

St. Matthew Antiochian Orthodox Church

June 2010 Newsletter

***2368 Sonoma Ave
Torrance, CA 90501
310-782-9468***

Thoughts from your Parish Chairman

To my St. Matthew Church family:

Having celebrated the Ascension, where Jesus ascended into heaven 40 days after his resurrection, we have now reached Pentecost. This is, following His Ascension, when the Savior fulfilled His promise and sent the Holy Spirit who appeared to Christ's followers as tongues of fire. As a result of the Spirit's operation the disciples spoke in languages foreign to them and were guided as to what to say. It is extremely significant that on the day of Pentecost, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, should take the form of tongues and that the first results of the disciples' baptism of the Holy Spirit should be the ability to speak in languages other than their own so that others, who spoke different languages could understand.

Speaking of, and relating this to our current contemporary situation, it can be said that many have lost this sense of urgency with regard to the Faith. Orthodox Christianity may have become just their religion, part of their culture, their ethos. The very thought of Orthodoxy being of vital importance, because salvation depends on it, is alien to many individuals.

I know we all do our best to attend Liturgy each Sunday. But what reasons qualify for us to miss a service on a Sunday or any other day? Do we pray each day during the week, even when things are going good, probably not? We probably only think to pray when there is a crisis or things are not going our way. Do we pray on behalf of others or those less fortunate?

In order to work towards our salvation we must praise God and all that he did for us full time and make it an integral part of our lives to attend services regularly unless something extreme gets in our way. We all have room to improve and we should be available to other church members who are in need of help.

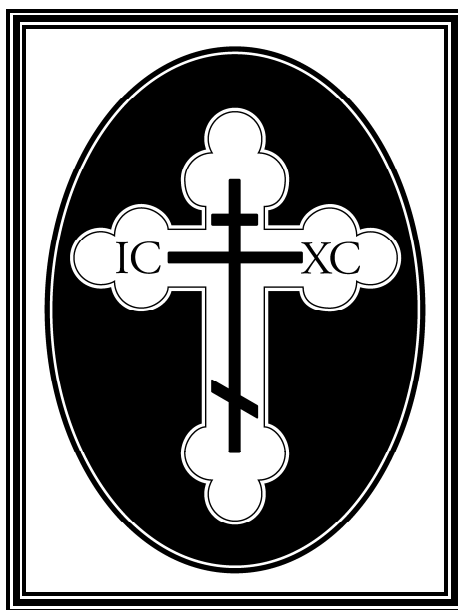
*Yours in Christ,
Ron Sesco
rsesco@ca.rr.com*

Treasurer's Report

We are almost \$6,000 in the red for the year. Please help us out by checking to see if you are up-to-date on your pledge. We have quite a few who are behind on their pledges. If this is due to financial hardship, then we understand and pray that your finances will improve. For those who have just forgotten, then please bring your pledge up-to-date. If you are not sure how much you have given or what your pledge amount is, please contact me at (310) 373-7860 or send me an e-mail at songoku2@verizon.net. I will be happy to let you know what your pledge balance is.

We are planning several fundraisers to help us meet our expenses. The first one will be a Luau in July. Please plan to support this event since we cannot pay our bills without income from our fundraisers. We will be having our annual yard sale in August, so store those sellable items until then. Please show your support for your church family and pray about tithing (giving 10% of your gross income) today.

*JoAnn Ramirez
Parish Treasurer*



Women of St. Matthew

The Ladies of St. Matthew wish to thank all those who supported and attended the May 1st Fashion Show.

Special thanks to Marlene Woodling, coordinator; Georgette Riggs, caterer; Liz Mike and Nellie Safford, support team.

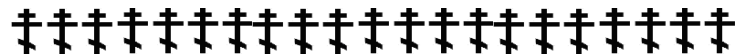
Our thanks to the lovely models Barbara Aquaro, Laila Bannura, Suhair Barakat, Abir Hanna, Tirusew Mamo, and Amany Shweiri.

It was a successful event in every way – good food, good company, and a good time!

The Ladies also wish to extend their thanks to Hanan Kary, who has stepped down as president of the Ladies Group. Hanan is still an active member, but needed a break from leading the group.

Thank you for your work!

Until the ladies elect a new president, please contact Laila Bannura concerning any matters relating to the Ladies group.



From the Editor

First, let me offer my apologies for not sending out a newsletter in May. Things got busy at work, and I simply forgot to put it together.

However, not putting out the newsletter also allowed me to reflect on where I directed my efforts.

Pascha this year did not feel like it has in the recent past. I did not attend as many mid-week services as I had previously. The excitement of Pascha was shared with the worldly concern of preparing for a spring break vacation (which began Easter afternoon), and the Paschal service itself felt different, because a dear friend, who attends a protestant “contemporary” church, chose this service to accept my daughter’s invitation to have her first Orthodox experience. I guess I’ll always worry that our non-orthodox friends will find our liturgy to be “just too weird”.

But upon reflection, I realized that this Pascha was different because I had lost my dear niece just as Lent began. Although her cancer seemed to be getting worse, her sudden death took me by surprise. I was unprepared for the questions that I knew would come from others: Why did God allow this? Why do good people die, yet bad people live? Why would he take someone so young, with a child to care for?

I thought I was prepared for her passing, but I found myself distracted. I realized that her death caused her family and friends to confront their own mortality. It caused them to wonder if they were “prepared”.

But what does it mean to be prepared? How does one prepare to meet their savior? This Lent, I looked at my own life, and realized that I have fallen far short of the goal of knowing Christ. In my church school class, I demand that they know the two great commandments: Love God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your soul, and love your neighbor as yourself. But do I myself live up to these standards? Unfortunately, no. I look at myself and see how I am more concerned with my job, than helping those in need. That I am more concerned with my comfort, than with comforting those in pain. That I am more concerned with the things of the world, than with the things of heaven. I realized that I am failing in what is most important.

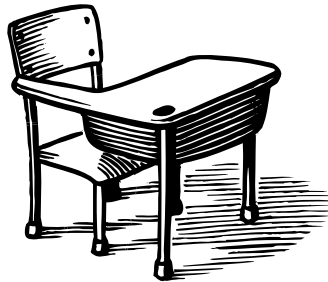
But, my family and friends assure me that I’m doing a lot, that I’m doing more than some. But that is the root of my failure. I should not compare myself to others, but to the One who gave Himself for us. Do I serve, as Christ served? Do I pray, as Christ prayed? Do I show compassion as Christ showed compassion? Do I love, as, even now, He loves us?

Each one of us must prepare ourselves for our passing. We don’t know if we’ll live another week, much less another 20 or 30 years. We cannot put off until tomorrow that which we can do today. Let us rededicate ourselves to serving Christ and being like Christ. Let us strive to outdo one another in service, and prayer, and humility. Let us do all we can, now, because we don’t know when our soul will be required of us.

“And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? ⁸ But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’? ⁹ Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not ¹⁰ So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’”

Luke 17:7-10

*Jim Ramirez
Editor*



School's out for summer!

As we finish the month of June, all the local schools have now completed their studies.

Our church school is also finished for the year, and for the months of July and August, we will be conducting a special summer program. This program is being led by Kimberly Woolsey and Theresa Ramirez.

The students will be limited to 1st through 8th grade. On alternating weeks, there will be a craft, a class and/or video, and a singing session led by Bill Waterman.

If you would like to help out, or if you'd like to provide snacks, please see Kimberly or Theresa.

Bible Trivia

Here is some more trivia for your enjoyment. Try doing these with your children and see who knows their Bible. The answers on the bottom of the last page

1. And I'll say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry." But God said to him, "Fool!"
A. true B. false
2. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a _____ was given to me, a messenger of Satan, to buffet me.
A. a thorn in my side B. a thorn in my flesh C. success D. significant other
3. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that
A. he shall come B. he walked C. we are perfect D. we are in him
4. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the . . .
A. apple of thine eye B. shield for your heart C. milestone D. precious pearl

Hot Meals for the Homeless

The homeless meal for July will be on Saturday the 10th, and the meal in August will be on the 14th. Summer is usually a very difficult month, because the service groups from the local schools are not available to help. If you can make it for these two months, the help will be especially appreciated.

The meal is served Saturday morning in south Torrance.

Come prepare sandwiches, or serve food, or make a dish for those less fortunate than ourselves. The meal is from 9:30 am to 1:00 pm, so come help, even if just for an hour.

Please call Jim or JoAnn Ramirez for details and directions (310) 373-7860.



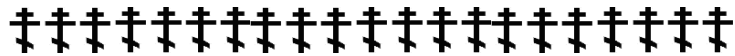
A Great Opportunity!

Many of us do not like to think about our mortality. If we don't think about dying, then maybe it won't happen to us (ha ha). But too often, the passing of a loved one occurs, and we are not prepared to handle all the things that must be done.

Green Hills Cemetery in Ranch Palos Verdes is opening a new section at their site. Grave plots in this area are being offered at reduced rates for early buyers (but there is no need to move in right away!).

Fr. George is hoping to get a few of us better prepared for the future, and has information on these plots. It is our hope that we can perhaps get an even lower price by having a group of us purchase at this time.

Please contact Mike Woolsey for more information



Looking ahead

This year, two of your elected council members decided that they could not devote time to the Parish Council, and have opted to resign, rather than not perform up to their usual standards.

That means that at our Annual General Church meeting in October, we will be looking for 5, count them, 5 brave folks to join our council. In addition to our normal three 3-year terms, we will be looking to fill a 1 year term, and a 2 year term.

Please start praying now, to see if God is leading you to assist your church in this ministry.

A sign from heaven?

Well, no. But our new sign is now installed, and what a blessing it is! You may not know it, but we have quite a few people who look in, wondering what kind of church this is (not that they actually enter into the service), and quite a few who mistake us for Nativity Roman Catholic Church (which is just down the street).

A lot of our visitors have overcome their trepidation about coming to a new “unmarked” church, so it is nice that they can now be certain that they have found the right place.

A great many thanks go to Deacon Barsoum, Bill Waterman, and Bill’s father (Bill Sr.) for installing the posts.

Thanks also to Deacon and Mike Woolsey, for making the time to scrape and paint the posts.



Luau!

Money problems are never fun, but that doesn’t mean we can’t have a little fun when addressing these problems.

On July 24th, we will be having a Hawaiian luau at the home of Nakhleh and Chamiran Abumuhor. Food and entertainment are still being finalized, so if you would like to help, please contact Mike Woolsey or Jim Ramirez.

Watch the bulletin and our website for more information. The cost of this evening has not been set, but keep in mind that this is a fundraiser!

Answers to the Bible Trivia

1. A Luke 12:19-20
2. B 2 Corinthians 12:7
3. D John 2:5
4. A Proverbs 7:2

The Parish Council would like to thank all those who have pledged to support St. Matthew Church in 2010.

So far, 59 people (or families) have returned pledge cards, for a total of \$103,510. Our church budget is \$143,000 for the year. Please join your church family in pledging to support our church.

Fr. George & Barbara Aquaro	Hanna & Abir Hanna
Fr. Paul Doyle	Sandra Hold
Dcn. Barsoum & Theresa Barsoum	Doris Holmes
Gabi Abumuhor	Timothy Holmes
Johnny & Suha Abumohor	Steve & Hanan Kary
Nakhleh & Chamiran Abumuhor	Amal Kary
Doris Afsa	Michael & Suzanne Kassis
Michael Afsa	Mary Khouri
Theresa Afsa	Naguib & Nihad Kilada
Tamara Amberik	Larry Kisby
Brad Arnold & Irina Cozianu	Tirusew & Sewnet Mamo
Larry & Lynn Baba	Samir Manneh
Laila Bannura	Liz Mike
Nabeel & Suhair Barakat	Jim & Jo Ann Ramirez
Mark Barsoum	Georgette Riggs
Christopher & Larissa Chapin	Samir & Huda Salfity
Elena Corbu	Nellie Safford
William Costley	Ron & Lena Sesco
Ed & Jean Dahdah	Cathy & George Shweiri
Fahed & Nadra Dahdah	Ed & Diana Shweiri
Mimi Dahdah	Tony & Amany Shweiri
Colin & Tara Day	Lydia Sidio
Terez Draganov	Evon Soof
Issa & Abeer Eghniem	Masoud & Nadia Soof
Dee Espinosa	Phil & Artemis Tamoush
Everett & Caroline Faulk	Rose Tritica
Joyce Fisher	Ronnie & Elaine Wade
Issa & Henriette Habash	Bill & Marlene Woodling
Nidal & Mariam Habash	Michael & Laura Woolsey
George Hanna	

Your pledges will help us meet our financial obligations and will allow us to support new programs for our parish. To become a pledge member, please fill out a lime green pledge card (located in the pews). Writing “pledge” on your check will not enlist you as a pledging member. Please see Parish Chairman Ron Sesco if you have any questions.

How to reach us

Church website : www.saint-matthew.net

Church e-mail : st.matthew1@att.net

Fr. George Aquaro	Pastor	424-731-0110
Fr. Paul Doyle	Pastor Emeritus	310-533-0714
Dn. Barsoum Barsoum	Deacon	310-318-2590

Your Parish Council

Ron Sesco	Chairman
Mike Woolsey	Vice-Chair
Laura Woolsey	Secretary
JoAnn Ramirez	Treasurer
Tim Holmes	Assistant Treasurer

Laila Bannura	Suhair Barakat	Jim Ramirez
Georgette Riggs	Nellie Safford	

Theresa Barsoum - Church School Coordinator
Laila Bannura - Ladies of St. Matthew President

And remember, Fr. George has created a “channel” on Youtube where short talks on the faith are presented.

Please visit it at :

www.youtube.com/user/PresbyterGeorge

Newsletter Editor is Jim Ramirez

If you have anything you'd like to contribute, or, if you have news or information you'd like to have published, please contact Jim.

The deadline for submissions is the 13th of each month.

Jim can be reached at 310-373-7860, or email him at songoku2@verizon.net

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