

# THE GUARDIAN



St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church of the San Fernando Valley

## Why "The Guardian" ?

By Charmaine E. Darmour, Editor

Welcome to the first issue of OUR new parish newsletter! You may be asking yourself: "Why The Guardian?" Well, I felt it important that our newsletter relate in a heartfelt way to our parish and as it turns out, Holy Tradition teaches us that of the seven leaders of the angelic powers *it is our patron*, the Archangel Michael who is especially considered to be *the Guardian of the Orthodox Faith* and fighter against heresies. So, there you have it !

This is OUR newsletter and YOUR input is vital to its success. Your feedback will be greatly appreciated, as well as your input.

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If you have something you'd like to share with our parish family, please contact me either in person at church or feel free to email me at [cdarmour@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cdarmour@sbcglobal.net)

I look forward to hearing from you!!

## Pastoral Message from Fr. Timothy...

I call Great Lent "The Church's forty-day rehabilitation of the soul" and the pre-Lenten weeks, such as we are now in: "a time of *detox*". It requires great effort and determination. Now is the time for us to consider our choices. The period of Great Lent has also been called by our Church Fathers: "The tithing of the year" because it is a chosen period of time (one-tenth in 365 days of the year) when we focus on our need for a personal spiritual renewal. Just as beginning an exercise program may be difficult at first, so it is with Great Lent.

One of the first and most vital

considerations we must ponder at the start of the Fast is the *barrenness of our souls*. Not only do we fail to live virtuously in many cases, we fail to desire to do so with any fervency. Even if we desire to repent, we may find that no sincere repentance actually exists within us. Going through the outward motions of worship, we observe that our minds are continually occupied with resentment, greed, jealousy, lust, covetousness, judgment of our neighbor and everything vain and foolish. How can we begin to progress? We start honestly seeking the mercy of Christ for the grace of repentance. For truly, the ability to repent does not exist within

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## Parish Council? My Condolences!

By Kris Thabit, Parish Council Chair

### Parish Council? My Condolences!

This is often the response upon being elected or appointed to the Council. Why not congratulations?

The council's core purpose is to manage the business affairs of the church and provide more freedom to the priest to address the spiritual needs of the church.

Father teaches us that liturgy means "work of the people". Council members work for God and worship Him my giving of their time

and talent to strategically plan for the future and be good stewards of what He and the parish has placed in our hands...a form of liturgy. I don't see how this can be viewed as a burden.

An additional benefit to serving is the opportunity to get to know better 15 people who love God and care about His church. Serving is a wonderful experience and you will be enriched by doing it.

*"Serve the Lord with gladness"*

*Psalm 100:2*

## Orthodox Outreach – The Martha & Mary House

Located on a quiet residential street in Escondido, God's grace is evident at Martha & Mary House, the first Orthodox Christian Maternity Home in our country. Under the auspices of the Orthodox Church of America, with a pan-Orthodox Board of directors, Martha & Mary House put out the welcome mat in early 2002. Their purpose is to provide a safe haven for pregnant women in crisis who are without resources and/or family support and to provide an alternative to abortion.

Martha & Mary House was the vision of its founder, Sarah Elisabet who now serves as

"Housemother" to all who seek the care & services offered there. Sarah Elisabet was chrismated into the Orthodox Church in 1995. Women who come to Martha & Mary House are usually not Orthodox, but while there their daily lives are saturated with Orthodox prayers, icons, and observance of Feasts. Antiochian Orthodox priest, Fr. George Morelli, Ph.D., who is also a licensed psychologist and cognitive therapist is on the Advisory Board and joins the women for Morning Prayer one day a week and is available for both

Please see Martha & Mary House on page 5

*An Orthodox Christian  
Maternity Home for women in  
crisis who choose life for their  
unborn child*



## Welcome New Faces on our Parish Council

This year our Parish Council has some new faces! Please welcome first time Council members Yvonne Palese and Robin Thomas. Perhaps you've seen Yvonne singing in the choir or you've seen Robin in Liturgy (she usually sits on the right side!) but do you really know them? Well here's your opportunity to get to know some tidbits on these wonderful ladies and then next time you see them in church, if you don't already know them be sure to introduce yourself.

**Yvonne Carol Palese** has been a member of our St. Michael family for 8 years. Yvonne was born and raised here in Southern California and converted to Orthodoxy 25 years ago at St. Innocent's OCA. Married to Tony for 35 years, Yvonne has 2 daughters and 4 grandchildren. As a registered nurse, Yvonne applies her professional skills in answering many parishioner questions on hospice and in-home care as well as chairing our Visitation Lay Ministry. This Ministry team calls upon and prays with our ill and/or home bound parishioners. Yvonne enjoys yoga, tai chi and exercising and if she could travel anywhere it would be to France. While serving on our

Parish Council Yvonne hopes to help establish more offerings for our youth and looks forward to growing together in love & trust.

**Robin Thomas** is a relatively new member of our St. Michael family, coming to us just over a year ago. Robin was born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA which makes her a fan of the Steelers, Pirates and Penguins. She converted to Orthodoxy about 15 years ago at St. George Antiochian in Pittsburgh. A convert from Roman Catholicism, Robin's father was cradle Orthodox and growing up she always felt a strong connection to his church and attended St. George often. This coming May, Robin will be getting married to Bob Haddad. A student pilot, Robin is pursuing her private pilot license. Additionally, she enjoys reading and traveling, and although she's been to Germany & Austria would like to travel more extensively in Europe and someday would also like to visit the Middle East. Recognizing that there are so many talented and gifted people within our community, Robin's goal for our Parish Council is to contribute in ways which will help encourage the active involvement of our church family.

## Saint of the Month – Taxiotis

The Miraculous Experience of Taxiotis  
Commemorated on March 28th

Taxiouis was a soldier from Carthage. He spent his whole life in grievous sins but finally repented, left the military service and lived a God-pleasing life. While with his wife on his estate near the city, he committed adultery with the wife of his farm worker.

Immediately afterward, he was bitten by a snake and died. Taxiouis was dead for six hours, after which he arose. On the fourth day, he finally spoke and related how he had passed through all of the toll-houses until he came to the toll-house for adultery.

There he fell into the dark abode of demons, but was led out by an angel who vouched for him. He was then sent back to his body to repent for his latest sin.

He repented for forty days, going from church to church, beating his head against the doors and thresholds, crying and telling of the terrible sufferings which sinners undergo in the other world. He implored men to cease from sin and to repent for those sins already committed. On the fortieth day, with rejoicing, Taxiouis took up his habitation in the Kingdom of the Merciful God.

Fr. Timothy's message continued from page 1

us, and can only be experienced when the grace of God illumines our souls. So we are to begin the fast imploring God for this most basic gift, that we may truly *begin* to repent, and that the season may be one of joy and not sorrow. Without this, all of our fasting is as empty as that of the Pharisees.

When our bodies are injured, they send a message of pain that is almost impossible to ignore. If we were to persistently ignore these messages, we would be destroyed in a short time. The same is true for wounds of our soul. We cannot ignore the depression, despair, hurt, guilt, anger, resentment and sorrow that is in us because of sin.

## LENTEN LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Beginning on Monday, March 14, our church will have five weekly services:

Monday evenings at 6:30pm Great Compline Service held in the chapel

Wednesday evenings at 6:30pm  
The Liturgy of Pre-sanctified Gifts  
(followed by a Lenten fellowship dinner)

Friday evenings at 6:30pm  
The "Akathist Hymn" (Service of Intercessory Prayer)

Saturday at 5pm Great Vespers

Sundays Orthros and The Divine Liturgy beginning at 8:45am

Confessions are heard up to 15 minutes prior to services if not by appointment.

Some seek to help themselves to drown out these messages by resorting to alcohol, drugs, entertainment, sex, and other material attainments. While moods temporarily change, very often situations do not and our wounds only continue to fester. Christ implores us to take our wounds seriously and to come to Him for healing.

As we begin the Fast and work of healing, seeking true repentance and the grace of compunction, we who like the Publican, were condemned, are found justified by His grace. Like the Father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, our heavenly Father who loves us meets us as we return home. Where sin ruled, there is forgiveness. This is the hope for the Fast: to be embraced by our loving Father, to find our sins washed away by the blood of Christ's sacrifice.



### SAVE THESE IMPORTANT DATES!

- March 26<sup>th</sup> Annunciation Tea
- April 15 - 17 Ladies Retreat held at Camp St. Nicholas
- May 21<sup>st</sup> Palm Springs Follies
- June 6<sup>th</sup> St. Michael Golf Outing
- June 29<sup>th</sup> - July 4<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Conference hosted by St. Nicholas, San Francisco
- July 24 - 31<sup>st</sup> - Archdiocese Convention hosted by St. George Troy, Michigan
- August 13<sup>th</sup> Laguna Pageant of the Masters
- October 22<sup>nd</sup> LUAU

*Martha & Mary House* continued from page 2

counseling and/or conversation.

The pregnant girls and women who come to Martha & Mary House sign an agreement to follow Family Guidelines and House Rules which include Morning & Evening prayer. Additionally, they are counseled for three parenting options: marriage to the father (who is invited to receive marriage counseling) choosing a two-parent family by adoption or preparing for single parenting. None of these choices are easy and all require much prayer, reflection and counseling. In the meanwhile, the expectant ladies receive pre-natal medical care, proper nutrition, exercise and Lamaze classes.

Please keep Sarah Elisabet and all involved with the Martha & Mary House in your prayers. Additionally, they are always in need of not only donations but baby items and basic necessities to run a household.

For further information visit their web site at: [www.marthaandmaryhouse.org](http://www.marthaandmaryhouse.org)

Martha & Mary House Phone: 760-741-7050  
PO Box 1680  
Escondido, CA 92033

email: [marthaandmaryhouse@hotmail.com](mailto:marthaandmaryhouse@hotmail.com)

## 6<sup>th</sup> Annual St. Michael Annunciation Tea

Saturday, March 26<sup>th</sup> Morning Prayer: 10:00am  
Tea and assorted Lenten delicacies will be  
served in the Fellowship Hall

*This year, we are delighted to welcome back Mother Victoria,  
of St. Barbara Monastery as our featured speaker*

**ALL LADIES** are encouraged to attend to honor the Mother of our Lord  
and if possible bring a Lenten food item to share

Minimum Donation: \$5.00

**ONCE AGAIN, PROCEEDS WILL BE DONATED TO ST. BARBARA'S MONASTERY**

(young ladies under 5yrs complimentary)

Please RSVP by March 21st to Charmaine Darmour at 714-827-6394



*"Rejoice, thou that  
art highly favored,  
the Lord is with  
thee!"*

*Luke 1:28*

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*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*

[www.stmichaelvannuys.org](http://www.stmichaelvannuys.org)

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A selection of pre-Lenten prayers from  
Fr. Timothy for all the faithful

*Heal the wounds of my heart inflicted on  
me through my many sins, O Saviour and  
Physician of our souls and bodies; for  
Thou dost always grant forgiveness of  
transgressions to those that ask. Give me  
tears of repentance and forgiveness of my  
sins, O Lord, and have mercy upon me.*

*Find me naked, stripped of virtues, the  
enemy wounded me with the arrow of sin;  
but O God, Physician of our souls and  
bodies, heal the wounds of my soul and  
have mercy upon me.*

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