
THE TORCHBEARER

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

MAY/JUNE 2009

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

"The earth doth celebrate and dance for joy, and heaven doth rejoice today on the Ascension of the maker of creation, who by His volition clearly united that which was separated"
(Canon of the Matins for Ascension)

As I write this on Great and Holy Thursday, the Feast of feasts – Pascha - is right in front of us. This is such a special time of the year when we "go all out." The church is cleaned to a shine, the choir has extra rehearsals, the church looks splendid, and excitement builds. However, for many people Pascha (Easter) is seen merely as a "holiday" announcing the beginning of spring. We think of Pascha in terms of the Easter bunny and chocolate and the like. Instead of basking in the glow of the Resurrection, Pascha is merely seen as just another day to eat, drink, and be merry. I am reminded of a true story that I love to tell. A friend and classmate of mine, Fr. Nicholas Ceko, a Serbian Orthodox priest currently serving in Los Angeles, was home in Chicago, when he was a seminarian, during the Paschal season. As he walked down the street he came across a friend of his from his church. At the top of his lung's Fr. Nicholas shouted "Christ is Risen!!!" The man looked at him and said, "that was Sunday."

Beloved in the Lord, "the earth doth celebrate and dance for joy, and heaven doth rejoice today on the Ascension of the maker of creation, who by His volition clearly united that which was separated." The Resurrection is about giving us a new beginning, a fresh start. Our goal is to see the gifts that God continues to give to us. No longer are we separated and estranged from God, no longer does sin divide us. Christ "tramples down death by his death and to those in the tombs he bestows life."

During this Paschal season, let us pause and allow our body, mind, and soul to ascend from the cares and pressures of this fallen and sinful world and think about the things that await those who believe in God. The Resurrection is not just "on Sunday" but rather it permeates all that we do, say, pray and think as Christians. Let us seek to continually unite ourselves to God. Let us be like the Samaritan woman and allow our "thirsty soul(s) to drink of the waters of piety; for thou, O Savior, didst cry out to all: Whoever is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Wherefore, O well spring of life, Christ our God, glory to thee." (*Dismissal hymn of the Vespers of the Samaritan Woman*).

On behalf of my family, I greet you all with the words of salvation and eternal life, Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen! With much love, **Archpriest John K. Teebagy, Pastor**



Church Records...

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

+Elias R. Nawfel (86) of Waterville, ME fell asleep in the Lord on March 31, 2009. He is survived by his wife, 1 daughter, and 2 sons, along with their families. Burial was at Pine Grove Cemetery in Waterville, ME.

+James Sabbag (80) of Bedford fell asleep in the Lord on April 5, 2009. He is survived by his wife, and 3 sons, along with their families. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Memory Eternal!



Announcements...

❖ **The Annual Parish Meeting** will be held on Wednesday, May 13th at 7 pm. Your attendance and input would be most appreciated. Please plan on participating!

❖ **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 “St. John’s Fellowship” and earmark it “FFFP” and return it by **June 1st**. Thank you!

❖ **From the Stewardship Committee**....What does it mean to be a Steward of St. John’s Church? I ask this question because I’m not sure that 20% of our parishioners know the answer. The 20% that I am referring to are those parishioners who have not yet submitted their pledge form this year.

Each and every one of us is a Steward and is called upon to use the special gifts God has bestowed upon us to do his work. We are very thankful to the 80% of our faithful stewards, who have submitted their pledges. However, our goal has always been to reach 100% participation.

In late February the stewardship committee reached out to 131 parishioners that didn’t submit a pledge with a reminder phone call. Disappointedly, after the calls were made only a dozen pledges came in.

If you love your church and you would like to see it prosper so it can serve your children and grandchildren then we need your help. If you are one of the 20% can you please call the office and submit your pledge for this year, or go online and pledge at www.stjohnd.org/stewardship . As you

know, we ask that you give from your heart. Give what you know you can afford, but everyone should submit a pledge.

You may also give of your time and talents, but in order to be a faithful steward of St. Johns church you need to make a commitment and let us know you would like to be a part of this beautiful church and parish by submitting your monetary pledge.

Just like a Steward of an airplane is entrusted with the care of its passengers. We as stewards are entrusted with the mysterious gifts given to us in our life by the Lord. Those gifts are our: Time, Talents and Treasures, which we are to use to serve him.

Our parish cannot continue to have only 80% of our parishioners contributing. We need you to help us by participating with your pledge. We look forward to hearing from you, if you have any questions you may call the church office, or speak to a Stewardship or Executive Board committee member. Remember It's not enough to care.... You must care enough! **Debbie Greenstein & the Stewardship Committee**

❖ **The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch:** Thanks to all of those who participated in the annual Easter card. The funds raised will continue our sponsorship of a child through the Children's Relief Fund. The annual dinner meeting of The Order will take place at the Diocese of Worcester and New England Parish Life Conference at the Wyndham Hotel in Andover, MA on Friday, June 26, 2009 at 7:30 pm. For further information, see the PLC web page at: <http://www.stgeorgelawrence.org/Conf2009/>

In the past year, The Order has funded many projects, including: The Treehouse Ministry (fostering the well-being of women and their newborn babies by supplying basic necessities and programs supporting their growth and development,) Project Mexico, Holy Trinity Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Orthodox Christian Fellowship (for both Regional Chaplain training and for College Conference,) Department of Christian Education, and International Orthodox Christian Charities. 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.

❖ **Altar Servers:** If you would like to serve in the altar beginning September 2009, please email the church office (churchoffice@stjohnd.org). *Even if you are currently serving*, please sign up for the new church year. All boys are eligible and welcome if they will complete grade 2 this year and have had good church school attendance. If you have any questions, please see Olivia Waishek or Bob Kurker. The deadline to sign up: June 7, 2009; the signup sheet will be at the Bengari between May 3rd and June 7th.

❖ **Nominations** for serving on the Executive Board are being accepted until May 13th, 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?

❖ **Church Closed** As we have done in the past, the church will be **closed** on Sunday, June 28th, due to the Parish Life Conference. Please join us at the Wyndam Hotel in Andover for liturgy that day, starting at 10 am, or another local Orthodox church in your area.

❖ **Summer Church Hours** – As usual, the Divine Liturgy will start at 9:30 a.m. from **May 31 through September 6th inclusive**. Please mark your calendars. The church will be closed on Sunday, June 28th, due to the Parish Life Conference in Andover.

❖ **Blessing of Graves...** As is the custom, Fr. John will be at Fairview Cemetery on Sunday, May 24th beginning at 11:30 am to bless the graves of our loved ones.

❖ **N. G. Beram Veterans Association – Scholastic Achievement Awards** High School seniors are invited to apply for the NG Beram Veterans scholarship. For more information, please go to <http://www.stjohnd.org/ngberam> or you may pick them up at the bengari. The deadline is June 1st.

❖ **Ascension** Liturgy for the Feast of the Ascension will be held on Wednesday, May 27th at 6 pm here at St. John's. The clergy and faithful of St. George, Norwood will join us for this Feast.

❖ **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 time and place for Liturgy will be announced.

❖ The blessing of the grapes will take place on Sunday, August 9th for the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ, which the Church celebrates on August 6th. The time and place for Liturgy on the actual feast will be announced.

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The deadline for the September/October 2009 issue of *The Torchbearer* will be announced

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