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# THE TORCHBEARER

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

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MAY/JUNE 2007

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## Does God Have a MySpace?

MySpace now has over 100 million profiles, and functions similar to a mall where kids electronically hang out. Much like when they physically hang out, a typical profile shows that kids connect about music, sports, movies, school, and friends; plus there is a rich supply of whining, gossiping and swearing. And unlike at malls, kids can hang out on MySpace and other social websites 24 hours a day. Also unlike at malls, thousands of sexual predators are surfing the net obtaining information on kids, with or without privacy restrictions. While many kids insist that it is their private space, nothing about the Internet is private; it is referred to as the World Wide Web. Once information is typed in, it is available to friends and enemies, parents and predators. And unlike what is spoken when friends are physically together, Internet words seem to live on and on. Certain employers and college admissions officers are starting to Google and search profiles of applicants in order to get a better idea of their character. One's internet activity is now the most public thing about them. A lot of people are disturbed by the idea that their Internet activity is not private. People do not like being watched, especially teenagers by adults. People often behave differently when being watched. What many people conveniently ignore or have forgotten is that God sees and hears everything. Whether on Pluto or Earth, home or school, work or play, God is everywhere. In addition to everything else in the world, the Internet is His space (is HisSpace trademarked?). Perhaps the more negative thing about the Internet is not predators and pornography, but the negative character being shaped online. If one would not use certain words or say something about someone else in their presence, it should not be communicated to others on the Internet. If one would not say or do something in front of parents, teachers, college admissions officers or future bosses, it should not be communicated on the Internet. If one would not do or say something in the presence of God, it should not be on the Internet, or anywhere else for that matter. As one more communication tool, the Internet affords the opportunity for users to share, research, learn, mature and grow more responsible. There are pitfalls and opportunities. Regarding Internet activity, concerned parents should note the following: 1. Computers should be in an open space such as a kitchen or family room with the monitors facing out – not in kid's rooms. 2. No last names, addresses, birthdates, school names, park district or community information, or specific information about looks or body style should be included on a profile or shared on line. 3. Personal pictures should not be posted on profiles, nor should friends post pictures of other friends. 4. While not foolproof, privacy measures by My Space and other sites should be activated. 5. Due to the ease of impersonating other users, always verify plans by phone

before agreeing to meet friends at outside locations. 6. Limit social time spent online to no more than a half hour at a time, while encouraging kids to make plans to get together in person, preferably at their own home. 7. Remain informed about Internet activity, reminding kids that trust and privacy are earned by responsible and mature activity and behavior. 8. Log into and implement BeNetSafe.com that allows for daily reporting of kid's online activities. 9. Log into GetNetWise.org, which offers filtering software and safety advice. Everything we say and do is in the presence of God. Let it be for the betterment of others and ourselves.

*Fr. Angelo Artemas, a classmate of Fr. John's, is pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Greek Orthodox Church in Chicago, Ill., and former director of the Greek Archdiocese Youth Office.*



### *Church Records...*

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

Maddox and Dominic, sons of Christopher and Nicole (Derany) Tocchio of Watertown, were baptized on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

### *Many Years!*

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

+Gloria Matook (68) of Milford fell asleep in the Lord on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007. She is survived by her mother, 3 brothers and 2 sisters, along with their families. Burial was at Dell Park Cemetery in Natick.

+Laurice Cahaly (88) of Wellesley fell asleep in the Lord on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007. She is survived by 2 daughters and a son, along with their families. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

+Rose Hamwey (92) of Somerville fell asleep in the Lord on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007. She is survived by 3 daughters and a son, along with their families. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

### *Memory Eternal!*

*From the Executive Board...* We have enjoyed another exciting period since our last communication.

The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary committee, chaired by Tom Sabbag, and its many subcommittees have been working diligently over the past many months in preparation of our upcoming 100th year anniversary activities including the Gala weekend planned for early October. That weekend will commence with a night of memories on Friday Night displaying pictures, artifacts and other memorabilia of our beloved Church. The weekend highlight is the Centennial Ball on Saturday night. The weekend will culminate in the Church events on Sunday. We welcome each of you to participate on one of the many committees to help celebrate our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Each Parishioner will be offered the opportunity to sponsor an event in their name or in the name of a loved one. Additionally every parishioner will be offered the opportunity to place an advertisement or expression of love for our church in our 100th year anniversary book. We encourage each of you to take advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity.

Our maintenance committee co-chaired by Richard Homsy and Christopher Bradley has continued to ensure that our Church remains in proper repair. New thermostats have replaced the poorly functioning ones, to ensure parishioner comfort and enhance the efficiency of the heating and air conditioning units. Recent roof leaks are being addressed to ensure final resolution of the root cause of our persistent leaks.

Fundraising activities are proving to be successful. While our Tupperware fundraiser fell short of expectations, the \$1000 Club has been a success having three winners to date of \$1000 each and having raised over \$6,000 this already year. We plan to continue this fundraiser for years to come. Our Stewardship campaign, which we embarked upon for the first time this year, has proven a complete success with over 50% of the Parishioners pledging, well above the 37% last year.

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. The maintenance committee is obtaining quotes to gain board approval for the many repairs still needed in the Church, including the front doors, the pews, the side walkway, and other repairs defined in the capital improvement plan. Fundraising activities must keep pace with the needed repairs.

The Board is working diligently to identify other innovative ways to raise the needed funds for the Church. We have placed a bid with the Needham Schools to rent classroom space to the KASE program for two years with a third option year. This opportunity could raise \$36,000 per year if St. John's is selected by the school. Additionally the Board is working to improve the use of the halls by offering hall rentals for business use. Signs will be placed along the road to inform potential clients of our hall offering.

We continue to need sponsors for the Sunday coffee hours, to include setup and clean up of the kitchen and hall. Coffee Hours are an important part of our beloved Church socialization and parishioner camaraderie. We beseech you to do your part to support this important function.

We ask for your participation on one of the many Church committees. If you are interested in joining one of these committees or in helping with fundraising for our beloved church, please contact Gail Kurker or Mike O'Hara

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 and Mike O'Hara*

*From the Centennial Committee...* As you all know, we are honoring the proud and rich spiritual and cultural heritage of our forefathers and foremothers during our Centennial Celebration the weekend of October 5-7, 2007.

The legacy we honor during our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year is the fruit of the labor of a group of dedicated individuals who were committed to preserving their cultural and religious heritage while assimilating in the New World. Our celebration honors those founders and every one of our parishioners for the past century . . . and the generations of parishioners to come. It is an exciting time, not only to look back at our "roots," but also to look forward to our collective future as a religious community.

A dedicated group of parishioners has been hard at work planning our Weekend Gala Celebration. Of course, more volunteers are always needed and welcomed to work on any committee. A detailed list of events for the weekend is highlighted in this issue of the Torchbearer so mark your calendars and make your reservations.

It's not too early to reserve your seat or table for the Centennial Ball which is the premier event of our celebration and sure to sell out. This will be a truly memorable evening with spectacular live entertainment by Fouad Hajjar & Ensemble and the Trilogy Orchestra at the Westin Hotel in Waltham. You will also be treated to hors d'oeuvres, a multi-course dinner and dessert. The committee has many additional surprises in store along with keepsake favors for all guests. Rooms are available at a discounted rate of \$109/nt. Call 1-800-Westin-1 prior to Sept. 1st to make a reservation.

Please consider becoming a part of history by placing a message in our special Commemorative Ad Book. You can honor a family member, pay tribute to the memory of a loved one or celebrate the meaning of St. John's to you and your family. This will be a keepsake for future generations.

If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to sponsor one or more events as an individual, a family or a business. All who do will be recognized in our Commemorative Ad Book, receive complimentary tickets to the Centennial Ball and an ad in our Ad Book, as well as an acknowledgement and advertisement on the St. John's website.

All sponsorship and ad book forms can be found at the bengari or on our website at [www.stjohnd.org/100th](http://www.stjohnd.org/100th). Or, look for a special mailing in the coming weeks that will include all of the forms and information necessary for you to participate in the Commemorative Ad Book or as a sponsor.

The planning and preparation leading up to our Centennial Gala requires a significant amount of time, energy and resources. Whatever contributions you can make to help the Centennial Committee will be greatly appreciated. We ask each and every one of you to help us in "Honoring

Our Past...Enriching Our Present...Ensuring Our Future." *Thank You and God Bless, Tom Sabbag, Chairman, Centennial Committee*

*From the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch...* About 20 years ago, one of our fellow parishioners, who was one of the first members of the Order of St. Ignatius, approached me to become a member of The Order. My immediate response was adamantly to say "No Thank You". My thoughts were that in no uncertain terms would I find myself wearing a big red ribbon with a big huge cross around my neck proclaiming to all that I made a big huge donation to this so-called "club of elite Orthodox".

I did not know at the time that because of The Order, many improvements to the Antiochian Village Camp and Heritage and Learning Center were partially funded by The Order. This is a place that I had visited on many occasions when I served as NER President of SOYO. A place where I found so much peace and joy, and I always returned home with a renewed spirit and deeper faith in God.

About 15 years ago, another one of our fellow parishioners, who was also a member of The Order, again asked me to join. And again, I smiled and said "No Thank You". And continued to believe that I would never wear one of those big red ribbons with the big huge cross around my neck boasting about a big huge donation.

I did not know then that The Order provided a significant subsidy to the Orthodox Christian Fellowship, the OCF, which serves Orthodox college students across North America. This was the same OCF that allowed me to meet so many wonderful Orthodox college students when I attended Simmons College in the 1980's. Those meetings were like nourishment for my young Orthodox soul while I was a college student.

And then about 10 years ago, I was again asked to join The Order. And again, I gave my standard response with a smile of course and said "No Thank You". By then I had convinced myself that I would never allow myself to wear one of those big red ribbons with the big huge cross.

I did not know then that The Order provided two camp scholarships for two 1-week sessions for each parish in our Archdiocese every single year to the camps of the archdiocese, especially the Antiochian Village. That means over 400 church school children were able to attend camp at The Village each year that most likely would not have had the opportunity to do so otherwise.

This is the same camp that I had never had the experience to attend, but made sure that my godson attended for two consecutive years. I had even brought my mom with me for a week so we could volunteer. It was our way of staying close to him, and an excuse for a mother-daughter vacation. But we gained so much more from that time together at the Village. As Matthew later told me, if I hadn't sent him to camp, he would never have learned so much about the Orthodox faith nor would he have made so many wonderful friends from throughout the country – many of whom he continues to stay in touch with today. I am very grateful that I had the financial resources to give him this gift.

And then 5 years ago, my son Anthony was born. And 3 years ago, my daughter Lydia was born. It is amazing what happens to us when we realize that God truly does hear our prayers. My heart opened, my ears opened, and my thoughts opened. It must have been then when I read in

Matthew, 13:9, where Christ says, "He who has ears, let him hear." That point, I think was when God turned on my ears – or at least I think He must have turned up the volume really high- because I suddenly heard about all the good deeds that came from those who participated in the works of The Order of St. Ignatius.

I no longer saw only the big red ribbons with the big huge crosses. I saw the red as the blood of Ignatius, which was shed out of love for our Lord. I saw the cross as the sacrifice we offer to God. And I did not hesitate 2 years ago when Chris Bezreh and then Mary Winstanley O'Connor again asked me to join The Order. I wanted to hear more about this mission.

Membership is only \$500 per year. That's only \$42 per month, or just a cup of coffee per day. Not really such a big huge donation after all. I knew I could do that, because I wanted to. I wanted to help our Archdiocese continue to grow and be strong for future generations. I wanted to do that for my children. I wanted to do that for over 400 other children to attend camp each year. I wanted to do that to help Orthodox college students keep their faith strong. I actually wanted to help support our retired clergy and married seminarians. I wanted to help strengthen the voice of Orthodoxy through Missions and Evangelism.

For only \$500 per year, I could feel good about wearing *my* big red ribbon with the big huge cross and help to make others aware of the many good deeds of The Order. To me, this donation was not only a tax-deductible contribution, but also it provided a priceless return on my investment that keeps on giving and growing. I think of it as the best way to share a cup of coffee each day.

The goal of our parish at St. John of Damascus is to have 100 members by our 100<sup>th</sup> Centennial Anniversary next year. We currently have only 39 members. We need to open a lot of ears around here! How fitting that our parish is beginning its own stewardship program today. Joining The Order is simply one other way that we can continue to be good stewards of God's gifts. I encourage you to learn more about the mission of The Order and it's wonders to help you take this step. I pray that you, too, will hear what I hear. Yours in Orthodoxy, *Cynthia R. Haddad*

*From The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. . . .* Thanks to all of those who participated in the annual Easter card. Enough money was raised to sponsor a child through the Children's Relief Fund. Special thanks go to Olivia Waishek who spearheaded this effort.

The annual dinner meeting of The Order will take place at the Diocese of Worcester and New England Parish Life Conference on Saturday, June 30, 2007 at 6:00 pm. For further information, see the PLC web page at <http://www.worcesterdiocese.net>

In February, the Holy Trinity Nursing and Rehabilitation Center of Worcester, Massachusetts recognized the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch for its donation of \$10,000 to its Leaders' Circle. As part of the room naming presentation, Fr. John Teebagy, Spiritual Advisor, and Christine Bezreh, Chair for the Diocese of Worcester and New England, were presented with a plaque, which will sponsor a patient room.

Holy Trinity is a non-profit, Eastern Orthodox, skilled nursing and rehabilitation facility, located in Worcester. It was realized through the efforts of the Council of Eastern Orthodox Churches of Central Massachusetts. It is the first pan-Orthodox nursing home in North America, the result of the cooperation of Orthodox parishes from various jurisdictions in a common venture.

As the St. John Centennial approaches, please expect a call or letter from the recruitment committee for The Order, especially if you are the parent of a child who attended Antiochian Village Camp, or participated in Real Break, College Conference, or any other program sponsored by St. Ignatius. The Order of St. Ignatius is first and foremost a SPIRITUAL movement of action by doing good works in the name of the Lord as we embrace a lifetime commitment to God. The Order spends over a million dollars each year on Archdiocese programs and outreach. There is very little we do in the church that does not bear the imprint of The Order of St. Ignatius. *Christine Bezreh*

*From the Stewardship Committee. . .* During the first three months of 2007 St John's has successfully launched the new stewardship program. We have received almost 73% of the stewardship forms back from parishioners thus far. We are very excited about these results but still think we can do better, with your help. Our goal from the start was to have 100% parishioner participation within our new program.

We would love to be able to announce at the parish meeting in May that we have received 100 % of the pledge forms back, so please ask your friends and family if they haven't sent in their form to do so as soon as possible.

Included on the form is a space for you to identify your talents. Parishioners' talents will be called upon by committees during the course of the year to help support the various needs of our church.

In order to keep our parish list up to date, even if you no longer plan to be a member of our church, we would still like to receive your form indicating your removal from our mailing list. *Please keep in mind that a fee will be assessed to non-stewards of our church for services held within the building.*

We are blessed and thankful to have received the pledge forms from the parishioners listed below, and for their many talents. *The Stewardship Committee, Chris Bezreh, Debbie Greenstein and Elizabeth MacNeil*

### *Announcements. . .*

❖ **FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE PROGRAM** – The Food for Hungry People Program is concluding. Please remember the homeless throughout the world during this holiest time of the year. Please consider offering a generous donation to this most worthy cause; make your check payable to the church and earmark it "FFFP" and return it by **June 1<sup>st</sup>**. Thank you!

❖ **THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** will be held on Wednesday, May 9<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup>, 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](mailto:execboard@stjohnd.org). We have a very busy and exciting year ahead... so won't you get involved?

❖ **CHURCH CLOSED** As we have done in the past, the church will be **closed** on Sunday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, due to the Parish Life Conference. Please join His Grace, Bishop ANTOUN and the clergy of the area for church that Sunday at the Radisson in Plymouth 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 27<sup>th</sup> through September 2<sup>nd</sup> inclusive**. Please mark your calendars. The church will be closed on Sunday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, due to the Parish Life Conference in Plymouth.

❖ **BLESSING OF GRAVES...** As is the custom, Fr. John will be at Fairview Cemetery on Sunday, May 27<sup>th</sup> from 11:15 am to 12:30 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 1<sup>st</sup>**. Applications can be obtained at our web site [www.stjohnd.org](http://www.stjohnd.org)

❖ **THE DORMITION FAST** begins on **August 1<sup>st</sup> through August 14<sup>th</sup>**. 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 5<sup>th</sup> for the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ.





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The deadline for the September/October 2007 issue of *The Torchbearer* will be announced

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