
THE TORCHBEARER

Great Lent, 2010

BREAKING THE GRIP OF DEATH

by Fr. Ted Pulcini

Death is not just some biological process that happens at the end of life. It is an ever-present reality that presses in on us throughout our lives, sometimes more strongly, sometimes less so. Illness, despondency, hostility, aimlessness, malaise, isolation, ignorance, immorality, violence – these and thousands of other aspects of living in today’s world are constant reminders of death’s corrosive effects, chipping away at our well-being.

Certainly medicine and psychology have done their part in helping to fend off some of these “symptoms of death,” but they can go only so far. At its core, death is a spiritual reality. This accounts for why death’s noxious manifestations have been increasing in strength: fewer and fewer people are tending to their spiritual health. Some ignore it completely; others dabble in a “spirituality” of their own construction (a spirituality which inevitably becomes self-serving). Few avail themselves of the therapeutic and healing power of true Christianity spirituality – precisely because it requires a “taming” of the self and a commitment to a discipline that requires us to negate (rather than to pander to) the passions. Yes, the “work” of salvation has been done for us by Christ and is ever offered to us as a gift, but our sanctification requires that we accept that gift appropriately and profitably. Such acceptance requires cooperation on our part, a cooperation in which few seem willing to participate. God has provided all that we need, but are we doing our part?

Great Lent is a time for us to re-orient ourselves and re-commit ourselves to this cooperation. The Fast is meant to give us a good “shake,” to jar us out of our complacency, passivity, and indolence, to awaken us to the riches of grace that are constantly set before us. As St. John Chrysostom said so beautifully, “The table is rich-laden; feast ye royally thereon!”

The banquet of salvation, to which we are invited by the Risen Christ, is an eternal feast to which we are invited, but we must prepare ourselves for it. That is what Great Lent is for: we must prepare ourselves to enter that banquet chamber (see Matthew 22:1-14)! That preparation requires repentance, prayer, self-denial through fasting and almsgiving,

and intensified communion with God, especially through the Eucharist and the special liturgical services in which the Holy Spirit is so powerfully present and active.

Death is tyrannical. Even nature yearns to be free from it. (I am always astounded at how quickly, after only a few days of sun and warmer temperatures, crocuses and daffodils anxiously struggle to push through the death of the frozen earth) We too, in our heart of hearts, yearn for freedom from 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!

Church Records...

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

+James Ahto (74) of Dedham fell asleep in the Lord on December 31st. His wife, three sons, a daughter and their families survive him. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Memory Eternal!



From the Executive Board... Greetings in the Name of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

As we embark on another Lenten journey towards Christ's empty tomb, we have much to look forward to in the life of our church. I would like to highlight just a couple.

This year, we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the consecration of our church in Dedham, MA. Many of you reading this were part of giving your heart, your soul, your strength, and your mind to build the beautiful complex that we call home. We are planning a small celebration in October, 2010 to recognize this milestone. We have some different ideas that we would like to employ that weekend, so it is sure to be fun and memorable. We will also be re-opening the legacy walkway for those who are interested in purchasing a brick along the walkway. More details on that will follow. If you are interested in getting involved, and helping out in any way, please let me know by email.

Looking ahead, next year in 2011, St. John's is hosting the Diocese of Worcester and New England Parish Life Conference. This will take place at the Hyannis Conference Center in Hyannis, MA. Cynthia Capobianco and Debbie Leotsakos are

chairing this event and welcome your involvement. This will be a great time of fellowship and a good fundraiser for the church as well.

The Executive Board has approved a balanced \$336,000 budget for 2010, more than half of which come from your pledges. As part of this budget, we have put some additional financial controls in place around each line item on the budget to ensure we can stick to the budget. We are also continuing to contribute \$19,000 / year to the Endowment Fund and \$19,000 to the Building Preservation and Improvement Fund. I will be sharing more about the budget in an upcoming Executive Board report.

Thank you for all you do, thank you for your contributions. Please email me anytime at executiveboard@stjohnd.org with your comments, thoughts, and ideas. Have a blessed Lenten season. With the love of Christ, *Don Khouri II*, Executive Board Chairman

From the Virgin Mary Society ... The members of the VMS would like to thank all those who gave of their time and talents while helping us in the cooking and baking for this year's bazaar, which it made so successful.

Please mark your calendars for our annual Lenten dinner that will be held on Friday, March 26th. Details will be forthcoming. *In Christ, Laurice Kurker and Mary Shagoury, Co-chairs.*

From the Parent Guild...The Parent Guild hosted the Annual Godparents luncheon in January, following the much-delayed Church School Christmas pageant. A huge thank you goes to Elaine Sabbag, Cynthia Capobianco, Debbie Leotsakos, and their many kitchen helpers. Approximately 200 people attended the luncheon, which was a delicious turkey dinner with all the fixings. During Lent, the Parent Guild will be hosting the breakfasts following Lazarus Saturday and Holy Thursday morning services.

Although we are just approaching the start of Great Lent, please mark your calendars for the Annual Penny Sale which is scheduled to take place on Sunday, April 11th. More information will be forthcoming as the date approaches.

The Parent Guild raises money to support the church school, but we also run events that promote fellowship amongst parishioners. Thank you to all who attend our events. *Yours in Christ, Carol Hazerjian and Bertina Kurker*

From The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch ... The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch for the Diocese of Worcester and New England enjoyed its annual Christmas Party in January in Norwood, MA with special guest Mother Alexandra, Abbess of the Convent of St. Thekla at the Antiochian Village. The Order has been supporting Mother Alexandra's efforts to establish the convent and welcome members. The next meeting of

The Order of St. Ignatius will take place at the Parish Life Conference in Sturbridge, MA in June. Check your mail for further details.

The St. John chapter would like to invite you to participate in our fundraiser to sponsor 12 year old Tony Srour of Lebanon. During Lent, members will collect donations for our annual Pascha greeting card. This will be an opportunity for you to share Easter greetings with friends and family, as well as support the Children's Relief Fund. We truly appreciate your support.

St. John of Damascus will be the host parish for the annual Parish Life Conference in June of 2011. It will be important to induct new members to The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch at that time. Please consider joining this charitable arm of the Archdiocese. Complete information about the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch is available on the Archdiocese Web Site (www.antiochian.org) including detailed information about where the budget is spent.

One of the organizations supported by The Order is International Orthodox Christian Charities. IOCC has responded to the urgent need for medical supplies and basic medications to treat the injured and sick in Haiti with a shipment of \$1.2 million worth of critical medicines and hospital supplies expected to assist over 45,000 Haitians. IOCC also participated in an airlift that included water purification and sanitation equipment for 10,000 people and 500 family tents. The IOCC is just one example of how The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch spends your membership dollars.

From the Fellowship... The Food for Hungry People Program is underway. Please remember the homeless throughout the world as we approach the holiest time of the year. 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 F.F.H.P. and return by June 1, 2010. Thank you.

Lenten Liturgical Notes & Announcements...



Confession - Great Lent, which begins on February 15th, is the perfect opportunity for you to receive Confession, especially if you plan on receiving the Eucharist on Palm Sunday (March 28th) and Pascha (April 4th). 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!

Lenten services - 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 begin your fast (from food, drink, and smoking) after a light lunch. 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.

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 9, 2010 and scholarships will be awarded at Church School graduation on May 23, 2010. 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. For further information, please contact Chris Bezreh or Fr. John.

Save the date The 72nd Annual Parish Life Conference being hosted by St. George Cathedral, Worcester the weekend of June 18-20. Rooms start at only \$98. Call the Sturbridge Host Hotel to book your room today at 508. 347.7393.

The Proof of Fasting

Do you fast?
Give me proof of it by
your works.



If you see a poor man, take
pity on him

If you see a friend being honored, do not envy him.

Do not let only your mouth fast, but also the eye, and the feet,
and the hands and all members of our bodies.

Let the hands fast, by being free of avarice. Let the feet fast, by
ceasing to run after sin. Let the eyes fast, by disciplining them
not to glare at that which is sinful. Let the ears by not listening
to evil talk and gossip.

Let the mouth fast from foul words and unjust criticism. For
what good is it if we abstain from birds and fishes, but bite and
devour our brothers and sisters?

- St. John Chrysostom



The Virgin Mary Society invites you
to their

Annual Lenten Dinner

Friday, March 26th, 2010

5 pm – 6:30 pm

Donation *with* reservations by March 15th:

\$12 (adults) and \$6 (children)

Donation *without* reservations: \$15 (adults) and \$7.50 (children)

Menu: Baked Fish, **M'judarra (Lentils)**, **Spinach Pies**,
Salad, Dessert and Coffee

For reservations, by March 15th, please call or email the church
office at 781.326.3046 or churchoffice@stjohnd.org

**All proceeds to benefit the 2010 project of the Antiochian
Women
St. Thekla Monastery at the Antiochian Village**

Donations for Lent and Holy Week

The Lenten Season will soon be under way and soon Holy Week and Pascha will be here as well. There are many things, as you know, that the Church will be needing for all of the special services coming up, and we ask for your participation and support.

If you would like to offer a donation to the Church of St. John of Damascus for the health of or in memory of any of your family members or friends, please fill out the form below and mail it back to the church office as soon as possible.

We thank you and pray that you experience a most joyfully rewarding and fruitful Lenten season and celebration of our Lord's Holy Pascha.



Dear Fr. John,

It would be a great joy for me/us (**envelope #** _____) to offer a donation of \$ _____ for my Paschal gift to the church. Please accept this donation for:

(please circle one)

for the health of or in memory

of: _____

_____ given by:

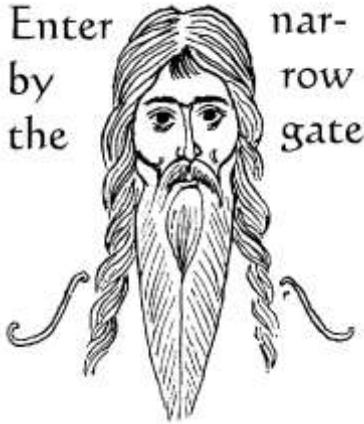
____ *Please list in the Palm Sunday bulletin*

or

____ *Please list in the Pascha (Easter) Bulletin*

Deadline for donations is Sunday, March 21st, 2010

Enter
by
the



nar-
row
gate

The Lenten Prayer of St Ephrem the Syrian



O Lord and Master of my life!

*Take from me the spirit of sloth,
faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk.*

*But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility,
patience, and love to Thy servant.*

*Yea, O Lord and King! Grant me to see my
own errors and not to judge my brother
for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen*



Annual Penny Sale & Luncheon

Sunday, April 11th

at 12 noon



Join your family, friends and fellow parishioners for a delicious luncheon, the chance to win great prizes and show your support of our Church School.

Roasted Chicken, Hashwa, Salad & Dessert

\$8/Adult \$4/Children

+ 2 Sheets of Penny Sale Tickets with each meal

Lunch will be served immediately following church school. During this time you may purchase additional Penny Sale tickets, take a look at all of the great prizes on stage and purchase raffle tickets for your chance to win great prizes!!

2010 Easter Card to benefit the Children's Relief Fund



Instead of sending Easter cards, include your name in our Easter card, which will be given out on Easter night.

Please enclose your donation (check payable to St. Ignatius/St. John) with this form and mail to:

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town/City& Zip code _____

Deadline for donation is Sunday, March 21, 2010

All proceeds to benefit the Children's Relief Fund and our sponsorship of 12-year old Tony Srour of Lebanon.

A project of the St. John's Chapter of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch

Holy Week - 2010

March 27th Lazarus Saturday

- ❖ Divine Liturgy @ 9 a.m.; Communion Breakfast, hosted by the Church School, to follow



March 28th Palm Sunday

- ❖ Matins @ 9 a.m. (**NO** Confessions)
- ❖ Divine Liturgy with procession @ 10 a.m.
- ❖ Bridegroom Matins @ 5 p.m.

March 29th Great and Holy Monday

- ❖ Confessions 6 pm – 6:45 pm
- ❖ Bridegroom Matins @ 7 p.m.

March 30th Great and Holy Tuesday

- ❖ Confessions 6 pm – 6:45 pm
 - ❖ Bridegroom Matins @ 7 pm
- Confessions will NOT be heard after tonight**

March 31st Great and Holy Wednesday

- ❖ Sacrament of Holy Unction @ 7 p.m.

April 1st Great and Holy Thursday

- ❖ Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great with washing of feet @ 9 a.m. Communion breakfast, hosted by the Church School, to follow.

- ❖ Twelve Gospels with procession @ 7 p.m.

April 2nd Great and Holy Friday

- ❖ Great Vespers with un-nailing of Christ from the Cross @ 3 p.m.
- ❖ Lamentations with procession @ 7 p.m.



April 3rd Great and Holy Saturday

- ❖ Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great @ 9 a.m.

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- ❖ Rush Service @ 10 p.m.
 - ❖ Paschal Canon with Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom and Agape breakfast to follow

Sunday, April 4th PASCHA: The Feast of Feasts

- ❖ Agape Vespers @ 11 a.m. @ St. John's, with St. Mary's, Cambridge & St. George, West Roxbury
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THE TORCHBEARER

is the newsletter of the Church of St. John of Damascus
A parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North
America

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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, 2010 *Torchbearer* will be April 9th.
This will be the final newsletter until September 2010.

Please consult the weekly Sunday bulletin for any changes, corrections,
etc.