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# THE TORCHBEARER

Great Lent, 2016

Beloved in the Lord:

On Monday, March 14, the Orthodox Church throughout the world begins Great Lent. As we make our way as a family, as a community, toward our Lord's empty tomb, let us all strive to return to God, much like the Prodigal Son, and see what good God has to offer to fill the emptiness of the world. Please do something to observe this great gift of Great Lent that God has given to us. Don't let this time go by and fail to see the potential that you have within you to affect a change for the good of your mind, body, and soul. Many "extra" liturgical services will be celebrated--become a part of them, and become reunited with God and His Saints.

Below please find the most, in my opinion, uplifting, insightful, and hopeful sermon in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. In fact, it is read in every Orthodox Church in the world at Pascha. Please don't read it! Rather, take the time to absorb these words and reflect on their meaning in our lives as Christians. You cannot help but see our Lord's Resurrection in a different light and context.

I very much look forward to seeing all of you during this most special time of the year. Please remember that I love you and pray for you. Please remember my family and me in your prayers, and remember that I am just a phone call away if you should ever need me. On behalf of my family, and in anticipation of the Great Feast, I want to wish each of you and those whom you love a most blessed Pascha, and a spiritually fulfilling Lenten journey. *With much love in Christ, Fr. John K. Teebagy, Pastor*

## THE CATECHETICAL HOMILY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

If any are pious and lovers of God, let them delight in this fair and radiant festival. If any are honest servants, let them enter and rejoice in the joy of their Lord. If any are



wearied with fasting, let them now enjoy the reward. If any have worked from the first hour, let them accept their just pay. If any have come after the third, let them feast with thankfulness. If any have arrived after the sixth, let there be no doubt, for they shall suffer no loss. If any come after the ninth, let them draw near, let them not waver. If any have arrived only at the eleventh, let them not be fearful for their tardiness, for the Master is gracious and accepts the last as well as the first. He gives rest to those who worked from the first hour. He is merciful to the last and provides for the first. He gives to this one, and to that one he shows kindness. He receives their labors and acknowledges the purpose, and he honors the deed and praises the intention. Therefore, let

everyone enter into the joy of our Lord, and let the first and the second take part in the reward. Those rich and those poor, join hands together. Those sober and those sorrowful, honor this day. Those who fast and those who do not, be glad today. The table is full, indulge yourselves sumptuously. The calf is ample, let no one go away

hungry. Let all enjoy the wealth of righteousness. Let none lament their poverty for the kingdom is revealed to all. Let none deplore transgressions, for forgiveness has dawned forth from the tomb. Let none be fearful of death, for the death of the Savior has set us free. By tasting his flesh, death has been quenched. He who went down to Hades despoiled Hades, and Hades was embittered when he tasted Christ's flesh. Isaiah, anticipating this, cried out and said: Hades was embittered when it met you face to face below. It was embittered, for it was abolished. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was cast down. It was embittered, for it was chained. It received a body and encountered God. It received earth, and met heaven face to face. It received what it saw, and fell where it saw not. O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons have fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and there are no dead in the tombs for Christ is raised from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who were asleep. To him be glory and dominion to the ages of ages. Amen.

## Church Records

### ***“Baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”***



Nadia Bea Anneliese, daughter of Jonathan and Robin (Basler) Mamary of Hingham, was baptized on November 15, 2015.

Liliana, daughter of Armando and Andrea (Gamel) Cassano of Medway, was baptized on December 20, 2015.

Sydney Helen, daughter of Michael and Susan (Jabbour) Andreas of Rutherford, NJ, was baptized on December 30, 2015.

### ***Many years!***

### ***“Blessed are they whom thou hast chosen and taken O Lord”***

+George J. Zahka (93) fell asleep in the Lord on November 30, 2015. His wife, 4 sons, and their families survive him. He was buried at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

+Richard M. Scott (86) fell asleep in the Lord on January 26, 2016. His wife, 3 sons and 1 daughter, and their families survive him. He was buried at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

+Nicholas Penza (18) fell asleep in the Lord on February 5, 2016. His parents and brothers survive him. He was buried at St. Mary Cemetery in Franklin.

+Leilah Steiger (94) fell asleep in the Lord on February 10, 2016. Her son survives her. She was buried at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

### ***Memory Eternal!***



## Church Organizations

**The Executive Board** Hopefully, this message finds you all well. It looks as though we have mostly been spared the many feet of snow and severe weather we endured last winter. Even though it has been winter, your parish and Executive Board have been very busy with many events for you to participate in and updates around the church complex that I hope you have noticed.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in the Special Parish Meeting held on February 7<sup>th</sup>. At that meeting, the Parish voted to sell our “right of First Refusal” for the house at 302 West St. for a sum of \$50k. It was refreshing to see our Parishioners join together to discuss and come to a decision on such an important issue. I would also like to commend the Board and the House Committee members for all of their hard work.

You should have received your 2016 pledge forms and most of you have returned them. If you have not, please do so at your convenience in order to help us maintain our records and plan our budget. Should you have any questions about your pledge, please contact the Church Office or a member of our Stewardship Committee.

Once again we are preparing for Great Lent which starts on March 14 as we make our journey towards Easter on May 1. Please check the church calendar on our website for times and dates of the services. We hope that you and your family will join us during this most important time in our church year. If you are unable to visit with us, please accept my sincere wishes for a healthy and spiritually fulfilling Pascha season.  
*Yours in Christ, Abe Sabbag, Executive Board Chairman*

**Church School** After 20 years as superintendent of our church school, Nancy Close is “retiring” on May 22, which is church school graduation.

All of you will agree that Nancy, along with our dedicated teachers, has done an outstanding job for our kids these many, many years; we have been so blessed to have someone of her caliber in this most important position of church leadership for so long. A generation of children has been the beneficiaries of her work, and we look forward to seeing what they will do for St. John’s in the future. Although I have asked Nancy to reconsider, she is looking forward to serving the parish in other ways.

We now are in need of a new church school superintendent. If you are interested in learning more about this position, I would be most happy to meet with you. The only thing necessary is a love of God, His Church, and His children. The rewards are endless. Thank you, Fr. John (781.326.3046;[pastor@stjohnd.org](mailto:pastor@stjohnd.org))

**Food for Hungry People** The Food for Hungry People Program begins on March 14, the first day of Great Lent. 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. If you prefer to donate by check, please make it payable to the church and earmark it F.F.H.P. We ask that all alms boxes and checks be returned by May 22. Thank you.

**The Visitation Ministry** I began the Visitation Ministry in September 2014, with the hope of making a difference in the lives of parishioners. Since that time, there have been 8 individuals or families who have taken advantage of this wonderful opportunity. For some, it has been in the form of confidential consultation, and for others, I visited weekly. Written correspondence has also been provided so people know they are being thought about. ALL cases are different, and are tailored to what an individual or family might need or desire.

At the present time, I am visiting two individuals on a weekly basis. They have thrived and benefited from knowing I would come each week for the sole purpose of visiting with them. These visits provide companionship and friendship, as well as the gift of time and kindness. There is tremendous room for growth, and I encourage anyone to contact me regarding the possibility of a visit for a loved one. Visitations can provide support and friendship for any and all need: "I was sick and you visited me." (Matthew 25:36) *Yours in Christ, Donna Sabbag*

## Announcements

❖ **Bazaar** Mark your calendars for Bazaar 2016, which we will be held from November 4-6.

❖ **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.

❖ **Did you know?** Spiritual Bouquets are available in memory of or for the health of our loved ones and friends. The cards, which cost \$10 each, can be obtained by contacting the church office.

❖ **Annual Parish Meeting** Watch for more information as it becomes available.

❖ **Scholarship** The Syrian Lebanese Women's Club of Boston invites young women of Syrian or Lebanese descent who live in the greater Boston area to apply for their annual scholarship. Applications, which are due by March 31, can be obtained by emailing St. John's church office ([churchoffice@stjohnd.org](mailto:churchoffice@stjohnd.org)).

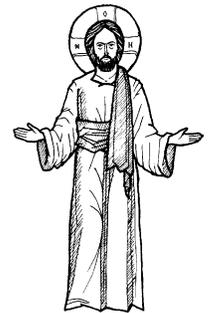
❖ **The St. John of Damascus Community Scholarship** applications are now available from the church office and the St. John website. Applications are due by April 15, 2016, and the scholarships will be awarded at Church School graduation. Applicants must be high-school seniors and graduates of the St. John of Damascus Church School planning to attend full time a fully accredited college, university, or technical school. For more information, please contact Christine Bezreh or Fr. John.

❖ **Icon Presentation** The Women's Club of St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church, Cambridge, presents "The Icons of Holy Week and Pascha," with Byzantine Iconographer Khouria Erin Kimmett of St. George, Norwood. The presentation will follow the Madayeh/Akathist service, which begins at 7 pm on Friday, March 18. Coffee and light refreshments will be served. All are welcome to attend.

❖ **The Gardens Cemetery** in West Roxbury has an Orthodox section with a chapel. Graves are being pre-sold for families who wish to be together. For more information, please visit <http://www.thegardenscemetery.org/orthodox-garden-and-chapel.asp> or call 617.325.0186.

## Lenten Liturgical Notes

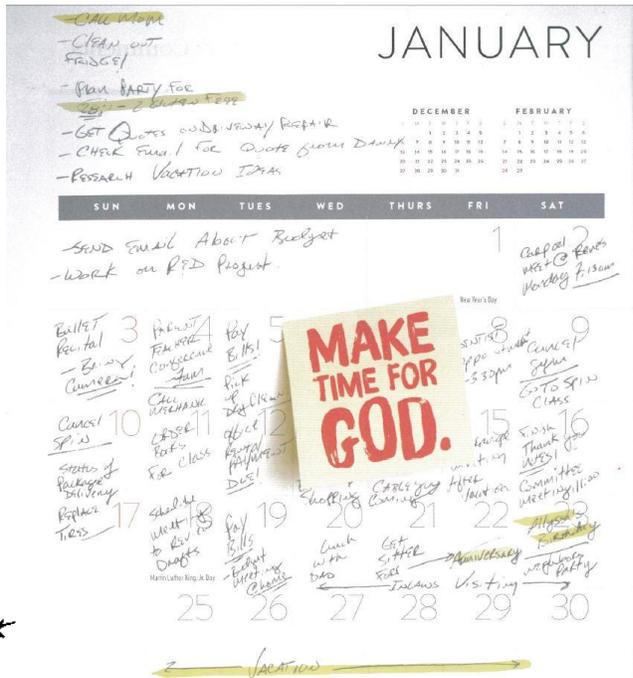
**Confession** - Great Lent begins on March 14, and it is the perfect opportunity for you to receive Confession, especially if you plan on receiving the Eucharist on Palm Sunday (April 24) and Pascha (May 1). Confession is available *before* all Lenten services, during Matins on Sunday mornings (8:40 –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:

- **Great Compline** on Mondays at 7 pm at various churches throughout the area. Places and dates TBD.
- **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 Lenten lunch.
- **Akathist Hymn** on the first five Friday evenings during Great Lent, we will chant the Akathist Hymn to the Virgin Mary at 6:30 p.m., *except on March 25 (please see below)*.
- **Feast of the Annunciation** Please join us on Friday, March 25 at 5:30 pm, here at St. John's for the festal liturgy, which is nine months before Christmas.

- **Bishop's visits in 2016** Bishop John will be with us for the Divine Liturgy on Lazarus Saturday @ 9 am, and for our feast day on December 4. More details will be forthcoming.



## 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 fast, 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

## *Donations for Lent and Holy Week*

The Lenten Season will soon be under way, and Holy Week and Pascha will be here as well. There are many things, as you know, that the Church will need 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:

**(please circle one)**

for the health of or in memory

of: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ given by:

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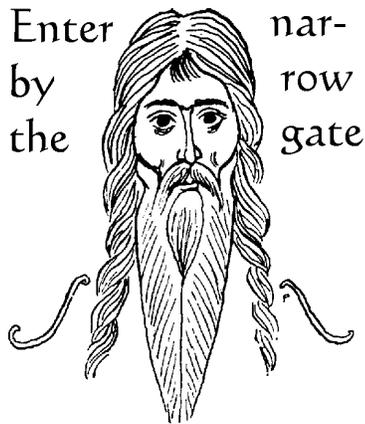
\_\_\_\_ ***Please list in the Palm Sunday bulletin***

**or**

\_\_\_\_ ***Please list in the Pascha (Easter) Bulletin***

*Deadline for donations is Sunday, April 17, 2016*

## The Lenten Prayer of St Ephrem the Syrian



Enter  
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the

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row  
gate

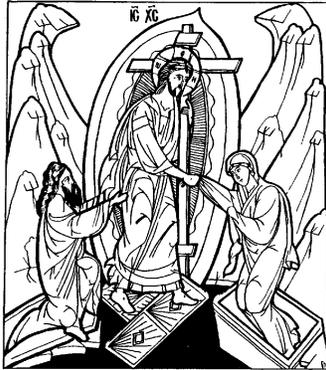
*O Lord and Master of my life!  
Take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-  
heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk.*

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

*See, 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*



2016 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:

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town/City& Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Deadline for donation is Sunday, April 17, 2016**

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

# Holy Week - 2016

## April 23, Lazarus Saturday

- ❖ Divine Liturgy with Bishop John in attendance @ 9 a.m.; Communion Breakfast, hosted by the Parent Guild, to follow



## April 24, Palm Sunday

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

## April 25, Great and Holy Monday

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

## April 26, Great and Holy Tuesday

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

## April 27, Great and Holy Wednesday

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

## April 28, Great and Holy Thursday

- ❖ Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil the Great with washing of feet @ 9 a.m. Communion breakfast, hosted by the Parent Guild, to follow.
- ❖ Twelve Gospels with procession @ 7 p.m.

## April 29, Great and Holy Friday

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

## April 30, Great and Holy Saturday

- ❖ Vespers 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, May 1, PASCHA: The Feast of Feasts

- ❖ Agape Vespers @ 11 a.m. HERE - St. George & St. Mary join us
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