

THE APOSTLE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2021 ST. MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF IRVINE

A Parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America
Metropolitan JOSEPH, Archbishop of New York
and Metropolitan of all North America
17840 Sky Park Circle
Irvine, CA 92614-6407
Tel: (949) 851-8933
Fax: (949) 851-0010
Email: frmlaffoon@yahoo.com
Website: 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
Rev. Deacon Nicholas Mamey
Sub-deacon: Athanasius Fakhouri
Choir Director: Barbara Scholl
**Chanters: Jacob Bahbah, Mark Ellis, Theresa
Joubran, Karim Youssef, Perry Ioannides**
Teen Advisor: Fatin Fakhouri

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Pastor's Corner

It seems that nearly every day we read or hear about more conflicts in our society. Conflict between political groups, ethnic groups, religious groups, etc. We all have our own differing perspectives on these issues, but one thing is clear: Our Lord told us to love everyone, from the neighbor to the enemy. As we try to live in this conflicted and confused world, let us keep the following in mind.

Love of Neighbor

After the love of God, the greatest commandment is the love of one's neighbor.

Fr. Thomas Hopko

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength. This is the first and great -commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets (Mt 22.37-40, Mk 12.30-31, Lk 10.27, Lev 19.18).

There is no commandment greater than these (Mk 12.31).

Love of neighbor necessarily follows from the love of God, and there can be no true love of God without it.

He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness still. He who loves his brother abides in the light and in him there is no cause of stumbling. He who hates his brother is in darkness

and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going for the darkness has blinded his eyes.

If any one says “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God, should love his brother also (1 Jn 2.9–11, 4.20–21).

The love of the neighbor and the brother does not mean the love of only those who love us and are good to us. The neighbor and the brother mean anyone near at hand, everyone made by God, all “for whom Christ has died” (Rom 14.15). The neighbor and the brother include also the enemies. This is the point of Christ’s parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10.29–37). It is also the Lord’s specific teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the heathen do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Mt 5.44–48).

But I say to you that hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and selfish (Lk 6.27–35).

This teaching of Jesus is conveyed also in the writings of the apostles.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them. No, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink. Owe one another nothing, but to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,” and any other commandment are summed up in this sentence, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom 12.9–10, 14–20; 13.8–10; cf. Mt 25.31–46).

Genuine love is expressed in deeds, and not in words alone. It is expressed through what one actually does in one’s life. It is manifested in concern for others through kindly speech and generosity with one’s earthly possessions given by God. It is revealed in one’s works of faith in keeping all of God’s commandments.

Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love that Christ laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if any one has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth (1 Jn 3.14–18; cf. Jas 2.8–17).

The love of neighbor “as oneself” is sometimes misunderstood. One should, of course, love oneself in the sense that one is faithful to God and grateful for his life. And certainly one should love oneself in the sense that he sees himself as uniquely important in the eyes of God and the object of God’s own unfailing love and mercy. One should not hate oneself in the sense that he despises the life given to him by God, rejecting his own talents and gifts because he is envious of others. Neither should one hate oneself for being a sinner, since, as the masters teach, such a self-hate is only the subtle form of a more grandiose pride which vaunts a person to stature of judgment greater than that of God Himself, who is merciful, loving and forgiving (cf. Father Alexander Elchaninoff, 20th c. Diary of a

Russian Priest; Father John of Kronstadt, 20th c. My Life in Christ).

One should certainly “hate himself,” however, in the sense that he despises and crucifies his “old self” corrupted by sin in order to “put off the old nature with its evil practices” and to “put on the new nature which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its Creator” (Rom 6.6, Col 3.10).

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal 2.20; cf. 5.24, 6.14).

This is also what Christ undoubtedly meant when He spoke those most violent and terrifying words in the Gospel.

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple (Lk 14.26).

This is the extreme and terrifying warning against all passionate attachments stronger and more powerful than one’s passionate attachment to Christ alone. And the greatest passion of all which keeps one from the love of God and the love of one’s neighbor is the sinful passion for oneself. Sinful self-love, says Saint Maximus the Confessor, is the “mother of all evils,” and the “original sin” of man’s heart.

One must “hate oneself” in this sense, even as he must hate his family and friends. He must hate them as objects of his sinful self-love, that he might love them, and himself most truly in Christ.

**Feasts, Special Services and Events for
September 2021**

September 1, Church New Year

Tuesday September 7, Evening Divine Liturgy, Feast of the Birth of the Theotokos, 6:30 p.m. (Orthros 5:30 p.m.)

Tuesday September 14, Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross. Evening Liturgy 6:30 p.m. (Orthros 5:30 p.m.)

September 19 Start of the new Church School Year

October 2021 Advanced Calendar
October 10, Annual Parish Meeting

**Selected Saints of the Month
October 1**

**THE PROTECTION OF THE MOST-HOLY
THEOTOKOS**

From time immemorial, the Church has celebrated the Most-holy Theotokos as the patroness and protectress of the Christian people, who, by her intercessory prayers, implores God's mercy for us sinners. The help of the Most-holy Mother of God has been clearly shown numerous times, to individuals and to nations, in peace and in war, in monastic deserts and in densely populated cities. The event that the Church commemorates and celebrates today confirms the Theotokos' consistent protection of Christian people. On October 1, 911, during the reign of Emperor Leo the Wise, there was an All-night Vigil in the Blachernae Church of the Mother of God in Constantinople. The church was full of people. St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ was standing in the rear of the church with his disciple Epiphanius. At four o'clock in the morning, the Most-holy Theotokos appeared above the people, holding her omophorion outstretched as a protective covering for the faithful. She was clothed in gold-encrusted purple, and shone with an ineffable radiance, surrounded by apostles, saints, martyrs and virgins. St. Andrew said to Blessed Epiphanius: "Do you see, brother, the Queen and Lady of all praying for the whole world?" Epiphanius replied: "I see, Father, and am struck with amazement!" The Feast of the Protection was instituted to commemorate this event, and to remind us that we can prayerfully receive the unceasing protection of the Most-holy Theotokos in any time of difficulty.

October 13

**THE HOLY GREAT-MARTYR ZLATA OF
MEGLIN**

Zlata was born of poor peasant parents (who also had three other daughters) in the village of Slatina, in the province of Meglin. She was a meek and devout girl, wise in the wisdom of Christ and golden, not only in name but also in her God-fearing heart. Once when Zlata went out to get water, some shameless Turks seized her and took her to their home. When one of them urged her to become a Moslem and be his wife, Zlata fearlessly replied: "I believe in Christ and Him alone do I know as my Bridegroom. I will never deny Him, even though you subject me to a thousand tortures and cut me into pieces." When her parents and sisters found her, her parents said to her: "O daughter, have mercy on yourself and on us, your parents and sisters; deny Christ in words only, so that we can all be happy, for Christ is merciful. He would forgive such a sin, committed due to the necessities of life." Her poor parents, sisters and relatives wept bitterly. However, the noble soul of St. Zlata resisted such diabolical snares. She answered them: "When you counsel me to deny Christ the true God, you are no longer my parents or my sisters. I have the Lord Jesus Christ as my father, the Theotokos as my mother, and the saints as my brothers and sisters." The Turks then cast her into prison for three months, flogging her every day until her blood soaked the ground. Finally, they suspended her upside down and lit a fire, to suffocate her with the smoke; but God was with Zlata, and gave her strength in suffering. At last they hanged her from a tree and cut her into small pieces. Thus, this brave virgin gave her soul up to God, and went to dwell in Paradise in the year 1796. Pieces of her relics were taken by Christians to their homes for a blessing.

October 19

THE HOLY PROPHET JOEL

Joel is second in the line of the minor prophets. St. Joel was the son of Phanuel, from the tribe of Reuben. He lived eight hundred years before Christ. Joel prophesied the misfortunes of the people of Israel, and the Babylonian Captivity because of the sins they had committed in the sight of God. He called the people to fasting and the priests to tearful penitential prayer, that God would have mercy on them: Sanctify ye a fast ... and cry unto the Lord (Joel 1:14); Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar (Joel 2:17). Joel also foretold the Descent of the Spirit of God upon the apostles and the pouring out of the

grace of the Spirit of God upon all Christians: Then afterward I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28). He prophesied and described the Dread Judgment of God, and also prophesied the glory of God's Holy Church.

Parish & Organization News

Now that our COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, our Organizations are able to plan their activities. Please check the Sunday bulletins in the weeks to come for their events.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Arij Alchammas 9/9
 Andy Bahbah 9/19
 Nora Bahbah 9/9
 Chloe Dabit 9/15
 Joe Daruty 9/21
 Rania Debbas 9/19
 Nicholas Debbas 9/2
 Andrew Ellis 9/14
 Jeries Hanna 9/8
 Zaina Hanna 9/11
 Nadia Karkar 9/16
 Abe Khamis 9/20
 Fadi Maalouli 9/4
 Alex Munayyer 9/14
 Giselle Rizkallah 9/4
 Heba Saadeh 9/16
 Hiam Sayegh 9/24
 Alexander Turk 9/26
 Christy Wilde 9/13
 Theodora Whitehead 9/23

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Ghassan & Geny Bahou 9/6
 Scott & Diane Daruty 9/4
 Norman & Wetcka Haffty 9/2
 Haitham and Sahar Hanna 9/9
 Michael & Charlotte Khoury 9/11
 Nader & Suhair Qoborsi 9/16
 Farah & Silvia Saba 9/15
 Ibrahim & Lydia Wakileh 9/19
 Hani & Marian Youssef 9/5

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 on Sundays or use**

The new mobile app, RaiseRight by ShopWithScrip, is simply the right way to fundraise. Just make sure to choose "E-Gift Card" and you will have it in your email in less than a minute.

Let's start shopping and earning money for your favorite church, St Mark Irvine!

Get the

app: <https://www.raiseright.com/>

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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)**

**SAINT MARK ANTIOCHIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH
17840 SKY PARK CIRCLE
IRVINE, CA 92614
JULY & AUGUST 2021
NEWSLETTER**