
❖ THE TORCHBEARER ❖

Vol. 9 ... No. 1 & 2

September/October, 2000

From the Pastor...

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thanks be to God, all is well here at St. John's, and since I last communicated with you much has happened. If you have been at the church recently you may have noticed that a new roof has been installed. In addition, the building has been power-washed and waterproofed, windows have been re-caulked, and a beautiful new rug has been installed. By the feast day (at the very latest), six small chandeliers will be installed in the church to compliment the existing chandelier from Hudson Street that was refurbished and hung last year. In order to bring the church complex "up to snuff" and to prepare for the future, a "Legacy Fund" has been established. This fund (see the article below) seeks to raise \$200,000 for various goals. If you have not yet made a pledge towards this fund, I would sincerely ask you to search your heart and consider making one. St. John's is hosting the 2002 Parish Life Conference and we are already begun to plan this. The bazaar committee has already dreamed of ways to make this year's bazaar better, if that is possible, than last year's! Finally, plans are being made for feast day 2000, which will be held on December 1-3, with His Grace, Bishop DEMETRI as our guest. Many of you, I am sure, remember His Grace when he served in the Boston area as a priest at St. George, Boston and St. Mary's, Cambridge in the 1970's. The list goes on and on! While this may seem too much for some it sure is better than the alternative – a dead parish.

I think that all this activity is wonderful because it allows us as a parish family to work, plan, and rejoice together in these activities for the good of the church. It shows that this community is hopeful for the future and ready to embrace the challenges that await it. For how could we shrink

from the past examples that our forefathers and mothers have showed us in their dedication and love for the church? It is this example that we must try to emulate. To be sure taking care of the church temple is of great importance. Who among us would be content to have a church building that was shabby and run down. What would this say to those who have gone before us?: "Thanks for all of your sacrifices, for giving and working for St. John's and all but things in my life are so busy that the church will take of itself." As we take pride in our homes by keeping them in good repair, so too the church needs and deserves the same.

While this "body of believers", i.e. the church, is alive with activity, it begs the question about the condition of the body of the believer. What is its condition? Is it, our spiritual life, alive - full of the Holy Spirit? All of us can look back and think of many people who were once active in the parish but have seemingly disappeared from the face of the earth. This shows so clearly that one can be active in the church but not be alive and active in Christ – this is of paramount importance; for the material things will die away but the spirit lives on in Christ. In my mind, the condition of this temple, i.e. the spiritual health of our bodies, is more important and a reflection of a higher purpose. What would please God more: a worshipping community full of people who form "the body of Christ" or an opulent church with the best of everything but whose people do not realize or use the gifts that God has given to them? Of course, we all know the answer to this question, don't we? If so, what is the health of our temple?

As the old cliché says, "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link." What is your weakest link?

Is prayer part of your daily life? When was the last time that you actually prepared yourself to take confession or do you take it as an afterthought? When was the last time that you sought forgiveness from or gave forgiveness to someone? Do you keep the fast of the Church on Wednesdays and Fridays and the other four major fasting periods? Do you come to church late on a consistent basis and still approach the chalice unprepared? My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, let us use this “rebirth” in our parish as an invitation from God to allow our souls to be reborn and find the “one thing needful” – our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ!

Know that I love each of you and pray for you daily. I ask you to remember me in your God pleasing prayers, that God will allow my priesthood to reflect His glory.

With much love,

Fr. John K. Teebagy
Pastor

From the Chairman...

First and foremost, I hope and pray that you and your family had a wonderful summer. Second, I would like to thank our new Executive Board for having the confidence in me to elect me as Chairman. I am very excited about having the opportunity to work with these terrific, dedicated, hard-working men and women. I also look forward to working very closely with Fr. John and all our church organizations in the upcoming year.

Your new officers for this year are: John Haddad, Chairman; Olivia Waishek, Vice Chair; Dan Capobianco, Treasurer; Paulette Mabardy, Clerk; Elaine Sabbag, Corresponding Secretary.

Over this summer, we have been working very hard to plan and organize for the upcoming year. As of this writing, we have installed a beautiful new carpet in the church over the summer and will be working on getting a new hardwood floor installed in the church hall. A special thanks goes

to outgoing Maintenance Chairman, Bob Bezreh for his hard work in making this happen.

We now have some steady revenue coming in with hall rentals each Saturday night for Ballroom Dancing. This has been so successful and profitable for the parish that we will be looking to further expand this on another weekday night. Thanks to the initiative and dedication of Ray Hamwey and his committee for making this a huge success.

The Bazaar committee is already busy planning for our upcoming November bazaar. Ray Hamwey will once again be chairing the bazaar. We have also started to plan for a fun-filled celebration of our annual feast day in December. Mitch Hallal will be chairing the feast day committee. Planning is well underway for this beautiful weekend. In addition, we will be hosting the 2002 New England Region Parish Life Conference. By the time you read this, we will have a chairman in place for this conference.

Our Long Range Planning Committee continues to work towards putting programs in place to meet the long-term needs of our parish. Don Khouri continues to chair this committee. The Outreach and Legacy Fund sub-committees have already instituted programs that are well underway. This committee will be working towards implementing focus groups and an endowment fund this coming year.

As you can see, we already have a busy plate in front of us. I am very enthusiastic and optimistic for our parish this year. Your Executive Board is committed to working very hard to making this a successful year. Won't you get involved? We need your help. Please feel free to contact any committee chairman or myself. Your help will be much appreciated.

One of my main goals of this upcoming year is communication. You will see frequent communications from me ... be it in the newsletter, via e-mail, on the St. John web page or in the weekly bulletin. More importantly, I am also here to listen. Your comments and suggestions are always very much welcome. Feel

free to give me a call or drop me an e-mail at
execboard@stjohnd.org.

Let's make this year a very successful year ...
TOGETHER..

Your brother in Christ,

John Haddad

Church Records...

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

Michael Robert and Marissa Lauren Esty,
children of Michael and Janice (Zahka) Esty of
Foxboro were baptized on November 21, 1999.

Sabrina Rose Najjar daughter of Joseph and
Cindy (Whittaker) Najjar of Canton was baptized
on January 9, 2000

Meredith Mae Vartabedian, daughter of Jacob
and Ericka (Davis) Vartabedian of Newburyport
was baptized on January 16, 2000

Scott Anthony Kirshy son of Dennis and Maureen
(Sharpe) Kirshy of Needham was baptized on
April 16, 2000

Madeline Elizabeth Aswad daughter of Paul and
Cynthia (Knights) Aswad of Needham was
baptized on July 23, 2000

Daniel Paul Hamilton son of Christopher and
Leslie (Ganim) Hamilton of Waltham was
baptized on August 6, 2000

Kyle David Veo son of David and Laura
(Taksery) of Belmont was baptized on August 13,
2000

Many Years!



“The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit”

Cindy Anne Najjar of Canton was chrismated on
April 29, 2000.

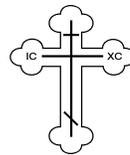
Timothy Langley of Franklin was chrismated on
April 29, 2000

Many Years!

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

Raymond Hamwey and Sheila Tawa were
married on June 24, 2000. They reside in
Needham.

Many Years!



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

Mary Ayan (68) of Allston fell asleep in the Lord
on December 16, 1999. She is survived by a
brother and sister and their families.

Lillian Michelle Demerjian (77) of Norwood fell
asleep in the Lord on December 29, 1999. She is
survived by a son and daughters and their
families. Burial was at Blue Hill Cemetery in
Braintree

Ajjon Zahka (91) of Dedham fell asleep in the
Lord on January 11, 2000. She is survived by
two daughters and their families.

Leo John Tawa (74) of Burlington fell asleep in
the Lord on January 25, 2000. He is survived by
sisters and brothers. Burial was at Mr. Benedict
Cemetery

Agenni Medwar (88) of Norwood fell asleep in the
Lord on February 16, 2000. She is survived by
sons and daughters and their families

George Eouse (73) of West Roxbury fell asleep in
the Lord on April 21, 2000. He is survived by a
wife, son and daughter and their families.

Memory Eternal!

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

Fr. John has appointed Linda Hakar as chairperson and Marie Shaker as treasurer for the year 2000 – 2001. We thank you for your past support and are looking forward to serving you in the usual fellowship manner. Some of the Fellowship's functions are to help with the bazaar, senior Christmas party, Lenten dinner, lobster dinner in May and the support of a child in the Middle East with our bake sale. You are all welcome to our next N.E. Regional meeting on Saturday, September 23 at 10:am at St. Mary's Church in Cambridge.

Legacy Fund Update...

As I am sure you are aware, this parish has recently launched a fund raising effort that we are calling the "Legacy Fund." We are attempting to raise \$200,000 so as to allow us to pass on to our children a financially stable parish.

These funds will be used to finance:

- ❖ new roof for church and hall complex
- ❖ new carpet for church
- ❖ new hardwood floor for church hall
- ❖ new sound system for church and hall
- ❖ parish home renovations
- ❖ current mortgage payoff

The roofing project has been completed and totally paid for ---the beautiful new carpet has already been installed in the church and is paid for --- the new hardwood floor for the church hall will be completed by the end of August ---the remaining above listed items will be taken care of as soon as the funds become available.

The following is a listing of those parishioners who have contributed \$46,000.00, to date, to the Legacy Fund. Our objective is to raise \$200,000 and, more importantly, expand the above listed names so as to include each and every family in the parish.

Fred and Constance Affsa
Carol B. Affsa
Jim and Mary Ahto

Anonymous
Virginia Ash
Joseph and Eleanor Ayoub
Dr. & Mrs. James Bezreh
Janet Bridges
Robert and Leila Bunai
Michael and Sharon Burdulis
Nadine Chabot
Georgette and Louise Dikmak
George and Judith Gatteny
John and Elaine Haddad
Mark Hallal
Mike Hallal
Mitch and Mary Hallal
Rose and John Hamwey
Sam and Janice Jabbour
Mr. and Mrs. Antoine Kandalajt
Mr. and Mrs. Donald E. Khouri II
Bob and Bertina Kurker
Laurice B. Maloley
Mr. and Mrs. Souhel Massabni
Rachel and Joan Mazares
Dianna McGowan
Eugene and Corrine Mudarri
Christine and Robert Roomey
Donna M. Sabbag
Alfred and Violet Saidnawey
Gregory and Anne Marie Shagoury
George Spear Trust
Ernest Tabeek
Mitri and Olga Taksery
Anthony and Ella Tawa
Fr. and Mrs. John Teebagy
Karen and Linus Vachon
Barbara and Lewis Weinstein
Mr. and Mrs. David G. Zahka

Our parents, grandparents and great grandparents, to their credit, have brought us to this point, and it is time that we honor their legacy and not allow it to die for the benefit of our children and grandchildren.

Legacy Fund Committee

From the Church School...

It's "Back to School Time" once again at St. John's Church School! Classes begin on September 10th, 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 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 it 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 devoted, dedicated staff of 20 teachers and aides who have a full, productive year planned – make sure your kids are a part of it !

In Christ,



Nancy Close

From Teen SOYO

Ashley Close, the daughter of Nancy and Dennis Close of Westford, participated in the Oratorical Festival at the Regional Conference this summer. Here is a copy of her oration:

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

What a beautiful and poetic passage - what a powerful passage! With seemingly simple language, St. John the Evangelist has laid the foundation of our basic beliefs as Orthodox Christians.

This Gospel opens, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1) St. John is telling us that Jesus always existed as one with God. The Word became flesh through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, so that we are blessed with His grace and truth, and are connected to the heavenly Father. This is the essence of our Orthodox Christian faith.

When Jesus was born as a human child, he didn't merely adopt a human form, like some sort of science fiction character. He actually became one of us in body and spirit, made of the same flesh and blood of which we are made. He lived a very human life, and exhibited human emotions as he "dwelt among us", teaching us how to live and to act.

St. John gives many examples, which attest to Jesus' "humanity". Upon learning of his friend Lazarus' death, St. John says, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). On the cross, very close to the end of his earthly life, Jesus uttered, "I thirst", (John 19:28), communicating a basic human need. And imagine Jesus nailed to the cross, keenly aware that He is preparing to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy with his death - about to change the course of history! What is Jesus' concern? In typical human fashion, He thinks of his mother. He says to St. John the Baptist, "Behold your mother!" (John 19:27)

God has given us His love by sending us Jesus, His Son, born of human flesh to save the world. How do we as Christians - Orthodox Christians - live up to this awesome gift in the hustle bustle of the 21st century?

St. Ignatius tells us to be "an imitator of the Lord". This is a constant theme throughout all of his letters, and shows us exactly what we must do. We must follow Jesus' commandment as it is written in John 13:34, "that you love one another as I have loved you." We must be Jesus' disciples,

with a responsibility to live as our Lord expects us to do.

The scriptures are brimming with examples for us to follow. Take, for instance, the story of Dorcas, a young woman who was a seamstress. She used this talent for the benefit of others, in her quiet, unassuming way. Dorcas demonstrates to us today that as Christians we must use our own individual talents to help our brothers and sisters in Christ. Dorcas was a simple woman, not a prophet or royalty, yet she was still able to live up to what God expects of us all.

Another example is the parable of the master and his servants (Matthew 25:14 - 30). We all know the story. The master entrusted his valuables to his three servants before he embarked on a long journey. When he returned, he discovered that the first two servants used what they had wisely. The third servant, afraid to use what he had been given, buried it. And Jesus said in Matthew 25:30, "And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness." This Gospel says very clearly that God has given us talents that we must share to attain the Kingdom of Heaven.

There are many modern examples of people who are living Jesus' new commandment. These people are the "behind the scenes" workers who don't ask for recognition or gratitude for their works. Look around you - you'll see these people everywhere. They're the ones who are working at our local food pantries and soup kitchens, Aids Action Committees, and homeless shelters, to name a few. These people are following the commandment "love one another".

There is a poem from the poet and philosopher Kahlil Gibran that truly describes our responsibility as Christians. It says "There are those who give little of the much which they have - and they give it for recognition and their hidden desire makes their gifts unwholesome. And there are those who have little and give it all. These are the believers in life and the bounty of life, and their coffer is never empty." I cherish this poem. By actually living these words, we can achieve everlasting life.

Every evening I pray to the Lord, "I believe in

one God, Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all thing visible and invisible. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, The only begotten of the Father before all Worlds. Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made (Nicene Creed)

Or as St. John so aptly put it in the first century, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth."

From the Parent Guild...

"Welcome back." The summer is almost over and September is just a few days away. The Guild is hard at work planning the new Church School year. Our first fun event will be the Sunday School Bar-b-q kick off right after Church on Sunday, September 10. Plan on coming. It's always a lot of fun, and a great way to celebrate Grandparents' Day. We're looking for new ideas, new faces, and, as always, your help. Please watch for future mailings and notices in the bulletin. Everyone is welcome! See you soon,

Debbie and Sheila



Dear Fellow Parishioners,

"We never stand to tall as when we kneel to help a child."

We hope you are all enjoying your summer, as it is quickly coming to an end. With the approach of fall, we are also fast approaching the First Annual OASIS Golf Tournament. As you well know, this fundraiser is benefiting the children of St. Theckla's Orphanage in Maloula Syria. One hundred percent of the day's profits are going directly to these young girls who are in desperate need of our help.

The OASIS Golf Tournament is being held on Monday, September 25, 2000 at the Glen Ellen Country Club in Millis, MA, followed by an evening of dinner and fun at our Church Hall. While the response and participation from our

parish has been wonderful to date (thank-you!), we are still in desperate need of golfers!!!! Won't you kindly consider golfing with us on this day? Pro or hack, it makes no difference ... we need you and your friends!

You can get a golfer's registration form from the Church Office, or you can call Nadine Hallal @ (508) 359-9761 for a form or more information.

Thank you for your consideration, enjoy the rest of your summer, and may God keep you safe and healthy.

Sincerely yours,
The OASIS Golf Committee



PLEASE NOTE

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

As you know, the Executive Board and our Church Organizations have been sponsoring a full coffee hour each Sunday after church. The coffee hour consisted of coffee, pastries and other delicacies. Most weeks, the burden for bringing in food, setting up the coffee hour and cleaning up after the coffee hour has rested on a handful of parishioners. In addition, the cost of providing this service each week is significant.

Your Executive Board has discussed this situation several times over the past year. The idea of a social hour after liturgy is still a wonderful idea; however, we need to set some guidelines for our coffee hour going forward so that all of us can enjoy social hour.

At the August 2000 meeting, the Executive Board unanimously approved the following coffee hour

policy. Our goal is to have a social hour that all of us can enjoy together. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask any other board member or me.

Policy, to be effective on Sunday, October 1, 2000:

Refreshments for coffee hour each week now will only be provided by sponsors. A sponsor can be an individual, a family or a church organization that would like to host the coffee hour.

Sponsors can sign up to host the coffee hour by contacting the church office and putting their name on the coffee hour sign-up sheet for a particular Sunday.

If a sponsor would like to host a coffee hour, they are responsible for the following:

- a. Providing all refreshments (except coffee, which will still be provided by the parish) for the coffee hour.
 - b. Coordinating setting up all refreshments for the coffee hour
 - c. Coordinating cleaning up of refreshments, tables and kitchen after the coffee hour
2. On Sundays where there is **not** a sponsor, only coffee will be provided for coffee hour. The Executive Board will coordinate setup, serving and cleanup on those weeks.
 3. Tablecloths for each table will not be provided for coffee hour due to the expense.

We fully understand that due to certain circumstances (e.g. Memorial Services), that a sponsor cannot attend church services and also set up coffee hour. That's why we use the word "coordinate". The sponsor should coordinate getting help to setup, serve and cleanup the coffee hour. There are many parishioners willing to help we just need to ask.

Again, this new policy will be implemented starting on Sunday, October 1st. We ask for your full cooperation, understanding and support. We encourage our church organizations, families and individuals to sign-up and sponsor the coffee hour

Sincerely,
John Haddad, Chairman

Announcements...

- ❖ Many years to Aunt Rose Haddad who was honored, along with four other centenarians, by Senator Edward Kennedy on July 24th at the Kennedy Library in Boston on the occasion of her 100th birthday and the 35th anniversary of the Medicare program! All us remember the wonderful collation offered for Aunt Rose by the VMS this past April. We love you Aunt Rose! May God grant you many years!
- ❖ **PLEASE JOIN US AT ST. GEORGE, NORWOOD** on the evenings of September 7th and 13th at 6 p.m. for the liturgies to celebrate the Nativity of Mary and the Elevation of the Cross respectively. We will have the procession of the cross, here, at St. John's on Sunday, September 17th.
- ❖ **ST. GEORGE CATHEDRAL, WORCESTER** invites you to their annual Hafli on Saturday, September 9th at 8 p.m. For more information, please call (508) 752-9150. Donation is \$20, which includes mazza.
- ❖ **THE ANNUNCIATION MELKITE CATHEDRAL** will have their annual church picnic on Sunday, September 17th at 1 p.m. All are welcomed to attend. For more information, please call (617) 323-5242
- ❖ **23rd ANNUAL BAZAAR & FOOD FAIR**, St. George Orthodox Church, West Roxbury October 20, 21, 22, 2000. See the bulletin board for more details or call (617) 323-9861.



"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Your Executive Board needs your help in developing a vision that will guide the growth and development of our parish family.

Where will we be, as the Parish of St. John of Damascus, in 5, 10, 20 years spiritually,

financially, and socially? How do you want to shape the future of our Parish? What is working well? What are your concerns? What recommendations would you make? These and many other questions will need to be answered as we move forward as a Parish family. To better understand your dreams and hopes for the parish, we would like to meet in small groups. There will be a series of six group discussions; each group will consist of 10-20 parishioners. We will meet after Liturgy on Sundays from 12:30-2:00 starting in September. The groups will be facilitated by Anthony Bashir, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Archdiocese and a parishioner of St. George Orthodox Church in Boston. You are invited to share your opinions at one of these group discussions. Your input is extremely valuable to the future direction of our parish, and we look forward to your participation, comments, and dreams. Please RSVP by calling the Church office at 781-326-3046. When we have captured all of your thoughts and understand your recommendations, we will present a summary to the Parish. We will then put programs in place and prioritize the work. Thank you.

The Long Range Planning Committee

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THE TORCHBEARER
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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 ten a.m.

Please plan accordingly.

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

DEADLINE for the **November/December 2000 Torchbearer** will be October 6th.

