

THE APOSTLE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 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
Sub-deacon: Athanasius Fakhouri
Choir Director: Barbara Scholl
**Chanters: Jacob Bahbah, Mark Ellis, Theresa
Joubran, Karim Youssef**
Teen Advisor: Fatin Fakhouri

2020 – 2021 PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman Kristin Chala {22}
Vice Chairman – Penny Skaff {22}
Secretary – Tony Rodriguez {24}
Treasurer – Osama Kishek {23}
Assistant Treasurer- Tammy Qutami {24}
Imad Alchammas {23}
Gisele Awayjan {23}
Sly Aldada {24}
Barbara Scholl {22}
Robert Mokbel {22}

[Number in brackets is the member's last year of his
or her current term]

Church School Co-Directors: Tammy Qutami and
Kristin Chala
Antiochian Women of St. Mark President: Paula
Rodriguez & Rima Tarazi
Teen SOYO President: Nour Youssef
Advisor: Fatin Fakhouri

Pastor's Corner

The Nativity of Christ

*Fr. Thomas Hopko ("The Orthodox Faith" Vol. II,
Worship)*

The celebration of the feast of the Nativity of Christ in the Orthodox Church is patterned after the celebration of the feast of the Lord's Resurrection. A fast of forty days precedes the feast, with special preparatory days announcing the approaching birth of the Saviour. Thus, on Saint Andrew's Day (November 30) and Saint Nicholas Day (December 6) songs are sung to announce the coming birthday of the Lord:

*Adorn yourself, O Cavern. Make ready, O Manger.
O Shepherds and wisemen, bring your gifts and
bear witness. For the Virgin is coming bearing
Christ in her womb (Vespers Hymn of Saint
Nicholas Day).*

On the eve of Christmas, the Royal Hours are read and the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil is served with Vespers. At these services the Old Testament prophecies of Christ's birth are chanted, emphasizing the prophecy of Micah which foretells Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Saviour, and the prophecies of Isaiah about the appearance and character of the Messiah:

*The Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold a
virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call
His name Immanuel, which translated is, God with
us (Is 7.14–15).*

*God is with us, understand all ye nations, and
submit yourselves, for God is with us (Is 8.9).*

*For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given;
and the government shall be upon His shoulders,
and His name shall be called Wonderful,
Counselor, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of*

Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end (Is 9.6–7).

...At the beginning of the Christmas Matins, which together with Compline form the Christmas Vigil, the six matinal psalms begin as usual with the words: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will among men” (Lk 2.14).

...The gospel reading from Matthew (1.18–25) tells of the birth of Christ, and all of the hymns and verses glorify His appearance on earth:

Christ is born, glorify Him. Christ is from heaven, go to meet Him. Christ is on earth, be ye lifted up. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing out with gladness, all ye people. For He is glorified (First Ode of the Christmas Canon).

The Christmas Liturgy begins with psalms of glorification and praise. The troparion and kontakion mark the entrance with the Book of the Gospels. The baptismal line from Galatians 3.27 once again replaces the Thrice-Holy. The Epistle reading is from Galatians:

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So through God, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir (Gal 4.4–7).

The Gospel reading is the familiar Christmas story from Matthew (2.1–12), and the liturgy continues in the normal fashion. A specific two-day celebration follows, dedicated to Mary the Theotokos and Saint Stephen, the First Martyr. The period of Christmas rejoicing extends to Epiphany during which time the Christmas songs are sung and fasting and kneeling in prayer are not called for by the Church.

The feast of Christmas is formally entitled the Nativity in the Flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. At Christmas we celebrate the birth as a man of the Son of God, the one who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit is truly God from all eternity. Thus, we sing in the Church:
Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One! Angels, with shepherds,

glorify Him! The wise men journey with the star! Since for our sake the Eternal God is born as a little child (Kontakion).

Feasts, Special Services and Events for December 2021

Sunday December 5, **Feast of St. Nicholas**

Wednesday December 3, 10 7 16, 7:00 p.m.,

Friday December 4, 11 & 18, **Advent Paraklesis**

Pre-Feast Vespers, December 22 and 23; 7:00 p.m.

Friday December 24, 9:30 a.m. Royal Hours of the Nativity

Friday December 24, Orthros (8:00 p.m.) and Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ (9:00 p.m.) No Services Christmas Day

Friday December 31, Evening Services for the **Feast of our Lord’s Circumcision and St. Basil Day**: Orthros 5:45 p.m., Divine Liturgy 7:00 p.m.

January 2022 Advanced Calendar

January 1 New Year’s Day, St. Basil’s Day

January 6 Feast of Epiphany

January 17 St. Anthony the Great

January 25 St. Gregory the Theologian

January 30 Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs

Selected Saint of the Month

THE GREAT MARTYR BARBARA (DECEMBER 4)

Saint Barbara was from Heliopolis of Phoenicia and lived during the reign of Maximian.

She was the daughter of a certain idolater named Dioscorus. When Barbara came of age, she was enlightened in her pure heart and secretly believed in the Holy Trinity. About this time Dioscorus began building a bath-house; before it was finished he was required to go away to attend to certain matters, and in his absence Barbara directed the workmen to build a third window in addition to the two her Father had commanded. She also inscribed the sign of the Cross with her finger upon the

marble of the bath-house, leaving the saving sign cut as deeply into the marble as if it had been done with an iron tool. (When the Synaxarion of Saint Barbara was written, the marble of the bath-house and the cross inscribed by Saint Barbara were still preserved, and many healings were worked there.) When Dioscorus returned, he asked why the third window had been added; Barbara began to declare to him the mystery of the Trinity. Because she refused to renounce her faith, Dioscorus tortured Barbara inhumanely, and after subjecting her to many sufferings he beheaded her with his own hands, in the year 290.

Parish & Organization News

Teen SOYO

The Teens are planning a Christmas party date TBA

On January 9, the Teens are going as a group to see an L.A. Clippers game.

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

The Antiochian Women will hold their annual Christmas Bake Sale on Sunday December 19.

St. Mark Men's Club

The Men of St. Mark will host a New Year's Eve dinner/dance on the 31st. Our stated maximum attendance is 150. If you are planning to attend, please contact Gisele Awayjan at 951-454-4177 asap before we run out of space.

The Committee is asking for help with Raffle Prize Donations, if you can sponsor a gift, please contact Gisele Awayjan.

Our Annual Christmas Dinner is scheduled for Saturday January 8, 2022. Event will be held at Austin & Saeda Turk's Residence in Lake Forest (More details to follow). Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Christina Aldada 12/1
 Ramzi Ammari 12/10
 Khalid Ammari 12/6
 Naheda Artoul 12/16
 Christopher Azzam 12/22

Vera Bahbah 12/19
 Daniel Chami 12/29
 Jerald Donvan 12/5
 Charlotte El-Hinn 12/31
 Salim Elsayegh 12/21
 Jerise Elqura 12/30
 Mary Fasheh 12/18
 Efstathios Geronikolaou 12/15
 Adele Habeeb 12/21
 Haitham Hanna 12/6
 John Jirjis 12/19
 John Karam 12/29
 Patricia Khamis 12/8
 Hilda Khamis 12/6
 Antoun Khoury 12/27
 George Khoury 12/15
 Fayez Khoury 12/18
 Melody Khoury 12/16
 Antoine Maalouli 12/17
 Susan Mitri 12/27
 Claude Mokbel 12/28
 Marina Najjar 12/12
 Lana Nino 12/10
 Jacob Qushair 12/29
 Nour Salameh 12/21
 Manuel Salameh 12/25
 Elias Sliheet 12/31
 Shouki Soury 12/27
 Majida Soury 12/11
 Christiana Tarazi 12/26
 Charlie Wakileh 12/17
 Ed Wong 12/31
 Michael Yaghnam 12/26

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Ghassan & Gisele Awayjan 12/16
 Joseph & Salwa Bahbah 12/27

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/>

USE THE ENROLLMENT CODE

LFA187LD11116

Turn your shopping list into fundraising

- **Discover new earning opportunities every day**
- **Narrow your search with categories that fit your everyday shopping needs**
- **Easily browse brands offering bonus earnings**
- **Add brands you love to your Favorites for faster shopping**

*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
DECEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER**