
THE TORCHBEARER

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

November/December 2010

From the Pastor...

This month brings two events that are important to the parish for different reasons. The first is our annual bazaar, which will be held on the weekend of November 5th. It is amazing to see the hard work of all those on the various committees who gather in the hall each night prior to the first day of this annual event. It is equally amazing to witness the crowds of people from near and far who have made this bazaar part of their yearly activities. If you look at the church's budget it is clear to see why the bazaar is so vital. However, the bazaar is vital for another reason too. It provides the parish with a common goal. It allows parishioners to meet each other and to feel united. The bazaar shows us in a very real way what this parish can accomplish when it sets its mind on something. The bazaar, to be sure, is vital to the "fellowship" aspect of the parish, but the "spiritual" aspect of the parish is just as important.

In addition to the bazaar, November also marks the start of our preparation for our Lord's birth. If you have looked at your mail recently, you can already see "holiday" catalogues being sent. I know that what I am about to say has been said before and will be said again, but I really feel that we must stop this trend. Christmas is not a holiday. Christmas is the birthday of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. If Christ were not born, what would our chances be for salvation? When Advent or "the fast of St. Philip" starts on November 15th what will our response be? This is the key word – response.

In theology classes in seminary, we learned a very fancy word - *synergia* (synergy). As Bishop Kallistos Ware says in his classic book *The Orthodox Church*, "To describe the relation between the grace of God and free will of man, Orthodoxy uses the term cooperation or synergy; in (St.) Paul's words: 'We are fellow workers with God' (I

Cor. 3:9). If man is to achieve full fellowship with God, he cannot do so without God's help, yet he must also play his own part: man as well as God must make his contribution



to the common work, although what God does is of immeasurably greater importance than which man does.” (p. 226) To repeat: *“If man is to achieve full fellowship with God, he cannot do so without God’s help, yet he must also play his own part. ”*

For some reason, people think that the only fasting period the Church has is Great Lent. How sad! Advent, like other fasting periods, allows us the chance to return to God - to refocus our minds, bodies, and souls toward that which is needful. Advent requires our full attention. God gives us so much, can’t we give him a little of ourselves? Can’t we deny ourselves just a little? Just a little? To be sure the church is fellowship. I can’t think of anyone who enjoys Arabic music, as much as I do, yet is it the sole purpose of the Church? I can’t think of anyone else who enjoys the cooking of the Middle East as much as I do, but is this the sole purpose of the Church? But the essence of the Church is being a member of the Body of Christ in full union with each other and in full communion with God through the life giving mystery of the Eucharist.

Make this Advent different. Make this Advent a time of reflection. Reflecting on God’s great love for us. Make this time a period of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (giving to the poor). Instead of going to parties before Christmas, encourage your friends and family to celebrate AFTER the Feast. Would any one of us even consider celebrating before Easter? Would anyone of us even consider chanting “Christ is risen...” on Good Friday? Then why would we “party” before Christmas?!

It is my fervent hope that all of us view Advent in a new way, a fresh way. It is my hope that our common journey towards Bethlehem allows us to find, once again, the right way. It is my hope that we can gather in this holy Church of St. John of Damascus on Wednesday, December 24th at 6 p.m. to pray together, to be together, to share in the Eucharist together, to celebrate together, and to shout from the depths of our hearts that “Christ is Born!! Glorify Him!!”

Assuring you of my love and prayers and wishing you all a most blessed Thanksgiving and Christmas, I remain, In Christ, *Fr. John K. Teebagy, Pastor*

Church Records...

“As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”

Cole Gabriel, son of Eduardo and Rebecca (Bargoot) Delgado of Framingham, was baptized on August 29th.

Many Years!



“O Lord our God crown them with glory and honor”

John V. Pilitsis and Lois O’Connor Pilitsis were married on September 5th, 2010. We wish them well as they begin their new life together in Westwood.

Many Years!



From the Stewardship Committee... We were blessed to celebrate our 25th Anniversary here in Dedham on September 26th, which was also Stewardship Sunday. The true meaning of Stewardship was evident at the weekend event, with a wonderful talent show and auction that Mitch Hallal had put together for our enjoyment. A big thank you to Mitchell Hallal and all of the parishioners who stepped forward to help out and also to those who shared their beautiful talents with us on Saturday evening and Sunday, and for the lovely choir and of course the adorable Sunday school children who sang for us as well. I'm sure you will agree it was a delightful weekend from beginning to end, and the true meaning of Stewardship..... sharing or your **time, talents** and **treasures**.....while celebrating such a wonderful occasion here at our beloved St. John's!

Announcements...

❖ **FYI...** In 2011, the date of Orthodox Easter is April 24th; Great Lent begins on Monday, March 7th.

❖ **Bulletin** The deadline for the November 28th bulletin will be Tuesday, November 23rd at 10 am. The deadline for the bulletins for Christmas Eve and December 26th will be Tuesday, December 21st at 10 a.m. SHARP. These deadlines must be strictly adhered to – please plan ahead. The office will close at noon on Wednesday, November 24th and will reopen on Tuesday, November 30th. The deadline for the January 2nd bulletin will be Wednesday, December 29th at 10 a.m. SHARP.

❖ **Advent** Please remember that the Christmas Fast begins on Monday, November 15th. 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 Friday, December 24th @ 6 pm; no services will be held on Saturday, December 25th).

❖ **Senior Dinner** Invitations for the Senior Citizen's Christmas dinner which will be held on Sunday, December 12th at noon have been mailed. If you are 65 years or older and did not receive an invitation, please call Barbara Khouri at (617)323-4463.

❖ **Cremation** The following policy statement concerning cremation is excerpted from the minutes a meeting of our Archdiocesan Synod of Bishops: "His Eminence (Metropolitan PHILIP) emphasized that the Orthodox Church is **against** cremation. The policy of this Archdiocese is that no funeral will be offered in any location for a 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."

❖ **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 **and** that Orthodox Christians **cannot and should not** take communion in non-Orthodox Churches.



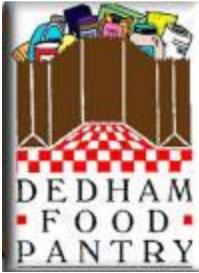
*73rd New England
Parish Life Conference
Hosted by St John of Damascus
June 17-19th, 2011*

At the Resort and Conference Center of Hyannis

- **Jacuzzi**
- **Indoor and outdoor pools**
- **Full service Spa and Health club**
- **18 hole par 3 Golf Course**
- **Children's playground, arcade and pool table**
- **Restaurants and Starbucks Coffee café**
- **Walking distance to Downtown Hyannis**
- **Close to cape beaches**

We look forward to seeing you!!

*If you would like to serve on a committee, please contact the church
office (churchoffice@stjohnd.org)*



We support the Dedham Food Pantry

The Dedham Food Pantry wishes to thank the St. John of Damascus Church community for your loyal support throughout the year. We recognize the monetary gifts as well as the food collected here. We are also very appreciative of your volunteers and of course, your prayers.

The Pantry has been working to meet one of the most basic of human needs for more than 20 years. An organization staffed by volunteers, we rely on the charitable support of our local community. Our motto is “Neighbors helping neighbors”.

It is through the generosity of people like you that we are able to help our less fortunate neighbors. We could not meet the needs of these families without your help. On behalf of our clients please know how much we appreciate your kindness.

With gratitude,
The Thank You Committee

Dedham Food Pantry

2010 Choir Christmas Card



Instead of sending Christmas cards, include your name in our Christmas Book to be mailed to the entire parish. Please enclose your donation with this form and mail to:

St. John of Damascus
300 West St.
Dedham, MA 02026-5594

Deadline: November 21, 2010

NAME _____ ENV. _____

STREET _____

CITY/ZIP _____

_____ *I am not a member of St. John's please mail a copy to the above address.*

Church of St. John of Damascus
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Dedham, MA 02026-5594

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THE TORCHBEARER
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Damascus**

A Parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

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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 2010 *Torchbearer* will be **November 10th.**

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