
❖ THE TORCHBEARER ❖

Vol. 6 ... No. 5

January, 1998

From the Pastor...

I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins...

By Fr. Alexander Schmemmann,
former Dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary

“I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins...” The Gospel of Matthew ends with this commandment of Jesus Christ to His disciples: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me; go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28: 18-19).

It is precisely in light of these words, and likewise in light of the word *baptism* as it is used in the Gospels, that one must try to understand thy Symbol of faith's baptismal confession.

Let us begin with the word “baptism.” While the Gospel ends with a commandment to baptize all nations, it also begins with the account of baptism as performed by John, a baptism which Christ Himself received at his hands in the river Jordan. For contemporaries of the Gospel, baptism (from the Greek *baptizma*, a symbolic immersion in water) was a familiar rite signifying a person's acknowledgment that sin had made him unclean, that he repented, and that he desired cleansing, forgiveness, and rebirth. Water, the source of life, the source of cleansing, was here the most appropriate, self-evident symbol, and immersion in water was the most widespread ritual. In accepting John's baptism, Christ gave the rite a new meaning by connecting it to Himself. “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn 1:29), says John the Baptist as he sees Jesus approaching him. The sign, the gift, the power to forgive sins and renew life which the Son of God and Savior brought to people is the same power which the Risen Christ, prior to His Ascension, grants to His apostles and their followers, when He commands them to baptize all nations. The mind can perhaps accept the teaching of Christ on love of God and neighbor, on righteousness

and purity. But to anyone who even once in his life has read the Gospel, it must be obvious that acceptance of

Christ's teaching as presented in Christianity and the Gospels cannot be divorced from faith in Him, because His teaching is neither a philosophy nor a moral code. If it were, then our relationship to Him would be irrelevant. Christ's teaching is first of all the “good news,” the proclamation of God's appearance in the world, an appearance in order to save people from sin and death, to give them a new and holy life. The one who believes in Christ, therefore, thirsts for union with Him, thirsts for the gift of salvation, of new life. Baptism is Christianity's sign of this gift, or as the Church says, the “sacrament” of this gift. In this act of immersion in water, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are united with Christ, and in Him, with God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

St. Paul says that we are united with Christ in baptism, through its likeness to death and resurrection (see Rom 6). Immersion in water signifies death, man's death in his total enslavement to materiality, to sin, to self-centeredness, to passions. Rising out of the water is the sign of resurrection and revival, the start of a new life in union with Christ. According to the Church's faith, Christ rose from the dead, and therefore death – in the words of the apostle Paul – “no longer has dominion over Him” (Rom 6:9). And here in baptism He gives us His resurrected and immortal life, His love, the power of His victory, This is the source of that amazing joy surrounding baptism in the early Church, the source of that faith in baptism as spiritual yet real union with Christ. “We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead... we too might walk in newness of life,” writes the apostle Paul (Rom 6:4).

For Christians, baptism is the foundation of the Church, because the Church, i.e., the community of those who believe in Christ, is not simply an organization to disseminate Christ's teaching and to provide mutual help and support. It is the union in Christ of all those who have received from Him the gift of new life and the forgiveness of sins. It is their unity in faith, i.e., their acceptance of Christ as God and Savior. It is their unity in love for Him, and in Him, for each other. Scattered

throughout the world and among all peoples, the Church constitutes a new people of God united not by flesh and blood, not by earthly interests such as government or nation, not by language, and not even by a common historical destiny, but a people united by faith in Christ, in their love for Him and in their experience of His presence. "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (MT 28:20).

On earth, man is born a member of a particular people or nation. But it is through baptism that a Christian is born and joins the new people of God. "The water of baptism," writes one Christian saint, "is for us both tomb and mother." Tomb, because in this water man dies, the man limited to the earthly and material, to "flesh and blood." Mother, because in rising out of this water a new person is born – forgiven, cleansed, reborn, living already here and now a new and eternal life.

People come to Christ all the time. They hear His voice, they give Him their hearts, their love, their life; and this self-giving to Christ is baptism. Having given themselves to Him, what they receive from Him is His life, His self-giving to us; and this self-giving of Christ to us is baptism.

Church Records...

"As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ."

Nicole Violet Saidnawey, daughter of Paul and Louise (Stanwicks) Saidnawey of Belmont, MA was baptized on November 23, 1997.

Lexie Michaela Mattar, daughter of Michael and Julie (Cappuccio) Mattar of Billerica, MA was baptized on November 23, 1997.

Many Years!!

"Blessed are they whom thou has chosen and taken O Lord!"

Thomas Ayan (68) of Framingham, MA fell asleep in the Lord on November 21, 1997. He is survived by his wife, son, daughter and two sisters. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park, MA.

Charles H. Bargoot (83) of Somerville, MA fell asleep in the Lord on December 4, 1997. He is survived by his wife, three daughters, and three brothers. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park, MA .

Memory Eternal!!

From the President...

"My deepest appreciation goes out to all who worked so hard to make our 90th Anniversary Celebration a wonderful experience and a huge success!"

Abraham Sabbag

Announcements

- The Feast of Theophany, which is January 6th, will be observed on January 4th with the traditional Blessing of Water. All are urged to come celebrate this feast and drink the life giving waters of Theophany. Houseblessings will start the next day.
 - Bishop BASIL's name's day is on January 1st. If you would like to send him greetings, you can write to him at: Bishop BASIL, 1559 North Woodlawn, Wichita, KS 67208-2429.
 - Bishop ANTOUN name's day is on January 17th. If you would like to send him greetings, you can write to him at: Bishop ANTOUN, 358 Mountain Road, Englewood, N.J. 07631
 - If you would like Fr. John to visit your home to bless it, kindly return the form by Wednesday, December 31st. If you have not yet received this form, or have misplaced it, please call the church office. Thank you!
 - 1998 Pledge Forms must be returned by December 31st so that we may update our pledge records and accurately plan the budget for the upcoming year. Please be sure to check your January 1998 Pledge statement for the pledge amount given. If the annual pledge is incorrect, please call the church office.
 - The Fellowship of St. John the Divine will be holding their annual "Super Sunday" Bake Sale on Sunday, January 25th, proceeds to benefit the Children's Relief Fund...sponsorship of Nina Nasr.
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From the Parent Guild...

The annual Godparents' (Brunch) Luncheon will be held on Sunday, January 11th. We have changed it from a brunch to a luncheon this year. **There will be no tickets sold at the door.** We are having the luncheon catered and therefore need an exact number of people attending. There will also be a program put on by the Church School students at the luncheon. If you have any questions, please call Paula Hamwey at (978) 840-0559 or see me during coffee hour.

Church Office Hours...

Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
The deadline for the Sunday bulletin
is Thursday at noon.
Please plan accordingly.

St. Paul's Shelter Needs Volunteers...

I would like to volunteer to serve on the following
Sunday(s):

1998
Jan. 11 _____ Feb. 15 _____ March 15 _____

April 5 _____ May 17 _____ June 14 _____

Name _____

Phone # _____ # of people to volunteer

I cannot serve but would like to cook on
_____.

Date

I would like to donate towards the cost of food. Enclosed
is a check in the amount of \$ _____.

THE TORCHBEARER
is the Monthly Newsletter of the
Church of St. John of Damascus

*A Parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America*

Rev. Fr. John K. Teebagy, Pastor

300 West Street ♦ Dedham, Massachusetts 02026-5594

♦ Telephone: (781) 326-3046 ♦ Fax: (781) 326-4473

♦ Web Page: <http://members.aol.com/stjohnd>

Services: Sunday-Matins 9:00 a.m.,
Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

DEADLINE for the **February, 1998**

Torchbearer
will be January 10th.

Please consult the Weekly Sunday Bulletin for any
Changes, corrections, etc.



Wishing you and yours a
Happy and Healthy New Year!

Dear Parishioners,

As part of our community outreach program, Saint John's parish has committed to going to **Saint Paul's Shelter** (a satellite shelter of the Pine Street Inn) in Dorchester one Sunday a month in order to provide food for 60-70 homeless men. Last year's program was very successful, and we thank the dozens of volunteers who helped.

Our responsibility is to cook the food in advance, go to the shelter, heat the food, serve it, and then clean up. John Najjar and Sheila Demerjian have volunteered to be responsible for organizing the cooking of the food and the trips to the shelter with a group of people on each of the Sundays involved. We would like 5 people to go each time to help, and we encourage you and your family to sign up. We also need volunteers to cook the food and package it before it goes.

If you decide to be a server, the commitment for the afternoon is merely two and a half-hours. You will meet at the church at 4:00 p.m., arrive at the shelter at 4:30 p.m., and then leave the shelter to go back to the church by 6:00 p.m.

Please sign up to either cook or serve, and we will be in touch with you when the time approaches. If you can't do either, perhaps you would like to make a small donation to help with the cost of the food that we have to provide. You may also call John Najjar at (617) 361-2376 or the church office.

Please check the month(s) you would like to help.

Name _____

Phone #: _____

I would like to volunteer to serve:

1997:
November 16 _____ December 14 _____

1998
January 11 _____ February 15 _____ March 15 _____
April 5 _____

May 17 _____ June 14 _____



The number of people to volunteer is: _____
I cannot serve but would like to help cook in _____.
(month)

I would like to donate towards the cost of the food. Enclosed is a check in the amount of \$ _____.

Church of St. John of Damascus
300 West Street
Dedham, MA 02026-5594

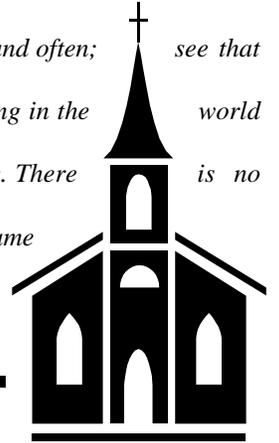
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How to Build a Great Church

It takes very little planning to wreck a building or a business but it takes skillful planning and diligent work to build. It is easy to kill a church, but it takes thought and persistence to build a great church. The great churches of our land did not just happen. They have been built through persistent effort. Here are a few suggestions for building a great church:

- *Never allow a day to pass without taking time to pray for your church and its ministry*
- *Never speak to anyone without praising your church and your pastor. The criticism will be spoken loud and often; the praise is louder.*
- *Never fail to be friendly to anyone in all church services, especially to newcomers and absentees. Nothing in the world can substitute for old-fashioned friendliness.*
- *Never make your church of less importance than social engagements, secular meetings, or anything else. There is no greater power for a church than that of members who quietly but emphatically put it first.*
- *Never refuse an opportunity to serve. Be willing to serve anywhere you are asked. All service ranks the same with God.*
- *Attend church every Sunday.*



“O Lord our God, crown them with glory and honor!”

Mark R. Taranto and Marcia M. Gatteny were married on September 20, 1997. They reside in Everett, MA.

Many Years!!

