
❖ THE TORCHBEARER ❖

Vol. 6 ... No. 7

May - June, 1998

From the Pastor...

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

With thanks to God, another Holy Week and Pascha have passed and all of us were able to bask in the light of the Resurrection. This past Lent and Holy Week, as in past years, showed the faith and commitment of the members of our parish. Attendance was the best that I can remember, the choir seems to be getting bigger, the altar boys were out in full force, the Executive Board outdid themselves at the Easter breakfast and the list goes on...

I would also be remiss if I did not thank Fr. Nifon Abraham for all of his help during the latter part of Holy Week, while I battled with a cold/allergy attack. Subdeacon Christopher Salamy, as always, provided assistance to us that went above and beyond the call of duty. He will be graduating from the seminary in a few weeks, getting married in August, and....? We thank him for his help these past two years and wish him God speed.

Below, please find a very timely essay on Easter (Pascha) and how its message truly transforms all – us included. I would ask you to read this and try to prevent the temptation of having the joy of Pascha be temporary. One way to do this is to remember that the church does not shut down during the summer. I realize that families, mine included, go on vacation and need downtime, but not the whole summer! Parents with small children should also be consistent in their attendance. If it is important to attend church when church school is in attendance, why isn't important when church school is out of session? The hidden message that we send to children, whether we do it intentionally or not, is that church school is more important than the Divine Liturgy.

This coming August 5th will mark the end of my sixth year as pastor of St. John of Damascus! It seems that August 5th, 1992 was just yesterday. As I start my

seventh year, I promise you that I will continue to have the same love and commitment to all of you. For me it is a blessing to be here, and I don't take it for granted. As I rest and reflect this coming summer to ready myself for a new church year in September, so too I ask you to do the same. This past year was VERY busy, next year will be even better!

Please pray for my family and me as we travel this summer on vacation and as I go to the Antiochian Village for the Clergy Symposium. Stay well!

With love in the Risen Christ,

Rev. Fr. John K. Teebagy

Pastor, Church of St. John of Damascus
Dedham, Massachusetts

"The Easter Faith"

by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

In the days that follow Easter, I repeatedly and involuntarily return to the same question: if the unprecedented affirmation "Christ is risen" contains the entire essence, depth, and meaning of Christian faith; if in St. Paul's words "your faith is in vain" if Christ has not been raised (1 Cor 15:14), then how does it make a difference here and now in our life, in my life? Another Pascha has come and gone.

Once again we experienced that amazing night, the sea of burning candles, the growing excitement; there we were, once again, in the midst of a service of radiant joy, whose entire content was like one exultant hymn: "Now all is filled with light, heaven and earth and the lower regions. Let all creation celebrate the rising of Christ. In him we are established." What joyful, victorious words! Everything is united: heaven, earth, the underground kingdom of death. The whole world participates in this victory, and in Christ's resurrection discovers its own meaning and affirmation.

But it passes, the night is over, the celebration ends, we leave the light and return to the world, we descend back to earth and reenter the normal, everyday, sober reality



of our life. And what do we find? Everything is the same, nothing has changed, and it seems that nothing, absolutely nothing has any connection whatsoever to the song we heard in church, "Let all creation celebrate the rising of Christ. In him we are established." And now doubt begins to creep into our soul. These words, so beautiful, so sublime – more beautiful and sublime than any other words on earth – could they be just an illusion, a dream? Soul and heart drink passionately of these words, but cold reason says: dreams, self-deception! Two thousand years have gone by, and what have these words been able to do? Where is their power? Where is their victory? My goodness, how often Christians see this and just hang their heads and don't even try to fit all the pieces together. Leave us alone, they seem to tell the world, let us have our last precious possessions, comfort and joy! Don't interfere as we proclaim in church, behind closed doors, that the whole world exults. If you won't interfere with us, we won't interfere with you as you construct, direct, and live in this world any way you please...

Yet, in the deepest corner of our conscience, we know that this timidity and minimalism, this inner escape into a mystical and secret celebration is incompatible with the authentic meaning and joy of Easter. Either Christ is risen or He is not risen. One or the other! If He is risen (and why else have a paschal exultation that fills the entire night with light, triumph and victory?), if at a decisive and unique moment in human and world history, this unheard of victory over death actually occurred, then everything in the world truly has become different and new, whether people know it or not. But then we, as believers, as the ones who rejoice and celebrate, are responsible that others should know and believe, that they should see, hear and enter into this victory and this joy. The early Christians called their faith not a religion, but the Good News, which it was their purpose in the world to spread and proclaim. They knew and believed that Christ's resurrection was not merely the occasion for an annual feast, but the source of powerful and transfigured life. What they heard whispered, they shouted from the housetops (Mt 10:27)... "Yes, but what can I do," my sober and realistic reason responds. "How can I proclaim or shout or witness? I, who am just a powerless little grain of sand, lost among the masses?" But this objection by reason and "sound mind" is a lie, perhaps the most terrible and demonic lie of today's world. This world has somehow convinced us that strength and significance come only through large numbers, multitudes, the masses. What can one person do against everyone else? Yet it is right here, in opposition to this lie, that Christianity's fundamental affirmation must be brought into the open with all its force and incomparable logic. Christianity affirms that one person can be stronger than everyone else, and this

affirmation is precisely the good news of Christ. Consider these remarkable verses from Boris Pasternak's "Garden of Gethsemane":

*He renounced with no hostility,
As if returning property on loan,
His works of wonder and his might.
And now, like us, was mortal.*

This is truly the image of Christ: a man with no authority, no hostility, no earthly power whatsoever. One man! Forsake, betrayed, cast aside by all. But victorious. Pasternak continues:

*You see, the march of centuries, like the walk to
Emmaus,
Can set the hearts alight along the road.
Because of its terrifying majesty
In voluntary suffering I descend into the grave.
I descend into the grave
And on the third day will arise,
And as rafts upon the river float,
So to me for judgement,
As barges in a convoy,
The centuries, out of the darkness, will come
drifting by...*

"Can set hearts alight along the road..." In this "set hearts alight" we find the key to answering the doubts of sober reason. What would happen if each of us who has experienced resurrection joy, who has heard its victory, who has come to believe what it has accomplished, unknown to the world, but in and for the world; if each of us, forgetting about large numbers, multitudes and masses, were to transmit this joy and this faith to just one other person, were to touch just one other human soul? If this faith and joy were secretly present in every conversation, even the most unimportant, in the sober realities of our daily life, they would immediately begin, here and now, today, to transfigure the world and life. Christ said, "The Kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed" (Lk 17:20). The kingdom of God comes with power, with light, with victory, each time I and every believer carry it with us from the church into the world, and begin to live by it in our own life. Then everything, at all times, at every minute "can set hearts alight along the road..."

DEADLINE for the
September, 1998 Torchbearer
will be August 10th. This will be the final Newsletter
until September 1998.
Please consult the Weekly Sunday Bulletin for any
Changes, corrections, etc.

From the President...

Christ is risen!

I hope that the recent Easter celebration was as spiritually uplifting and rewarding for you as it was for me. I always look forward to seeing our parish families throughout Holy Week and during the Pascha Services. These are the most beautiful and moving services of the church year and help strengthen our commitment to our faith. We do not realize all of the work and effort that helps to make our Easter so wonderful. Thank you to Fr. John, the Choir, Altar servers, and parishioners (especially Elaine Sabbag) who helped make this Easter so special.

On May 2nd we sponsored our third "Nite on the Big Easy". Thanks to Cynthia Capobianco, Elaine Sabbag and their committee for their work to make this night a success. On May 15th the Parent Guild will again sponsor their Annual Penny Sale which has always been a great evening for the whole family to attend. So please plan on supporting our church school by attending this event.

Our annual parish meeting will be held on May 13. Do not underestimate the significance of this meeting. Your parish has been very active this year. This is the best opportunity to find out the status of current financial progress as well as actions taken on past issues. It is where you will be able to see how your efforts have helped your parish prosper. This meeting is also the best time to make your concerns known to your Executive Board so that we can act on them. This is the 90th year of our church. It is time to take a look at where we are and begin to think about where we want to go from here. There have been many changes that have taken place based on items brought up at past meetings. Please attend your annual Parish Meeting on May 13.

I wish to extend a nomination to the Executive Board of the Church of St. John of Damascus to all members in good standing of our parish. As you will see at the parish meeting, your board is actively working to keep your church and its many programs active. Several members of your current Board are constitutionally ineligible to return. In order for the Executive Board to be truly representative of our parish, we need new parishioners to serve. If you are nominated to run for the Board, please give it serious consideration. It is only through parishioner involvement that our parish stays healthy.

This is my last newsletter to you as my term as president of your Executive Board comes to an end. This is my sixth year as a Board member and I am forced to take some time off the Board. In six years, I have seen this parish grow tremendously. I thank Father John for his continuous spiritual guidance during this time, especially

during the previous year. Also Linda Bekerian and George Ameer who have always provided exemplary support and really keep our church running. I would like to thank our Executive Board and its officers and each organization of the church for their hard work and support this year.

Finally, I wish to thank the people of the Church of St. John of Damascus. It has truly been my honor to serve as your president. This year has been the most challenging and rewarding experience of my Orthodox life. I have learned a lot from you about the faith and tradition of this parish and look forward to working with all of you in the future. The Executive Board may be the administering body of this church, but it is you who keep the spirit and tradition of the Church of St. John of Damascus alive. Thank you.

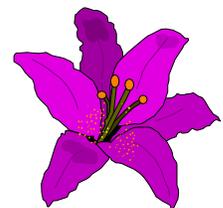
Very Truly Yours,

Abraham E. Sabbag
President, Executive Board

A Better Gift



- Mend a quarrel
- Seek out a forgotten friend
- Share some treasure
- Give a soft answer
- Encourage youth
- Keep a promise
- Find the time
- Listen
- Apologize if you were wrong
- Be gentle
- Laugh a little
- Laugh a little more
- Express your gratitude
- Welcome a stranger
- Gladden the heart of a child
- Take pleasure in beauty and wonder of the earth
- Speak your love
- Speak it again
- Speak it still once again



Anonymous

Liturgical Notes...

- **SUMMER CHURCH HOURS** – As usual, the Divine Liturgy will start at 9:30 a.m. from May 24th through September 6th inclusive. Please mark your calendars.
- To observe the **FEAST OF THE ASCENSION** (40 days after Easter- May 28th), we will celebrate a **Vespertal Liturgy on Wednesday, May 27th @ 6:30 p.m.**
- **THE BLESSING OF GRAVES...**As is the custom, Fr. John will be at Fairview Cemetery on Memorial Day, May 26th from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. to bless the graves of your loved ones. Trisagion Prayers will be offered in front of the shrine at 9 a.m.
- We will observe the **FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST** (August 6th), on **Sunday, August 9th** with the blessing of the grapes.
- Please consult the weekly Sunday Bulletin for any changes, additions, etc. that may occur during the Summer months.
- **ST. MARY ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, 8 Inman St., Cambridge FEAST DAY WEEK – Liturgical Schedule** – Monday, August 12th, Paraclesis at 6:30 p.m.; Wednesday, August 12th, Paraclesis at 6:30 p.m.; Friday, August 14th, Vigil for Dormition – Vespers at 4:15 p.m., Orthros with Lamentations at 5:30 p.m., Divine Liturgy at 6:45 p.m. More details to follow.
- **FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE PROGRAM** - Each year at this time our Archdiocese sponsors this program that has helped to feed many hungry people all around the world. Please consider offering a generous donation to this most worthy cause; make your check payable to the Church of St. John of Damascus earmarked "Food for Hungry People." Checks may be mailed to the church or left in the vestibule of the church. We encourage the whole family to share with those less fortunate. God bless you! We will be accepting donations through June 1, 1998.

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

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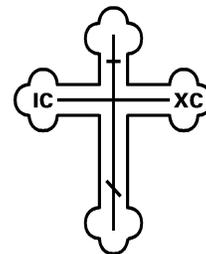
Services: Sunday:

Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m. (As of May 24th)

Church Records...

“The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit”

Michael William Esty of Canton, MA was chrismated on March 15, 1998.



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

Madison Lee Gallelo, daughter of Francis and Michele (Maloo) Gallelo of Needham, MA was baptized on March 8, 1998.

Thomas Michael Kirshy, son of Russell and Angela (DeAngelis) Kirshy of Port Charlotte, FL was baptized on March 22, 1998.

Shannon Margaret Kirshy, daughter of Dennis, Jr. and Maureen (Sharpe) Kirshy of Needham, MA was baptized on April 5, 1998.

Many Years!!

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

Albert A. Kurker (72) of West Roxbury, MA fell asleep in the Lord on February 15, 1998. He is survived by his wife, son, three daughters and 2 brothers. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park, MA.

Abraham Charles Hakar (93) of Medford, MA fell asleep in the Lord on April 5, 1998. He is survived by his daughter and two sons. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park, MA.

Deeb Elian Homsy (65) of Arlington, MA fell asleep in the Lord on April 21, 1998. He is survived by his wife and three sons. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park, MA.

Memory Eternal!!

“Whether it be needful to quench pride, to lull passion to sleep, to tread underfoot the love of money, to despise pain, to inspire confidence, to gain patience – in the Scriptures we may find abundant resource.”

St. John Chrysostom

St. Paul's Shelter Needs Volunteers...

May 17 ____ June 14 ____

Name _____

Phone # _____ # of volunteers _____

I cannot serve but will cook on _____.

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

From the Parent Guild...

Greetings to All,

It's hard to believe that we are almost at the end of another Church School year. And what a busy year it has been. But it's not over yet!

- ❖ The Third Annual Penny Sale will be held on May 15th at 7 p.m. We are still in need of new items that you would be willing to donate, as well as gift certificates, weekend get-aways, etc. The Penny Sale is one of our biggest fund-raising events of the year. There will be a pizza supper from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. (includes pizza, salad, and ticket for the door prize.) Tickets are \$4.00 per adult and \$2.00 per child. Coffee and dessert will be available later that evening. Admission after 7 p.m. is \$1.00 per person. During the evening we will have the CAKE WALK. The price will be \$2.00 per child and they will stay in the walk until they win a cake or we run out of cakes! This is a fun night for young and old. Our success depends in your support and participation!!
- ❖ There will be a car wash following Liturgy on Sunday, May 10th to benefit the Antiochian Village campers. Show your support and go home with a shiny, clean car!
- ❖ Graduation will be held on May 17th following Liturgy. There will be a luncheon immediately following. Make your reservations by May 10th.
- ❖ The Annual Church School Picnic will be held on June 6th.
- ❖ The Church School Kickoff will be held on Friday, September 11th. It will be a family dance featuring the same disc jockey that we had last October. If you missed it then, don't miss it again. This was a fun-filled night for everyone.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy, and enjoyable summer,

Paula J. Hamwey, Guild President

Kathleen Tawa, Guild Vice-President

Announcements...

- **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** will be held on **Wednesday, May 13th at 7 p.m.** Your attendance and input will be most appreciated. Please plan on participating!
- **1998 ANNUAL PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE** sponsored by St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, Lowell, will be held at the Westford Regency Inn and Conference Center, Westford, MA from **June 25th through June 28th**. Highlights include the Oratorical Festival, Bible Bowl, Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, Grand Hafli, Awards Brunch "under the tent", Historic Lowell Tour and Special Historic Lowell Children's Activity. Special room rates are available until June 4th. Keep these dates open and plan to attend. More information and details are coming soon!
- **PAN-ORTHODOX SINGLES OF NEW ENGLAND – OLDIES DANCE** will be held on **Saturday, May 30th from 7 p.m. to 12 a.m.** at St. John of Damascus Church. Members - \$10, Non-members - \$15. We will be serving light hors d'oeuvres, coffee, pastry and cash bar. For more information please call Cheryl Mattar at (617) 323-7087 or Nikki Bratsis (781) 762-5584. **SUMMER PICNIC** will be held on **Saturday, June 20th from 11 a.m. – 8 p.m.** at Hopkinton State Park, 71 Cedar St., Hopkinton, MA. Enjoy an All-you-can-eat Barbecue from 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Rain or Shine – RSVP by June 5, 1998. Advance Registration: members \$20, non-members \$25; Day of Event: members \$25, non-members \$30.

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.

Summer Office Hours...

As in the past years the office hours for the summer months will be modified as follows:

July 1st – September 4th

Tuesday through Thursday, from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

The deadline for the Sunday bulletin will be Thursday at 10 a.m.

Please watch the weekly Sunday Bulletin for any changes or exceptions.

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

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Forwarding and Address Correction Requested

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 \$ _____.

THE PARENT GUILD
will be holding their
3rd ANNUAL PENNY SALE
on Friday, May 15, 1998 at 7:00 p.m.

—◆—
Pizza Supper 6 p.m. – 7 p.m.
Adults \$4.00 Children \$2.00
(includes admission and ticket for door prize)

Admission after 7 p.m. - \$1.00 per person (includes ticket for door prize)

- Cake Walk during intermission
- Coffee and Dessert will be served.

*Please plan on joining us
for this evening of fun for all!
Support your Parent Guild and Church School.
There will be toys, clothes, household goods, Beanie Babies, and lots of raffles!*

Our M.C.'s for the night will be
Ray Hamwey and Fred Hamwey.

Mark Your Calendars...

October 24, 1998



'50s Dance

sponsored by the Parent Guild
to benefit the Antiochian Village Scholarship fund.

Watch for further details!