
THE TORCHBEARER

The Newsletter of the Church of St. John of Damascus, Dedham, MA

November/December 2002

From the Pastor...

"Actions speak louder than words."

Beloved in Christ,

As I write this, the church is full of activity. The church, on most Sundays, is standing room only; the church school area is bursting at the seams; the VMS, God bless them, is cooking and baking for the bazaar; the teens are preparing their full schedule of activities; the Fellowship's Lobster dinner was, as always, wonderful and the list goes on and on.

Despite all of this activity or even because of it, we must always remind ourselves that the Church's focus and our focus as well must be on the Eucharist. Each time we receive the Eucharist, we become united to God (i.e. *in communion*) in a most unique way, and we come together as one family – one community during the Divine Liturgy. Too often, many people identify their personal experience of the Church with what group or organization they or their family members belong. As I have said many times, all of the groups and organizations that we have exist because of the Church, not the other way around. When we forget that we need to be one Church not many churches in one parish - trouble is sure to follow. Perhaps not trouble as in fighting and screaming but something more frightening and less visible - apathy.

Our attentiveness and faithfulness at the services of the Church, particularly the Liturgy on Sundays, speak loudly and clearly. At 10 a.m. when the church is less than half full- that speaks volumes; when people congregate in the bengarri and hall while the Liturgy is being celebrated- that speaks volumes. When we receive the Eucharist unprepared or even talk while the Eucharist is being given -that speaks volumes. When we stay away from church "because of those people," or worse yet when we have no "excuse"- that speaks volumes. And the list could go on and on.

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, during this season of Thanksgiving and the Nativity of our Lord, let us pause to give thanks to God for all the blessings He has bestowed on us. The greatest gift, of course, is the birth of His only begotten Son. God sent His son because of His great love for us and to reclaim us as His own. Many times we wonder where God is in our lives when a tragedy occurs not admitting to ourselves that we left Him long ago.

Is it possible to return to God? You bet it is. We can start our return to God by showing Him our love and respect on His day- Sunday, which also know as the day of the Lord. We can also return to God by freeing ourselves from perhaps one of the greatest sins – apathy. God waits for us with open arms. Let's make this wait a short one.



On behalf of my family, Khouria Joan, Alexander, Elizabeth, and Nathaniel, I say to you -Christ is Born! Let us all with our hearts, minds, and souls glorify Him!

With love in the new born babe,

Fr. John K. Teebagy, Pastor



Liturgical notes. . .

❖ Please remember that the Christmas Fast begins on Friday, November 15th. Like other Lenten periods, the Church calls us to increase (or even start) our efforts in prayer, fasting, and giving to the poor. It is also the perfect time to have your Confession heard. Confessions are heard on Sunday morning from 8:30 a.m. to 9:45 a.m. or by appointment. Please note, as in past years, confessions will not be heard on Christmas evening. Let's all do something to prepare us for our Lord's birth!

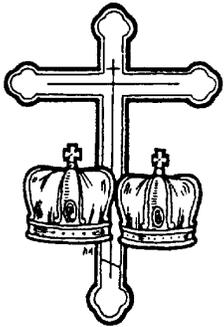
❖ To celebrate the Entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Temple on November 21st, a Vespertal Liturgy will be celebrated on Wednesday, November 20th at 6 p.m. at our sister church of St. George, Norwood. Please join us.



❖ It is the teaching of the Holy Orthodox Church that only those Orthodox Christians who have prepared themselves through prayer, recent confession, and fasting (and being on time for church) should approach the chalice. It is likewise the teaching of the Church that our non-Orthodox guests and friends should not approach the chalice or that Orthodox Christians cannot and should not take communion in non-Orthodox Churches.

Church Records...

"O Lord our God crown them with glory and honor!"



Dr. Kenneth Sabbag and Margaret Heflin Sabbag were united in marriage on September 28th. We congratulate them as they begin their new life together in Los Angeles, CA.

Glen M. Medwar and Deborah Chaiton were united in marriage on September 28th. We congratulate them as they start their new life together in New York City.

Many Years!

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



Joseph William Rausa son of Joseph and Nicole (Murphy) Rausa was baptized on September 15, 2002

Many Years!

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



Laurice Cardoos (87) of Kalispell, Montana fell asleep in the Lord on August 29th. Her three daughters and their families survive her. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery

Alexander "Sandy" Cahaly (70) of Newton fell asleep in the Lord on September 16th 2002. His wife, one son and two daughters survive him. Burial was at Newton Cemetery

Memory Eternal!

From the Executive Board Chairman...

Just as every year the leaves change bright colors and autumn makes way for winter, the annual bazaar has come and will once again provide the necessary funds to complete the church budget for the next fiscal year. This single event is the most important moneymaker for our church and a heartfelt thanks goes out to Ray and Sheila Hamwey for their dedication and direction in making this enjoyable and lucrative event happen once again. I am sure that they, as well as those who attend the bazaar each year, express their gratitude to those who work preparing the food and other items.

Our next enjoyable endeavor will be our Feast Day weekend, which is December 8th and 9th, 2002. Robert and Louella Cardoos have put together a wonderful evening of fellowship on Saturday night. This year will be very different from the past two years, as we will not have a Bishop in attendance. It allows us as a Parish to assess our recent accomplishments of a successful mortgage burning and a great New England Conference. We can enjoy each other's company while being entertained by the youth of our Parish. We will also recognize Fr. John Teebagy for his leadership and guidance over the past decade to St. John of Damascus Church. I hope that everyone will attend this enjoyable weekend as a FAMILY.

It has been the tradition at the feast day banquet to award scholarships to the freshmen of our parish for academic achievement and stewardship in the church. Over the years the Zahka Scholarship has been given through the generosity of Mrs. Lorice Zahka. The other scholarship has been given through the Wedad Spear Memorial Fund. Unfortunately, due to the death of George Spear, the fund no longer exists. This means that in order to give scholarships in the future a new fund must be created. With the interest of \$4,000.00 the church received from the Spear Fund in 2001, the board has decided to set up the St. John of Damascus Scholarship Fund for the benefit of the youth of this Parish. The fund will be set up as a legal entity and ANYONE may make a donation to this fund. The principal will be invested and the interest will fund the scholarships on a yearly basis. As I am sure that everyone knows how low interest rates are at the present time, we hope that people will make generous contributions so that we will be able to continue to give these much needed scholarships.

As always I am available to each Parishioner through email, by telephone or in person. Enjoy the holiday season with your family and remember Him who is responsible for all the good things we have in our lives.

Yours in Christ,

Cynthia Capobianco

From the Church School...

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Church School is in the midst of a very busy and exciting year! We will be implementing many new programs this year, as well as repeating some of our tried and true favorites.

We have already completed our first Service Project of the year. We collected school supplies for the St. Innocent Orthodox Orphanage in Mexico. Thanks to our entire parish, not just our Church School students and their families, we collected an overwhelming amount of school supplies! Many thanks to everyone who so generously donated pens, pencils, notebooks, protractors... and on and on!

The annual Church School Christmas Performance is scheduled for Sunday, December 8th, right after Divine Liturgy. Are you interested in being part of the "Production Team"? We welcome all who are interested in making this year's production the best ever! We are always receptive to new ideas and new faces.

If your kids are anything like my son, he or she doesn't tell you much about "regular" school, never mind Church School! So for those of you who aren't sure who is teaching your child, here is the official staff list:

Preschool 2 – Debbie Greenstein and Emily Vogel

Kindergarten – Bertina Kurker, Roberta Maloof, and Karen Vachon

Grade 1 – Ashley Close and Michael O'Hara

Grade 2 – Carol Hazerjian and Christina Haddad

Grades 3 and 4 - Joan Teebagy and Heather Feldman

Grades 5 and 6 – David Haddad and Jodie Nosiglia

Grade 7 – Nicholas Capobianco and Jim Sabbag

Grades 8 and 9 – Gina DeStito and Kristin Sabbag

Grade 10 – George Khouri

Please take note of the following no Church School dates: November 3 (Bazaar), December 29 (school vacation week), February 16 (school vacation week), April 20 (Palm Sunday), April 27 (Easter). Our final day of class is June 1, with graduation and the annual parish picnic on June 8, 2003.

As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions. Please feel free to contact your child's teacher or me at any time.

In Christ,

Nancy Close
Church School Director

From the Teen SOYO...

The Teen SOYO has just begun their year in September. From the attendance at the first meeting, it looks like another great year. We had an attendance of 34 people and approximately 45 members signed up; it looks like the Teen SOYO will have a prosperous year. In mid-August, the teens gathered together at a member's house, for a summer party to start the year off. With another great turnout, the teens enjoyed themselves.

During the last few weeks of August, we had the chance to run the ballroom dancing. With the generosity from the Executive Board, they let us keep the profits from the two nights we ran it.

Upcoming events for the Teen SOYO are the annual Bazaar, serving food at a shelter, and maybe a little skit during Feast Day weekend.

If any teens 13+ interested in joining the Teen SOYO, we have our meetings during the 2nd Sunday of each month. We welcome all new members!

-David Haddad
President of the Teen SOYO

From the Virgin Mary Society...

The Ladies have been diligently working three days a week for our upcoming bazaar. We always need and welcome any additional help, even if just for a few hours a day, as time is of essence. Although our work is almost done for this year's bazaar, we ask you to think about helping us in the future.

We would like to extend our grateful appreciation to the St. John's Chapter of the Order of St. Ignatius for their presentation of the icon of St. Euphrosynos, the cook, to the Virgin Mary Society. Special thanks goes to Chairperson Christine Bezreh and the other members of the Order for this wonderful recognition. God grant you and the members of the VMS, many years.

I hope all in the parish have a most blessed Thanksgiving and Christmas with their families.

Yours in Christ,
Lillian Khouri

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

- ❖ The Annual Senior Citizen Christmas Luncheon will be held on Sunday, December 15th, immediately following Liturgy. Watch for your invitation in the mail!
- ❖ The Fellowship of St. John the Divine would like to thank those who helped make the Lobster Dinner on October 2nd the success that it was.

From the Order of St. Ignatius...

NEW MEMBERS

We'd like to welcome Daniel Capobianco and Joan Teebagy to the St. John of Damascus chapter of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. Dan and Joan were inducted by Bishop Antoun at the Parish Life Conference in June. This brings our total membership at St. John's to 27. Nationwide, there are 2,700 members, with a goal of 3,000 members by the 30th anniversary of the Order in 2006.

COST OF MEMBERSHIP

There are three different levels of membership to the Order. Most people start at \$500 per year. With a new electronic transfer system, members may pay \$41.67 per month. It couldn't be easier! There is also a \$1,000 level of membership (some people eventually upgrade,) and finally, life membership costs \$15,000 (paid in installments.) More information about the Order can be found on the Archdiocese web site: www.antiochian.org/Order



ICON PRESENTED TO VIRGIN MARY SOCIETY

An icon of St. Euphrosynos the Cook was presented to the Virgin Mary Society by the St. John of Damascus chapter of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. We are grateful to the Ladies for all the hard work they do. Euphrosynos was born of humble parentage and was uneducated. When he arrived at Mt. Athos he was relegated to work in the kitchen and not given much respect. But one night, an abbot had a dream that he was in a beautiful garden and he saw Euphrosynos with an apple branch in his hand, conversing with the angels. When the abbot awoke, he found the branch of apples in his hand. He realized that the monk he had so disdained was a holy person. The apples were found to have miraculous healing powers. What a powerful metaphor for our church and our ladies. They work tirelessly for the good of our parish. They do not ask for praise or recognition. As soon as one project is finished, they start another one. The next time you see a member of the Virgin Mary Society, thank her for setting such a good example for the rest of us. (p.s. The saint's name is pronounced, "you froze your nose!")

From the Church Office...

Pledge Forms for 2003 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 year 2003 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 office help you avoid any confusion or misunderstanding by sending this form back. Thank you for your anticipated cooperation!

The deadline for bulletins for Sunday, December 22nd and Christmas Eve will be Wednesday December 18th at 2 p.m. These deadlines *must be* strictly adhered to – please plan ahead.



Announcements...

❖ **FYI...**Next year, the date of Orthodox Pascha (Easter) is April 27th (Great Lent begins on March 10th). April 20th is date of Western Easter.

❖ **MANY YEARS!** We welcome and congratulate the newly elected and reelected officers of the Parent's Guild... Debbie Leotsakos and Bertina Kurker Co-Presidents, Sharon Cormier, Treasurer, and Khouria Joan Teebagy, Secretary

❖ **SCHOLARSHIPS:** If you are a parishioner in your first year of college or an accredited vocational school, you are invite to apply for The Robert P. Zahka Scholarship, which will be awarded at the Feast Day Banquet on Saturday, December 7th. Please call the church office for an application. The deadline to apply is Sunday, November 10th.

THE PRAYER FELLOWSHIP OF ST. JOHN THE DEVINE

Prayer is human need. Created in God's image every human being feels the need to transcend the banalities and temporal concerns of life to enjoy refreshing communion with the One in whose image he or she in created. It is interesting to reflect on how, even in a God-denying culture like our own, people attempt to meet this spiritual need. Occultism, ideology, the health and fitness mania – all of these and countless other cultural phenomena of our day – are really attempts to come to terms with spiritual emptiness. All these attempts are defective, some even destructive. None of these can be satisfying substitutes for what human beings require, and energizing relationship with God that fives meaning and dept and joy to life.

Prayer binds us one to another especially intercessory prayer.



TROPARION OF THE NATIVITY

Today the virgin giveth birth to the Transcendent in essence; the earth offereth the cave to the unapproachable One; the angels with the shepherds glorify him; and the Magi with the star travel on their way; for a new child hath been born for our sakes, God before the ages.

Church of St. John of Damascus
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THE TORCHBEARER
is the Bi-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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Sunday Services: 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 10 a.m.

Please plan accordingly.

DEADLINE for the January/February 2002 *Torchbearer* will be December 10th.

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



KONTAKION OF THE NATIVITY

Today the virgin giveth birth to the Transcendent in essence; the earth offereth the cave to the unapproachable One; the angels with the shepherds glorify him; and the Magi with the star travel on their way; for a new child hath been born for our sakes, God before the ages.

TROPARION OF THE NATIVITY

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath given rise to the light of knowledge in the world for they that worshipped the stars did learn therefrom to worship thee, O Sun of Justice, and to know that from the east of the Highest thou didst come O Lord, glory to thee.