, he interceded before God on her behalf. She was healed by the great compassionate soul of Hypatius and lived the remainder of her life in repentance and prayer. St. Hypatius died and took up habitation in the eternal Kingdom of Christ the God, in the year 326 A.D.

Parish & Organizations News

Baptised into Christ

On Januray 3rd, Levoni Zadah, son of Noriek and Nancy Zadah at St. Mark Church in Irvine. Her godmother is Rita Zarour and her godfather is Randy Bahbah.

On January 24th, Adella Xenia Tannous, daughter of David and Juliana (Turk) Tannous at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Los Angeles by Metropolitan Joseph and Father Michael Laffoon. Her godmother is Laurence Tannous and her godfather is Anthony Turk

Ladies Guild

The Ladies Guild had their meeting on Sunday February 8th; it started with a prayer by the Ladies President Julie Bahbah with 25 Ladies in attendance.

Treasurer Report was given by Theresa Joubran /Giselle Awayjan.

Sunshine Report was given by Khouria Donna. Get well card was sent to Michael Asaly. Please keep him in your prayers.

Scrip Report was given by Saeda Turk who raised \$2500.00 from the program we encourage everybody to use it.

Old Business:

We would like to thank all the ladies that helped bake Spinach Pies for The Christmas Bake sale. Special thanks to Theresa Joubran who baked 200 pieces at home.

Bake Sale, we would like to thank Maryse Benjamin & Barbra Khamis for chairing this event and to all the Ladies that baked.

Zalabieh Luncheon, thanks to Gisele Awayjan for chairing this event and to all the Ladies that donated the food, and helped to set up and cleaned up.

Ladies Christmas Luncheon, thanks to Lydia Wakileh for chairing this event. The party and the fellowship were enjoyed by 47 Ladies that attended. It was a great success.

Metropolitan Joseph Luncheon Special thanks to Hiam Sayegh for preparing the food for the Metropolitan, and all the Ladies who helped.

Father Michael hosted our local Orthodox Priests for lunch on Tuesday January 27 at the Church. Thanks to Julie Bahbah, Barbra Khamis and Lydia Wakileh for hosting.

New Business:

The Ladies Guild sponsored the Valentine Dance on February 14th. It was chaired by Afifa Artoul and Gisele Awayjan. We would like to thank each and every one who supported this event. Many thanks to all who donated items for the Raffle, and to those who encouraged their friends to attend.

Lenten lunch: will be held on March 22 and profit of this lunch will be donated to the Antiochian Women's Project "Nurturing the Seeds of Orthodoxy Across North America" to benefit "Regional Camping and Learning Centers" and "Monastic Communities". We encourage all the Ladies to help in this event please by signing up with Gisele Awayjan to donate for the luncheon.

March is Antiochian Women's month, the Ladies will participate in Ushering, Reading the Epistle and serving during the 5 weeks of March.

Bible Study by Fr. Michael the 2nd Thursday of each month at the church at 10.30 am please try to attend.

Holy Bread is always needed for the Church, so we need more bakers. We will be having a class of how

to make the Holy Bread during the Ladies Guild next Meeting on Thursday March 5th at 6:30 p.m.

Southern California Diocesan Antiochian Women's Retreat

36th Annual Spring Retreat

Camp St. Nicholas, Frazier Park CA

St. Mary of Egypt Weekend-March 27-29, 2015

To ensure availability of space and accurate planning, please register and pay online or fill out and return the application included in this newsletter with your check by March 20, 2015 Final deadline.

For early bird rate register by March 6.

If you are interested in going on Saturday **only** the fee is \$60 including 3 meals. See the retreat schedule included in this newsletter.

If we have enough Ladies interested on going from St. Mark for one day on Saturday March 28th, we will arrange rental transportation.

A limited number of Scholarships are available from the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West Antiochian Women to attend the Spring Diocesan Retreat each year.

Please see Lydia for more details.

Because your input is very important to us, please take one of the survey and tell us what other ideas and teaching you would like to see at the Ladies ministry. Please plan to attend the monthly meeting and share your ideas with the ladies.

Men's Club

Sunday February 1st the Men's Club hosted their first Super Bowl Party in the Church hall. Over 100 people attended. The Men's Club made over \$3000.00 and everyone seemed to have a good time. Congratulations to the winners of the \$50 raffle/pool:

1st Qtr: Ibrahim Khamis \$500

2nd Qtr: Heba Khoury \$500

3rd Qtr: Rony Hannounah \$500

Final: Lew Malouf \$1,000

Thank you to: Phillip Bahbah, Saeda Turk, Randy Dabbah, Randy Bahbah and all the ladies who assisted with this event.

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

Teen SOYO

On February 8th, the Teen SOYO had their monthly meeting at the church.

On January 23rd we attended Vespers, went ice skating, and then went to dinner at Chili's.

Our next event was February 27th. We had a special vespers at 6:30 p.m. with Father Michael followed by a Potluck dinner and a game night.

*Jay Skaff
Teen's Secretary*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Sleiman Aldada 3/11
Diana Aldada 3/4
Joseph Attallah 3/27
Sarah Asaly 3/10
Gisele Awayjan 3/24
Anahid Azzouni 3/19
Jacob Bahbah 3/1
Nicholas Bahou 5/26
Wally Batarseh 3/12
Lucy Billeh 3/20
Samir Billeh 3/3
Nuha Daher 3/23
Mark El-Hinn 3/30
Dina Elsayegh 3/30
Nicole Fakhouri 3/1
Katrina Fakhouri 3/26
Carole Jo Goson 3/29
Anton Hadoub 3/17
Wetcka Haffty 3/19
Sameer Hanna 3/17
Amanda Hanna 3/25
Mary –Margret Hanna 3/26
George Hanna 3/21
Fr. Patrick Irish 3/12
Maurice Karkar 3/25
Mitri Khamis 3/6
Tanya Khamis 3/4
Samir Khamis 3/20
Amanda Khoury 3/5
Melissa Khoury 3/19

Najat Khury 3/20

Elena Khury 3/29

Jerri Mamey 3/26

Nabil Mansour 3/24

Linda Mokbel 3/31

Liana Munayyer 3/3

Walid Najjar 3/11

Elizabeth Nassar 3/2

Daniel Rizkallah 3/16

Deena Salameh 3/23

Ramsey Samara 3/18

Jamal Sayegh 3/3

Samira Skaff 3/29

Juliana Tannous (Turk) 3/4

Richard Tierney 3/2

Martha Toubbeh 3/30

Isabella Turk 3/10

Osama Turk 3/12

Michael Wakileh 3/23

Lydia Wakileh 3/25

Matthew Whitacre 3/19

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Samir & Maysa Azzam 3/4

Carlos & Rhonda Rodriguez 3/1

George & Martha Toubbeh 3/28

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 15th of the month to the Church office (949-851-8933)

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