
❖ THE TORCHBEARER ❖

Vol. 7 ... No. 2

October, 1998

From the Pastor...

Beloved in the Lord:

October is Youth Month throughout our archdiocese. Here at St. John's we will observe Youth Month in the usual way. The teens will read the epistle, serve as ushers, host the coffee hour, and take up a collection for the Special Olympics. While these things are most important, they are not enough.

As one who was brought up in the church, serving as an altar boy, being part of the church school, helping wait tables at parish dinners, participating in the different festivals, and the like, I used to think that this was what church was all about. Not only did I do these things but many, many of my friends did them too. Yet, I ask how many of them still go to church, still have a commitment to Christ and His Church? Sadly, the answer is not many. Look back to when you were in the YPA, the Crusaders, or the many other groups that we have. How many of our friends still come to church? Again, the answer, sadly, is not many.

Do you see a common thread here? When we have a commitment that is exclusively on the "business" side of the church, burnout is sure to follow. Our commitment to the church must first and foremost be a commitment to Christ and His holy church. This should be *the* priority. What a joy is it to attend the Divine Liturgy, to hear the words of God in the Epistle and Gospel, and how humbling it is to

receive the very body and blood of Christ, when we enter into communion with God.

Don't get me wrong. I enjoy dances, dinners, bazaars, fashion shows and the like as much as anyone else; however, when they become the reason for the church's existence and not *vice versa* then something is wrong. The Church's *raison d'être*, its reason for being, is to form an earthly community to reflect the glory of God and community of saints gathered around the heavenly church. To receive the sacraments, to pray, to fast, to grow in the Spirit towards full Communion with God. This is what we are supposed to do. Field trips and recess are nice, but is that why we send our children to school?



Hence, our *example* as faithful Orthodox Christians is how we can teach our youth something that is real and will withstand the test of time. When they see us pray and take our faith seriously they in turn will see how important our Orthodox faith must be. If we think that taking kids to conventions, to dinners, or having them participate in the oratorical festivals, or even going to the Village is going to cement their relationship with God in and of itself we are, in my opinion, sadly mistaken.

Let's not let history repeat itself. Let's show our kids and ourselves that the Church is something worthy of our love, respect, and attention. It will be hard to do

but you'll be glad you did!

with much love in Christ,

Rev. Fr. John K. Teebagy
Pastor

Liturgical Notes...

On Cremation

Questions have been asked, and I guess will always be asked, concerning why the Orthodox Church does NOT accept cremation as a viable alternative to the normal and proper Trisagion & Funeral Prayers at the church, and the burial at the cemetery that are offered after a member of our community has departed this life. In fact, in my 12 years as a priest having to defend this position, I have come across many people who didn't even know what cremation was all about or how it was done, let alone the church's position.

So, let's start with a short explanation (not meaning to get too graphic here) on what happens when a human being is taken to be cremated. Cremation involves taking the body to a crematory and having it completely incinerated, or burned. The heat of the fires is so hot that it burns the fleshly portion of the body to the extent that not even ashes remain. It is entirely consumed. The only thing left is the bones, which do not burn completely. The bones are then taken and crushed and pulverized, AND THAT is what is returned to the family in a little enclosed urn. When people say that they want their "ashes" scattered across the field, or at sea, or wherever, there are no real "ashes" per se, because everything was burned up to the point of mere dust. The so-called ashes are really the crushed bones of the person.

With that in mind, let us talk now about the teachings of the Orthodox Christian Church as to why this is NOT an acceptable practice for Orthodox Christians.

First of all, we have to remember that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. This means that human beings have a special blessing above all other forms of creation. If we bear that holy and divine image, we are obligated to show a much deeper respect for our bodies than we would anything else. Hear the words of St. Paul: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). If our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, we should not do anything to harm or destroy it, even after its soul

has departed this life. For example, we do not purposely kill other people; rather, they die of natural causes. Therefore, we do not purposely cremate a body; rather, we show respect for it, honor it, pray over it, anoint it with oils and ashes, and bury it in the ground to decay naturally.

Secondly, we ought to treat our body with great respect because the Lord God has become incarnate and has taken on our human life as His own. Through Jesus Christ, our human nature has been deified and united with God. The pre-eternal, uncreated Son of the Living God has united Himself to MAN: He lived His earthly life in a human body; He dies in a human body, and was raised from the dead in a human body; and He ascended back into heaven IN A HUMAN BODY. And because of His resurrection from the dead, we too "look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come" (The Nicene Creed). Listen again to St. Paul: "*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized [immersed] into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his*" (Romans 6:3-5).

You see, my friends, it goes like this: From the moment of our conception, we have a soul and a body that is developing and growing in the image and, hopefully if we allow it to, the likeness of God. It is the soul that enlivens the body, and the body that is the tangible base of the soul. [FYI – In the totality of our being, we must realize that we human beings also have a spirit (see 1 Theses. 5:23), which may be thought of as our conscience, or as Fr. Paul Tarazi puts it, is "the center where we meet the Spirit of God, ... our 'spirit' is but the opening through which the Holy Spirit is poured into our lives and works in us..." It is our spirit that causes us to know the Truth and what is right and wrong, which other creatures do not have. They act on instinct; we act on reason. However, this aspect is food for another discussion.] When we die, our body and soul separate, as it did with Jesus. Our body is then buried in the grave, and our soul goes on to be kept by God until the Second Coming of Christ (see also Luke 16:19-31). At the Second

Coming, when Jesus comes on the clouds to judge the living and the dead, our bodies will be raised from the dead, and REUNITED WITH OUR SOULS, so that we will become fully human again, hopefully to spend eternity with God in His heavenly Kingdom. For as Jesus says: *“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgement”* (John 5:28-29). So, then, we honor the body in hope of the resurrection from the dead.

Thirdly, in the history of The Church, there have been countless instances where miracles have occurred at the graves of the martyrs and saints. Their bodies, even though buried, have filled the air with a sweet-smelling fragrance, such as can be experienced at the monastery of St. Katherine in Mt. Sinai, Egypt. In our Tradition, we take these “relics” as we call them, the BONES, or remains, of the saints, and place them in the center of the altar, or even sew them into the *antimension* that sits on the altar, upon which will be placed the bread and wine to become the Body & Blood of Christ. Therefore, we honor the relics (a practice that began in A.D. 156 with the relics of St. Polycarp), and have them placed on our altars, and within the icons of the saints to be venerated and honored – not pulverized and scattered in the garden or out at sea.

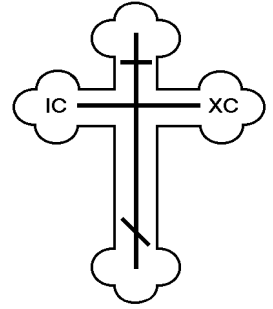
Lastly, let me say this: the point in all of this is to show honor and respect for the human body in the Tradition of what has been handed down to us from Christ and His apostles. No doubt, many will ask, as they have before: *“But what if someone is cremated, or burns and dies in a fire? Can God still raise up their bodies from the dead?”* Well, of course. God can and will do whatever He chooses. But, again, the point is that WE shouldn't do harm to that which has been sanctified and deified and chosen by God to be a consecrated vessel, and an instrument of His divine purposed **in life and even after death**. *“Do you know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are”* (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

Taken from St. George Cathedral, Toledo, OH
Rev. Christopher Holwey, Pastor

Church Records...

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

Alyson Hayley Veo,
daughter of David and
Laura (Taksery) Veo of
Belmont, MA was baptized
on August 23, 1998.



Many Years!!



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

Matthew Reynolds and Rachel Sabbag were married on September 19, 1998. They reside in Brookline, MA.

Norman M. Beshere and Kimberly Ann Bocon were married on September 20, 1998. They reside in Randolph, MA.

Many Years!!



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

Khourieye Christine Sakey (94) of Biddeford, ME fell asleep in the Lord on August 22, 1998. She is survived by her three sons and their families. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park, MA.

Thomas A. Nashawaty (78) of Canton, MA fell asleep in the Lord on September 1, 1998. He is survived by his wife, daughter and son and their families. Burial was at Knollwood Memorial Park, in Canton, MA.

Linda Helen Abbott (84) of Lowell, MA fell asleep in the Lord on September 2, 1998. She is survived by her two daughters, son and their families. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park, MA.

Memory Eternal!!

From the Chairman...

I hope and pray that this edition of the Torchbearer finds you and your family in good health. It has been a great start to the Church Year. The Church School and Guild have kept us busy. Church is full again and we have a whole host of events planned so that everyone can get involved.

Church is more than Sunday morning. The only way to realize that is to get involved. On behalf of the Executive Board I challenge you to get involved – there are so many events and committees that can use your help. Your Church can always use help in the Altar, the Choir or the Church School.

Our church is a family and we must all work together to keep Our family healthy.

If you have any suggestions or ideas please do not hesitate to bring them to the attention of the Executive Board. We want you to feel free to approach any Board Member, including Fr. John, with your comments.

May God Bless You,

Robert P. Zahka, Chairman, Executive Board

ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS ANNUAL BAZAAR

will be held on

November 6, 7, and 8,

**Mark your calendars now for
a weekend of fun, great food,
handmade crafts and so much
more!**

Volunteers are needed as we prepare for our largest fund-raiser of the year! Please call co-chairmen, Ray Hamwey at (978) 263-1266 or John Haddad at (508) 533-6218 if you are interested in helping out.

From the Church School...

By the time this Newsletter is published, we will have already been back in Church School here at St. John's. We have some new and very "novel" activities planned for this year, always with our committed goal of providing a sound Orthodox education in an atmosphere of fellowship and fun.



We are in the planning stages for our first ever overnight retreat at the Church. Our older students will participate in lively discussions about our Faith, attend evening worship, create group projects... and of course, enjoy homemade pancakes in the morning!

Soon you should see some of our seasoned Antiochian Village campers leading our Divine Liturgy in song, as well as our girls holding baskets, collecting the offering, and reading the Epistle.

Floors are waxed, books are in, supplies are ready, and the teaching staff await the return of students this Sunday. Here is our staff list – many veterans and some new "recruits".

Preschool 1	Parent Volunteers
Preschool 2	Laura Bradley and Gina DeStito Kristen Sabbag, Aide
Kindergarten	Roberta Maloof Karen Vachon and Catherine Drislane, Aides
Grade 1	Diane Mercado Kristen Matta, Aide
Grade 2	Dianne Teebagy DiFonso and Carol Hazerjian
Grade 3	Sharon Cormier Camille Zahka, Aide
Grade 4/5	Erin Tawa and Kathleen Tawa
Grade 6/7/8	Peter Zahka
Grade 9/10	Peter Zahka, Advisor

Each of these teachers deserves our heartfelt thanks for their dedication and enthusiasm.

As always, I welcome your support and input.

Faithfully,

Nancy Close

From the Parent Guild...

The church school year started off for the Parent's Guild with the usual **BANG**. This year instead of the reptile show, we hosted a kids dance on Friday night. From the expression on all the kids' faces, it would seem that it was a success. The DJ had games and prizes, as well as all the popular tunes. Then on Sunday, the guild hosted the Family Bar-B-Que for the parish. The food was good and thanks to the Teen Soyo you were able to have your car washed while you ate. It's always nice when we can get together with our church family and break bread. I would like to thank everyone who made this weekend a success.

The Guild and the Church School are working together to do some new things for the children of St. John's. If you have any ideas, please tap me on the shoulder during coffee hour. We are always interested and would love any help you have to offer. The Guild and the Church School are here for the benefit of our children.

It was good to see all the faces back from summer vacations and we look forward to the coming year.

Kathleen Tawa - Guild President

Debbie Leotsakos - Guild Vice President

From the Teen SOYO...

This is Erin Tawa, president of St. John's Teen SOYO. I thought I would just let you know a little on what is going on in the St. John's Teen SOYO. On Sunday, September 13th, our Teen SOYO held a car wash as a fundraiser during the Parent Guild's Kick-off Carwash. It went very well and we raised a total of \$206.00 after expenses. Special thanks go out to Joe Demerjian, and two other boys who I am not sure of their names but they know who they are! The Teen SOYO is always having fundraisers and events, and is always appreciative of the support of the church. Some upcoming events are the snack bar at the Bazaar, Pennies for Project Mexico, and the Pistachio/Candy fundraiser to benefit the Giving Tree. Once again thank you for all the support. Good-bye and God Bless.

Erin Tawa

Announcements...

ST. MARY ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, Cambridge - 70th ANNIVERSARY AND MORTGAGE BURNING FOR CHURCH AND PARISH HOME – October 2, 3, and 4 with presiding hierarch, the Rt. Rev. Bishop DEMETRI.

For complete schedule, reservations and more information call St. Mary's church office at (617) 547-1234.

ST. GEORGE, NORWOOD – DINNER HAFLI with Fouad Hajjar & Ensemble to celebrate the Golden Anniversary of the Orthodox Choir at St. George, Norwood – Saturday, October 10th at St. John of Damascus Church. Full Middle-Eastern Buffet at 7 p.m.; Hafli at 8:30 p.m. Adults - \$35, under 12 - \$20. Reservations Only (tables of 10 welcome) – please call Dolores Elias at (781) 762-2393, Florence Esper at (781) 762-2847, David Franciosi at (781) 769-2443, or Jackie Saber at (781) 769-2248.

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH, West Roxbury - 22nd ANNUAL BAZAAR & FOOD FAIR – October 16 & 17 – (Friday and Saturday) 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., & Sunday, October 18, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. FREE ADMISSION. Full kitchen service and take-outs. Featuring Authentic Middle Eastern Cuisine, American Foods & Pastry, Country Store, Arts & Crafts, Ceramics, Handknit Boutique, Holiday Boutique, Halloween Table, Costume Jewelry, Toys, Raffles, White Elephant Table, Middle Eastern Pastries and much, much more. Great family fun and bargains galore. Come and do some early Christmas shopping! For more information please feel free to call the church at (617) 323-9861. Proceeds benefit church projects.

DEPARTMENT OF CAMPUS MINISTRY invites all 1998 graduates, college students and young adults to ANNUAL WINTER COLLEGE CONFERENCE at the Antiochian Village Heritage and Learning Center, PA from December 26th – 30th. This years theme is "Through Eyes of Faith." Complete room and registration fee is only \$125 – scholarship assistance is available. For reservations call the Village at (724) 238-9565.

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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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Services: Sunday-Matins 9:00 a.m.,

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Church Office Hours...

Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

The deadline for the Sunday bulletin is Thursday at noon.

Please plan accordingly.

DEADLINE for the **NOVEMBER TORCHBEARER**

will be **October 10th.**

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

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