
THE TORCHBEARER

Great Lent, 2003

From the Pastor...

Beloved in the Lord:

On Monday, March 10th, the Orthodox Church begins Great Lent. As we make our way as a family, as a community, toward our Lord's empty tomb let us all strive to return to God, much like the Prodigal Son, and see what good God has to offer to fill the emptiness of the world. Please do something to observe this great gift that God gives to us. Don't let this time go by and fail to see the potential that you have within you to affect a change for the good of your mind, body and soul. Many "extra" liturgical services will be celebrated - become a part of them and become reunited with God and His Saints.

Below please find the most, in my opinion, uplifting, insightful, and hopeful sermon in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Please don't read it! Rather, take the time to absorb these words and reflect on their meaning in our lives as Christians. You cannot help but see our Lord's Resurrection in a different light and context.

I very much look forward to seeing all of you during this most special time of the year. Please remember that I love you and pray for you. Please remember my family and me in your prayers, and remember that I am just a phone call away if you should ever need me. On behalf of my family, Khouria Joan, Alexander, Elizabeth Rose, and Nathaniel, and in anticipation of the Great Feast, I want to wish each of you and those whom you love a most blessed Pascha, and a spiritually fulfilling Lenten journey.

With much love in Christ,
Fr. John K. Teebagy, Pastor

THE CATECHETICAL HOMILY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM.



If any are pious and lovers of God, let them delight in this fair and radiant festival. If any are honest servants, let them enter and rejoice in the joy of their Lord. If any are wearied with fasting, let them now enjoy the reward. If any have worked from the first hour, let them accept their just pay. If any have come after the third, let them feast with thankfulness. If any have arrived after the sixth, let there be no doubt, for they shall suffer no loss. If any come after the ninth, let them draw near, let them not waver. If any have arrived only at the eleventh, let them not be fearful for their tardiness, for the Master is gracious and accepts the last as well as the first. He gives rest to those who worked from the first hour. He is merciful to the last and provides for the first. He gives to this one and to that one he shows kindness. He receives their labors and acknowledges the purpose, and he honors the deed and praises the intention. Therefore, let everyone enter into the joy of our Lord, and let the first and the second take part in the reward. Those rich and those poor, join hands together. Those sober and those sorrowful, honor this day. Those who fast and those who do not, be glad today. The table is full, indulge yourselves sumptuously. The calf is ample, let no one go away hungry. Let all enjoy the wealth of righteousness. Let none lament their poverty for the kingdom is revealed to all. Let none deplore transgressions, for forgiveness has dawned forth from the tomb. Let none be fearful of death, for the death of the Savior has set us free. By tasting his flesh, death has been quenched. He who went down to Hades despoiled Hades, and Hades was embittered when he tasted Christ's flesh. Isaiah, anticipating this, cried out and said: Hades was embittered when it met you face to face below. It was embittered, for it was abolished. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was cast down. It was embittered, for it was chained. It received a body and encountered God. It received earth, and met heaven face to face. It received what it saw, and fell where it saw not. O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons have fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and there are no dead in the tombs for Christ is raised from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who were asleep. To him be glory and dominion to the ages of ages. Amen.

Church Records...

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

Alexander Charles son of Joseph and Mirna (Battikha) Zelic was baptized on February 9, 2003

Many Years!



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

Joseph Arbeely (76) of West Roxbury fell asleep in the Lord on December 30, 2002. His wife, four children and their families survive him. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Leroy Shimp (75) of Carver fell asleep in the Lord on January 24, 2003. His wife, four children and their families survive him. Burial was at the National Cemetery in Bourne.

Memory Eternal!



From the Executive Board Chair...

Those of you who know me are aware that I am from the South. I was raised in New Orleans by parents who were of Greek and Lebanese descent. I attended the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity, which is the oldest Orthodox parish in North and South America. That church was fifty years old when my grandfather came to this country in 1911. He and many other Orthodox Christians from different ethnic backgrounds were an integral part of that church. Even the Syrian, Albanian and Serbian members of the church were on the church board and members of the AHEPA, which was instrumental in keeping Orthodox Christians out of harm's way, especially from the Klu Klux Klan. All nationalities in the church worked together and it became a very large parish. In 1970, however, there was a crisis in our church. It seemed that no one was very interested in doing the work that needed to be done. Our church school needed a new director and the Ladies' society had grown old with no one to take their place in the kitchen. The worst situation was that no one wanted to run for the Executive Board. The older people said that they were "too tired" and the younger people said they were "too busy".

In an effort to grow the parish and bring in new members, our priest went out to visit all the newly arrived Greeks to this country. They were eager to come to the church and we made them feel welcome. They became involved in every facet of the church, and very soon the

"newcomers" had full control of the Executive Board of the church. Within two years, the board passed a proclamation stating that only 100% Greek nationals could be voting members of the church. All other parishioners were not really welcome but they could attend service. A group from the youth organization, GOYO, wrote to the Archbishop. He sent our regional bishop to bring us together, but it did not work.

A few months later, while attending a Syrian–Lebanese convention in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I was fortunate to attend Sunday service in the hotel for the Orthodox Christians. It was then, at age 18, I learned of the Antiochian Archdiocese. I wrote a letter to Sayedna PHILIP and three months later we started St. Basil's Antiochian Orthodox Church in my parents' living room. Over the next decade, St Basil's moved to a variety of locations, until a church was built and consecrated in Metairie, Louisiana. St. Basil's is not a "Syrian" church, nor is it a "Lebanese" church. It is an Orthodox church that welcomes Arabs, Serbs, Albanians, Romanians, Russians, Greeks, and all others who pray together in English every Sunday. Their bake sales and dinners feature a wide variety of foods and customs. After working so many years establishing such a wonderful church, some of the Greek parishioners of St. Basil's decided to return to Holy Trinity, in order to, once again, make the "Greek" church a church for every Orthodox Christian.

This whole series of events has consumed most of my adult life. Now I am fully involved with the Church of St. John of Damascus. But I am also involved in the other churches I was raised in because these parishes are also my family, and I know that I can never stop and take a break.

The Church moves forward because of the faith and works of the people. You cannot say that "this is my church" if you do not know what it is to be a part of her daily life. Everyone must find even a small amount of time to give his or her "gift" of precious time to the growth and prosperity of this parish. You never know when the wolves are standing in the wings to take apart everything that has been put together by our forefathers and mothers. Unless you are an integral part of this church, participating not only in the Liturgy, but joining the various church organizations, how do you know what is really going on? Do you know what issues the Executive Board discusses and votes on each month? Do you come to the annual meeting and find out what the needs of the church are and where she is going? Do you think about the direction the parish is moving and are you in favor of it? Do you have concerns that you feel are not being addressed? Please take the time to think about these questions and many others you may have. When the nomination committee asks you to run for the board please give it serious thought. When there are positions to be filled in the church, please consider giving even a small amount of your time. We need people to run for the Executive Board for 2003. We also need people to chair or co-chair the Bazaar. Every week we need people to volunteer just one evening to run ballroom dancing. We also need

a person to oversee hall rentals and stock and manage the bar for outside functions. There is so very much to do and everyone can help in some way.

On May 4, 2003 plan to stay for the annual meeting so that you know where this church is headed. We need to keep the parish united and strong as a family so that it will prosper. Please give of yourself. It is the greatest gift of all!

In Christ,
Cynthia Capobianco, Executive Board Chair

From the Virgin Mary Society...

Our annual Sfeeha sale is in progress and we are busy baking to fill the orders as we receive them. The deadline for orders in April 6th, and the pick up date is April 13th. Order forms are at the bengari or you can call the church office. Please make arrangements to pick up your order on April 13th after church or before the 13th, if possible.

Once again the Virgin Mary Society will sponsor their *Annual Lenten Dinner*, which is scheduled for Friday evening, April 18th from 5:30-7 p.m. The menu is as follows: Emjudarra (Lentils), Salad, Baked Fish, Spinach Pies, Dessert and Coffee. Donation: \$10.00 per adult/ \$5.00 per child

Proceeds from this dinner will go to the Antiochian Women's "Project 2003," which will help and provide for the Orthodox orphanages in Syria, Lebanon, and many other countries. Your support will be greatly appreciated for this worthy cause. For reservations please call Lillian Khouri at 781.237.1655 or Patty in the church office at 781.326.3046.

As added feature, we will be selling Humus and Spinach Turnovers at our Lenten Supper only. (Please, no phone orders)

Yours in Christ,
Lillian Khouri, President, Virgin Mary Society

From Teen SOYO...

After the busy holiday season and a busy Teen SOYO season, we are ready to take it easy and relax. During our busy months, we helped the Fellowship in December serve for the Fellowship luncheon. Then in late December, the teens were invited to Fr. John's house for a relaxing evening and a nice chat.

On Super Bowl Sunday, the SOYO had a special collection for the Food for Hungry. This was part of the Souper Bowl of Caring. This was started 10 years ago to utilize Super Bowl Sunday to inspire the youth to fight hunger and poverty. With the generous donations given by the parishioners, we were able to collect \$375. We thank all the parishioners for helping us in this cause.

In February the SOYO will be hosting a regional dance on February 15th. All teens are welcomed. It's a good opportunity to see your camp friends from Massachusetts and to get closer with the region.

In Christ,

David Haddad, President of Teen SOYO

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

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!

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 are in the process of planning our Lenten Retreat for students age 8 and up. In the past, students have had a wonderful time at our retreats, with opportunity for worship and fellowship, as well as a hefty dose of fun thrown in.

Our middle school aged students are hard at work becoming iconography experts. During Lent, you will be treated to the fruits of their labor, as they will share their knowledge and expertise with the parish.

The Lazarus Saturday Lenten Crafts Program returns this year, with the promise of new and exciting crafts for children and adults of all ages. If you would like to participate in this program as a craft leader, we welcome your help and your creative ideas!

As we approach the halfway point in our Church School year, I would like to reiterate our attendance policy. Students who have attained **at least 50% attendance** during the school year will be awarded a certificate of completion and will be eligible for other awards at graduation on June 8, 2003. This is intended to reward those students (and their families) for their dedication and commitment to Church School. It is not intended to penalize students who do not attend regularly. Rather, we hope that it will serve as an incentive for children to attend class more frequently. If you have any questions concerning your child's attendance thus far, please feel free to contact me.

Please take note of the following no Church School dates: April 20th (Palm Sunday), April 27th (Easter).

Our final day of class is June 1st, with graduation and the annual parish picnic on June 8th.

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

Lenten Liturgical Notes & Announcements...

❖ During Great Lent, the Church calls us to increase and intensify our prayer life. Keeping this in mind, please note that we will celebrate the Presanctified Liturgy on Wednesday evenings during Great Lent at 5:30 p.m. If you wish to receive the Eucharist that evening please fast (from food, drink, and smoking).

❖ On Friday evenings, during Great Lent, we will chant the Akathist Hymn to the Virgin Mary at 7 p.m.

❖ **KEEPING VIGIL AT THE TOMB OF CHRIST** - Following the Lamentations on Great & Holy Friday, April 25th, the church, led by the teens, will begin to keep watch (vigil) over the tomb of Christ. We will be reading from the Psalms and Gospels all through the night. You are encouraged to sign up for an hour or so to come and keep watch together. Please watch for the sign up sheet in the hall. The youth are especially encouraged to be at

the church all night. The vigil will end on Saturday morning, when we will all gather together for Divine Liturgy and partake of the Eucharist.

❖ **A WARM THANK YOU FROM FR. JOHN** - To all those who graciously welcomed me into their homes during this house blessing season, I would like to express my deepest appreciation and thanks for your gracious hospitality!! God grant you all many years!

❖ **Confession** - *Great Lent* is the perfect opportunity for you to receive Confession, especially if you plan on receiving the Eucharist on Palm Sunday (April 20th) and Pascha (April 27th). Confession is available before all Lenten services, during Matins on Sunday mornings or by appointment. Please don't wait until the last minute to come to confession! In addition, because of the many extra responsibilities Fr. John will have during Holy Week, he **WILL NOT** be able to hear Confessions on Palm Sunday morning or from Holy Wednesday on (i.e. Holy Tuesday is the last chance for Confession for Pascha). So please plan accordingly! In addition, please note that being anointed on Holy Wednesday is not a form of Confession. Hence, if you plan on being anointed on Holy Wednesday, please plan on coming to Confession before Holy Wednesday!

❖ **SYRIAN LEBANESE WOMEN'S CLUB ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP** for high school graduates – applications are now available by calling Laurice Kurker at 781.643.7991 or Rose Maloof at 617. 484.3844. The deadline is March 31st.

How Can We Keep Great Lent?

It is obviously impossible for us to go to Church every day. And since we cannot keep the Lent liturgically, the question arises: what is our participation in Lent, how can we spiritually profit by it? The Church calls us to deepen our religious conscience, to increase and strengthen the spiritual contents of our life, to follow her in her pilgrimage towards renewal and rededication to God.

Fasting...

The first universal precept is that of fasting. The Orthodox teaching concerning fasting is different from the Roman Catholic doctrine and it is essential to understand it. Roman Catholics identify **fasting** with a "good deed," they see in it a sacrifice, which earns them a "merit." "What shall I give up for Lent?" - this question is very typical of such an attitude toward fasting. Fasting thus is a formal obligation, an act of obedience to the Church, and its value comes precisely from that of an **ascetical effort**. It is the effort to subdue the physical, the fleshly man to the spiritual one, the "natural" to the "supernatural." Limitations

in food are **instrumental**; they are not ends in themselves. Fasting thus is but a means of reaching a spiritual goal and, therefore, an integral part of a wide spiritual effort. Fasting, in the Orthodox understanding, includes more than abstinence from certain types of food. It implies prayer, silence, an internal disposition of mind, an attempt to be charitable, kind, and - in one word - **spiritual**. "Brethren, while fasting bodily, let us also fast spiritually..."

Prayer...

We must always pray. But Lent is the time of an increase of prayer and also of its deepening. The simplest way is, first, to add the Lenten prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian to our private morning and evening prayers. Then, it is good and profitable to set certain hours of the day for a short prayer: this can be done "internally" - at the office, in the car, everywhere. The important thing here is to remember constantly that we are in Lent, to be spiritually "referred" to its final goal: renewal, penitence, closer contact with God.

Spiritual Reading...

We cannot be in church daily, but it is still possible to follow the Church's progress in Lent by reading those lessons and books that the Church reads in her worship. A chapter of the Book of Genesis, some passages from Proverbs and Isaiah do not take much time, and yet they help us in understanding the spirit of Lent and its various dimensions. It is also good to read a few Psalms - in connection with prayer or separately. Nowhere else can we find such concentration of true repentance, of thirst for communion with God, of desire to permeate the whole of life with religion. Finally, a religious book: Lives of the Saints, History of the Church, Orthodox Spirituality, etc. is a "must" while we are in Lent. It takes us from our daily life to a higher level of interests, it feeds us with ideas and facts, which are usually absent, from our "practical" and "efficient" world.

Change of Life...

And, last but not least: there must be an effort and a decision to **slow down** our life, to put in as much quiet, silence, contemplation, and meditation. Radio, TV, newspapers, social gatherings - all these things, however excellent and profitable in themselves, must be cut down to a real minimum. Not because they are bad, but because we have something **more important** to do, and it is impossible to do without a change of life, without some degree of **concentration** and discipline. Lent is the time when we **re-evaluate** our life in the light of our faith, and this requires a very real effort and discipline. Christ says that a **narrow path** leads to the kingdom of God and we must make our life as narrow as possible. At first

the natural and selfish man in us revolts against these limitations. He wants his usual “easy life” with all its pleasures and relaxations. But once we have tasted of such spiritual effort, once we have made by it one step towards God, the reward is great! We discover a joy that cannot be compared to any other joy. We discover the reality of the spiritual world in us. We begin to understand what St. Paul meant by “the joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.” **God himself enters our soul:** and it is this wonderful coming that constitutes the ultimate end of Lent:

“If a man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.” (John 14:23)

Let us make this Lent a real Lent!

(This article was excerpted from an article entitled **Great Lent: The Time of Repentance** by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, former dean of St. Vladimir’s Seminary. For a fuller treatment on the meaning of Lent, read the book **Great Lent**, also written by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann.)



Do you fast?



Give me proof of it by your words. 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 eye, and the ear, 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 ear 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 and sisters – St. John Chrysostom

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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 10 a.m..
Please plan accordingly.

DEADLINE for the
May/June, 2003 Torchbearer
will be April 10th . This will be the final Newsletter until September 2003.

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

