
THE TORCHBEARER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS,
DEDHAM, MA

MAY/JUNE 2006

Christ is Risen!

By

Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann

My belief in Christ does not come from the opportunity given to me to participate since earliest childhood in the paschal celebration. Rather, Pascha is made possible, that unique night fills with light and joy and such victorious power in the greeting "Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!" because my faith itself was born from experience of the living Christ. How and when was it born? I don't know, I don't remember. I only know that every time I open the gospel and read about Christ, read his words, read his teaching, I consciously repeat, with all my heart and being, what was said by those who were sent to arrest Christ but who returned to the Pharisees without him: "No man ever spoke like this man" (John 7:46). Therefore what I know first of all is that Christ's teaching is alive, and that nothing on earth can be compared with it. And this teaching is about him, about eternal life, about victory over death, about a love that conquers and overcomes death. I know as well that in a life where everything seems so difficult and tiresome, the one constant that never changes and never leaves is this inner awareness that Christ is with me. "I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you" (John 14: 18). And he does come and give the feeling of his presence through prayer, through a thrill of soul, through a joy so incomprehensible, yet so very alive, through his mysterious, but again so certain, presence in church during services and in sacraments. This living experience is always growing, this knowledge, this awareness which becomes so obvious that Christ is here and that his word has been fulfilled: whoever loves me, "I will love him and manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). And whether I am in a crowd or alone, this certitude of his presence, this power of his word, this joy of faith in him remains with me. This is the only answer and the only proof.

"Why do you seek the living among the dead? Why do you mourn the incorrupt amid corruption?" All Christianity, therefore, is the experience of faith repeated again and again as if for the first time, through its incarnation in rites, words, music, and colors. To the unbeliever, it may indeed seem like a mirage; he hears only words, he sees only incomprehensible ceremonies, and he understands them only outwardly. But for believers, all of this radiates from within, and not as proof of his faith, but as

its result, as its life in the world, in the soul, in history. Therefore the darkness and sadness of Holy Friday is for us something real, alive, contemporary; we can cry at the cross and experience everything that took place in that triumph of evil, treachery, cowardice, and betrayal; we can contemplate the life-bearing tomb on Holy Saturday with excitement and hope. And therefore, every year we can celebrate Easter, Pascha, the Resurrection. For Easter is not the remembrance of an event in the past. It is the real encounter in happiness and joy, with him whom our hearts long ago knew and encountered as the life and light of all light. Easter night testifies that Christ is alive and with us, and that we are alive with him. The entire celebration is an invitation to look at the world and life, and to behold the dawning of the mystical day of the Kingdom of light. "Today the scent of spring begins," sings the church, "and the new creation exults..." It exults in faith, in love and in hope.

This is the day of resurrection, let us be illumined by the feast, let us embrace each other, let us call brothers" even those that hate us, and forgive all by the resurrection, and so let us cry: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life. Christ is risen!



Church Records...

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

Carolina Grace, daughter of Michael and Pamela (Beers) Rawan of Franklin, was baptized on March 19th, 2006.

Many Years!

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

Edward Hamwey (77) of West Roxbury fell asleep in the Lord on February 3rd, 2006. His wife and three children, along with their families survive him. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Eleanor Teebagy (82) of Hanover fell asleep in the Lord on February 13th, 2006. Her four children, along with their families survive her. Burial was at Hanover Cemetery in Hanover.

Rose Bunai (95) of Cambridge fell asleep in the Lord on February 17th, 2006. Her four children, along with their families survive her. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Olga Taksery (78) of Norwood fell asleep in the Lord on March 10th, 2006. Her husband and four children, along with their families survive her. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

James Solomon (75) of West Roxbury fell asleep in the Lord on March 11th, 2006. His wife and two children, along with their families survive him. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Charles Hamwey (85) of Ft. Lauderdale, FL fell asleep in the Lord on March 19th, 2006. His wife and two children, along with their families survive him. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Memory Eternal!



From the Executive Board...

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We have enjoyed another exciting month since my last communication.

This month we are pleased to tell you about the exciting progress we are making on repairing the steps and beautifying the front of our Church while enhancing safety for the parishioners and providing improved access for the handicapped. The Board has selected a layout that addresses the needs of all parishioners, meets new regulatory requirements, and preserves the beauty and dignity of our beloved Church. Our long term planning committee, the maintenance committee, and finance committee led by Tom Sabbag are together finalizing the planning, obtaining final quotes for the selected design from multiple contractors, and have scheduled a start date in early July so it can be done in October.

The scholarship committee chaired by Chris Bezreh is accepting applications scholarships that will be presented at the Church School graduation. The deadline is April 9.

Our maintenance committee co-chaired by Chris Bradley and Alan Cardoos are preparing for the much needed repair and refurbishment of the church pews. They are also preparing for spring by tending to the necessary landscaping needs to beautify our Church and the Church Home.

Progress on the kitchen renovation continues on schedule. Led by Tom Sabbag we are near completion of the planning of the new layout of the Kitchen. Tom is also chairman of the 100th year anniversary committee, where he continues to conduct successful and informative meetings attended by board members and parishioners alike. We have received key ideas through both these meetings and the responses received from last month Torchbearer questionnaire. We thank all of those that participated and responded. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday April 12. We welcome your participation, thoughts and comments for this important event. This information will be used to

help guide and focus the committee to ensure the celebration of our 100th anniversary will have both the dignity and prestige deserved by its membership.

We are looking forward to a beautiful and memorable Holy Week with the yearly events coordinated and implemented by Religious Coordination Committee chaired by Debbie Vogel. The committee has been busy coordinating parishioners for carrying the Bier on Good Friday, preparing the decorations for the Iconostasis on Holy Saturday, and signing up Altar Servers for the week. The Board hopes to see all of you at every event during the week.

Although we have had great success to date, a lot still remains to be done. The coming months offer many new and exciting challenges for the Board and the Parish membership. 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. In addition to the plans to beautify the front of our church we are looking at innovative and cost effective ways to facilitate additional parking, and facilitate additional classroom space for the future children of the Church of St. John of Damascus.

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

From the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch...

Many thanks are extended to all of you who participated in the 2006 Pascha greeting card. We hope this will be the first of many which will benefit our church programs. This year's donations will be put into the St. John Community Scholarship Fund.

Here is a reminder of why the Order of St. Ignatius is so important to our parish and our community:

- At least 70% (this means \$350.00 of a \$500.00 annual contribution) is returned to parishes via contributions to Youth and Campus Ministry, Parish Development, Christian Education, and Summer Camp Scholarships. The Order helps fund these important aspects of Archdiocese life.
- Our clergy should retire in dignity. The Order donates \$200,000 annually to support our

retired clergy and their wives. And as more and more of our clergy retire the need will become greater to provide a decent retirement to those who have served the Church so faithfully.

- The Order funds annual distributions to major projects outside our Archdiocese such as Hurricane Relief, Project Mexico, Prison Ministry, IOCC, Teen Special Olympics, and Tree House Ministries.

- 100% support of the annual College Conference where our young adults gather for a week of prayer, learning, fellowship, and witness to Christ as Orthodox Christians. It began with 27 students. This year over 300 participated.

Individual membership is granted with a minimum annual gift of \$500 or \$1,000. Dues donations can be made through the electronic funds transfer system where \$41.67 or \$83.34 is deducted from a checking or savings account on a monthly basis. A Life Member is one who wishes to make a gift of at least \$15,000 in full or in 3 equal and consecutive annual donations. Life Membership is an endowment and the principle is never spent. Thus, a Life member's gift will continue in perpetuity. So what are we really asking for? The equivalent of a cup of Starbucks a day or simply our spare change.

As the centennial of St. John of Damascus Church approaches, consider giving yourself and others a Paschal gift and make The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch your choice. You will be glad you did. Be an example to our children that the church is a good investment.

From the Parent Guild . . .

The snow forced us to postpone the Godparent's luncheon, but it finally took place on March 5th. It was wonderful to have such a great turnout. The Guild served its annual Lenten dinner on April 2nd, with all proceeds benefiting the Food for Hungry People program. Thank you to Cynthia Capobianco and all of her helpers. As of the writing of this newsletter, the Parent Guild is preparing to host the Lazarus Saturday breakfast and the Holy Thursday breakfast.

Please mark your calendars for the evening of Saturday, May 6th, at which time we will hold our annual Penny Sale, starting with a casual supper at 5:00 p.m. Two weeks later (on Sunday, May 21st) we will be busy with the parish picnic, which follows the church school graduation program. Please plan to attend this parish-wide event and enjoy the company of your fellow parishioners, as well as a delicious barbecue. We will be holding St. John's second annual backgammon tournament. It was quite exciting last year, both for children and adults. We hope that this year's tournament attracts even more players than last year's, and hopefully our reigning champions (Dennis Kirshy – adult competition and Brian Hazerjian – children's level) will return and play to retain their respective titles! There also will be plenty of other activities for children, both indoors and outside, weather permitting.

Bertina Kurker and Carol Hazerjian, Co-chairs

Announcements . . .

❖ **FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE PROGRAM** – The Food for Hungry People Program is underway. Please remember the homeless throughout the world during this holiest time of the year. The alms boxes and cans will be available at the bengari. We depend upon your support. Please consider offering a generous donation to this most worthy cause; make your check payable to the church and earmark it “FFFFP” and return it by **June 1st**. Thank you!

❖ **THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** will be held on Wednesday, May 10th @ 7 pm. Your attendance and input would be most appreciated. Please plan on participating!

❖ **NOMINATIONS** for serving on the Executive Board are being accepted until May 4th, which is the annual meeting. If you and/or someone you know, would like to offer your name, please send in the name(s) to the attention of the nominating committee at the church office or let any Board member know. You may also e-mail your nominee by writing to execboard@stjohnd.org. We have a very busy and exciting year ahead... so won't you get involved?

❖ **PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE** will take place on June 22-25 at The Margate in Laconia, NH (1.800.627.4283). His Grace Bishop ALEXANDER of Ottawa will preside. For more information, contact St. George, Boston at 617.323.0323.

❖ **CHURCH CLOSED** As we have done in the past, the church will be *closed* on Sunday, June 25th due to the conference. Please join His Grace, Bishop ALEXANDER and the clergy of this area for church that Sunday at the Margate in New Hampshire or a local Orthodox church in your area.

❖ **SUMMER CHURCH HOURS** – As usual, the Divine Liturgy will start at 9:30 a.m. from **May 28th through September 3rd inclusive**. Please mark your calendars. The church will be closed on Sunday, June 25th, due to the Parish Life Conference in New Hampshire.

❖ **BLESSING OF GRAVES...** As is the custom, Fr. John will be at Fairview Cemetery on SUNDAY, May 28th from 11:45 am to 12:45 p.m. to bless the graves of our loved ones. Trisagion Prayers will be offered for all the dead of our church family at the church at the conclusion of liturgy that morning, which begins at 9:30 a.m. We all will then go to Fairview together.

❖ **NICHOLAS G. BERAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION** announces their Annual Scholastic Achievement Awards Program for all concerned high school seniors. Applications are available at the church office. The deadline is **June 1st**. Applications can be obtained at our web site www.stjohnd.org

❖ **THE DORMITION FAST** begins on **August 1st through August 14th**. Please do your best to observe this fast to the best of your abilities. This fast in honor of the Mother of God's "Dormition," is one of the four major fasting periods of the Church.

❖ The blessing of the grapes will take place on Sunday, August 6th, which is the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ.



It is not enough to care, you must care enough...

What is Stewardship? The word stewardship is used more and more in the Orthodox churches. This seems to be a new way of committing to your faith. What makes stewardship so different? Well, stewardship is an individualized way of giving to your church. Stewardship lets you look at yourself and your resources, and find what works best for you. As you know we are all blessed with precious gifts given to us by God. Whether it's musical or artistic talent computer skills, cooking, carpentry or financial ability. We are given these gifts from God, for us to use today, here on earth, to help others and ourselves.

Instead of our church telling us what each baptized soul should give to the church, we should search deep in our hearts and decide what we can afford to give. We should be able to assess our yearly income and make a pledge that we feel comfortable to give back to God. Some will be able to give more than others because of their financial status, while others might not be able to give as much, but can gladly give of their time. Of course, we need money to run a successful parish and cover the overhead costs but we also need parishioners that are willing to offer their talents to have a healthy thriving parish.

As we approach 2007 and our 100th year celebration, a new day has come, and a new way for the next century is called for. Let Stewardship be the new way! As we see in Luke 12: 48: We are responsible for what God gives us.

The St. John's Stewardship Committee

Church of St. John of Damascus
300 West Street
Dedham, MA 02026-5594

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Dedham, MA
Permit No. 74

Forwarding and Address Service Requested

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

V. Rev. John K. Teebagy, Pastor

300 West Street • Dedham, Massachusetts 02026-5594

• Telephone: (781) 326-3046 • Fax: (781) 326-4473

• Web Page: www.stjohnd.org

Sunday Services: Matins 9:00 a.m.; Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

(Summer hours from May 28th - September 3rd: Divine Liturgy at 9:30 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.

The deadline for the September/October issue of *The Torchbearer* will be announced

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