
THE TORCHBEARER

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

November/December 2003

From the Pastor...

This month brings two events that are important to the parish for different reasons. The first is our annual bazaar, which will be held on the weekend of November 7th. It is amazing to see the hard work of all those on the various committees who gather in the hall each night prior to the first day of this annual event. It is equally amazing to witness the crowds of people from near and far who have made this bazaar part of their yearly activities. If you look at the church's budget it is clear to see why the bazaar is so vital. However, the bazaar is vital for another reason too. It provides the parish with a common goal. It allows parishioners to meet each other and to feel united. The bazaar shows us in a very

real way what this parish can accomplish when it sets its mind on something. The bazaar, to be sure, is vital to the "fellowship" aspect of the parish, but the "spiritual" aspect of the parish is just as important.



In addition to the bazaar, November also marks the start of our preparation for our Lord's birth. If you have looked at your mail recently, you can already see "holiday" catalogues being sent. I know that what I am about to say has been said before and will be said again, but I really feel that we must stop this trend. Christmas is not a holiday. Christmas is the birthday of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. If Christ were not born, what would our chances be for salvation? When Advent or "the fast of St. Philip" starts on November

15th what will our response be? This is the key word – response.

In theology classes in seminary, we learned a very fancy word. In fact the word is even in Greek! See how important the word must be! The word is

synergia (synergy). As Bishop Kallistos Ware says in his classic book *The Orthodox Church*, “To describe the relation between the grace of God and free will of man, Orthodoxy uses the term cooperation or synergy; in (St.) Paul’s words: ‘We are fellowworkers with God’ (I Cor. 3:9). If man is to achieve full fellowship with God, he cannot do so without God’s help, yet he must also play his own part: man as well as God must make his contribution to the common work, although what God does is of immeasurably greater importance than which man does.” (p. 226) To repeat: **If man is to achieve full fellowship with God, he cannot do so without God’s help, yet he must also play his own part.**

For some reason, people think that the only fasting period the Church has is Great Lent. How sad! Advent, like other fasting periods, allows us the chance to return to God - to refocus our minds, bodies, and souls toward that which is needful. Advent requires our full attention. God gives us so much can’t we give him a little of ourselves? Can’t we deny ourselves just a little? Just a little? To be sure that church is fellowship. I can’t think of anyone who enjoys Arabic music, as much as I do, yet is it the sole purpose of the Church? I can’t think of anyone else who enjoys the cooking of the Middle East as much as I do, but is this the sole purpose of the Church? But the essence of the Church is being a member of the Body of Christ in full union with each other and in full communion with God through the life giving mystery of the Eucharist.

Make this Advent different. Make this Advent a time of reflection. Reflecting on God’s great love for us. Make this time a period of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (giving to the poor). Instead of going to parties before Christmas, encourage your friends and family to celebrate AFTER the Feast. Would any one of us even consider celebrating before Easter? Would anyone of us even consider chanting “Christ is risen...” on Good Friday? Then why would we “party” before Christmas?!

It is my fervent hope that all of us view Advent in a new way, a fresh way. It is my hope that our common journey towards Bethlehem allows us to find, once again, the right way. It is my hope that we can gather in this holy Church of St. John of Damascus on Wednesday, December 24th at 6 p.m. to pray together, to be together, to share in the Eucharist together, to celebrate together, and to shout from the depths of our hearts that “Christ is Born!! Glorify Him!!”

Assuring you of my love and prayers and wishing you all a most blessed Thanksgiving and Christmas, I remain,

In Christ,

+Fr. John K. Teebagy

Fr. John K. Teebagy, Pastor



Liturgical notes...

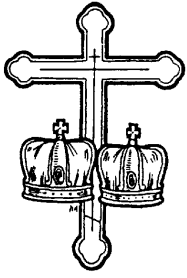
- ❖ Please remember that the Christmas Fast begins on Saturday, November 15th. Like other Lenten periods, the Church calls us to increase (or even start) our efforts in prayer, fasting, and giving to the poor. It is also the perfect time to have your Confession heard. Confessions are heard on Sunday morning from 8:30 a.m. to 9:40 a.m. or by appointment. Please note, as in past years, confessions will *not* be heard on Christmas Eve. 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 Vespereal Liturgy will be celebrated on Thursday, 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!"



Stephen E. Hamwey, Jr. and Kelly (Jameson) Hamwey were united in marriage on September 21, 2003. We congratulate them as they begin their new life together in Walpole.

Many Years!

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

Eric Raphael, son of Ralph and Susan (Serris) Cahaly of Waltham was baptized on August 10th, 2003

Micaela Teresa, daughter of Paul and Cynthia (Zahka) Mazzoni was baptized on August 31st, 2003

Nancy (Kaaz) Shagoury was chrismated on September 14th, 2003



Many Years!

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



Mitchell G. Sabbag (89) of Arlington fell asleep in the Lord on September 16th. His son and his family survive him. Burial was at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in Arlington.

Elsie Kurker (76) of West Roxbury fell asleep in the Lord on October 6th. Her son, three daughters and their families survive her. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Memory Eternal!



From the Executive Board Chairman...

Greetings,

Once again, I would like to thank the members of the Executive Board for all of their help and participation in all that has been done over the past few months.

Thanks to the decisions made last year about the shades in the church, the parishioners who came to church over the summer months were more comfortable. The shades not only provided a cooler environment but also cut down on the electricity used and the maintenance costs of our older a/c units. The shades are a fine, functioning addition to the church. Another addition is the new bengari table, which hopefully you have all seen. This special gift from a parishioner is a beautiful piece of work that graces the entrance of our church and it complements the work inside the church, as it is from the same manufacturer in Greece. We are truly grateful for this special gift.

The kickoff of our Sunday school year on September 7th was a great success due to the hard work of the Parent Guild. I hope that you had a chance to enjoy some of the great food prepared for us all. Our focus is now on the bazaar, which is moving wonderfully due to the efforts of Paula Hamwey and Sheila Hamwey, who are co chairing this important event in the life of the parish. I want to thank them for all of their efforts, and I am sure they are just as thankful for all of the help that they are receiving. The Virgin Mary Society is doing a fantastic job again, just as they always do, and our youth are also very involved doing all they can to help. Right after the bazaar and Thanksgiving is our Feast Day celebration, which all of us anticipate. After this we can rest for Christmas and the New Year!

Ballroom dancing continues to be very successful for the parish, and at the same time is a lot of fun for the people who attend. It is also a source of enjoyment for the parishioners who help work at the dances; we can always use help with this ongoing event. Be sure to take notice of some of the parish memorabilia in the hallways. Hats off to Jim Sabbag and to those who donated these reminders of our proud history and shared memories.

These are some of the things that we can see every day. We also need to thank the many people who help run the church everyday behind the scenes, and there are many.

Wishing you all a wonderful Thanksgiving and Christmas with your loved ones and hoping to see you all in church, I am

Sincerely,

Alan Cardoos

Alan Cardoos, Executive Board Chair

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 the essence. Although our work is almost done for this year's bazaar, we ask you to think about helping us in the future.

We are deeply grateful for your patronage and help and would like to wish all our fellow parishioners 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, for those 65 and older, will be held on Sunday, December 14th, immediately following Liturgy. Watch for your invitation in the mail. Please call Barbara Khouri at 617.323.4463 if your invitation hasn't arrived by mid November.

❖ The Fellowship of St. John the Divine would like to thank those who helped make their Lobster Dinner on October 8th the success that it was.

From the Order of St. Ignatius...

The St. John of Damascus Chapter of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch currently has 28 members. We would like to increase membership in the Order by December 2004, when Metropolitan Philip will visit our parish for the Feast Day. For further information about joining the Order, please contact Christine Bezreh at 781-449-1230 or cbezreh@comcast.net.

The following article was written by Dan Abraham, outgoing Membership Chair of the Order, and is reprinted with permission.

THE ORDER OF ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH: WHERE WE ARE – WHERE WE NEED TO BE

Jesus commanded us that “what you do unto the least of your brethren you do unto me”. Further, when He appeared to His disciples following His Resurrection, He exulted those “who believe yet who have not seen and not touched”. These two messages give meaning to the good works of The Order, which might be characterized in 2003 as follows:



Blessed are you the members of The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch who in secret do unto the least of your brethren whom you cannot see, cannot touch, and most likely do not know, yet believe God will combine our individual gifts for the benefit of those who need it most.

We soon will approach 3,000 members who come from all parts of North America and all walks of life. It is truly a testament to this God inspired vision. Our members enjoy an irreplaceable feeling of “touching peoples’ lives”. We do it anonymously, without concern for personal recognition, and we do it because of our belief in Jesus Christ, our Orthodox Faith, and our Antiochian Archdiocese. We are particularly grateful to the faithful of our Archdiocese who recognize The Order’s “good works”. However, our work will not be complete until every faithful soul has joined this movement.

RESPONSES TO THOSE SEEKING ANSWERS ABOUT THE ORDER:

1. They say: “The Order is ‘too showy.’” We reply:

- a. We are witnesses to our faith and examples to others
 - b. We wear secular insignia without feeling “showy”
2. They say: “The Order is just about money.” We reply:
- a. The Order is first a spiritual movement manifested through financial giving
 - b. Jesus sanctioned financial giving when he honored the poor widow who gave her last two coins. She gave from her need. The Order only asks that we give from our surplus
 - c. When we give to The Order we participate in the “Miracle of Giving”: it is only through God that our combined gifts add up to a greater sum than each person individually.
3. They say: “I give to many worthy organizations and want to spread my giving.” We reply:
- a. Do the secular charities open and close with prayer?
 - b. Do they ask God for guidance?
 - c. Will other charities remember and help the Orthodox if we don’t? Thus, if we don’t put our faith as our top priority, who will?
4. They say: “I want to give anonymously.” We reply:
- a. Giving anonymously is acceptable.
 - b. Standing before God and pledging our commitment to Him is an honor.
5. They say: “I can’t afford it; it is only for the rich.” We reply:
- a. We can’t afford not to
 - b. \$1.35 / day = 1 cup of coffee
 - c. Members currently are from all walks of life.
6. They say, “I’m too young or too old.” We reply:
- a. Everyone of age can join

- b. Young people are clamoring to be members when they understand they can join. They want to give back for the next generation what they were able to enjoy and take advantage.
 - c. A “young” woman of 80 years joined two years ago and recruited 7 new members this spring at her Parish Life Conference.
7. They say, “ I support my church. I don’t have any connection with the Archdiocese.” We reply:
- a. Every Parish and every Antiochian Orthodox is impacted. 33% of the Archdiocese budget is from The Order for our Christian books, music, evangelism, and ministry.
 - b. The Order contributes 100% of the funds annually to the Priest’s retirement / housing allowance. Every priest in our Archdiocese benefits.
 - c. Young people enjoy a camping experience and annual College Conference both of which are sponsored by The Order.

America needs Orthodoxy now more than ever before, especially since September 11, 2001. Americans seek security for themselves and their families. The Orthodox Faith is the candle that Christ lit 2,000 years ago. It is a beacon of stability, steadfastness, and strength. The winds of adversity blow strong but we must not let this light extinguish. I ask that you pray and make the commitment to serve our church, our country, and our Faith.

A challenge to the current members of The Order: Take a chance if you haven’t already and approach someone about The Order. Feel something good happen inside you. Christ approached 12 ordinary people and asked them to “follow me”. They trusted him and did extraordinary things. He called on them individually by name and not in large groups. We therefore must reach out to every individual as Christ did. We too can do extraordinary things if we trust in the Lord.

*Giving to someone we know is our responsibility.
Giving to someone we don’t know is our choice.
Make The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch your choice.*

The only way to God is through helping other people and denying “I.”

From the Church Office...

Please read...Please read...Please read...Please Read...Please read

Pledge Forms for 2004 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 2004 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!**

Please read...Please read...Please read...Please Read...Please read

The deadline for the bulletins for Christmas Eve and Sunday, December 28th will be Monday December 22nd at 10 a.m. SHARP. These deadlines must be strictly adhered to – please plan ahead. The office will close at noon on December 24th and will reopen on December 29th. The deadline for the January 4th bulletin will be Tuesday, December 30th at 10 a.m. SHARP.



Announcements...

❖ **FYI...** In 2004, the date of Pascha (Orthodox Easter) is April 11th (Great Lent begins on February 23rd). April 11th is also the date of Western Easter.

❖ **ROBERT P. ZAHKA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP:** Attention college freshman. Applications are now being accepted for the Robert P. Zahka Memorial Scholarship. The purpose of this Scholarship is to recognize and acknowledge those students who have excelled in service to the Church of St. John of Damascus and their Orthodox Faith. Each year a scholarship award is presented to that student who has been most exemplary in his or her Church participation and commitment. Awards are presented in conjunction with the Annual Feast Day Celebration in December. Any college freshman that is a member of the Church of

St. John of Damascus is eligible to apply. Applications are available at the Church Office. **Application deadline is November 15, 2003.**



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 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10 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 2004 *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.