

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2010

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Pastor's Corner

OF IRVINE

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Rev. Protodeacon George Moubayed

Sub-deacon: Athanasius Fakhouri

Choir Director: Barbara Scholl

Chanters: Elia Qushair, Theresa Joubran, Dionysius

Ingraham, Mark Ellis, and Jacob Bahbah.

Church Office Administrator: Lydia Wakileh

Youth Director: Juliana Turk

2009-2010 PARISH COUNCIL

Austin Turk {11} Chairman (949) 581-2060

Randy Dabbah {11} Vice Chairman (949) 595-0863

Kendall Schorr {12} Secretary (714) 602-7936

Theodore Skaff {12} Treasurer (949) 305-9565

Michael Khoury {10} Co Treasurer (714) 717-2349

**Ghassan Awayjan {10} Building Committee &
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**Mufid Samara {10} Building Committee (714) 809-
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**Fouad Tarazi {11} Building Fund & Asst. Treas. (949)
462-3232**

**Paula Rodriguez: {12} Special Events & Stewardship
(949) 470-9876**

Vera Sidorenko: {10} Web Design (949) 888-0540

[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: Mark Ellis: (949) 458-1604

Ladies Guild President:

Vera Bahbah (714) 943-7113

Teen SOYO President:

Melisa Khoury (714) 373-1225

Why Not "Open Communion"?

Adapted from an article by the Very Rev. John Breck (originally published June 2007)

Non-Orthodox Christians often ask why they may not receive Holy Communion in Orthodox parishes. As painful as this refusal is, it is based on our understanding of the true meaning of the sacrament as revealed in Scripture and ecclesial experience.

A few months ago someone sent me a posting from an Internet site that spoke to the issue of communion among various Christian confessions. In answer to the question why a Protestant believer was refused the sacrament at Easter in her boyfriend's Catholic parish, the writer declared that non-Catholics do not believe in "the presence of God's body in the transubstantiated host." Therefore, "they cannot take communion."

Then the writer added: "There is just one exception to this rule. Orthodox Christians (such as Greek Orthodox Christians) may take communion in all Roman Catholic Churches. The reason for this is that Orthodox Christianity also teaches the actual presence of God in the host."

This widespread understanding of the matter is not accurate and needs to be corrected on several counts, theological as well as pastoral. An entire tome could be written by way of explanation, but here are a few of the most important elements.

In the first place, we need to acknowledge that many Protestant Christians (including many Anglicans) do believe that Holy Communion offers them a true participation in Christ's Body and Blood. They may not articulate that belief as Catholics or Orthodox would like; but their faith in Christ's "real presence in the Eucharist" is genuine and should not be disparaged or denied.

Then again, Orthodox Eucharistic theology does not explain the change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ as a result of "transubstantiation," the teaching that the "accidents" (visible properties) of the elements remain unaltered, while their "substance" or inner

essence becomes the actual Body and Blood. Orthodox tradition speaks of "change" or "transformation," (metamorphôsis; in the Eucharistic Divine Liturgy metabalôn, "making the change") but always with a concern to preserve the mystery from the probings of human reason. It also speaks of the Body and Blood of the glorified Christ, making the point that our communion is in the personal being of the Resurrected and Exalted Lord, and not in the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus, torn and shed on the Cross. The incarnate Jesus and the risen Christ are certainly one and the same Person ("Jesus Christ is Lord," the apostle Paul declares in Philippians 2:11). But our communion is in the radically transformed reality of the risen Christ, who ascended into heaven and makes Himself accessible to us through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit within the Church.

Another point needs to be stressed. It is true that Orthodox Christians are considered by some Catholic priests to be eligible to receive communion in their parishes; but this practice is not formally sanctioned by the Catholic Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (the Holy Office or Magisterium). On the other hand, the Orthodox Churches, united above all by their Eucharistic faith and practice, accept to communion only baptized Orthodox Christians, and then, theoretically, only when they have prepared themselves by prayer, by appropriate fasting, and -- in most traditions -- by confession of sins. In addition, Orthodox bishops and other teachers make clear to their faithful that they can only properly receive communion from a canonically ordained priest or bishop within the context of the traditional Orthodox Divine Liturgy (which includes communion taken to the sick).

It is hardly enough, though, simply to state that the Orthodox does not teach "transubstantiation" (despite the term's appearance in some of our liturgical books) and, if they are faithful to their tradition, do not receive communion outside of their own Church. There is also the crucial matter of "ecclesial identity." No Orthodox Christian receives Holy Communion in isolation. We are incorporated into a universal community of persons, both living and departed, whose common faith and practice unite them in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Our existence in the Body of Christ, our ecclesial identity as Orthodox Christians, is such that we represent the Church in all that we

are and do. If I defy the ordinances of my ecclesial tradition and receive communion in another Church, or as a priest welcome a non-Orthodox believer to receive the Eucharist in my parish, I am acting in violation of my own tradition, to which I have committed myself before God. And because of my solidarity with all other members of the Orthodox Church, I am implicitly involving them in my act of disobedience.

The real issue, however, is not one of obedience or disobedience to rules and regulations. If the Orthodox preserves the sanctity of the Eucharist as a supreme obligation, it is because of the often stated truth that communion in the Body and Blood of Christ is the very end or fulfillment of Christian existence. It can not, for example, be reduced to a means by which to achieve "Christian unity." (In any case, Church history has made it clear that sharing of Communion among Churches of conflicting theological teachings never results in lasting unity.)

The Eucharist is life itself. It is the life of Christ that enables us to live our life in Christ. To participate in the Eucharist as we are called to do requires our acceptance of a doctrinal attitude and commitment that is specifically "orthodox," grounded in the Scriptures and transmitted through the ages under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It requires as well acceptance of an ascetic discipline, which includes personal prayer, liturgical celebration, fasting, confession of sins, and acts of charity: the ingredients of a life of repentance and of an ongoing quest for holiness. And it requires that we honor our particular "ecclesial identity," together with submission to ecclesial authority represented above all by our bishops: persons canonically ordained and established, who are called by their actions and teachings to preserve and transmit the truth of the Orthodox faith while maintaining a bond of unity within the Body of Christ. A unity grounded not in power but in mutual respect and fraternal love, shared by all members of the Church.

From this perspective, "open communion" -- the welcoming of non-Orthodox to share in the Eucharistic celebration -- is simply not possible without undermining the very meaning of the sacrament. This implies no particular judgment on the Eucharistic services of other Churches. It acknowledges rather that for the Orthodox, the Divine Liturgy is what the name implies. It is both

the means and the end of Christian existence, an existence which arises from Orthodox faith, ongoing repentance, ascetic discipline, ecclesial identity and works of love. To those who accept this "Orthodox Way," the Eucharist offers a true participation in the very Life of the risen and glorified Christ, just as it offers the forgiveness of sins, the healing of soul and body, and a foretaste of the heavenly Banquet in the eternal presence of God.

Feasts and Special Events for September

Tuesday September 7, 7:00 p.m. Evening Liturgy, Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos **at St. Barnabas Church in Costa Mesa**

Monday September 13, 6:30 p.m. Evening Divine Liturgy, Feast of the **Elevation of the Holy Cross (Orthros, 5:30 p.m.)**

Sunday September 19, **Start of Church School**
Sunday September 19, **Ladies Friendship Tea**

Sunday September 26th, **St. Mark Blood Drive**

Advance Calendar for October

October 2, St. Mark Wine and Food Tasting
October 8, 9, 10: Western Diocese Delegates Meeting
October 10, Annual Parish Meeting

Bishop Joseph's Schedule

September 11-14, 2010

Holy Cross Church, Yakima, WA

Patronal Feast Day

September 18-19, 2010

St. Paul Church, Lynwood, WA

Episcopal Visit

September 19, 2010

St. Andrew Church, Arlington, WA

Episcopal

Visit for Sunday Vespers

WEEKLY SERVICES

Wednesday Vespers 6:30 p.m. (during Lent, Pre-Sanctified Liturgy)

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.

At our October 10, 2010 Parish Meeting, the Nominating Committee will present a slate of candidates for election to three Parish Council seats. If you would like to be nominated or to suggest someone for nomination, please speak with outgoing Council Members, or Fr. Michael. Per our parish Constitution, all nominations must be made through the Nomination Committee. The Nominating Committee must complete its work no later than 10 days before the Annual Meeting (September 30, 2010), and the list of Nominees will be printed in the Sunday Bulletin one week before the Annual Meeting. Only Orthodox Christians 25 years of age or older, who are Regular Pledged members of St. Mark's, are in good spiritual standing, and agree to fulfill the duties of a Council Member, may be nominated for Parish Council.

Selected Saints of the Month

September 13th

The Consecration of the Church of the Resurrection of Christ.

When the holy Empress Helena found the Lord's Cross in Jerusalem, she stayed longer in the city and built churches in Gethsemane, in Bethlehem, on the

Mount of Olives and in other places that commemorated the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. On Golgotha, where she found the Precious Cross, she began to build an enormous church, under whose roof would be the places both where the Lord was crucified and where He was buried, the holy Empress wanting to bring under one roof the places of His suffering and His glory. But Helena went to the Lord before this magnificent church was completed. It was finished in the same year in which Constantine completed thirty years on the throne, and so the consecration of the church and the Emperor's Jubilee were fixed for the same day, September 13th, 335. At that time, a local Council of bishops was meeting in Tyre. These bishops, with many others, made their way to Jerusalem, to the solemn consecration of the Church of the Resurrection of the Lord. It was then instituted that this day, as a day of victory and triumph for the Church of Christ, should be celebrated every year.

September 26

St. John the Theologian, Apostle and Evangelist

John was the son of Zebedee the fisherman and Salome the daughter of Joseph, the betrothed of the holy Mother of God. Called by the Lord Jesus, John immediately left his father and the fishing nets and followed Christ with his brother James. From that time, he was not parted from his Lord until the end. With Peter and James, he was present at the rising of Jairus' daughter and at Lord's Transfiguration, and laid his head on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper. When all the others had forsaken the crucified Lord, John stayed beneath the cross with the holy Mother of God. In obedience to the Lord's wish, he was as a son to the holy Virgin Mary, caring for her and serving her, looking after her right up to her falling-asleep. After her Dormition, John went off with his disciple Prochorus to preach the Gospel in Asia Minor, and mainly lived and worked in Ephesus. By his inspired preaching and miracles, he brought many to Christianity and undermined the foundations of Paganism. The vexed pagans bound him and sent him to Rome to the Emperor Domitian. He was tortured and flogged before the Emperor, but when he was unharmed either by the strong poison that he was given to drink or the boiling oil into which he was put, the Emperor was afraid and, thinking he

was immortal, sent him into exile on the island of Patmos. On this island, St. John brought many to Christianity by his words and miracles, and strengthened the Church of God. He wrote his Gospel and the Revelation there. In the time of the Emperor Nerva, who gave liberty to all the captives, John returned to Ephesus, where he lived for some time, confirming the work that he had earlier begun. He was over a hundred years old when he went to the Lord. When his disciples later opened his grave, they found his body was not there. Every year, on May 8th, a fine, fragrant dust endowed with healing power rose from his grave. After a long and fruitful life of labour upon earth, this beloved disciple of Christ and pillar of the Church entered into the joy of his Lord, to peace and eternal rejoicing.

September 28th

Our Holy Father Chariton the Confessor

Chariton was an eminent and devout citizen of the city of Iconium. Imbued with the spirit of his compatriot, St. Thecla, Chariton openly confessed the name of Christ. When a harsh persecution of Christians broke out under the Emperor Aurelian, Chariton was immediately brought to trial before the governor. The judge ordered him to worship false gods, to which Chariton replied: 'All your gods are furies, which were aforetime through pride cast out from heaven into the nethermost hell.' Chariton openly showed his faith in the one, living God, the Creator of all, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind. Then the governor ordered that Chariton be so beaten and tortured that his whole body became covered with wounds until it was like one great wound. After the evil death of Aurelian, whose evil-doing caught up with him in the end, Chariton was released from torture and imprisonment. He traveled to Jerusalem, but on the way was seized by robbers from whom he was freed by God's providence. He did not return to Iconium, but withdrew to the wilderness of Pharan, where he founded a community and gathered a group of monks together. Having given a rule to this community and desiring to escape the praise of men, he withdrew to another desert near Jericho where, in time, he founded another community, called after him. He finally founded another community, Souka, called in Greek the Old Lavra. He died at a great age and entered into the glory of his Lord on September 28th, 350, and his relics are

preserved in his first monastery. The practice of tonsuring monks is attributed to St. Chariton.

September 29th

The Holy Martyrs Dada and Gobdelas.

Dada was a Persian noble and a kinsman of King Sapor, and Gobdelas was the son of the same king. When St Dada openly confessed his faith in Christ, King Sapor ordered that he be harshly tortured. During the tortures, Dada worked great miracles in Christ's name, which made such an impression on Gobdelas that he also embraced the Christian faith. Both Dada and Gobdelas glorified God in their patient endurance and many miracles, and gave their souls to God under the tortures. They suffered in the fourth century. With them there suffered – for they had also come to faith in Christ- Gobdelas' sister Kasdoa and Gargal, the chief of the pagan priests.

Parish & Organizations News

Baptized into Christ...

On July 15th, 2010, Ryan Antonio Rodriguez son of Carlos & Rhonda Rodriguez at St. Mark Church. His godfather is Christopher Rodriguez and his godmother is Pamela Kouri.

Married

On July 18, 2010 Ashraf Soliman & Nahla Megaly at St. Mark Church. The best man was Farid Mansour and maid of honor Miss Linda Dwyer.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord

On 7/3/2011, Yacoub George Bahou, husband of Hana Bahou. His funeral was sung at St. Mark on 7/9/2010 followed by the graveside prayers and burial at El Toro Memorial Park in Lake Forest. May His Memory Be Eternal!!

Ladies Guild

The ladies did not meet during the summer; our Tea party is scheduled for September 19th at Tariez Bahbah's house in Orange. All the ladies are invited. More information will be posted soon. Please see the flyer included!!

Teen SOYO

Saturday August 21st Lunch/ 2nd Harvest Food

Bank- We met at church at 11am including the new SOYO members (incoming 7th graders), had lunch together, and we all went to the 2nd Harvest Food Bank in Irvine and helped out (work from 1:00 to 3:30). At 3:30pm we left the food bank and headed to church for Vespers at 4pm.

We did not kidnap 7th graders in the morning, this year but they all met at church)

Sunday August 22nd Annual Election Meeting-

after church school, the teens met and had an election for new officers.

Sunday August 29th- Officers meeting at church

Men's Club

Men's Club canceled their meeting for August. They will meet on Thursday September 16th.

Sep 18th – Fifteen volunteers/2d Harvest Food Bank Work Session, 1-4 pm

Sep 23d – Bag of non-perishable food items for FOCUS OC Backpack Kidz due.

Sept 26th – Blood Drive at St Mark Church, Irvine, 9am to 3pm, www.redcrossblood.org, Sponsor code Orthodox

Please note that as of May 2009, the main mode of distribution for this newsletter is via an email attachment. If have received this through the US mail and would like to receive it through email, please contact the Church Office with your current email address. Likewise if you prefer a hard copy, please also contact us.

Hall Rentals!!

St. Mark has entered into an agreement with a caterer for the use of our church hall. This

agreement will greatly benefit our parish financially, but since we expect significantly more hall rentals, it is incumbent on our organizations and parishioners to schedule hall use well in advance. The parish will have “first call” on hall usage, but once we have committed a date to the caterer we must honor that commitment. Please plan ahead.

Bloopers

1-Hymn: He Torched Me.

2-Women’s Bible Study: Overcoming Obstacles.

3-Sermon: “Chris has Risen!”

4-Just a reindeer that you are to work in the Nursery this coming Sunday.

Norman & Wetzka Haffty 9/2
Michael & Charlotte Khoury 9/11
Nader & Suhair Qoborsi 9/16
Jamal & Tammy Qutami 9/21
Issam & Bernadette Ramsey 9/19
Farah & Silvia Saba 9/15
Ibrahim & Lydia Wakileh 9/19

*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)***

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Maya Aldada 9/24
Daniel Ayoub Abu Raya 9/18
Andy Bahbah 9/19
Nora Bahbah 9/9
Rania Debbas 9/19
Nicholas Debbas 9/2
Andrew Ellis 9/14
Robert Hagel 9/23
Madilyn Hagel 9/28
Nadia Karkar 9/16
Abe Khamis 9/20
Najwa Moubayed 9/26
Alex Munayyer 9/14
Bernadette Ramsey 9/14
Issam Ramsey 9/19
Heba Saadeh 9/16
Hiam Sayegh 9/24
Alexander Turk 9/26
Rana Turk 9/26
Christy Wilde 9/13
Theodora Whitehead 9/23
Yesenia Zadah 9/8

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Yousef & Rita Billeh 9/9
Scott & Diane Daruty 9/4

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