
THE TORCHBEARER

Great Lent, 2007

BREAKING THE GRIP OF DEATH

by Fr. Ted Pulcini

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this tyranny. Great Lent is the time to taste of that freedom, to taste of that eternal banquet of the Kingdom prepared for us by Christ through his Resurrection. As we move toward the celebration of the Resurrection, let us prepare ourselves for that never-ending feast!

From the Stewardship Committee... The Stewardship program is off to a good start. As of the end of January we have received 350 pledge forms out of a total of 621 that were sent out. This represents 56% of the parish and we are still hopeful for 100% participation.

We feel that when you give freely from your heart all that you can afford, it is then, that you feel good about giving.

We're in the process of updating our parishioner database list and we need to receive all of the pledges, in order to do this. If you have not yet sent back your pledge form, please do so as soon as possible. We will be contacting parishioners who have not sent back their forms to confirm that they've received it, and would like to remain an active member of our church. The pledge form is available on the St. John web site: <http://www.stjohnd.org/handbook/pledgeform> or you may call the church office.

We have successfully started to build our talent pool, and it is nice to see that we have so much talent here at St. John of Damascus. We are truly blessed.

From the Order... **Why Bother Joining the Order of St. Ignatius?**

The last time I wrote about this was around five years ago. Chances are you don't remember what I wrote. I know I didn't, but thank God an old floppy disk did. This article isn't that much different than what I wrote before, but I guess that's because the reason why I joined the Order didn't change.

For many years I heard about the Order of St. Ignatius, but thought it wasn't for me, even though I believed the projects funded by the Order were worthy of my support. After all, it supported some of the charities my wife, Bertina, and I had supported for several years with separate contributions, including Teen SOYO Special Olympics, the Seminarian fund, the Clergy Retirement fund, the Covenant House (for homeless children in major US cities), and International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC). When we found out the Order contributed to these charities plus other worthy charities, we figured it was more convenient to join for just a little more than what we were contributing already. However, I delayed joining for a couple of years because I really didn't want to go in front of the parish for the induction ceremony. I wasn't dying to draw attention to the fact that I decided to donate \$500 per year toward this cause, since I figured that donations were a personal thing. I was also cautious of joining another Church related organization, for fear of being over committed.

Over time, as I started to investigate these issues, I realized they were unfounded. Was I going to let a five-minute induction ceremony prevent me from making a Christian commitment I

believed in? I eventually convinced myself that I wouldn't. (A few months after joining, I discovered that one could join anonymously...if only someone had told me that was an option earlier, I guess they would have gotten a couple of more years of dues out of me.) Later on I discovered some of the benefits of joining publicly, and why we are asked to wear the red ribbon and Cross on certain occasions. It enables those who are contemplating joining the Order to know who are members, so they could ask them questions about the organization. It also lets others know that it isn't only a handful of parishioners that are members. (And besides, many of us don't always wear the red ribbon and Cross. Being a low-key kind of guy, I usually opt to wear the lapel pin instead, despite Bertina giving me the pep talk to wear the ribbon.) St. John of Damascus parish has had a lot of members join since the last time I wrote (partly because word that one could join anonymously spread like wildfire). However, we still have a relatively low percentage compared to most parishes.

Despite what many believe, the Order isn't comprised of a bunch of rich elitists. I'm a lowly Federal Government employee. We recently replaced our 1991 and 1995 cars with newer used cars, but they are still nothing to brag about. (I've seen better cars than ours parked in high school student parking lots.) My wife has been a full time homemaker since we had our first daughter. (She earns six figures, but doesn't get paid a penny for it!) We live in a large house, but that's because it's a two family (which has a family with four kids running over our heads). Now, are we rich elitists? Many other members in the Order have similar financial situations. \$500 a year (less than \$10 a week) isn't very much in today's money, though it was when the Order was first established almost 30 years ago. If Bertina and I can swing it financially, I know a lot of others can.

The Order funds many projects you are probably already supporting, so if you join, you no longer need to make separate donations. Besides the charities I mentioned earlier, a large percentage goes to Antiochian Village, which a lot of our parish's children attend each year. It also goes toward Prison Ministries, which brings hope to people trying to turn around their lives. It funds Missionary projects and Orphanages, helping to bring the Orthodox faith to those in other countries and our own. It subsidizes Seminarians, who may otherwise not be able to afford the tuition to answer their calling. The list goes on and on.

And the commitment thing? We sponsor the coffee hours during the month of December (but since that month includes our Feast Day weekend, it means bringing in and setting up a few pastries for no more than three Sundays). Members also do the Epistle readings during that month. The New England regional St. Ignatius meetings are only about four twice a year and attendance is optional. So as you can see, it's not very taxing.

I realize the Order may not be for everyone, but I hope and pray that many will consider being part of this organization. With increased membership we will be able to accomplish even more good work for God's glory. Bob Kurker

From the VMS...I hope that you enjoyed the holiday season with your families. As we begin the New Year, our next project is our annual "Sfeeha Sale" in March. Order forms are in this issue of the newsletter and at the bengari. Please return your forms by the deadline, as Easter is early this year. Complete ordering information is on the order form. Our annual Lenten dinner is scheduled for

Friday, March 30th. More details will follow. All of the members of the VMS wish you a healthy and blessed New Year. Yours in Christ, Lillian H. Khouri

Lenten Liturgical Notes & Announcements...

❖ Confession - *Great Lent* is the perfect opportunity for you to receive Confession, especially if you plan on receiving the Eucharist on Palm Sunday (April 1st) and Pascha (April 8th). 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!

❖ 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. In addition, on the first 5 *Friday evenings* during Great Lent, we will chant the Akathist Hymn to the Virgin Mary at 6:30 p.m.

❖ **Great Compline** The area clergy will be at St. John's on Monday, March 19th at 7 pm. The other Compline schedule is follows – all beginning at 7 pm: February 19th – Norwood, February 26th – Lowell, March 5th – West Roxbury, March 12th – Weymouth, March 19th – Dedham, March 26th – Worcester.

❖ **1000 CLUB** Congratulations to January's winner – Lorraine Aswad. Numbers are still available. Please contact the church office (781.326.3046/office@stjohnd.org) to get yours.

❖ **The Robert P. Zahka Memorial Scholarship and The St. John of Damascus Community Scholarship:** Scholarship applications are now available from the church office and the St. John website. Applications are due by April 13, 2007 and scholarships will be awarded at Church School graduation on May 20, 2007. Applicants must be high school seniors planning to attend full time, a fully accredited college, university, or technical school. Applicants must be graduates of St. John of Damascus Church School.

❖ Make plans now to attend the 69th Annual Parish Life Conference, hosted by all the parishes in the Diocese of Worcester on June 28-July 1, 2007 at The Radisson, Plymouth). More details to follow.

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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, 2007 Torchbearer**
will be April 6th. This will be the final newsletter until September 2007.

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

USE FOR 2007 LENTEN ISSUE- “BREAKING THE GRIP OF DEATH”

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