
❖ THE TORCHBEARER ❖

Vol. 8 ... No. 1

September, 1999

From the Pastor...

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As I write this, I have just returned from the Archdiocese convention in Chicago. The highlight of the convention was the presence of our Father and Patriarch IGNATIUS IV. Having him was such a treat and joy.

The convention was like conventions of old in many ways. At the General Assembly, which was held on Thursday and Friday, reports were heard from all of the various departments. It is amazing to see and hear all that is taking place in this archdiocese which keeps growing and growing. So often our view of the archdiocese is myopic, i.e. we don't see beyond our parish and/or regional boundaries. I invite you to stop by the church office or look at the November issue of *The Word* magazine to read the reports. I think that you'll be proud to be part of this archdiocese.

Earlier in the summer, I attended the Parish Life Conference in Plymouth. Our sister church of St. Mary, Pawtucket did an outstanding job of hosting the conference. St. John's was very well represented. Our teens did an outstanding job in the "Bible Bowl" missing first place by just a few points! Our thanks go to Michael Bezreh, Ashley Close, and Nicole Mercardo for making us proud! Ashley Close also represented us well in the Junior Division of the oratorical contest. You will find her oratory, which she delivered in Church in June, on pages 4-5 in this issue. We were also ably represented in the Adult Bible Bowl by Chris Bezreh, Nancy Close and Khouria Joan Teebagy.

Congratulations also go to Shawn Boyle who was awarded a scholarship from the Order of St. Ignatius through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Abdelahad.

While it is still summer, please know how hard all of us are working to ensure a busy and fruitful new church year in September. The members of the Executive Board are preparing their goals of maintaining the beauty and fiscal stability of the church, the church school is gearing up for another successful year, the Virgin Mary Society is hard at work picking grapeleaves in preparation for the bazaar in November, and the list goes on and on.

We have much to be grateful for here at St. John's. Don't ever forget this, and don't ever take it for granted. I invite you to become part of this church – this "body" of Christ. For those who come to church regularly, I challenge you to deepen your commitment to God and His holy church. For those who "belong" to the church but don't come around, I encourage and urge you to "taste and see how good the Lord is." You are always welcomed at your "home."

With much love,

Rev. Fr. John K. Teebagy
Pastor

From the Chairman...



I hope and pray that this edition of the Torchbearer finds you and your family in good health.

The ballots are in! The newly elected members of your Executive Board met on July 12th and elected the new officers for the 1999-2000 term. They are: Robert Zahka - Chairman; David Shagoury -Vice Chairman; Dan Capobianco - Treasurer; Caroline Ganim – Clerk; and John Najjar - Corr. Secretary.

Over the past several months your Executive Board has been discussing Capital Improvement Projects needed to help properly maintain our beautiful Church. The Maintenance Committee has presented its final recommendation on Waterproofing and Roof Replacement to the Executive Board. The total projected cost of this project is \$180,000.

We need to raise or borrow this money. A special parish meeting has been called for Monday, August 16, 1999 at 7p.m. At that time, the Maintenance Committee and Finance Committee will present their reports. While the Executive Board has the authority to borrow money, we felt that the Parish should be directly involved in any such undertaking.

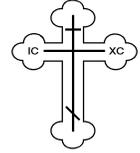
I can not stress enough the importance of your attendance at this Special Parish Meeting. While the members of the Executive Board were elected to handle the business of the Parish, we need your input on this matter.

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

May God Bless You,

Robert P. Zahka,
Chairman, Executive Board

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



Vanessa Raffaella Mattar, daughter of Michael and Julie (Cappuccio) Mattar of Billerica, MA was baptized on April 25, 1999.

Nicholas Frederick Rausa, son of Joseph and Nicole (Murphy) Rausa of Stoughton, MA was baptized on April 25, 1999.

Nicholas Mitchell Aswad, son of Gary and Tina (Meehan) Aswad of Dracut, MA was baptized on May 23, 1999.

Jared Ryan Medwar, son of Albert and Patricia (Feeley) Medwar of Raleigh, NC was baptized on July 11, 1999.

Celine Lily Lizotte, daughter of John and Carol (Gatteny) Lizotte of Reading, MA was baptized on July 11, 1999.

Many Years!!

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

Joseph Zelic and Mirna Battikha were married on May 2, 1999. They reside in Quincy, MA.

Philip Aswad and Sheri Zeeb were married on May 8, 1999. They reside in Stoneham, MA.

Demetrios Tsillas and Deborah Najjar were married on May 16, 1999. They reside in Arlington, MA.

Dr. Stephen Camer and Joanne Morris were married on May 29, 1999. They reside in Dedham, MA.

Nicholas Saber and Andrea Hadge were married on June 5, 1999. They reside in Boston, MA.

Jeffrey Vartabedian and Danielle Clark were married on July 3, 1999. They reside in Lewiston, ME.

Richard Ahto and Kate Herburger were married on July 10, 1999. They reside in Mansfield, MA.

Many Years!!

Church Records...

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

Mitri Nahat (78) of Burlington, MA fell asleep in the Lord on May 6, 1999. He is survived by his wife, son, daughter, and 4 stepchildren and their families. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park, MA.

Charles Wayshak (82) of Watertown, MA fell asleep in the Lord on June 3, 1999. He is survived by his wife. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park, MA.

Memory Eternal!!

From the Fellowship of St. John the Divine...

“A Gift from the Heart”

A gift of \$7,235.00 was lovingly and generously donated to the 1999 Food for Hungry People Program by the caring parishioners of the Church of St. John of Damascus. This gift was gratefully acknowledged by Robin Lynn Nicholas, Food for Hungry People Chairman, Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese.

From the Virgin Mary Society...

The summer months will soon be over and the VMS members hopefully will be well rested and ready to begin our cooking and baking for the 1999 Bazaar.

Luckily, we have well over 10,000 grapeleaves ready to be rolled due to the efforts of all the faithful “grapeleave pickers.” Thank you to all who answered our plea for grapeleaves thus enabling us to meet or, maybe exceed, our last year’s quota of rolled grapeleaves for the Bazaar.

We can always use more help, so we welcome anyone interested in giving some spare time for a good cause, supporting our church. We encourage anyone to join us whenever possible.

We have always been proud of our contribution to the Bazaar in previous years and we hope that 1999 will be the same. For details on our working schedule, please call Maryann Hamwey at (781) 326-3417 or Linda in the church office at (781) 326-3046.

From the Church School...

It’s “Back to School Time” once again at St. John’s Church School! Classes begin on September 12th, and are followed by the Annual Family Barbecue sponsored by the Parent Guild. Hope to see you all there.

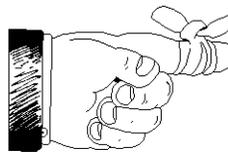
If your kids do not attend Church School regularly – or at all, they are really missing out! Let this be your invitation to join us.

Our emphasis here at St. John’s is on a comprehensive religious education for all students. We meld Orthodox Christian doctrine with a focus on moral responsibility, as well as introduce the students to stewardship and service. We strive to develop a program through which students come to know the true faith, and to know God Himself.

If this sounds like a mouthful, let me add that all this occurs in an atmosphere that is fun and lively. We plan our programs to instill enthusiasm and pride in our students, and to make Church School a place our kids look forward to attending!

We have a devoted, dedicated staff of 20 teachers and aides who have a full, productive year planned – make sure your kids are part of it!

In Christ,
Nancy Close



DID YOU KNOW? The Church Office is covered 24 hours a day by an answering service. Please be sure to leave your name and phone number and a brief message. We will get back to you within 24 hours. ***If it is an emergency***, you should inform the answering service and request that they page Fr. John immediately.

From the Parent Guild...

It seems hard to believe that the summer is close to an end, but even as this is so the Guild has been busy planning for the next Church School year. I recently met with Nancy Close, Joan Teebagy and Fr. John to discuss the coming Church School year and how the Guild can support them. This meeting was very successful and a lot of really good ideas for programs and activities were discussed. We hope that we are able to implement them all, but will need the assistance of all those with or without children in Church School. I encourage you to get involved. The Guild is not an exclusive club and we would love to have any parent, grandparent, aunt, and uncle, etc. help.

The Guild / Church School will hold the overnight retreat again in October. This was a very successful program last year and well attended by the children of St. John's. More details on this will be forthcoming. Also this year, the Parent Guild will sponsor an essay contest for two scholarships to the Antiochian Village Camp next summer. These scholarships will be separate from the scholarship money that the Village Parents raise. More information on the essay subject and rules will be provided later in the school year. These are just a sampling of the programs and activities that we wish to provide the children of St. John's.

This year the Guild will hold a monthly meeting, which will be during coffee hour on Sunday. You don't need to attend every meeting to be involved. Also, you will soon be receiving from the Guild a committee sign-up sheet for various activities. Please consider signing up on a committee. We do have a lot of fun while we also do the work.

The Sunday school kickoff starts on Saturday, September 11th with a taco dinner and Magic Show from 5:00 to 8:00pm at St. John of Damascus. Admission is free with a donation for the Dedham Food Pantry. On Sunday, September 12th, the Guild will have the Sunday school kickoff barbecue. The menu includes chicken, ribs, hot-dogs, salad, potato salad and corn. Admission is \$6.00 Adults, and \$3.00 Children. Please come and join your family and friends for lunch.

If anyone has any comments, questions, or would like to get involved please talk to me. I am usually in the hall during coffee hour or call me at home (781) 878-2992. I would love to hear from anyone with new ideas or if you have an idea on how to do something better. I look forward to seeing everyone in September at the kickoff weekend.

Faithfully,
Kathleen Tawa, Guild President

From the Y.P.A....

Ashley Close, the daughter of Dennis and Nancy (Zahka) Close, represented St. John's in the Junior division of the Oratorical Contest at the Parish Life Conference in Plymouth this past June. Below, please find her oration.

“Therefore let them be instructed by you, at least by your deeds”, writes St. Ignatius to the Ephesians. A simple statement, and yet one of the most powerful statements in the history of Christianity. Timeless, for as much as the world has changed in the almost 20 centuries since St. Ignatius lived, these words are as fitting today as they were then.

What does St. Ignatius really mean? To me, St. Ignatius is saying that in a sense we are all teachers, and that our lessons - very powerful lessons - are given not only through our words, but also through our actions. How are we then to act? As St. Ignatius says to the Magnesians, “it is fitting then not just to be called a Christian, but to be such.”

As Christians - as Orthodox Christians - we have a responsibility to be like Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. St. Ignatius calls on us to live our faith!

I have a responsibility to lead with the strength that Jesus Christ has given me. In the Holy Gospel according to St. John (Chapter 4:5-42), Jesus says to the woman of Samaria, “...Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.” I relate to this verse each time I receive the Eucharist. It strengthens and reaffirms my commitment to Jesus and to my Orthodox faith.

As an enthusiastic camper at The Antiochian Village, I have learned so much about my faith and the many ways we celebrate it. When I passed through the gates at the entrance to The Village that first time three summers ago, I followed one path, God's path, and I was awestruck by the faith, the forgiveness, the respect, and the love that awaited me. As a result, I have learned to treat others with respect, love and compassion, just as Jesus did.

Throughout the school year I try to keep in mind the ways of Antiochian Village and to stay focused on God's path. By my actions and through the choices I make, I can be an effective role model for my peers. In the words of St. Paul in his Letter to the Colossians (Chapter 3:12-16), "...do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." I must constantly strive to live up to the gifts, which have been given to me by the Lord.

Teenagers face many difficult decisions and challenges every day. Many of my friends were not raised in a family like mine, where faith is first, and sports and other activities come second. I choose to say "no" to many events, which conflict with my time of worship. This is not easy as I listen to friends discussing a great Sunday morning basketball game or a late Saturday night party. As an Orthodox Christian, however, I know that I must live my life as an imitator of the Lord. I recently wrote an essay which I called "No Sunday Sports", in which I expressed the true meaning of the Lord's Day.

I try to choose my friends based on similar values - rather than to be part of the most popular group at school. If I observe any tormenting of an unpopular or "different" student, I must do more than just stand there. I must intervene. This can be very difficult due to constant peer pressure. But then I think of the Orthodox cross I wear around my neck. It is small, yet big enough to convey to the whole world that I am a Christian - an Orthodox Christian - with the responsibilities that go with that. I think to myself, "What would Jesus do?" And I act!

Teenagers have an opportunity to set an example for others. I have a younger brother and nine younger cousins. They expect that the actions I take are correct, and follow me blindly. If I act

faithfully, so will they, but if I say nothing, and talk in silence, they will be silent also. When they observe me participate in the Divine Liturgy and in Teen SOYO, and work with those less fortunate, they will model my behavior. As St. Ignatius said, I "instruct them with my deeds".

Follow the teachings of the church, make them the basis of your actions, and be true to the cross. It sounds so simple. But it is a challenge! It is a challenge because we have competition. Competition with the false teachers of today - murderers, corrupt politicians, drug dealers in our schools, and others who have fallen away from God's path.

You see, these false teachers also instruct by their deeds. So our deeds must speak louder! Those who have lost Jesus seem to have the front page of newspapers and the lead stories on television. But I am ready for this challenge - ready to follow the words of St. Ignatius - ready to instruct by my deeds! I am committed to this challenge!

**We will return to our
REGULAR CHURCH SCHEDULE as of
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH:**

Services: Sunday-Matins 9:00 a.m.,
Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Confession: 8:45-9:40 a.m. or by appointment.

We welcome and congratulate the newly elected members of our Executive Board...
George Bezreh, Dr. James Bezreh, Daniel Capobianco, John Haddad, Raymond Hamwey, Don Khouri II, Elaine Sabbag, Sheila Tawa, Andrea Tawa Venuti

ELECTED OFFICERS

Robert Zahka, Jr., *Chairman*
David Shagoury, *Vice Chairman*
Dan Capobianco, *Treasurer*
Carolyn Ganim, *Recording Secretary*
John Najjar, *Corresponding Secretary*

We also offer a special thanks to the following board members who served the churchs o

faithfully: Christine Ayoub, Mary Battikha, Yvonne Homsy, Bob Kurker, Charles Maloof, Fred and Gloria Matook, and Rose Marie Nawfel.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS
for Upcoming Events
at the Church of St. John of Damascus

A Rock 'n Roll 50's Party



Saturday, October 23, 1999

6:30 p.m. – 12 :30 a.m.

“Dancing”

“Prizes”

Donation: \$19.50

Cocktails: 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Dinner: 7:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Proceeds to benefit the children from St. John’s attending the Antiochian Village, Summer, 2000.

**ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS
ANNUAL BAZAAR**

November 5, 6, and 7, 1999

Volunteers are needed as we prepare for our largest fund-raiser of the year! Please call co-chairmen, Ray Hamwey at (978) 263-8984 or John Haddad at (508) 533-6218 if you are interested in helping out.

ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS FEAST DAY WEEKEND, December 3, 4, 5, 1999 – Mark your calendar and watch for upcoming details.

Announcements...

- **AXIOS!** We have received word that Fr. Nabil Hanna, our former pastor, will be elevated to the dignity of Archpriest on September 12th by His Grace, Bishop Demetri at St. George, Indianapolis. If you would like to send Fr. Nabil greetings, you may send them to: 4020 North Sherman Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46226-4464.
- **23rd ANNUAL BAZAAR & FOOD FAIR,** St. George Orthodox Church, West Roxbury – **October 15, 16, 17, 1999.** See bulletin board for more details or call (617) 323-9861.
- **21ST ANNUAL ST. THEKLA PILGRIMAGE – September 10 – 12, 1999,** Antiochian Village. Call the church office for registration form. See the bulletin board for schedule of events.
- **PAN-ORTHODOX YOUTH WORKERS CONFERENCE,** Antiochian Heritage & Learning Center, Ligonier, PA, sponsored by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and Orthodox Church in America, will be held on November 19-21, 1999. You should attend this conference if you work with teens; are concerned about the welfare of our youth, believe that right moral and ethical behavior matters. Registration forms are available in the church office. For more details see the bulletin board.

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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

Rev. Fr. John K. Teebagy, Pastor

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♦ Web Page: www.stjohnd.org

Services: Sunday-Matins 9:00 a.m.,

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

(June 20th – September 5th : Divine Liturgy @ 9:30 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.

The deadline for the Sunday bulletin will be Thursday at 12 noon.

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

DEADLINE for the **October 1999 Torchbearer** will be September 10th.

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