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# THE TORCHBEARER

The Newsletter of St. John of Damascus Antiochian Orthodox Church, of Dedham, MA  
November/December 2012

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## CHRISTMAS MORNING

by St. John Chrysostom

*St. John Chrysostom's homily on the Nativity was delivered during a period of great theological pluralism and fierce debate over the identity and work of Jesus Christ. In this sermon St. John enlists the words of Cyril of Alexandria (c. a. 382-444) to place us securely before the mystery of the one who is both fully God and fully human: "Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man." This view would, find normative expression some fifty years after Chrysostom's death in the Chalcedonian Formula faith (451 AD.). In our own time of pronounced theological fluidity, may Chrysostom's words help us appreciate the stunning force of the news that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."*

Behold a new and wondrous mystery. My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn. The Angels sing. The Archangels blend their voice in harmony. The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side, the Sun of justice. And ask not how: for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed, He had the power, He descended, He redeemed; all things yielded in obedience to God. This day He Who is, is Born; and He Who is, becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man; but being the

Word He became flesh, His nature, because of impassability, remaining unchanged.

And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has



come upon the earth, not bringing with Him Angels, nor Archangels, nor Thrones, nor Dominations, nor Powers, nor Principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.

Since this heavenly birth cannot be described, neither does His coming amongst us in these days permit of too curious scrutiny. Though I know that a Virgin this day gave birth, and I believe that God was begotten before all time, yet the manner of this generation I have learned to venerate in silence and I accept that this is not to be probed too curiously with wordy speech. For with God we look not for the order of nature, but rest our faith in the power of Him who works.

What shall I say to you; what shall I tell you? I behold a Mother who has brought forth; I see a Child come to this light by birth. The manner of His conception I cannot comprehend.

Nature here rested, while the Will of God labored. O ineffable grace! The Only Begotten, Who is before all ages, Who cannot be touched or be perceived, Who is simple, without body, has now put on my body, that is visible and liable to corruption. For what reason? That coming amongst us he may teach us, and teaching, lead us by the hand to the things that men cannot see. For since men believe that the eyes are more trustworthy than the ears, they doubt of that which they do not see, and so He has deigned to show Himself in bodily presence, that He may remove all doubt.

Christ, finding the holy body and soul of the Virgin, builds for Himself a living temple, and as He had willed, formed there a man from the Virgin; and, putting Him on, this day came forth; unashamed of the lowliness of our nature'. For it was to Him no lowering to put on what He Himself had made. Let that handiwork be forever glorified, which became the cloak of its own Creator. For as in the first creation of flesh, man could not be made before the clay had come into His hand, so neither could this corruptible body be glorified, until it had first become the garment of its Maker.

What shall I say! And how shall I describe this Birth to you? For this wonder fills me with astonishment. The Ancient of days has become an infant. He Who sits upon the sublime and heavenly Throne, now lies in a manger. And He Who cannot be touched, Who is simple, without complexity, and incorporeal, now lies subject to the hands of men. He Who has broken the bonds of sinners, is now bound by an infants bands. But He has decreed that ignominy shall become honor, infamy be clothed with glory, and total humiliation the measure of His Goodness.

For this He assumed my body, that I may become capable of His Word; taking my flesh, He gives me His spirit; and so He bestowing and I receiving, He prepares for me the treasure of Life. He takes my flesh, to sanctify me; He gives me His Spirit that He may save me.

Come, then, let us observe the Feast. Truly wondrous is the whole chronicle of the Nativity. For this day the ancient slavery is ended, the devil confounded, the demons take to flight, the power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is

removed from us, error driven out, truth has been brought back, the speech of kindness diffused, and spreads on every side, a heavenly way of life has been 'in planted on the earth, angels communicate with men without fear, and men now hold speech with angels.

Why is this? Because God is now on earth, and man in heaven; on every side all things commingle. He became Flesh. He did not become God. He was God. *Wherefore He became flesh, so that He Whom heaven did not contain, a manger would this day receive.* He was placed in a manger, so that He, by whom all things are nourished, may receive an infant's food from His Virgin Mother. So, the Father of all ages, as an infant at the breast, nestles in the virginal arms, that the Magi may more easily see Him. Since this day the Magi too have come, and made a beginning of withstanding tyranny; and the heavens give glory, as the Lord is revealed by a star.

To Him, then, Who out of confusion has wrought a clear path, to Christ, to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, we offer all praise, now and forever. Amen.

## Church Records...

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

Chase Nicolas Bargoot, son of Eduardo and Rebecca (Bargoot) Delgado of Wellesley, was baptized on September 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Many Years!**

## Announcements...

❖ **FYI** In 2013, the date of Orthodox Easter is May 5<sup>th</sup>; Great Lent begins on Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup>.

❖ **Bulletin** The deadline for the November 25<sup>th</sup> bulletin will be Tuesday, November 20<sup>th</sup> at 10 am. The deadline for the bulletins for December 23<sup>rd</sup> and Christmas Eve and will be Tuesday, December 18<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm SHARP. These deadlines must be strictly adhered to – please plan ahead.

❖ **Advent** Please remember that the Christmas Fast begins on Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup>. 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 Monday, December 24<sup>th</sup> @ 8 pm (matins at 7 pm); *no* services will be held on December 25<sup>th</sup>).

❖ **Senior Dinner** Invitations for the Senior Citizen's Christmas dinner, which will be held on Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup> after liturgy, have been mailed. If you are 65 years or older and did not receive an invitation, please call or email the church office ([churchoffice@stjohnd.org](mailto:churchoffice@stjohnd.org)).

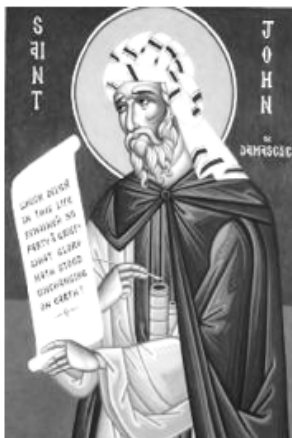
❖ **Coffee Hour** Many open dates are available. Please consider asking your friends and family to join forces in hosting the coffee hour, which is a vital part of our fellowship. To reserve a date, please call or email the church office ([churchoffice@stjohnd.org](mailto:churchoffice@stjohnd.org)). Thank you.

❖ **St. Mary, Pawtucket** will have their annual bazaar from November 9<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup>; let's all support our sister church. For more information, please call 401.726.1202.

❖ **Fellowship** Come join us on Friday, November 16<sup>th</sup> as Bishop John speaks about "What is communion?" This is the first in a series of talks about Interfaith Relationships. Wine and cheese will be served at 6:30 pm and the talk will begin at 7 pm. All are welcome!

❖ **Donations** After making donations to the church or its organizations please do your best to pay for them at your earliest convenience. This would be *very much appreciated!* Thank you.

❖ **Bishop John** To celebrate his first anniversary as a bishop, the deanery will gather at St. George Cathedral, Worcester on Monday, December 10<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm for liturgy and a reception. ALL are welcome! More information to follow.



# St. John of Damascus

Feast Day  
honoring

Archpriest John K. Teebagy  
20th anniversary as our Pastor

Special Guest  
His Grace, Bishop John

*Please join us*  
**SUNDAY DECEMBER 2, 2012, 12PM - 6PM**

## Special Music Presentations By

**St. John's Choir**  
**Heather Feldman**  
**Fouad Hajjar**

**Reservation Call:**

Laurie Bradley  
781.320.9623

Debbie Leotsakos  
781.762.3110

**Menu Choices:**

Baked Haddock  
Fish Thara Thoorl  
Mac & Cheese

*Donation \$10, Children under 12 free*



**DIOCESE of WORCESTER and NEW ENGLAND**

## ***AL-KAFAÀT Benefit Banquet***

**Saturday – November 17<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm**

**St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church of Boston**

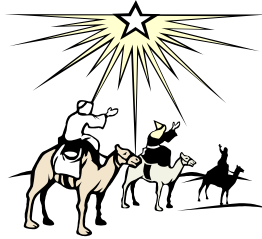
**\$125 per person**

**Cocktail Hour – Gourmet Dinner – Raffles – Auction**

*For tickets contact Christine Bezreh or email the church office ([churchoffice@stjohnd.org](mailto:churchoffice@stjohnd.org))*

To find out more about Al-Kafaàt go to <http://www.al-kafaat.org/>

# 2012 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 18, 2012*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ENV. \_\_\_\_\_

STREET \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

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

**St. John of Damascus Orthodox Church**

300 West Street

Dedham, MA 02026-5594

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**THE TORCHBEARER**

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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 Wednesday at 2 pm.*

Please plan accordingly.

**DEADLINE** for the January/February 2013 *Torchbearer* will be **November 16<sup>th</sup>**.

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