
❖ THE TORCHBEARER ❖

Vol. 7 ... No. 4

December, 1998

From the Pastor...

Beloved in the Lord:

As I write this, we just completed another successful bazaar. A debt of thanks goes to John Haddad and Ray Hamwey, co-chairs of the bazaar, for once again offering their time and talents to the church. Thanks also go to all the many, many people who also worked so very hard, especially the faithful members of the Virgin Mary Society.

The week before the bazaar the Parent Guild and Church School ran an overnight retreat for 30 kids from our church school. Four seminarians ran the retreat whose theme was "O, come let us adore Him." Many positive comments were received from all those who were involved; we hope to make this a permanent part of the church school calendar. A few weeks before this the Parent Guild ran a '50's dance to raise the necessary funds to help offset the cost of sending our kids to the Antiochian Village. This coming Sunday, the Church School/Parent Guild will sponsor a workshop for parents and teachers "Bringing Faith to Life and Life to Faith."

Hence, as you can see the Church of St. John of Damascus, thanks be God, is alive and well! For us Thanksgiving is not simply once a year but every time we gather as a community. We have much to be grateful for! Don't take all the good and positive things that this church does and stands for for granted. This would be wrong and sinful. On the other hand, don't think for one moment that we have what we do on our own. Rather, we should

thank God for bestowing his blessings upon this church community.



This month not only marks Christmas but my birthday as well. If you want to get me two gifts for my birthday and Christmas, I know the perfect present. Invite two people that you know from the parish who haven't been to church in a while to Liturgy. What a gift this would be to me and really to them as well!

Thank you to all who do so much for this church. Thank you to all who make this parish the special place that it is. On behalf of my family, I want to greet each of you with the words of salvation, "Christ is Born! Glorify Him!"

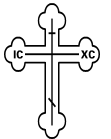
In the new born babe,

Rev. Fr. John K. Teebagy
Pastor

Church Records...

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

Christopher Wadih Yacoub, son of Samer and Mayada (Aljamal) Yacoub of Brockton, MA was baptized on October 18, 1998.



Caroline Abigail Najjar, daughter of Michael and Michelle (Krazmien) Najjar of New York City, NY was baptized on October 24, 1998.

Eliana Dina Elbahou, daughter of Antony and Dina (Aljamal) Elbahou of Brookline, MA was baptized on October 24, 1998.

Christina Michelle Maloof, daughter of Ronald and Michelle (Griffin) Maloof of Dedham, MA was baptized on October 25, 1998.

Michelle Clara Monga, daughter of Tejvinder and Joan (Mazares) Monga of Waltham, MA was baptized on October 25, 1998.

From the Chairman...

I hope and pray that this edition of the Torchbearer finds you and your family in good health. As I write this message, I am finishing off my last combo plate from the Bazaar.

Thank you to all who helped make our 1998 Church Bazaar a great success. While I would like to thank everyone personally, there just is not enough room in the Torchbearer. However, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge our Bazaar Co-Chairmen, John Haddad and Ray Hamwey. Thank you on behalf of the parish for a job well done.

The weekend of December 5th and 6th is the celebration of the 91st Feast Day of the Church of St. John of Damascus. Instead of the regular sit down banquet with all the speeches, John Shagoury has planned a "Birthday Party like no other." Please plan to join with your Church family as we celebrate our 91st Birthday. Look for additional information in the mail.

As we approach the holidays, please take a moment and thank God for all that you have. Too many families are having trouble making ends meet. One of the annual projects of the Church is the "Angel Tree." Through the Angel Tree, we are able to experience the true meaning of Christmas – the Joy of Giving. We will be collecting Christmas gifts for those less fortunate than ourselves.

If you have any suggestions or ideas please do not hesitate to bring them to the attention of the Executive Board. We want to feel free to approach any Board Member, including Fr. John, with your comments.

May God Bless You,

Robert P. Zahka
Chairman, Executive Board

- The Christmas Fast, which began on November 15th, is well under way. The church, in Her wisdom, gives us this unique gift to prepare ourselves for the mystery of Christ's Incarnation so that we may be able to meditate on its great significance in our lives. What better way to prepare for Christmas than by having your Confession heard. Confessions are before the Divine Liturgy on Sunday mornings, and by appointment. Confessions, however, will NOT be heard on Christmas Eve.
- Please join us on Thursday evening, December 24th to celebrate the Lord's birth. That evening the Divine Liturgy will be at 6 p.m. Liturgy is being held at his time so that families can worship together before going to visit friends and families. Let's ALL plan on coming to Christmas Liturgy so that with one voice we may all shout "Christ is Born! Glorify Him!"
- Notices regarding House Blessings will shortly be mailed shortly. If you would like Fr. John to visit your home to bless it, kindly return the form by Thursday, December 31st. If you have not yet received this form, or have misplaced it, please call the church office. Please return the form by the deadline so that Father can visit you when he is in your town. Thank you!

From the Teen Soyo...

Hi everyone! Just a little information from the Teen SOYO. First and foremost, I would like to thank everyone who came and helped out at the Bazaar snack bar, especially Tim and Shannon O'Hara, Dianne Mercado, and Rachael Sabbag. Our next meeting will be on November 15th, where we will hopefully get back into the swing of things. Two events that are in the works are a fundraiser to raise money to sponsor an ornament from the "Angel Tree," and our own Operation Overcoat where we will donate used winter coats to a shelter in the church's name. Once again we will be asking for everyone's generosity and participation to make these two worthwhile projects a success. Thank you in advance and God bless.

Erin Tawa

Liturgical Notes

The Proof of Fasting

Do you fast?
 Give me proof of it by
 your works.
 If you see a poor man,
 take pity on him.
 If you see a friend being
 honored, do not envy
 him.

Do not let only your
 mouth fast, but also the
 eyes and the ears and the
 feet and the hands and all

the members of our bodies.

Let the hands fast, by being free of avarice.

Let the feet fast, by ceasing to run after sin.

Let the eyes fast, by disciplining them not to glare at
 that which is sinful...

Let the ears fast by not listening to evil talk and
 gossip...

Let the mouth fast from foul words and unjust
 criticism.

For what good is it if we abstain from birds and
 fishes, but bite and devour our brothers?

St. John Chrysostom



- The 61st Annual Parish Life Conference, hosted by St. Mary Church, Pawtucket, RI will be held June 24 – 27, 1999 at the Sheraton Inn Plymouth. Join us for a spiritually uplifting and fun filled weekend with Divine Services, Family Awards Brunch, Art Exhibit by our Church School children, Parish Council Dinner, Oratorical Festival, Bible Bowl, Grand Hafleh and MORE! “*Lo, I am with you always, event to the end of age.*” Matt 28:20

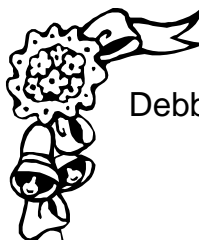
From the Parent Guild...

Since the last newsletter the Guild has been busy with various activities. On October 30th, the Church School/Guild held the very first overnight retreat for ages 9 and up. Seminarians Nick Louh and Jimmy Shadid and our own Seminarian Tony Elbahou came and spoke to the children about various subjects regarding the Orthodox faith. By the comments I heard after, the children had an awesome time and want to do it again. This is one of the best functions that the Church School/Guild has sponsored and we hope to do this again. It was very well organized and a “pat on the back” should be given to Nancy Close, Debbie Vogel and Sharon Cormier for all their hard work. Also, thanks should be given to Jim Sabbag, Abe Sabbag, and Dennis Close for chaperoning and sleeping on the hard floor; and Bob Zahka for picking up the pizzas.

The Guild/Church School schedule does not slow down yet. We are an organization that is a “rolling stone that gathers no moss.” On December 5th the Church School children will be putting on the Christmas Pageant. More information on this will be sent home with the children. Anyone who would like to help either with the play or the lunch, please contact myself, or stop by the Sunday School office.

Anyone who would like to help with any of the events that the Guild puts on, please let me know. We are always looking for more help, new ideas and talent. It is a lot of fun working on these committees and you get to know the faces you see in church each week. The Guild is also looking for someone to chair the Penny Sale in May, if anyone is interested..let us know.

Kathleen Tawa, President
 Debbie Leotsakos, Vice President



Announcements

- Once again an anonymous donation of \$10,000 (ten thousand) was received. As per the donor’s request, the Executive Board has allocated \$1,000 to the Assistance Fund and \$9,000 to the General Fund. To the donor(s)...THANK YOU!
- 1998 Pledge Forms will be sent out in the coming weeks. As in the past, we ask that everyone who considers St. John's “their church” to return this form. As always, the amount you pledge is confidential. It is from your response, that the Finance Committee can prepare the 1998 budget. **Failure to return the Pledge Form will result in your pledge being automatically set by the computer at a default pledge of \$416 per year.** Please help the church by sending this form back. Thank you for your anticipated cooperation!
- The deadline for the Christmas bulletin and the deadline for the Sunday, December 27th bulletin will be Tuesday, December 22nd at 12 noon.
- ***These deadlines must be strictly adhered to – please plan ahead.***

**DO YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING AT
CHURCH??!?**

WHAT A GREAT IDEA!!!!

We have a great selection of Christmas gifts for your family and friends. Check out our unique gift ideas:

- *Crosses* – both 14kt gold and wooden wall crosses.
- *Icons* – in various sizes for your home, car of office – of Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Hospitality of Abraham, St. George, St. Christina, St. Christopher, the Mystical Supper, and others.
- *Books for all ages* – Prayer books for children and adults, cookbooks, bookmarks, and the best selling book, “The Orthodox Study Bible.”
- *Children’s Gifts* – coloring books, activity books, puzzles, and communion bibs.
- *Music* – CD’s or Cassettes. We have the latest edition from the Boston Byzantine Choir, “First Fruits”, with members from our sister church of St. Mary’s in Cambridge, and Orthodox Christian music songs from “Kerygma.”
- *Collector Plates* – We only have two left of “The Sweet Kissing” icon plate from the fine art porcelain collector series dedicated to Christ and the Virgin Mary. These are beautifully hand-painted by Khouryee Erin Kimmett.
- *Advent Activity Books* – Why not start the Advent Season with the Children’s Advent Activity Book – “The Biggest Birthday Party.”

Our beautiful, hand-painted icons make a wonderful gift for all occasions. Consider a special gift for weddings, christenings, housewarming, birthdays, anniversaries and other special occasions.

The showcase will be open during coffee hour each Sunday until Christmas. If you have a special request, please contact Cindy Haddad at (781) 647-7122 or the church office at (781) 326-3046. We will try our best to have your order in for Christmas.

***Let Christ be a part of your
Christmas celebration!
He is the reason for the season.***

***The Antiochian Village Scholarship
Fund Raising Effort is underway!***

The first fund-raiser for the Antiochian Village Scholarship Fund was held on October 24, 1998. A great time was had by all. We had a Fifties Rock’N Roll Party, and boy, was the Church Hall rocking. Thanks to the support of our parishioners, as well as a lot of outside friends, we raised over \$2,000. We have already booked the hall for next October. Many people who did not attend the function made a contribution, and we thank you.

A special thanks to Robert Cardoos for the delicious meal that was served.

From the Village Parents...

The Village Parents is a group of parents whose purpose is to fund raise in order to send the children from our Parish to the Antiochian Village, if not on full scholarships, at least with as much financial help as we can possibly give to the children and their families.

Last year and this year, the Parent Guild worked on fund-raising for the children who attend the Antiochian Village. Some questions have been raised concerning this, so we’re going to try to explain this.

First of all, the Village Parents is a subcommittee to the Parent Guild. The funds raised by the Parent Guild are kept separate from the funds raised for Village Scholarships. Are they kept in the same account? Yes, they are, but a separate, detailed accounting is maintained at all times. In other words, if you make a donation to the Parent Guild, it stays with the Parent Guild. If you make a donation to the Antiochian Village Scholarship Fund, it stays there.

Who are the Village Parents? If your child/children attend the Village, you’re one of us. We need each and every parent to make this work. Letters have been sent out to all parents of children eligible for attending the Village. If you even just think that your child will be attending the Village in 1999, please get involved. We are going to do as much fund-raising as we possibly can. We need the input and support of all of you in our efforts.

In talking to people, it sounds as though there will be over twenty children from our Parish attending

the Village. If you don't know anything about the Village, keep your ears open because people are talking. The children who attend the Village come home with new friends, attitudes, and more knowledge of their faith. It's a truly wonderful experience.

Please continue to support our efforts. If you have any questions or suggestions or fund-raising ideas, please contact Chris Bezreh at (781) 449-1230 or Paula Hamwey (978) 840-0559 or see them during coffee hour. Thank you.

The Church School provides envelopes for the children for the weekly collection. If your child does not have any envelopes, please stop by the Church School office to pick some up. If you have some and just forget one week, there is a supply kept at the Bengari.

*Congratulations to our
1998 Bazaar Cash Raffle
Winners!*



- 1st prize \$500 – Brianna Borghi
2nd prize \$300 – Gabriella Petruzziello
3rd prize \$50 – Gail Abdelnour
4th prize \$50 – Jim and Barbara Sabbag
5th prize \$50 – Mary Najjar
6th prize \$50 – Victoria Digan
7th prize \$50 – Dolly Medwar
-

Christmas in the Orthodox Home

Some suggestions for a more meaningful Christmas Fast (Advent)

1. Prepare for the feasts of Christmas and Theophany AS A FAMILY. Abstain from meat at least on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
2. Intensify your prayer life and be sure to read the Holy Scriptures DAILY.
3. In your Christmas preparations remember the poor and needy. Your care gives them hope.
4. Make a good Advent Confession and receive Holy Communion - the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ often during the Advent season.
5. Be sure to make Christ the center of your Christmas celebration.
6. Plan on bringing yourself and your family to the Christmas Divine Liturgy and that all are prepared to partake of Holy Communion.
7. And last, but not least , please remember –
Our Lord Jesus Christ is the
Reason for the Season.

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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-Matins 9:00 a.m.,

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

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.

DEADLINE for the **JANUARY TORCHBEARER**
will be **December 10th.**

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

“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!!





*What shall we offer Thee O Christ, who for our sakes hast
appeared on earth as man?*

Every creature made by Thee offers Thee thanks.

The angels offer Thee a hymn;

the heavens a star;

the Magi, gifts;

the shepherds, their wonder;

the earth, its cave;

the wilderness, the manger:

and we offer Thee a Virgin Mother.

O pre-eternal God, have mercy upon us!

Catholic Orthodox consultation urges common Easter date

taken from The Pilot, November 13, 1998

Members of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation have endorsed the 1997 Aleppo Statement urging all Christian churches to start celebrating Easter on a common date beginning in 2001.

At a meeting October 29-31 at St. Paul's College in Washington, the consultation continued its study of Baptism and mutual recognition of sacraments.

Participants also exchanged information on various events in the lives of both churches and discussed the relation ship of their consultation with the international Catholic-Orthodox dialogue, which next June will meet in Emmitsburg, Md.

In a two-page statement issued at the end of their meeting, consultation members said the Aleppo Statement provides a sound theological, scientific, historical and practical basis to end centuries of division over the date of Easter, letting all the Christian churches give common witness once again to one of the central mysteries of the faith, the Resurrection.

“The Aleppo Statement does well to call attention to the continuing relevance of the Council of Nicaea – a fundamental point of reference for the traditions of

both our churches – and in so doing, to reject proposals to establish a fixed date for Easter/Pascha,” the group said. Easter is called Pascha throughout the Orthodox world.

“As the Aleppo Statement points out,” the group added, “the Council of Nicaea was willing to make use of contemporary science to calculate the date of Easter/Pascha. We believe that this principle still holds valid today.”

The Aleppo Statement emerged from a consultation of Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant scholars, jointly sponsored by the World Council of churches and the Middle East Council of Churches, which met March 5-10, 1997, in Aleppo, Syria.

The Council of Nicaea in the fourth century decreed that Easter should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox.

Differences in dating occur because churches follow different calculations of the equinox and the full moon.

The Aleppo statement called for all churches to follow the Nicene rule of the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox.