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# THE TORCHBEARER

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

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January/February 2006

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## From the Pastor...

One of the most vital aspects of a priest's ministry is visitation of the sick. In my 13-½ years as the pastor of this church I have logged countless hours and miles visiting the sick all over Eastern Massachusetts and in Rhode Island. I have seen people from Jordan Hospital in Plymouth to Lowell General in Lowell from University of Massachusetts Hospital in Worcester to Massachusetts General in Boston and everywhere in between. However despite all of this, I hear from members of the Executive Board and others that "Mrs. Smith" was in the hospital and I did not visit, when in fact, no one from "Mrs. Smith's" family ever called me. Indeed, I spoke about this frustration in my *very* first pastor's report at the annual meeting in May, 1993 when I said: "I hear rumors that I didn't visit so and so in the hospital - when no one in the family ever called me; *this despite the fact that we have a secretary, an answering service, which provides 24 hour coverage, and that I wear a beeper.*" We also have email now too.

This is not a problem that only afflicts St. John's or me. You may remember the January/February 2001 newsletter where I put in article from Fr. Michael Ellias, now serving in Brooklyn, NY. In my preface to his article I wrote "I want to sincerely thank Fr. Michael Ellias, of our sister church in West Roxbury, for his thoughts on one of the most essential aspects of a priest's ministry - visiting the sick. He must have read not only my mind but also the minds of others in the ministry. Too often this topic has cause hard feelings between a priest and his parishioners, while other times it has denied the sick and/or dying person of the sacraments of the Church. Below are excerpts from Father's article." Fr. Michael went on to say "We (the clergy) also humbly ask you to let us know **directly** whether or not you want a visit. Many people still assume the priest will come to them when they are ill. Unfortunately, the priest does not receive ESP at his ordination to know when someone is sick (or if they even want a visit). If you do want a visit for yourself or a family member, just call the office **directly** - ***not through an intermediary*** - and we will come absolutely as soon as possible. We make this request because, you know, there are still some in our community who think they are dying if the priest comes near them! We have often been gently chased away because families have not wanted to frighten the infirm! Nevertheless, the scripture prescribes such visits, our love for you compels such visits, and our community deserves such visits. "

Below, please find an article written by, another friend and classmate of mine, Fr. Anthony Yazge of St. George, Terre Haute, IN whose experience mirrors Fr. Michael's and mine:

“Over the years, ‘good intentions’ people have changed the world and not always for the better. One small example of this is the changes made regarding privacy issues and laws. If you haven’t been a patient in a hospital recently or had a close family who was a patient, you might not realize that information is kept very confidential. Some hospitals now ask the patient, upon admission, if they can tell people they are a patient. There used to be a time when you could find out exactly what a patient’s condition was with a simple phone call. Not anymore. There used to be a time when the hospitals would call a patient’s pastor, if the patient desired. Not anymore. There even used to be a time when a pastor could go into the ER to be with his parishioner in their time of need. Now it’s a long waiting game, if the pastor is even allowed into the ER.

With that in mind, it is important to communicate your spiritual needs to me, your pastor, and to the medical staff treating you. ***If you are admitted to the hospital and would like me to come and pray with you, then you or a member of your family need to call me at the office.*** If you happen to be under the weather at home and would like me to come to your home and pray with you, please call me.

The Church is our path to salvation. She offers prayers and sacraments, such as the Eucharist, Confession and Unction, for the faithful. In addition to my visits, we ought to be visiting one another. As the priest, I haven’t cornered the market on prayers. You can visit the sick and shut-ins as well and pray with them. Our service books have prayers for the sick that you can say together.

After seeking guidance and spiritual direction from one of our hierarchs and several priests, I want to add the importance of the individual or a family member of the sick in requesting a pastoral visit. Often I receive calls from well intentioned parishioners asking me if I knew that so-and-so is sick. ***On occasion there are some people who prefer to keep their health as a private matter. And quite honestly, some also prefer not to have me visit them, for whatever reason.***

I have wrestled with this issue myself. ***The decision I have made, with spiritual guidance and much prayer, is to respect the wishes of the faithful. So unless the person who is sick or in need of healing (or someone in their family) calls me, I will respect his or her privacy and will not visit them. I will still pray for them in my daily prayers though.*** I am asking every one to respect the privacy of individuals, but at the same time encourage all of us to seek the healing ministry of the Christ’s Holy Church. May our Risen Lord grant us all health of soul and body.”

Bottom line?: I stand ready to serve you ***24 hours a day 7 days a week***. All I ask in return is for you to ***directly*** tell me your needs. Don’t depend on word of mouth, the bulletin, the grapevine, etc. Contact me ***directly***. If you don’t, then I will assume, wrongly or rightly, that I am not needed.

With much love, I remain

+Fr. John

Fr. John K. Teebagy, Pastor

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## Church Records...

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

Marcus Morris and Kimberly Najjar were united in marriage on September 10<sup>th</sup>. We congratulate them as they begin their new life together in Charlotte, NC

*Many Years!*



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

Gregory Theodore, son of Gregory and Jennifer (Foley) Kogos of New Orleans, LA, was baptized on September 18<sup>th</sup>.

John Patrick, son of John and Michele (Mabardy) Sarro of West Roxbury, was baptized on September 18<sup>th</sup>.

Vince Edward, son of David and Lisa (Zahka) Cassarino of Tolland, CT, was baptized on October 16<sup>th</sup>.

Luke Khalil, son of Raymond and Claire (Flaherty) Haddad of Cohasset, was baptized on October 16<sup>th</sup>.

Christopher Robert, son of Jeffrey and Laura (Cahaly) Ristaino of Boxborough, was baptized on November 6<sup>th</sup>.

John Christian, son of Elias and Eleni (Lampros) Nawfel of Waterville, ME, was baptized on November 13<sup>th</sup>.

*Many Years!*



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

George Arbeely of Hyde Park fell asleep in the Lord, on August 13<sup>th</sup>. A son and his family survive him. Burial was in Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

*Memory Eternal!*



## From the Executive Board...

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It has been an exciting couple of months since our last communication.

A record breaking Bazaar was the result of hard work and dedication of many volunteers from across our Church organizations and all of our parishioners. Young and old alike gave of their time, talents, and hard work to ensure a very joyous and memorable bazaar. On behalf of Father John and the entire Executive Board, we would like to thank all who supported and contributed to the preparations for the bazaar, all that provided the many donations to the highly successful auction, the white elephant table, the raffles, and throughout the Bazaar, and all those who came to partake in and enjoy the many offerings of the Bazaar. We also offer my sincere gratitude and a special thanks to Charley and Debbie Greenstein whose extraordinary efforts as co-chairs of our 2005 Bazaar ensured its success.

Further we have embarked on our kitchen renovation that ensured a safe, clean, and efficient kitchen was ready in time for our annual Bazaar. Under the constant direction and leadership of Tom Sabbag, clean, cost effective propane kitchen equipment and propane tanks were installed, tested and ready to service all who use the kitchen. Use of propane in our kitchen will provide significant utility cost savings to the church

We have constituted and charged a committee with the preparation of our upcoming 100th year anniversary. Graciously, Tom Sabbag accepted the chair of the committee and has already conducted its first meeting that was attended by 25 parishioners. During church on November 13<sup>th</sup>, Tom personally requested the support from all parishioners to share their ideas, memories, and artifacts of the church to ensure the celebration of our 100th anniversary will have both the dignity and prestige deserved by its membership. We welcome each of you to participate on this or one of the many other committees to help improve our church. If interested in supporting this or any of the Church committees or activities please contact Gail Kurker or Mike O'Hara.

Our maintenance committee co-chaired by Alan Cardoos and Christopher Bradley has ensured that our parish home has been kept in proper repair. Making the necessary repairs to windows, and restoration of the building exterior and interior will ensure comfort for Father John and his family for years to come.

Although we have had great success to date, a lot still remains to be done. The coming months offers many new and exciting challenges for the Board and the Parish membership. We are looking forward to beautifying the front of our Church while enhancing safety for the parishioners and providing improved access for the handicapped. To provide even more utility cost savings to the church, we will extend the propane system to provide safe, clean, and efficient operation of the heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems of our Church, Church school and halls,

One other request, last year the old Bengari table was replaced with a new beautiful Bengari table. As we determine its proper disposition, we wish to provide a new life to the old table while ensuring that proper respect and dignity is paid. We find no record of donation by any family in the church. If anyone can provide a record of donation, or if anyone has ideas of how to disposition the table, please contact Gail Kurker or Mike O'Hara by January 31, 2006. We thank you in advance for your support on this important matter.

We will communicate with the parish members on a regular basis via newsletter and e-mail to keep you apprised of the progress of activities and to mark key accomplishments of the parish. On behalf of the Board, we thank you for taking the time to read this letter and look forward to a successful year forged by your attendance at church and participation on one or more of our committees. ***With eternal love in Christ, Gail Kurker & Mike O'Hara, Chair and Vice Chair, Executive Board***

**From the Virgin Mary Society...** We hope that our parishioners enjoyed the holidays with their families.

Even though the bazaar is past, we wish to extend a special "thank you" to all of our parishioners for their help and support. Special thanks go to our ladies of the Executive Board for their rolling and cooking 3000 grape leaves for the kitchen, ***a job well done.***

We now focus on our next projects for the New Year: our annual sfeeha sale and Lenten dinner. Watch for further details in the church bulletin.

Words alone are not enough to "thank" our faithful women, who come in every day that we work from August to November. God bless you all and grant you good health always!

We welcome all women in the parish to come and join us in our kitchen. It is very rewarding. As our great poet Kahlil Gibran says: "For to be idle is to become a stranger in to the seasons and you step out of life's procession, but when we work together, we are a flute though whose heart the whispering of the hours turns to music." ***Yours in Christ, Lillian H. Khouri***

**From the Church Office...**

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

Pledge Forms for 2006 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 2006 budget. ***Failure to return the Pledge Form will result in your pledge being automatically set by the computer at a default pledge of \$421 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!***

**From the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch...**The Parishioners of St. Michael the Archangel on Cape Cod celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the ordination of their pastor, Fr.

Nicholas Manikas, on September 24 and 25, 2005. Metropolitan Philip presided over this most festive celebration.

St. Michael the Archangel began as a mission a number of years ago and has grown to become a Parish through the hard work and dedication of many, including the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. The budget for 2005 for the Department of Missions and Evangelism is \$300,000. The amount contributed by The Order of St. Ignatius is \$150,000—HALF! I think it is fair to say that without The Order's assistance, this former mission and many others would not be the thriving parishes they are today.

We welcomed two new members from St. Michael's to The Order of St. Ignatius. Although this is a tiny but growing parish, almost one-fifth of their parishioners are members of The Order.

The tragedy of three hurricanes in Southeastern United States brought the International Orthodox Christian Charities to the area to provide relief. St. Ignatius is the single largest contributor to the IOCC. In addition, The Order is sending a large sum of money to rebuild St. Basil parish of Metairie, LA, which has sustained severe flooding and damage.

At The Order's Governing Council Meeting in October, the following projects were approved for funding in 2006: Winter Camp at Antiochian Village, \$4,000 in student scholarships; Orthodox Christian Fellowship, \$15,000 to keep college students connected to The Orthodox Church; Holy Trinity Nursing Home, \$10,000; and to the Youth Ministry Department, \$25,000 for Youth Worker Leadership Training.

St. John of Damascus Church will celebrate its centennial in 2007. We hope to have a record number of inductees at that time. If you have any questions about The Order, please contact **Christine Bezreh**.

**From the Parent Guild...** It is hard to believe we are just about to celebrate Christmas, as it seems we just enjoyed the September barbecue. We are busy planning for the luncheon to follow the Church School Christmas Pageant taking place on December 18<sup>th</sup> following Diving Liturgy. In October, we held a bake sale to benefit the victims of Hurricane Katrina for our sister church of St. Basil, in New Orleans. Through the efforts of so many, we sent \$1,550 to Fr. Peter Nugent at St. Basil's, from the bake sale proceeds and the church school kick-off barbecue.

Please look for details to come about the Annual Godparents luncheon, which will occur on Sunday, February 13, 2006, featuring **Elaine's famous turkey dinner**. Please be sure to make reservations, as last year was a sell out, as news traveled throughout the parish of Elaine's fabulous meal!

Please watch the bulletin for announcements of future meetings, and consider **joining us!** Wishing you a Blessed Christmas and a Healthy, Happy New Year. **Bertina Kurker and Carol Hazerjian, Co-presidents**

**From the Fellowship of St. John the Divine...**The Fellowship of St. John the Divine will be holding their annual Super Bowl Sunday Bake Sale on February 5<sup>th</sup> following Liturgy.

Proceeds will benefit the Children's Relief Fund and the sponsorship of Christian Kalash of Beirut, Lebanon. Anyone who is willing to bake, please call *Margaret Khouri @ 781. 329. 2201*.

## Liturgical notes...

❖ To celebrate the Feast of our Lord's Theophany, the blessing of water will take place on Sunday, January 8<sup>th</sup>.

❖ Great Lent starts on Monday, March 6<sup>th</sup> and Holy Pascha (Easter) is on Sunday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>. More information will follow in the next issue of *The Torchbearer*.

❖ **PLEASE REMEMBER** 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.

❖ The following policy statement concerning **CREMATION** is excerpted from the minutes of the recent (June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005) meeting of our Archdiocesan Synod of Bishops: "His Eminence (Metropolitan PHILIP) emphasized that the Orthodox Church is **against** cremation. The policy of this Archdiocese is that **no funeral** will be offered in any location for the body that will be cremated. **However**, the priest may say the Trisagion for the Departed over the body in the funeral home before cremation and in the church for the nine day and forty day memorials. Under no circumstances will any prayer be offered over the ashes. This was approved unanimously."

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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 Lenten issue *Torchbearer* will be February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

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

