

# THE APOSTLE

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### March 2022

## ST. MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF IRVINE

**Teen SOYO President:** Nour Youssef  
**Advisor:** Fatin Fakhouri

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#### PASTOR'S CORNER

**Not Becoming a Modern Pharisee**  
Fr. Geoffrey Korz

Today, it is very easy—and very popular—to do what seems right when people are watching.

And the Lord knows, people are always watching!

In the days of the Lord's ministry on earth, it was the sect of the Pharisees who were always watching, to see if you washed your hands before you ate, or if you spoke to anyone who was unclean.

All this watching was in order to detect external virtues—false virtues, on the outside only, and not true virtues of the heart.

True virtues of the heart are seen when no one is watching.

True virtues of the heart are seen by God, not just when the Pharisees are watching.

In our times, we also have Pharisees—a great, mighty, powerful group of Pharisees.

Our Pharisees are the media—often funded by the government—and the social media.

Like the Pharisees of old, these media and social media Pharisees prowl around, looking for someone to devour, looking for fake, external virtues.

They use name-calling to divide people into categories of clean and unclean, acceptable, and unacceptable.

#### **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

They divide friends and families—and even whole countries.

Because of these Pharisees, much of the world lives in fear: fear of being judged and condemned for falling short of their external, false virtues—which secular, ungodly people mistake for true and lasting virtues.

Brothers and sisters: there is a lesson we must learn from these modern Pharisees of the media and social media.

We must not fall into the easy trap of prowling around like a lion—like the devil—seeking someone to judge and devour.

We must not fall into the habit—and how easy it is, dear brethren!—in which we also are constantly looking for other people who have transgressed some law, some rule, some measure of goodness, so we can hold them accountable.

The media and social media—those satanic vehicles which attempt to mimic God, to be everywhere present and filling all things—cannot get under our skin so much that we simply try to mirror them in protest and revenge.

A Christian must be different.

A Christian must have an entirely different perspective.

A Christian must be looking for sins and transgressions in one place, and in one place alone:

in his or her own heart.

Why is this?

What have the last years taught us? Have they taught us anything?

Have they not taught us how incapable we are of changing the flow of events in the world?

Have they not taught us how little impact we can have on fixing and manipulating the decisions made by other people—even critical decisions? Life-altering decisions?

Decisions which would break up the family, and divide friendships forever?

If we cannot have any influence over other people in these things, what makes us think we can correct the wrongs of other people?

What makes us think we can steer their sins and transgressions in another direction?

That's just what the modern Pharisees in the media and on social media try to do: to manipulate conformity through social pressure and embarrassment!

But this doesn't lead to a lasting change in the heart. It is all superficial!

That's the reason why this kind of technique is used by superficial people.

But we Christians must strive not to be superficial.

We must enter into the depths of the heart, where we can find Christ, and Christ can change us.

This is the opposite of the Pharisees: This is the humble path of the Christian life.

When we hear some public figure speaking in the media, shaming groups of people—recognize what they are doing!

When we hear the media or single individuals on social media destroying the reputation of others for some alleged transgression—which as Christians, we must remember, can always be forgiven!—recognize what they are doing!

And when you recognize this, remember: This is the Pharisee which lurks within each of us.

This is the Pharisee I can so easily become.

This is the Pharisee which, without [repentance](#), I will become.

May God have mercy on me, a sinner.

**THE LENTEN FAST (Lent begins on March 7)**  
*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.*

### **Feasts, Special Services and Events for March 2022**

March 6, Forgiveness Sunday (Cheesefare Sunday)

March 7, Clean Monday – Start of Great Lent

**Sunday March 13, Sunday of Orthodox, Pan-Orthodox Vespers** at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Anaheim, 6:30 p.m.

#### **Weekly Lenten Services**

Monday Great Compline 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:30 p.m.

Friday Little Compline and Akathist Hymn 7:00 p.m. (through April 8)

Friday March 25, Feast of the Annunciation: Divine Liturgy 6:30 p.m.

#### **April 2022 Advanced Calendar**

April 17, Palm Sunday

April 18-23 Holy Week

April 24, Great & Holy Pascha

#### **SELECTED SAINT OF THE MONTH**

**Theodore the Commander & Great Martyr**  
(February 17)

The holy Martyr Theodore was from Euchaita of Galatia and dwelt in Heraclea of Pontus. He was a renowned commander in the military, and the report came to the Emperor Licinius that he was a Christian and abominated the idols. Licinius therefore sent certain men to him from Nicomedia, to honor him and ask him to appear before him. Through them, however, Saint Theodore sent back a

message that it was necessary for various reasons, that Licinius come to Heraclea. Licinius, seeing in this a hope of turning Saint Theodore away from Christ did as was asked of him.

When the Emperor came to Heraclea, Saint Theodore met him with honor, and the Emperor in turn gave Theodore his hand, believing that through him he would be able to draw the Christians to the worship of his idols. Seated upon his throne in the midst of the people, he publicly bade Theodore offer sacrifice to the gods. But Theodore asked that the emperor entrust him with the most venerable of his gods, those of gold and silver, that he might take them home and himself attend upon them that evening, promising that the following day he would honor them in public. The Emperor, filled with joy at these tidings, gave command that Theodore's request be fulfilled.

When the Saint had taken the idols home, he broke them in pieces and distributed the gold and silver to the poor by night. The next day a centurion named Maxentius told Licinius that he had seen a pauper pass by carrying the head of Artemis. Saint Theodore, far from repenting of this, confessed Christ boldly. Licinius, in an uncontrollable fury, had the Saint put to many torments, then crucified. While upon the cross, the holy Martyr was further tormented -- his privy parts were cut off, he was shot with arrows, his eyes were put out, and he was left on the cross to die. The next day Licinius sent men to take his corpse and cast it into the sea; but they found the Saint alive and perfectly whole. Through this, many believed in Christ. Seeing his own men turning to Christ, and the city in an uproar, Licinius had Theodore beheaded, about the year 320. The Saint's holy relics were returned to his ancestral home on June 8, which is also a feast of the Great Martyr Theodore.

#### **PARISH & ORGANIZATION NEWS**

##### **Teen SOYO**

March 13 Meeting, after Church

##### **Antiochian Women of St. Mark**

March is Women's Month in our Archdiocese. The Ladies will be assisting as Epistle readers and Ushers.

## St. Mark Men's Club

No activities are planned for March. April events TBA.

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Sleiman Aldada 3/11  
Diana Aldada 3/4  
Joseph Attalla 3/27  
Sarah Asaly 3/10  
Gisele Awayjan 3/24  
Anahid Azzouni 3/19  
Jacob Bahbah 3/1  
Nicholas Bahou 3/25  
Wally Batarseh 3/12  
Waleed Bachawaty 3/23  
Joiel Betar 3/18  
Lucy Billeh 3/20  
Samir Billeh 3/3  
Habib Chala 3/1  
Nuha Daher 3/20  
Mark El-Hinn 3/30  
Dina Elsayegh 3/30  
Nicole Fakhouri 3/1  
Katrina Fakhouri 3/26  
Carole Jo Goson 3/29  
Wetcka Haffty 3/19  
Sameer Hanna 3/17  
Amanda Hanna 3/25  
Fr. Patrick Irish 3/12  
Maurice Karkar 3/25  
Therese Kdeiss 3/11  
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 Patel 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  
Kyra Pelachik 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

Martha Toubbeh 3/30

Esabella 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 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 15<sup>th</sup> of the month to the Church office (949-851-8933)***

**SAINT MARK ANTIOCHIAN  
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FEBRUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER**