
THE TORCHBEARER

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

Great Lent, 2004

From the Pastor...

Beloved in the Lord:

On Monday, February 23rd, 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.

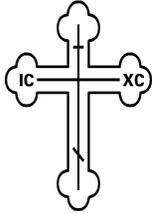
Below please find the most, in my opinion, uplifting, insightful, and hopeful sermon in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Please don't read it! Rather, take the time to absorb these words and reflect on their meaning in our lives as Christians. You cannot help but see our Lord's Resurrection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

Nicole Rose daughter of Dennis and Maureen (Sharpe) Kirshy of Needham was baptized on January 10th, 2004.

Many Years!



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

Elias Ganim (76) of Westwood fell asleep in the Lord on January 5th, 2004. His wife, a son, and a daughter and her family survive him. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Rose Erpen (81) of Sharon fell asleep in the Lord on January 24, 2004. Her sister and brother, and many nieces and nephews survive her. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Georgette Callahan (78) of Arlington fell asleep in the Lord on January 27, 2004. Her sister, brother and 4 stepchildren survive her. Burial was at Calvary Cemetery in Waltham.

Memory Eternal!



From the Executive Board Chair...

Hello,

Here we are already coming up to the beginning of Lent. It seems like we just celebrated New Year's and Easter is sneaking up on us. We have many great and important services of the Church coming up over the next few months, please try to make time to attend.

We have been working on a few projects for the Church, one of which is the feasibility of expansion of the Sunday school classrooms. The VMS has expressed a concern about the upgrade of the kitchen to make it more “user friendly,” and if anyone else has any input at this time, now is the time to express it. I will be glad to hear any ideas or concerns and to pass them on to the committee. We are also finishing what we started with the sound system for the hall. We are getting new bids now and you should see something done with this in the near future. This should, if I am not mistaken, be the last item on the list of improvements we set money aside for through the “Legacy Fund.”

This is short and sweet but again I didn't want the opportunity to slip by without wishing you all well and thanking you for all the hard work we all do to keep our parish healthy. Enjoy the upcoming Feast and let's all hope for an early spring. See you in Church.

Sincerely yours,

Alan Cardoos, 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 is March 14th, and the pick up date is March 28th. Order forms are at the bengari or you can call the church office. Please make arrangements to pick up your order on March 28th after church or before the 14th if possible.

Once again the Virgin Mary Society will sponsor their *Annual Lenten Dinner*, which is scheduled for Friday evening, April 2nd 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 2004," 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.

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

**A letter to all Parishioners and Organizations using the Function Hall of
The Church of St. John of Damascus**

Dear Parishioners and Organization Presidents,

I am asking for your help and understanding relative to hall rental and usage. At this time in the Church's history we need more advance notice for hall functions. In the past, when George Ameer was sexton of our church he devoted himself to serving the church and the parishioners. He was at the church every day, all day. If someone needed the hall and gave short notice, it was not a problem to him because he was at the church and he would make sure he got the hall set-up and ready for the function. That was George's legacy and that was the advantage to the church of having a full time, devoted sexton such as George.

At this time the church has two firemen, the "two Steves" as they have come to be known, as our sextons. They are also devoted to the job and to the church but they are full time firemen and part time sextons. Therein lays the difference. Coordinating their schedules to set up the church on short notice is much more difficult. They are willing to re-arrange their schedules

at the firehouse in order to be at the church, but they need advance notice to find replacements at the firehouse. And sometimes they will not be able to make a switch, so a date may be unavailable for a hall rental.

I am asking everyone seeking to rent a church function hall (small hall or large) to submit a completed application at least sixty days in advance of the function. We need this time to properly coordinate the hall set-up, bar if needed, cleaning after the function, and hall break down.

Thank you for your understanding.

Most Sincerely,
Wayne E. Zahka, Chair - Hall rental committee

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!

The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch...

In December, 2004, His Eminence, Metropolitan Philip will be coming to St. John of Damascus for our Feast Day celebration. We have a goal of inducting fifteen new members to the Order in December. There are currently 27 members at St. John's. Most parishes our size have a much larger membership. We hope to be able to persuade you to join the Order by informing you about all the good works that are performed by the Order on a national as well as regional basis. But, we cannot convince you unless we can talk to you. Please contact any of the members listed below to learn more about the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch:

Christine Bezreh, James Bezreh, Robert Bunai, Richard Cahaly, Cynthia Capobianco, Daniel Capobianco, Louella Cardoos, Paula Hamwey, Yvonne Homsy, George Khouri, Lillian Khouri, Robert Kurker, Bertina Kurker, Ibtihaj Massabni, Linda Pickering, Raymond Sabbag, Mary Lou Sabbag, Emil Samman, Deacon Alexander Scott, Joan Teebagy, Laura Veo, Deborah Vogel, and Olivia Waishek

From the Choir...

In his article entitled "The Ministry of Church Singers" in the December 2003 edition of The Word magazine, His Grace Bishop Basil states that "there are few ministries of the Church that require the devotion and the dedication that church singing does." We, at St. John's, have been blessed with talented and dedicated singers for whom I want to thank for their support and contribution to weekly liturgy.

Over the past six months, the physical and musical growth of the choir has been overwhelming. Not only have the members been learning new Troparions and Kontakions weekly, but they have also been expanding their entire liturgical repertoire. Currently, rehearsals are being dedicated to learn more advanced music for Good Friday and Pascha. Following Pascha, we will be learning the Troparions of the Resurrection in 4-part harmony to perform at the annual Choir Concert to be held at the Parish Life Conference in June. We look forward to your support at the concert.

If you have even the slightest desire to sing, please do not hesitate to join us. **We need at least 5 new members to reach our enrollment goal this year.** We especially need tenors and altos, but all voice parts are welcome. All rehearsals are on Sundays before liturgy. With many new opportunities to sing in the next few months, won't you join us? Please feel free to contact me after Liturgy or call me at (617) 489-9456.

Mark Haddad

From the Church School ...

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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 May 23rd, 2004. 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 4th (Palm Sunday), April 11th (Easter). Our final day of class is May 16th, with graduation and the annual parish picnic on May 23rd.

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 Teen SOYO ...

While the year is progressing the Teens are still as busy as ever. We once again ran the snack bar during our church bazaar, with great success. We are currently selling candy bars to help fund money, planning a dance for April, attending the regional retreat in March, and participating in the 3rd annual Teen SOYO team or the Relay for Life. During Great Lent, we are going to meet with Fr. John and participation the Vigil on Good Friday night. We are all excited for the upcoming events and looking forward to them. We wish everyone a great Paschal season and a good Easter.

Rachel Sabbag, Teen SOYO President

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) from noon.
- ❖ On Friday evenings, during Great Lent, we will chant the Akathist Hymn to the Virgin Mary at 6:30 p.m. (*please note the new time*)
- ❖ On Monday evenings during Great Lent, the clergy of the New England Deanery celebrate the Great Compline at 7 pm. Please consult the monthly calendars for the locations. The deanery will be at St. John's on Monday, March 15th.
- ❖ **SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY** St. John's will host the greater Boston Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers this year on Sunday, February 29th at 5 pm. His Grace, Bishop NIKON of

the Albanian Archdiocese is scheduled to preside, along with all of the clergy of the greater Boston area. Please join us.

❖ **KEEPING VIGIL AT THE TOMB OF CHRIST** - Following the Lamentations on Great & Holy Friday, April 9th, 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.

❖ **Confession** - Great Lent is the perfect opportunity for you to receive Confession, especially if you plan on receiving the Eucharist on Palm Sunday (April 4th) and Pascha (April 11th). Confession is available *before* all Lenten services, during Matins on Sunday mornings (8:40 -9:40 am) 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!

❖ **SYRIAN - LEBANESE WOMEN'S CLUB ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP** applications for high school graduates are now available. Please contact Mrs. Rose Maloof or at 617.484.3844 or Laurice Kurker at 781.643.7991. The deadline is March 31st.



Make plans now to attend the 66th Annual NER Parish Life Conference, hosted by St. Mary's, Cambridge on June 24-27 at the Radisson Hotel Plymouth Harbor (508.747.4900). More details to follow or call St. Mary's at 617.547.1234 for further information

Some Things You Should Know while in Church (part 2)

by Father David Barr (pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Ben Lomond, CA)

Leaving Before Dismissal Leaving church before the Dismissal - besides being rude - deprives us of a blessing. Worship has a beginning ("Blessed is the Kingdom...") and an end

("Let us depart in peace..."). To leave immediately after Communion is to treat church like a fast food restaurant where we come and go as we please. We live in a fast-paced world where we seem to be hurrying from place to place. But in God's presence, we need to make every attempt to fight this pressure to move on to the next thing on the day's agenda. We deprive ourselves of blessings by not being still and participating in God's holiness. Eat and run at McDonald's - but stay in church and thank God for his precious gifts.

Blot that Lipstick! Have you ever looked at an icon in just the right light and seen the lip prints all over it? It's disgusting, isn't it? In fact, it's downright gross. Lipstick may look fine on lips, but it looks horrible on icons, crosses, the Communion spoon and the priest's or bishop's hand. Icons have been ruined by lipstick; and even though the cross can usually be cleaned after everyone venerates it, it just isn't considerate to others to impose your lipstick on them. What is the answer? If you insist on wearing lipstick to church, blot your lips well before venerating an icon, taking Communion, or kissing the cross or the priest's or bishop's hand. Even better, wait until after church to put it on. After all, God is not impressed with how attractive you look externally - your makeup or clothing - but how attractive you are internally, your adornment with good works and piety.

Venerating Icons When you enter the church, it is traditional to venerate the icons. Usually there are icons at the entrance to the church and many churches have icon stands in the front as well. When venerating (kissing) an icon, pay attention to where you kiss. It is not proper to kiss an icon in the face. You wouldn't go up and kiss the Lord or His mother on the lips, would you? You would kiss their hand, and only if they invited you would you even dare to kiss them on the cheek. Pay attention to what you are doing. When you approach an icon to venerate it, kiss the gospel, scroll, or hand cross in the hand of the person in the icon, or kiss the hand or foot of the person depicted. As you venerate an icon, show proper respect to the person depicted in the icon - the same respect you would show the person by venerating him or her in an appropriate place. And remember, blot off your lipstick before kissing.

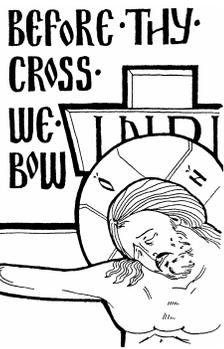
Talking during Church Isn't it great to come to church and see friends and family members? But wait until coffee hour to say "Hi" to them. It just isn't appropriate to greet people and have a conversation with them during the services. Besides being disrespectful towards God, it is rude towards the other people in the church who are trying to worship. Talk to God while in church through your prayers, hymns, and thanksgiving, and to your friends in the hall afterwards.

Kiss (Don't Shake) the Priest's or Bishop's Hand Did you know that the proper way to greet a priest or bishop is to ask his blessing and kiss his right hand? How do you do this?

Approach the priest or bishop with your right hand over your left hand and say "Father (or "Master" in the case of the bishop), bless." [He will make the sign of the cross, and place his right hand over yours.] This is much more appropriate (and traditional) than shaking their hands. After all, the priest and bishop are not just "one of the boys." When you kiss their hands, you show respect for their office - they are the ones who "bless and sanctify" you and who offer the holy gifts on your behalf. So next time you greet your priest or bishop, don't shake his hand, ask for his blessing.



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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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 10 a.m.
Please plan accordingly.

DEADLINE for the **May/June, 2004 Torchbearer**
will be April 10th . This will be the final Newsletter until September 2004.

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