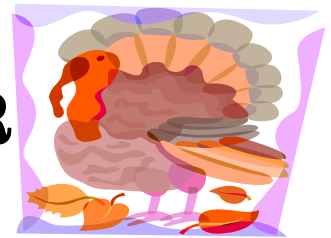




# **THE APOSTLE**

## **MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

### **NOVEMBER 2014**



# **SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH**

## **OF IRVINE**

### **HAPPY THANKSGIVING**

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Website: [www.st-mark-church.org](http://www.st-mark-church.org)

**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**

#### **Commitment to the Truth, Metropolitan George Khodr, Archdiocese of Mt. Lebanon**

I do not think that the Orthodox say that the Holy Synod leads the Church in terms of it being an executive authority as opposed to those who say that the Church has a single person who leads it... They are not prepared to say, if we wish to be precise, that they have an administrative body for spiritual leadership. They reject as a matter of principle any imitation of the civil order. But apart from its statements, they have a sense of collectivity and of concord. This is what they call a holy synod, something for which there is no image in the civil order.

It is not a parliament of bishops. It is an act of making effort for unity. There is no value to numbers in it except as a symbol of the direction being taken in dogma or pastoral practice. That which is desired is God's will in the topic at hand. It is not to advocate a democratic order, since there is no say in it except God's word.

If Eastern Christians talk about conciliarity, they are not setting up a democratic order in place of an autocratic order, if such could be considered to exist in Christianity. The Catholics themselves do not say that the Papal system is autocratic. As in Orthodoxy, it is in principle based on the entire community. However, since collective leadership does not mean that the Church has a democratic system, so-called collective leadership is only a symbolic expression

used to indicate the single purpose, and thus it is an act of making effort. For us the group is not a substitute for the individual. It is merely an effort towards being an image of the totality of the faith that has been inherited across generations, the faith handed down to us from the Apostles.

Thus the concept of numbers is meaningless in the council of bishops when they gather. That which is desired is the tradition. That is, authenticity and submission to that which was handed down "one time to the saints". Consensus or quasi-consensus in the Holy Synod is the principle image of commitment to the truth. Relying on a decision based on a majority vote is merely a practical agreement whose aim is to examine the issue. It is no sense means that it binds the conscience of any bishop. Yes, there is a general administrative life that is manifest in agreement or near-agreement. It is not true to say that the council of bishops does not err when it gathers together. The Church has rejected at least one council in the fourth century that brought together hundreds of bishops. Truth or wisdom has nothing to do with the number of voters or electors. It is above councils. The Church strives for it and no one can claim that a council of clergy possesses God's infallibility. This requires universal acceptance by the Church, which comes to be known in the life of the Church years later and after conflicts and it becomes manifest to the pure. I do not know of a single church in the Christian world that claims for its leadership automatic infallibility merely by issuing a dogmatic or pastoral decision. The popular saying that the Orthodox believes in the infallibility of the ecumenical councils in no way means the believer is called to accept a synodal decision merely because it was issued. It means gradual acceptance by believers as a whole, repeated acceptance by council after council and the emergence of a conviction among God's holy nation.

Truth is an act of making effort because interpretation is an act of making effort. We do not have the principles of courts that make you believe automatically any decision issued by a council. There is what we call the consensus of the fathers. How can this be when there is no census and no presentation of facts? The consensus of the fathers comes to be known within history. That is, after it

has appeared, gradually and after discussion that may go on for a long time. In the Church there is nothing that resembles civil law on the surface. There is interpretation and exegesis, taking into account the reality of history and the words of the ancients. The truth is received through effort, not through the decision of an authority. This is proven by the fact that every decision of an authority is subject to the interpretation of subsequent authorities. At any time before the last day, truth is an act of effort made in holiness, love and brotherhood. If debate becomes vicious, there is no holiness.

The first ecumenical council, the Council of Nicaea which met in 325 and made explicit Christ's divinity and issued the Creed took generations to be accepted. No council, no matter how holy, is accepted immediately and automatically by the faithful. For us the council is not an authority. It is an image of the acceptance of the faithful, if they accept it. No ecclesiastical authority can say to you "We have gathered, O faithful, and you must accept," since the pure faithful may sometimes reply, "Your gathering concerns you. It does not concern us." Final say belongs to the Church gathered together in the Holy Spirit, not to a human authority in itself. God does not equate any authority to Himself. If it gathers together, if it speaks the truth and the Church recognizes it in her catholicity, it becomes an authority. We do not have a ruler with power on account of his position. Power belongs to what is said, not to who said it. The Christian's only leader is the truth.

**Feasts, Special Services and Events for  
November**

Saturday November 8, Feast of Holy Archangels Michael & Gabriel Divine Liturgy, location TBA

Saturday November 15, Beginning the Christmas Fast (Advent)

Thursday November 20, Feast of Presentation of Theotokos in the Temple 6:30 p.m. (Orthros at 5:30 p.m.)

**On Saturday November 15<sup>th</sup>, Advent (the Christmas Fast)** begins. This fast, which lasts exactly 40 days, prepares us to celebrate the Feast of the Nativity (Birth) of Jesus Christ, commonly known as Christmas. During this season we are reminded that the Christian life style must include alms giving (acts of charity), prayer and fasting. Therefore, we are asked to intensify these efforts. During Advent we should be praying more, giving more time and resources to those in need, eat less and more simply, and above all, seek to fast from sin. As usual, Wednesdays and Fridays are strict fasting days (abstention from all meat, poultry, dairy & egg products, alcohol and olive oil). Until December 20, the other days of the week we are to fast from all meat and meat products, with wine and olive oil allowed. As part of our Advent effort Orthodox Christians should also participate in the Sacrament of Confession.

Annual Pilgrimage

November 14-17, 2014

St. Michael Church, Las Vegas, NV

Episcopal Visit

**WEEKLY SERVICES**

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.

**NOTE:** Due to hall rentals and our construction, no Saturday Vespers will be held at St. Mark.

**Selected Saints of the Month**

**November 2**

**The Holy Martyrs Acyndinus, Pegasus, Anempodistus, Aphthonius, Elpidophorus and others with them**

They were all Christians from Persia and suffered during the reign of King Sapor in the year 355. The first three were servants at the court of this same king but secretly served Christ their Lord. When they were accused and brought to trial before the king, he asked them where they came from. To this they replied: "Our fatherland and our life is the Most-holy Trinity, one in Essence and undivided, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God." The king subjected them to cruel tortures but they endured all heroically, with psalmody and prayer on their lips. During the time of their torture and imprisonment angels of God appeared to them many times, and one time the Lord Christ Himself appeared to them as a man "with a face radiant as the sun." When one of the torturers, Aphthonius, beheld a miracle, when boiling lead did no harm to the martyrs, he believed in Christ and cried out: "Great is the Christian God!" For this, he was immediately beheaded, and many others saw and believed. Then the king ordered that Acyndinus, Pegasus and Anempodistus be sewn into animal skins and cast into the sea. But St. Aphthonius appeared from the other world with three shining angels, and led the holy martyrs to dry land and set them free. Elpidophorus was one of the king's nobles. When he revealed that he was a Christian

**December 2013 Advanced Calendar**

December 4, Commemoration of St. Barbara, St. John of Damascus

December 6, Commemoration of St. Nicholas

December 8, St. Nicholas Sunday

December 21, Ladies Guild pre-Christmas Bake Sale

December 25, Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, Jesus Christ

December 28, (Sunday) Church School Christmas Program; after Liturgy

December 31, Men's Club New Year's Eve Celebration

**Metropolitan Joseph's Schedule**

November 3-6, 2014

Antiochian Village, Ligonier, PA

Meeting of the Pastoral Practice Committee

November 8-10, 2014

St. Paisius Serbian Monastery, Safford, AZ

and denounced the king for his slaughter of innocent Christians, the king condemned him to death and Elpidophorus was beheaded along with seven thousand other Christians. Then those first three martyrs [Acyndinus, Pegasius and Anempodistus] were finally thrown into a burning furnace along with twenty-eight soldiers and the king's mother, since they also believed in Christ-and thus, in the flames, they gave up their righteous souls into the hands of the Lord.

### **November 9**

#### **Saint Simeon Metaphrastes [the Translator]**

Simeon was a gifted Constantinopolitan. He had both a secular and spiritual education. He attained the rank of imperial logothete [chancellor] and was first among the nobles at the imperial court, yet he lived a pure and blameless life as a true ascetic. He distinguished himself by great military bravery and statesmanly wisdom. For these qualities, Emperor Leo the Wise greatly respected him and sent him to Crete to negotiate a peace with the Arabs who then occupied the island. Successfully completing his mission, he returned to Constantinople and soon thereafter withdrew from the world and worldly affairs. He wrote many lives of saints, compiling 122 new biographies and correcting 539 biographies. He entered into rest in about the year 960, and a fragrant and healing myrrh flowed from his relics.

### **November 16**

#### **The Holy Apostle Matthew the Evangelist**

Matthew, son of Alphaeus, was a tax collector when the Lord saw him in Capernaum and said: Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him (Matthew 9:9). After that, Matthew prepared a reception for the Lord in his home and thus provided the occasion for the Lord to express several great truths about His coming to earth. After receiving the Holy Spirit, Matthew preached the Gospel to the Parthians, Medes and Ethiopians. In Ethiopia he appointed his follower Plato as bishop, and withdrew to prayerful solitude on a mountain, where the Lord appeared to him. Matthew baptized the wife and the son of the prince of Ethiopia, at which the prince became greatly enraged and dispatched a guard to bring Matthew to him for trial. The soldiers returned to

the prince saying that they had heard Matthew's voice, but could not see him with their eyes. The prince then sent a second guard. When this guard approached the apostle, he shone with a heavenly light so powerful that the soldiers could not look at him; filled with fear, they threw down their weapons and returned. The prince then went himself. Matthew radiated such light that the prince was instantly blinded. However, the holy apostle had a compassionate heart; he prayed to God, and the prince was given back his sight. Unfortunately, he saw only with physical eyes and not spiritual eyes. He arrested Matthew and subjected him to cruel tortures. Twice, a large fire was lighted on his chest, but the power of God preserved him alive and unharmed. Then the apostle prayed to God and gave up his spirit. The prince commanded that the martyr's body be placed in a lead coffin and thrown into the sea. The saint appeared to Bishop Plato and told him where the coffin bearing his body could be found. The bishop retrieved the coffin with Matthew's body from the sea. Witnessing this new miracle, the prince was baptized and received the name Matthew. After that, the prince left all the vanity of the world and became a presbyter and served the Church in a God-pleasing way. When Plato died, the Apostle Matthew appeared to the presbyter Matthew and counseled him to accept the episcopacy. He accepted the bishopric and, for many years, was a good shepherd until the Lord called him to His Immortal Kingdom. St. Matthew the Apostle wrote his Gospel in the Aramaic language. It was soon after translated into Greek and the Greek text has come down to us, while the Aramaic text has been lost. It is said of this evangelist that he never ate meat, but only vegetables and fruit.

### **November 25**

#### **The Hieromartyr Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria**

Peter was a disciple and successor of St. Theonas, Archbishop of Alexandria, and was for a time a teacher at Origen's famous school of philosophy. He ascended the archiepiscopal throne in the year 299, and died a martyr's death in 311, beside the grave of the Holy Apostle Mark. He governed the Church in a most difficult era, when assaults were being made against the faithful by unbelievers from without, and

by heretics from within. During his time, 670 Christians suffered in Alexandria. Often, whole families were led to the scaffold and executed. At the same time, the ungodly Arius was confusing the faithful with his false teaching. St. Peter cut him off from the Church and anathematized him, both in this world and in the next. The Lord Himself visited this great and wonderful saint in prison.

## **Parish & Organizations News**

### **Ladies Guild**

The Ladies Guild had their election in September for new Officers for the coming term 2014-2015, the newly Ladies Guild Officers:

President - Julie Bahbah  
Vice-President- Barbara Khamis  
Treasurers - Giselle Awayjan and Theresa Joubran  
Secretaries - Lydia Wakileh and Wisam Farraj  
Congratulation and May God Bless you!

The Ladies October 16<sup>th</sup> meeting was held at the Church. The meeting included the introduction of the new Ladies officers. A brief business meeting about the new business, potluck dinner and Bunco game.

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, Breast Cancer Awareness Walk was enjoyed by all the participants; on Sunday October 19<sup>th</sup> the Ladies Guild served the Pizza & Salad Luncheon which was enjoyed by the entire Parish. All profits from the Breast Cancer walk and the luncheon were benefiting Living Beyond Breast Cancer.

New business was discussed for the month of November like the Pre Thanksgiving lunch that will be served by the Ladies Guild on November 9th. A signup sheet was passed for that.

Next Ladies Guild meeting will be at the Church on Sunday November 16<sup>th</sup> after Liturgy.

*Lydia Wakileh*  
*Ladies Guild Secretary*

### **Men's Club**

Our Men's Club met at the Church, on Sunday October 26<sup>th</sup> after Liturgy. They had their elections for new officers for the coming term 2014-2015 and they are:

President - Austin Turk  
Vice President - Jacob Bahbah  
Secretary - Don Skaff  
Treasurer - Protodeacon George Moubayed

Next Men's Club meeting will be announced at the weekly bulletin.

*Don Skaff*  
*Men's club secretary*

### **Teen SOYO**

Elections were held for new officers at the Teen SOYO last meeting and they are:

President: Grace Bahbah  
Vice president: Alex Turk  
Secretary: Jay Skaff  
Treasurer: George Bahbah  
Historians: Paul Rodriguez-Anter and Christiana Tarazi  
8th grade representative: Youssef Youssef  
7th grade representative: Marianne Hannouneh

They discussed future activities:

- \* Teen SOYO Dance on October 25th at St. Anthony's
- \* Teen SOYO coffee hour sponsored by the Habeeb family on Sunday, October 26th
- \* Pre order pies on October 26th  
There is pumpkin, pecan, and apple pie available for sale
- \* Ask Abouna, Dinner, and Movie Night on Friday November 14th, the movie will be My Big Fat Greek Wedding.
- \* Christmas party at the Silheet's house. The official date is to be determined, but it may possibly be on December 28th

Jay Skaff  
Teen Secretary

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Angelina Alchammas 11/30  
Emad Alchammas 11/1  
George Aldada 11/1  
Amber Asaly 11/7  
Yorgo Awayjan 11/22  
Andy Bahbah 11/14  
Jake Bahbah 11/9  
Tarize Bahbah 11/11  
Geny Bahou 11/26  
Chris Bederov 11/13  
Diane Daruty 11/3  
Kayla Daruty 11/17  
Saad Elsayegh 11/6  
Spiro Fasheh 11/26  
Constantine Geronikolaou 11/17  
Paul Habeeb 11/28  
Alexander Haftty 11/7  
Melad Hanna 11/16  
Richard Hanna 11/18  
Anthony Hannouneh 11/23  
Richard Jirjis 11/11  
Sophia Joellson 11/25  
Rania Karkar 11/28  
Lana Kashou 11/7  
George Kassir 11/3  
Grace Khoury 11/19  
Violette Khamis 11/17  
Lourice Kishek 11/17  
George Mokbel 11/17  
Michel Moubayed 11/7  
Elias Nasrawi 11/26  
Denise Nassif 11/13  
Kristen Nassif 11/16  
Leilah Rodriguez 11/17  
Anthony Saadeh 11/28  
Randa Salameh 11/23  
Mufid Samara 11/25  
Autumn Schorr 11/16  
Ronda Schorr 11/5  
Kendall Schorr 11/22  
Fouad Shaker 11/19  
Pat Shaker 11/3  
Theodore Skaff 11/24  
Don Jr. Skaff 11/5  
Simon Sliheet 11/30

Sereen Soury 11/11  
Patrick Wilde 11/13  
Nadim Youssef 11/16

## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Vladimir & Joanna Chendler 11/5  
Jimmy & Carole Goson 11/28  
Tony & Paula Rodriguez 11/7  
Fouad & Rima Tarazi 11/3  
Dave & Brenda Tax 11/14  
Roger & Carol Tierney 11/12  
Bob & Theodora Whitehead 11/13

### **“No Debt Building Campaign”**

**Our sanctuary remodel and expansion is progressing and we hope to move into the new sanctuary by the mid of December. In order to complete this work with little or no debt, we have embarked on a “No Debt” Campaign. So far we have pledges and donations totaling \$86,880. Thanks to those who have made these pledges. Please consider your “No Debt” contribution today!**

*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.***

**SAINT MARK ANTIOCHIAN  
ORTHODOX CHURCH  
17840 SKY PARK CIRCLE  
IRVINE, CA 92614**

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