

The Heavenly Host

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St. Michael Hosts International Orthodox Christian Charities Guest Speaker: Nora Kort, from the IOCC Jerusalem Office Sunday, November 10, 2002

Orthodox Christians from all jurisdictions in the Los Angeles area met at St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church in the San Fernando Valley to hear Ms. Nora Kort, head of the Jerusalem Office of the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC). The event began at 3:30 p.m. and with a 15-minute video highlighting the 10 years of work by IOCC throughout the world. The video was followed by a talk by Ms. Kort on "Hope Amid Hostility: A Palestinian Christian Looks at Life in the West Bank," focusing on the work of IOCC in the Holy Land. The evening ended with a half-hour session for questions and answers.

Nora Kort has had nearly 20 years experience in social work and community development on regional, national and international levels. She has previously worked for a period of 15 years as the manager of the Women & Social Services Department at Catholic Relief Services in Jerusalem, and currently directs IOCC's initiatives in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. IOCC was established in the Holy Land four years ago. It began with an operating budget of a few thousand dollars, and has grown to a budget of over 3 million dollars in the last two years. In the past four years, IOCC has earned a reputation of being a service provider to the needs of residents on the West Bank.

Ms. Kort began her presentation by clarifying that IOCC's primary goal in the Holy Land is to currently provide hope for work with dignity for the 66.5% of 3,300,000 Palestinians who are unemployed. She pointed out that of this high unemployment figure, 78% is from the labor force in the Holy Land. She stated that an average income of a Palestinian (including those who reside in cities, villages and refugee camps) is \$2.10 a day, with the average family income at \$400 a month. The challenge in providing assistance is made more

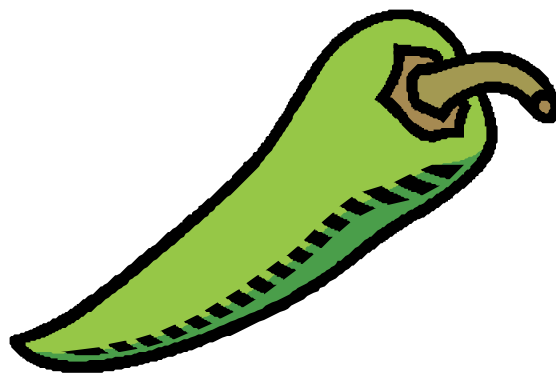
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Plan to participate in the Annual Chili Cook-Off by Neda Toomey

The chili cook-off will take place on January 12 at St. Michael Community Center, following Liturgy. Please start practicing and/or creating your secret chili recipes now so that you can become a contestant at our event. It's a lot of fun, and there is also a backgammon tournament, which is always a big success. Adult tickets are \$5 and children under 10 are \$3. Hot dogs, drinks and desserts will also be served. Contact Neda Toomey for more information at (818) 780-5758.



The Parish Coffee Hour: Social Aspects of Evangelism by Katrina E. Davis

Today, one of the most common ways for making contacts outside the work place is the social gathering. Almost everyone enjoys some form of after-work or weekend social life. So it follows that one of our greatest opportunities for attracting and incorporating new people into the life of the church is the social life of the parish. If we make newcomers and potential members a welcome part of the coffee hour or the “after-service” gatherings, this can become an important factor in forming their impressions of the church. “Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another” (1 Peter 4:9).

During the service itself a friendly smile, a nod of greeting, and the offering of a Liturgy book open to the proper place sets the tone and makes the newcomer more at ease. Because many people do not like having attention drawn to themselves, this should be done quietly. If the service is a special one or unusual in any way, a quiet word of explanation may be in order.

After the welcome and invitation to attend the coffee hour has been given by the priest at the end of the Liturgy, the church member designated to greet newcomers (if there is one) should introduce himself or herself to the visitors and conduct them to the refreshment table, making sure that they are served *before* they are surrounded by “well-wishers.” If the greeter can make introductions, it will keep mumbled names from being misunderstood.

A few general questions such as: “Are you new in the area? Do you live in the neighborhood?” will usually elicit enough information for the greeter to work with, yet keep the visitors from being put through the “third-degree” by everyone who comes up to talk to them. If they are searching for a church, or come from one of the local churches, members should not make comparisons. Much more appropriate is something on the order of “We hope you

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St. Michael Church

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December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9:30 am-Parish Council Elections 1	4:00 pm-Classrooms 1-6 Rented 2	6:00 pm-Ladies Guild Christmas Dinner & Meeting 3	4 4	5 5	6 6	6:00 pm-Kitchen & Banquet Room Rental 7:00 pm-Great Vespers 7
11:30 am-Founder's Coffee Hour 8	4:00 pm-Classrooms 1-6 Rented 6:00 pm-Parish Council Christmas Dinner & Meeting 9	7:00 pm-Classrooms 1-6 Rented 7:30 pm-Bible Study at Skaff's Home 10	11 11	12 12	10:00 am-Prep for Bake Day 13	8:00 am-Baking Meat Pies 10:00 am-Church School Pageant Rehearsal 14
11:30 am-Church School Pageant & Lunch 15	4:00 pm-Classrooms 1-6 Rented 7:00 pm-Messiah Sing-a-long at Dorothy Chandler Pavilion 16	7:00 pm-Classrooms 1-6 Rented 7:30 pm-Bible Study at Skaff Home 17	7:00 pm Ballroom Rented 18	7:30 am-Classroom 6 Rented 19	20 20	6:00 pm-Kitchen & Banquet Room Rental 21
22 22	23 23	5:00 pm-Christmas Eve Liturgy 24	THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD NO LITURGY 25	26 26	27 27	6:00 pm-Kitchen & Banquet Room Rental 28
29 29	30 30	31 31				

Wednesdays and Fridays are observed as *fast days* in all Orthodox churches.

Regular Services

Saturdays:
Great Vespers at 5 pm in the Church.

Sundays:
Orthos at 8:45 am & Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am in the Church.

Confessions are arranged by appointment or prior to services.

Update on Cathedral Tour in Los Angeles by Carrie Skaff

50 people braved the rain to tour the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. It is definitely a must see. We were split into three groups, each with its own docent. The docents were very knowledgeable. Each group thought they had the best docent!!! The Cathedral is built to last 500 years, to withstand an 8.5 earthquake and can move 27 inches laterally in either direction during a tremor. Afterwards, we had a late lunch at Olvera Street.

Social Aspects of Evangelism, cont.

(Continued from page 2)

enjoyed our service and will come again.”

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” (Hebrews 13:2)

Remember that we are Christ’s witnesses here on earth, so the impression we make on others is very important. Let’s try to make it a good one.

“Then the King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.’” (Matthew 25:34-35)

Some guidelines for Visiting with Visitors:

Do Not: question visitors on the doctrine or other practices of their present church.

Do: welcome them to our services, and ask if they have any questions.

Do Not: allow any one member to monopolize and isolate them. *Do:* try to introduce them to as many members as possible, particularly those of similar background and age and make sure they are introduced to the priest.

Do Not: assume that because they came once they will want to become involved in all phases of church life: choir, Sunday school, baking, tithing, etc. *Do:* assure them that all areas of church life are open to them should they wish to participate.

Do Not: give a “crash course” in Orthodoxy. *Do:* answer specific questions simply and briefly.

Do Not: tell them about financial problems, personality conflicts, gripes against the priest or

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Greek Chicken Stew

6 skinless chicken breasts
Flour
2 cups cubed and peeled eggplant
2 cups sliced mushrooms
1 medium onion, coarsely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon dried oregano leaves
½ teaspoon dried basil leaves
½ teaspoon dried thyme
2 cups de-fatted, low sodium chicken broth
¼ cup dry sherry or red wine
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper
1 can (14 ounces) artichoke hearts, drained
6 cups cooked, yolk-free egg noodles

Lightly coat chicken with flour. Generously spray a large skillet with nonstick cooking spray and heat over medium heat. Cook chicken about 5-10 minutes or until browned on both sides. Spray a large soup pot with nonstick cooking spray and heat over medium heat. Add eggplant, mushrooms, onion, garlic, oregano, basil and thyme and cook over medium heat until soft, about 5 minutes. Add chicken, chicken broth, sherry, salt and pepper and heat to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer covered for about 1 hour or until chicken is no longer pink. Add artichokes during last 20 minutes of cooking. Serve over noodles.

Makes 6 Servings

Serving Size: 1 breast, 5 ounces vegetables and 8 ounces noodles

Meat Pie Bake Day Approaching

The next baking day is scheduled for Saturday, December 14, 2002 in the kitchen. Please bring your aprons and your smile. Thanks to everyone who helps make this day a huge success.



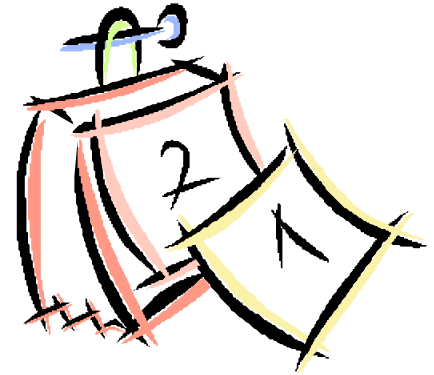
Dates to Remember

Founders' Recognition Day (Coffee Hour) is Sunday, December 8.

Church School Christmas Program is Sunday, December 15.

Annual Chili-Cook-off & Backgammon Tournament is Sunday, January 12, 2003.

Saturday, March 29, 2003 will be a planned visit to the Santa Barbara Monastery to visit with Mother Victoria.



Ladies Guild

Scrip available each Sunday in the Community Center. A portion of each dollar is donated to our Church and is applied to our mortgage. Shop at your favorite stores and buy item for work, home or school!

You're all invited to sign up for Holy Bread & to host a coffee hour. Please call Leila Abu-Ghazaleh for more information on open dates at (805) 522-4797.

Spiritual Bouquets: Donations are offered in memory of the deceased in lieu of flowers. If you wish to participate, please see Jeannette Aboud.

Christmas Cultural Event: The tickets are here for the *Messiah Sing-a-long* on Monday, December 16, 2002. Please pick up yours now and plan to stay for caroling.

A free bus trip is still being planned for Solvang in the Spring.

Around Los Angeles, the LA County Museum of Art is featuring the works by Ansel Adams and "Sergeant and Italy." Make your reservations now by calling (877) 522-6225. One ticket admits you to both events and the remainder of the museum, including the George Washington exhibit. Also, across the street, stop by the Peterson Car Museum.

Beginning February 1, 2003, the San Sylmar/Nethercutt Museum offers antique cars, organs, etc., for children 12 and over.

PARISHIONER DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 31ST

2003 Pledge/Tithe Forms are due December 31st. All parishioners who are at least 18 years old and self-supporting must complete a new Pledge/Tithe Form each year, and all information is strictly confidential. Any questions or concerns, please contact Mary Ann Coury, Comptroller, at (818) 994-2313, or Sondra Love, Treasurer, at (818) 996-0271.

Report on IOCC Event, cont.

(Continued from page 1)

complicated by the fact that health hazards are increasing in the region. Current statistics show that 50% of the Palestinian population is under the age of 18. According to the recent estimates of the United Nations, 269 million dollars will be needed for humanitarian relief in the next six months. She pointed out that the greatest obstacles in humanitarian work includes travel through over 300 check points, half of which are Israeli military check points resulting from the recent military siege of cities on the West Bank. The military incursions have necessitated the use of donkeys for travel by civilians, if not by foot, on many dirt roads in some areas where the main access roads have been closed for a long period of time. Every staff worker is challenged to take great risks, whereby, spending up to a period of three hours in traveling may result in the refusal of entry into a village or town where access is often forbidden. In the recent months, IOCC has concentrated its efforts in the Northern region of the West Bank where the need has been the greatest. In West Bank villages alone, over 200,000 olive trees have been uprooted resulting from the military installations and Israeli settlements.

Through the work of IOCC 36,000 workdays have been funded in various fields. The closure of Gaza Strip, along the Mediterranean coast has prevented any assistance to reach the area; however, IOCC is working to extend its work to the area in the coming year. Ms. Kort clarified that the work of IOCC is not limited to one segment of the religious population. Currently, Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land comprise 2% of the population. Christians who are Palestinian in Jerusalem comprise 1%.

In answer to a question from the audience, Ms. Kort further clarified that generally, Christians live by a higher standard of living. And while poverty is greater among the Muslim families, the small number of Christians in the West Bank and Gaza makes this fact quite irrelevant. She pointed out that in a recent study published by the Bethlehem University, the immigration of Orthodox Christians was the highest recorded. The survey revealed that Orthodox Christians were leaving the Holy Land because of feelings of neglect, need for work, loss of dignity, opportunities for education, and need for security.

Will this trend continue? In Nora's opinion, "Institutional support is essential for the continuing presence of Christians in the Holy Land." Moreover, IOCC hopes in the future to "empower Christian organizations in the central region of the West Bank" with the goal of reaching the needs of a larger segment of the population.

Included among the questions asked was one which inquired as to whether or not the Israeli government has changed its position in refusing to recognize the newly-elected Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem (IRINEOS) who was reported in the press as facing a dispute with the state regarding leases of church property, one of which includes the land that the Israeli Parliament stands. Ms. Kort's response began with the statement: "Nothing changes in the Holy Land." She went on to say that the Greek government was intervening to help resolve the matter. It was her opinion that the Patriarch would eventually be recognized, however, as for now, "nothing has changed."

Everyone was encouraged to visit the organization's website at: www.iocc.org, where a complete financial statement is available for anyone with questions. In responding to another question that evening, Ms. Kort mentioned that 8% of contributions to IOCC are used for administrative expenses, while many charities operate with a 20 to 25% for their administrative offices. Ms. Kort was leaving for another speaking engagement in Michigan on Monday, and had plans to also visit with His Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP in New Jersey, before returning back to Jerusalem.

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Newsletter Editor

John E. Andrews

Please send all announcements, articles or news worthy stories by email or text sent to the church office for submission to our newsletter. Deadline is the third Sunday of the month prior to next month's issue. Thank you.

Welcoming Visitors, cont.

(Continued from page 4)

parish gossip. They may be trying to escape these things at their present church. *Do:* tell them good things that are going on: upcoming events, special projects, etc. Show them that the church is busy and involved in the community.

Do Not: load them down with books, crosses, icons, and the like, or make them feel obligated to browse or buy if the church has a bookstore. *Do:* let them know if the church has a library or bookstore, but only as one item of interest.

Do Not: refer to them as "our visitors." This creates the impression that they are not encouraged to return. *Do:* assure them of their continued welcome and invite them to return; give them a schedule of services, making sure times are clear and correct; and ask them to sign a guest book so follow-up can take place.

Words from the Fathers [and Mothers]

"Do not ask for love from your neighbor, for if you ask and he does not respond you will be troubled. Instead show your love for your neighbor and you will be at rest and so will bring your neighbor to love." -- St. Dorotheos of Gaza