

---

---

# THE TORCHBEARER

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

---

November/December 2006

---

## Stewardship? Stewardship!

After a great deal of research and preparation, The Church of St. John of Damascus will implement a Stewardship program for 2007. In 1995, John Haddad and Ray Hamwey, along with Fr. John, spent many hours and hard work putting together a stewardship program to help support the needs our church. At that time, the Executive Board decided that the parish wasn't ready for a change and didn't implement the program. With the positive results from our recent parish sample survey the Executive Board has now decided that the time has come to make this change.

Like those of our sister parishes, a successful Stewardship program promises to be a positive change that will ensure that the life of this parish succeeds both spiritually and socially. We feel this program will secure our beautiful church and keep this structure standing for many generations to come.

The current dues and pledge system of our parish asks for a minimum assessment of \$421 per baptized soul over the age of 18. Of the 670 eligible dues payers, only 17% pay the actual assessment, and another 10% pay more. Of the remaining number, 35% pay less than the assessment, i.e. \$421 and the largest number, 37%, pay nothing at all.

We have both a need and an opportunity to improve upon our current pledge system. At the present time, revenue from pledges and envelopes covers less than half of the parish budget. The rest comes from special donations for memorials, sacraments, etc., and this figure varies from year to year and is unpredictable. With full participation, pledges can provide us with reliable income to cover our costs. The Executive Board has set a goal for 2007 of covering at least 51% of our budget with stewardship pledges. Our present system is "one size fits all." Stewardship, on the other hand, stresses a more equitable approach to giving. We are called to

give of our time, talents, and treasures. Each of us is asked to return to God a fair portion of that with which he has blessed us.

This month, you will receive a brochure that explains the principles of tithing. We hope this brochure is helpful in providing more information about stewardship and tithing. Many of our sister parishes are experiencing success with proportionate giving programs.

We ask that you support this program and embrace a successful change.

Let's not let the sacrifices of those before us, who have worked so hard to build our beautiful church, be diminished. The investment we make today will be there for our generations to come. Please help us; with full participation from everyone, St. John's will have a successful stewardship program that will keep our church alive and thriving for generations to come. The Stewardship Committee – Christine Bezreh, Debbie (Zahka) Greenstein, and Elizabeth MacNeil

## Liturgical notes...

❖ **ADVENT** Please remember that the Christmas Fast begins on Wednesday, November 15<sup>th</sup>. 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 8:40 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! (Liturgy for Christmas will be on Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup> @ 6 pm. **NO** services will be held on Monday, December 25<sup>th</sup>).

❖ **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.

❖ **CREMATION** The following policy statement concerning cremation is excerpted from the minutes a recent meeting of our Archdiocesan Synod of Bishops: "His Eminence 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 forty-day memorial. Under no circumstances will any prayer be offered over the ashes. This was approved unanimously."

## Church Records...

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

James Dow and Amy Dow were united in marriage in the Orthodox Church on September 24<sup>th</sup>. We congratulate them as they begin their new life together in Buzzards Bay, MA.

*Many Years!*



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

Kristina Cahaly, daughter of Robert and Kimberly (Cahaly) Klauzinski of Westwood, was baptized on September 17<sup>th</sup>.

*Many Years!*



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

Margaret Eid (86) of Canton fell asleep in the Lord on August 10<sup>th</sup>. Her 3 sons and their families survive her. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

*Memory Eternal!*



## From the Church School...

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Classes are well underway in Church School! We have a wonderful staff of teachers and aides who work tirelessly to make your children's experience in Church School rich and rewarding. Our curriculum across all grade levels combines age-appropriate Orthodox Christian doctrine with service/stewardship opportunities and events.

Here is our teaching staff for 2006 - 2007:

Preschool 2 - Audrey Vogel, Erica Zahka, Natalie Djerf

Kindergarten - Bertina Kurker, Roberta Maloof, Karen Vachon

Grades 1 & 2 - Joan Teebagy, Allie Earle, Katie Vachon

Grades 3 & 4 - Dana Langley, Tim Langley, Joseph Demerjian, Derek Zahka

Grade 5 & 6 – Carol Hazerjian, John Capobianco, Allie Zahka  
Grades 7 & 8 – Jim Sabbag, David Hazerjian  
Grade 9 – Bennett Earle  
Grade 10 – Don Khouri, Bob Kurker

Our Fall Service Project was very successful, thanks to the generosity of our Church School families. We collected a huge assortment of school supplies to send to the boys at St. Innocent Orthodox Orphanage in Mexico. We have already started up our shut-in communication program, which is in its ninth year. For those of you new to our Church School, our students make original bookmarks, prayer books, cards and other projects, which we mail to shut-in parishioners on a monthly basis. If you know of any parishioners who are not official shut-ins, but would benefit from a “hello” from the Church School, please let me know and we will add them to the list.

Please watch the bulletin and your email for an announcement of our upcoming Open House. During our Open House, you will get view our curriculum, visit the classes, ask questions, and see first hand what goes on in Church School. We look forward to seeing you all soon! Nancy  
Close Church School Director 978-692-0857 / [school@stjohnd.org](mailto:school@stjohnd.org)

From the Order of St. Ignatius...

I have just returned from the Governing Council meeting of The Order of St. Ignatius in Troy, Michigan. The Council approved funding for the following projects: \$10,000 for Treehouse Ministries and \$5,000 for Martha and Mary House, both programs for unwed mothers; \$3,000 for the Chinese translation Project; \$15,000 for The Orthodox Christian Fellowship; \$15,000 to the Married Seminarians' Fund; \$10,000 to the Antiochian Village Camp, and \$15,000 to the Department of Youth for its leadership training program. The Order also made a contribution to the gift purse presented to Metropolitan Philip on the occasion of his 40<sup>th</sup> year in the episcopacy; Saida Philip in turn donated the purse to the Clergy Retirement Fund.

The St. John of Damascus Chapter of The Order met for its first annual Fall Social on Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup>. Luncheon was served and the discussion centered on our recruitment efforts for the St. John of Damascus Centennial. We hope to induct a record number of members in October 2007 during our gala weekend with Metropolitan Philip. Individual membership is granted with an annual gift of \$500. Dues can be paid through the electronic funds transfer system -- \$42 a month deducted from your checking account.

The Diocese of Worcester and New England is now looking forward

to its annual Christmas Party to be held on Sunday, January 7, 2007 at Byblos Restaurant in Norwood, Mass. This event is always much anticipated and well attended.

Anyone interested in joining The Order can contact me at [stignatius@stjohnd.org](mailto:stignatius@stjohnd.org). Christine Bezreh

## From the Centennial Committee...

Dear Parishioners,

I have heard my father say more than one time, "If I can just make it to 100 years old I will be all set, because you know, not many people die at 100 years old." Well thanks to our Parents and our grandparents and in some cases our great grandparents, we have a facility, a family, a Church that is one hundred years old, this coming year 2007. Our Church, St. John of Damascus, was consecrated October 1907 and with all our efforts will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in the year 2007 and continue to prosper for years to come. Our families and friends have given us a strong foundation to build upon and it will be our task to build for our children and our children's children and to insure the growth and prosperity of the Church for the next 100 years and beyond.

This is no small task and seems to get more difficult as the years go by, but as we have done in the past we will need to work hard, physically if capable and financially if possible, to support what is good in our lives, the Church, our family, our facility.

I am sure that you have heard or seen little hints of what is to come in the next year; we will have a full year of celebration for this historic event. The year will start with a New Years party, and will continue to have other events all through the year. We hope the young adults will be hosting another successful Hufli, plus we have planned extended coffee hours, and an exceptional school picnic, and save a date, October 6, 2007 for our Gala celebration at the Westin Hotel in Waltham, it should be an affair not to miss. We have many committees in place and will be looking for your help in any way you can, so please be kind as you always are, with your support. Thank you all. Alan Cardoos

## 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 10<sup>th</sup>, 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 11<sup>th</sup> the success that it was.

## Announcements . . .

❖ **FYI...** In 2007, the date of Orthodox Easter is April 8<sup>th</sup>; Great Lent begins on February 19<sup>th</sup>.

❖ **BULLETIN** The deadline for the November 26<sup>th</sup> bulletin will be Tuesday, November 21<sup>st</sup> at 10 am. The deadline for the bulletins for December 24<sup>th</sup> and Christmas Eve will be Tuesday December 19<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m. SHARP. These deadlines must be strictly adhered to – please plan ahead. The office will close at noon on December 22<sup>nd</sup> and will reopen on Tuesday, December 26<sup>th</sup>. The deadline for the December 31<sup>st</sup> bulletin will be Wednesday, December 27<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m. SHARP.



**The following homily on stewardship was given by Deacon John Zarras at St. John of Damascus Church on Sunday, September 24, 2006. Deacon John is a communicant at Christ the Savior Church in Southbury, Ct. and is the father of St. John parishioner Elizabeth MacNeil.**

Good afternoon. I am happy to be here. Fr. John Teebagy and my daughter, Elizabeth, asked that I

come and share my experiences and thoughts on Stewardship and what it means to be a steward. You are taking a new and bold step in the life of the parish. Change sometimes is uncomfortable and doubt enters into our minds.

Today's Gospel lesson applies to this test of faith (Luke 5:1-11.) In the morning, Jesus asks Peter and the others to put out their boats and fish. Peter has doubts – they had fished all night and caught nothing, he reasons. But, Peter does as Jesus commands and not only do they catch fish, but they catch fish abundantly (the nets are full.) Peter admits being sinful for doubting Jesus, and then Peter, James and John give up everything they had and follow Jesus. The message of this Gospel is: Faith placed in Jesus is rewarded abundantly!

Stewardship is looking at ourselves as good stewards in accordance with the teachings of our Lord. All we have is from God. God is the provider of everything – it is not us but God who directs and permits all. In the Divine Liturgy, we say “Thine own of thine own...” God gives us the grapes from which we make our offering of wine, and gives us the grain from which we make our offering of bread. We give Him back what He gave us. In thankfulness, we are asked to offer a percentage of our first gifts, not our crumbs, back to

Him. Our hearts and personal relationship with God determines how much we should return. No one else can set an amount for each of us. It is deeply personal and depends on how abundantly we feel blessed.

You can look to those in the pews on your left, right, in front, or in back and wonder what they think and what they will do, but it does not matter; what matters is what you alone personally want and will do. Setting a fixed amount for everyone is wrong in that it assumes all people face the same needs and have been given the same financial, material and spiritual gifts, which is not true.

About 20 years ago, parishes in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese began the transition to a spiritual adoption of the principles of stewardship to fund the ministries of the parish. As parishes transitioned to stewardship, like the Gospel lesson of today, they found their nets became full. My small OCA parish was founded 14 years ago on the principal of stewardship. Following stewardship enabled the parish to grow, even while planning to build and consecrate a new church. This parish sets 10% of what is pledged by its members aside to help those in need within and outside of the parish. It was able to practice stewardship as a parish, even in the course of building a new church.

It is with great conviction and joy that I urge you to go forward with faith towards adopting and practicing stewardship, for I know that this is the right time to do so in the life of the parish.

As a parish, you will personally experience the power of the Lord in providing for all the existing needs of the parish and enabling you to expand your charitable ministries and works.

As individuals, you will experience joy in arriving at how much you will give based on a serious and prayerful review of your life circumstances and reflection on the gifts He has given you in life. As a parish and as individuals you will feel His love and the love of each other in ways you could not have imagined beforehand. Your nets will be full!



**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](http://www.stjohnd.org)

**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 2006 *Torchbearer* will be **November 19<sup>th</sup>**.

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