

**St. John of Damascus Parish Meeting
Chairman's Report – Don Khouri II**

May 18, 2011

Good evening,

Christ is Risen!

I would like to cover three topics with you today.

First, I have a few thank yous I would like to distribute

Second, I would like to update you briefly on what the Executive Board has focused on this year.

And Third, I have a few things we should be thinking about in the years ahead.

Thank Yous

Slide. I would like to thank the other members of the Executive Board, who have worked hard this year to deliver an agenda and do what is right for the parish. This is a committed and dedicated group that always has the best interest of the parish in mind. I want you to know that when a topic is deliberated it is given the appropriate recognition and the attention it deserves. Nothing is taken lightly.

Please take a few minutes and look at the names on this slide. Each of these individuals has contributed to the church and to the Executive Board in their own way from chairing committees, serving on committees, running events, and overall supporting the church. It is not an easy job, and I know it comes from a labor of love.

Slide. When I re-joined the board in 2007, the youngest member of the board was 40 years old. Now 25% of the board is younger than 40, and 20% is younger than 30. When we deliberate on a topic, it is usually these 5 individuals that are the most thoughtful about the long-term impacts of our decision, and I commend them for that

I would also like to thank you the parish, for all your contributions and support throughout the year. Please keep your comments, ideas, and suggestions coming. The more we hear from you, the more information we have to do our work.

Initiatives

Slide. Communication. We have tried to increase communication from the board over the past few years in a number of ways. You have seen communication from me in the bulletin, newsletters, and special reports. For those on the email list, you have also received a number of email communications on timely topics. The webmaster has added a number of improvements on the website. And for those who are more comfortable online, you are following us on Twitter, and Like Us on Facebook.

Slide. Consistent with our goal as a cultural center, we started professional Arabic classes this year with two classes. There were 8 Adults 18 and older, and 6 children from ages 10 to 16. We hired a professional organization, Berlitz to come in and teach these classes. There was a teacher dedicated to each class. We have received very positive feedback overall from these classes, and we have a whole family attending together. There were 25 sessions in all, a total of 40 hours of classroom time. We will continue this initiative next year, and if there is interest, we will offer a level 2 class for those graduating this year. Fadi Massabni was the champion behind this work, and saw it all the way through from the inception of the idea to hiring Berlitz, and working out all the details of the class.

Slide. There is so much to keep up with the maintenance of our church and the parish home. On this slide are just a few of the projects the Maintenance Committee – namely Richie Homsy, Arthur Khouri, Bob Zahka, Alan Cardoos, and Tim Langley – have completed this past year. To highlight just a few, the carpeting throughout the church was replaced, the walls were painted, and one of the four HVAC units was replaced. On one hand the church is never looking better. These gentleman put in a lot

of hours to keep up the church. On the other hand, the building is starting to age, and there is much more that needs our attention.

Slide. We held an art action again this year with limited success. There were 75 attendees, and about 40 pieces sold, and we netted about \$2500. Arthur Khouri ran, promoted and managed this event from end to end.

In October, we celebrated our 25th anniversary with a wonderful weekend chaired by Mitch Hallal. There was a full house on Saturday night with a delicious middle eastern dinner and outstanding, home-grown parish entertainment – you really can't beat it. And another full house on Sunday with a special brunch after church accompanied by some encore acts. It is a great example of the community spirit we have when we come together like this as a parish family.

We are hosting the Parish Life Conference this year at the Hyannis Conference Center on Cape Cod. This has taken much of our attention this year. Debbie Leotaskos and Cynthia Capobianco are leading this effort. You had to have at least four syllables in your last name to be considered to chair this event. They have been leading this effort for two years, it takes that much time to prepare for this weekend. The ad book has raised approximately \$10k, and I believe a few ads are still trickling in. You will here a lot more about this from Debbie and Cynthia shortly.

Lastly, Richie George and Louella Cardoos approached the board and asked to lead an event to remember the Crusaders, a church organization that existed many years ago. Richie has many surprises planned for that weekend, and it promises to be a great time. I don't even know what he has up his sleeve.

Looking Ahead / Challenges

Slide. We have a financial gap that needs to be filled. It takes more to run this parish than we are currently bringing in. As you know, we made a decision as a parish family recently to pass on an opportunity to rent out our church school to a local pre-school. This would have netted about \$20k. The last two years, we have rented our parking lot out to the

Newbridge group for \$24,000 annually. They have recently decided not to renew the contract. This creates a gap that we need to fill, and John Haddad and Larua Veo are going to be talking more about this in more detail in just a few minutes. We have some decisions to make as a parish. Do we want to bring in outside funds to support our parish, or do we want to raise all the money internally, or do we want to consider a cheaper place to live (I'm not saying that is popular or that it would be my first choice). We need to make some decisions and stay dedicated to that path.

This is not a new story. The work usually falls on the same people. We have taken some steps over the last 2 years, under David Haddad's leadership to create a database of volunteers, their skills and how they are willing to help. This has helped but not enough. We need some new ways to get people involved, and we will continue to work on this, make it fun, and share the load.

We are up to these challenges.

I want to close by saying that it has been a pleasure to serve as you chairman for the past 2 years. I hope and pray that I have moved the ball forward a bit. I know that I have made some popular decisions, and some decisions that have not been popular, and either way it is all done for the love of the church. This is a great church, we have proven over and over again that we can accomplish anything that we put our minds to, and work together to accomplish. Napoleon Hill said, "whatever your mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve."

I am also reminded of Matthew chapter 17, when the father brings his demon possessed son to the disciples, they could not remove the demon. When Jesus healed the boy, he told the disciples, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Let's move mountains!

Thank you and God Bless You.