
❖ THE TORCHBEARER ❖

Vol. 7 ... No. 7

May - June, 1999

From the Pastor...

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!



With thanks to God, another Holy Week and Pascha have passed and all of us were able to bask in the light of the Resurrection. This past Lent and Holy Week, as in past years, showed the faith and commitment of the members of our parish. Attendance was the best that I can remember, the choir seems to be getting

bigger, the altar boys were out in full force, the Executive Board outdid themselves at the Easter breakfast and the list goes on...

I would also be remiss if I did not thank Fr. Nifon Abraham for all of his help during Holy Week. Subdeacon Antony Elbahou, as always, provided assistance to us that went above and beyond the call of duty. We thank him for his help this past year and wish him well as he prepares for final examinations.

Easter (Pascha) time is such a wonderful time of the year. Our goal must be to see how Easter and its message truly transforms all – ourselves included. I would ask you to fight the temptation of having the joy of Pascha be temporary. One way to do this is to remember that the church does not shut down during the summer. I realize that families, mine included, go on vacation and need downtime, but the whole summer?! Parents with small children should also be consistent in their attendance at the Liturgy. If it is important to attend church when church school is in attendance, why isn't important when church school is out of session? The hidden message that we send to children, whether we do it intentionally or not, is that church school is more important than the Divine Liturgy, which it is not.

This coming August 5th will mark the end of my seventh year as pastor of St. John of Damascus! It seems that August 5th, 1992 was just yesterday. As I start my eighth year, I promise you that I will continue to have the same love and commitment to all of you as I did when I first arrived. For me it is a blessing to be here, and I don't take it for granted. As I rest and reflect this coming summer to ready myself for a new church year in September, so too I ask you to do the same. This past year was VERY busy, next year will be even better!

Please pray for my family and me as we travel this summer on vacation and as I go to Chicago for the archdiocese convention. Stay well!

With love in the Risen Christ,

*Rev. Fr. John K. Teebagy
Pastor, Church of St. John of Damascus
Dedham, Massachusetts*

The Garden of Humility

by Fr. Paul O'Callaghan

“Let us run away from the boasting of the Pharisee and learn the humility of the Publican,” so the kontakion for the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee exhorts us. This first Sunday of the Triodion period (the period that precedes Great Lent) recalls us to the most fundamental virtue, the one from which all others flow, according to the Fathers. Just as the fall of man came by pride, as he sought to exalt himself into a god, so his redemption begins with humility – that of God who humbles himself to become man.

Spiritual writers have asserted the idea that the fruit of each tree in the Garden of Eden was a unique sacramental pathway to the contemplation of God. Each fruit offered man a participation in grace and a vision of virtue, an opportunity through which he could participate in the life of God. The Garden therefore was a Paradise of spiritual delights, the savor of each fruit bearing a distinctive opportunity for communion with the Creator.

With this version of the Garden in mind, we may rightly speak of humility itself as a garden of spiritual delights.

For the saints show that only the truly humble person can love perfectly, suffer profitably, extend kindness wholeheartedly, understand truly, believe unflinchingly, struggle unremittingly, and speak wisely. Why? Because in all these things he sees the truth of God, neighbor, and self. He thus becomes transparent to God and His activity in all situations. Each form of virtue and spiritual endeavor is for him a unique realization of his communion with God.

True humility and the pathway to it are difficult to understand in our age. We have few living examples, holy saints, who make it plain by embodying it. We can discuss it, but only with grave limitations.

A simple definition of humility might be “not to think of oneself more highly than one ought.” But the saints go much further than this. They encourage each one of us to consider himself “the worst of all sinners.” How can this be so? Can I really honestly say that I am a worse sinner than Adolph Hitler or Charles Manson? The point is not to make comparisons between one’s failings and those of others. It is the fact that one can have a personal realization of the gravity of his own sins in a way that he can never have of others.” By God’s grace, it is possible to sense that one has failed uniquely and horribly in the light of the blessings, gifts, and responsibilities which have been entrusted to him. He sees himself as worst because he sees his truth about himself best.

There are many outward acts by which a person can seek to demonstrate humility. Dressing poorly, being unkempt, living noticeably below one’s means, acting in ways that invite the disdain of others are examples. Church history is replete with such. But true humility is not conspicuous. The ways of “fools for Christ” are extremely specialized and treacherous pathways to humility. Average persons who would seek to embrace this lifestyle are likely to become just plain fools for their efforts. In *The Way of the Ascetics* it is said that “...the truly humble person escapes notice. The world does not know him; for the world he is mostly a ‘zero.’” In a similar vein, it was my grandfather’s greatest desire “to pass through the world unnoticed.” This is the character of a humble spirit. It does not seek recognition in either in being glorious or in being contemptible. It seeks not to be recognized at all. It is distressingly average or regular.

Must one be of a lowly state in life to be humble? Does a janitor have a better chance of being a humble man than a lawyer? Perhaps. But who was the most humble man we meet in the Gospels? Other than the Savior, the Theotokos, or the Baptist, would it not be the centurion who proclaimed he was unworthy to have Jesus enter under his roof? And yet he was a man in a position of authority, commanding a hundred men. Or think of the role of a bishop. Can a bishop be a humble man, wearing

so many insignias of his authority, having his hand kissed constantly, and hearing “Many Years” wherever he goes? He can if he keeps in mind that these expressions belong to the dignity of his office, and are not recognition being paid to his person. The point is not whether one is of a high or low estate in life. Humility is found in the way which one conducts oneself, not in the office one occupies.

For example, an important corporate executive is humble if he accepts his high position as a gift from God and a duty toward God. He has a great responsibility for the resources and welfare of others that he takes seriously. He knows that the exercise of his office must be done as personal service to the Lord. Even if he must make difficult decisions that have a negative impact on others, (such as firing someone), he does so with understanding and without arrogance. In all things he seeks excellence because he knows the Lord asks no less of him.

Current pop psychology emphasizes “feeling good about yourself,” delighting in the praise given by others, and even praising oneself. It is seen as desirable to think highly of oneself, whether or not that assessment is shared by others. “Low self-esteem” is seen as a terrible inner affliction. How does Christian humility square with this approach? Not very well. Whereas the saints and fathers encourage us to be lavish in the praise of others, they caution us against accepting praise. By the latter they mean receiving praise into the heart with a warm feeling of self-congratulation. Rather, they encourage us to give the glory to God.

Beyond rejecting praise, the saints encourage us to rejoice in insults and persecutions because through them we learn humility. The problem with this advice is that a person must already be advanced in humility to accept it. Most of us would do well, if not to rejoice in these things, to learn to bear them without resentment, self-pity or complaining. If one can retain peace of soul and refuse the temptation to become embittered against one’s opponents, then substantial progress toward humility is being made. But for most of us, these are hard lessons to learn and little rejoicing is involved. We think highly of ourselves and it hurts when our pride is wounded. Or we suffer from low self-esteem and such experiences cause us to collapse further into self-pity and inner recrimination.

Low self-esteem and high self-esteem both reflect a preoccupation with self. The difference is whether the evaluation is negative or positive, but self is still on center stage. True humility as championed by Christ and the saints of all generations means that self is no longer the preoccupation. Instead, God and others are always in view. This is how the Apostles were able to endure such terrible adversities; they were grounded in this

perspective. It is a difficult ideal to achieve for those of us reared in a society which values self-centeredness.

The pathway to all other virtues begins when a person glimpses the glory of God and senses his own unworthiness. Out of this vision is born a deep compassion for others who are also caught in the web of human sin, failure, and suffering. The humble person identifies himself in this way with others and seeks to promote their healing and restoration as he lifts up and exalts the glory of God. May God grant us to see little of self and much of God and neighbor as we seek through humility to taste of all the divine virtues that render a soul pleasing to Him.

From the Chairman...

I hope and pray that this edition of the Torchbearer finds you and your family in good health. *Christ is Risen. Truly He is Risen.*

While the rest of the Parish was enjoying a beautiful Holy Week, your Maintenance Committee was very busy. Meeting with contractors and engineers, the Committee has put together a prioritized list of "Capital Improvements" for both our Church Complex and Parish Home. Repairs to the Air Conditioning Units, a new roof, "dance" floor and carpeting for the Church are only a few of the items. The current estimates for the work that must be done totals close to \$200,000.00.

There is a feeling that our Church is in great financial shape. While our Annual Bazaars have been successful and the Church has been operating in the black, our finances are anything but wonderful. Several years ago, the Executive Board created a "rainy day fund" (the Sinking Fund) to help offset the cost of major items like those listed above. Unfortunately, the Sinking Fund only has about \$50,000 - \$60,000, far short of the amount of money needed.

Your Finance Committee has been charged with putting together a Comprehensive Plan to help raise the needed money. We, as a parish, need to address how we are going to maintain this beautiful complex. We, as individual parishioners, need to address how we support our Church financially. If you have any suggestions on how we can raise the much needed funds please contact any member of the Executive Board.

Your Executive Board has recently taken the position that you should not be asked to give to a "second collection" every time you come to Liturgy. We voted that the Four Special Collections, which the Church is assessed for by the Archdiocese, will be covered as part of our Annual Budget.

The Annual Parish Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 18th at 7:00 p.m. At that time, the Ballot for the

Executive Board will be finalized. If you are interested in serving the parish as a member of the Executive Board please contact David Shagoury, Chairman of the Nomination Committee.

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.

Very Truly Yours,

Robert P. Zahka, Chairman – Executive Board

Church Records...

"As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ"

Julia Ann Langley, daughter of Timothy and Dana (Khoury) Langley of Franklin, MA was baptized on March 21, 1999.

Sabrina Rose Doyle, daughter of Brian and Susan (Hamwey) Doyle of Wilmington, MA was baptized on March 28, 1999.

Many Years!!

"The Seal of the Gift of Holy Spirit"

Jolaine Agnes Hamwey, wife of Tony Hamwey, of Tewksbury, MA was chrismated on April 10, 1999.

Christopher James Bradley, husband of Laurie (Tawa) Bradley, of Dedham, MA was chrismated on April 10, 1999.

Many Years!!

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

Matel Roomey (100) of Norwood, MA fell asleep in the Lord on March 28, 1999. She is survived by her daughter, and three grandchildren and their families. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park, MA.

Corrine (Kurker) Hill (58) of Bedford, MA fell asleep in the Lord on April 3, 1999. She is survived by her husband, son, three daughters and their families. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park, MA.

Liturgical Notes...

- **SUMMER CHURCH HOURS** – As usual, the Divine Liturgy will start at 9:30 a.m. from June 20th through September 5th inclusive. Please mark your calendars.
- To observe the **FEAST OF THE ASCENSION** (40 days after Easter), we will celebrate a **Vespertal Liturgy on Wednesday, May 19th @ 6:30 p.m.**
- **THE BLESSING OF GRAVES...**As is the custom, Fr. John will be at Fairview Cemetery on Memorial Day, May 31st from 9 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. to bless the graves of your loved ones. Trisagion Prayers will be offered in front of “the shrine” at 9 a.m.
- **DORMITION FAST** begins on August 1st through August 15th. Please do your best to observe this fast to the best of your abilities. This fast in honor of the Mother of God’s “Dormition” is one of the four major fasting periods of the Church.
- We will observe the **FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST, which the Church observes on August 6th**, on Sunday August 8th with the blessing of the grapes.
- Please consult the weekly Sunday Bulletin for any changes, additions, etc. that may occur during the Summer months.
- **FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE PROGRAM** - Each year at this time our Archdiocese sponsors this program that has helped to feed many hungry people all around the world. Please consider offering a generous donation to this most worthy cause; make your check payable to the Church of St. John of Damascus earmarked "Food for Hungry People." Checks may be mailed to the church or left in the vestibule of the church. We encourage the whole family to share with those less fortunate. God bless you! We will be accepting donations through June 1, 1999.
- The Department of Youth announces two online registration and information pages: 1999 Pan-Orthodox Youth Workers Conference Information Page and Online Registration is now available at: http://www.antiochian.org/Youth/Conference/1999_pan.htm.
1999 NAC Teen SOYO Special Olympics Games: This being the 20th Anniversary of NAC Teen SOYO’s ministry to Special Olympics and the fact that the only dates this year available at Antiochian Village Camp conflict with the Pennsylvania Special Olympic State Games and International Games, NAC Teen SOYO has voted and with the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP, will be going to the Pennsylvania Special Olympics State Games being held at Penn State from June 9th- 12th. Teens

interested in volunteering to assist at these games, as official representatives of NAC Teen SOYO, can fill out the online application request from located at [http://www.antiochian.org/youth/Special Olympics Application request](http://www.antiochian.org/youth/Special_Olympics_Application_request) .

- When planning your wedding please keep three things in mind...
 1. **Book the church** before the reception facility.
 2. **Book the church** before printing the invitations
 3. **Book the church** before ...
-

From the Church School..

Happy Easter ... Christ is Risen!

The pace hasn’t slowed down yet here at Church School! Each grade is busy on the Creative Arts and Writing Festivals, as well as their own grade level activities.

Four of our “star” pupils are hard at work preparing to participate in the Teen Bible Bowl at the regional conference in June. Michael Bezreh, Ashley Close, Nicole Mercado, and Emily Vogel are studying the Letters of St. Ignatius under the guidance of Seminarian Tony Elbahou. This is quite a challenging topic, to say the least, and these students deserve praise and encouragement from us all!

The second annual “Village Report” was presented recently during the Divine Liturgy. Seven campers addressed the parish, describing their experiences as Antiochian Village campers. Our Grade 4/5 teacher, Erin Tawa, explained what it was like to be a Counselor In Training last summer. If you missed this eloquent presentation, it is available in a pamphlet for your reading enjoyment!

The 1999 Church School Design contest is starting soon. All students are eligible to submit a drawing which they feel represents our Church School. Last year’s winning design was printed on a T-shirt which all students received at graduation. This year we’re going to printed the winning artwork on well, you’ll just have to wait and see!!

As always, we welcome your ideas, input and interest in our Church School. And we thank the many, many people who continue to support and assist us!

Faithfully,
Nancy Close

From the Parent Guild...

Now that one of the holiest seasons of our church year is behind us, the Guild is busy putting together the last of our activities before summer is upon us. This starts off with what has become a very fun evening for the families of St. John's, THE PENNY SALE. The Penny Sale will be held on Friday May 21, 1999. We are asking that each child in Sunday school bring in a new item, value approximately \$10.00. The item can be anything from toys, games, small appliance, videos, cd's, etc. These items can be dropped off at the Church School office any Sunday. We also, will take cash donations, if you don't have time to shop. Please see myself, Sheila Tawa, Cynthia Capobianco or Elaine Sabbag.

The Church School Picnic will be held on Saturday, June 12th. The time and location will be announced and details will be sent home with each child. Also, Graduation this year will be on June 13th and as usual will be followed with a luncheon.

We look forward to seeing everyone at the Penny Sale, Picnic and Graduation.

God Bless You All,

Kathleen Tawa, Guild President

Debbie Leotsakos, Guild Vice-President

From the Fellowship of St. John the Divine...

Greetings,

We felt we should take the time to let you know we're alive and well and living at West Street.

I'm sure you are all aware of the role of the "Fellowship." It is to work behind the scenes towards humanitarian needs.

Thanks to the generosity of you all, we are able to meet those needs.

We do not have meetings. Work is coordinated by a chairman and treasurer. In addition, each project is headed up by a volunteer..

Our Religious Showcase is meant to be a convenience to our parishioners as well as a fund-raiser. The showcase is ably managed by Cindy Haddad. Cindy will special order any item you might need.

Our Lenten Smorgasbord was very successful. The children enjoyed the pizza which was generously donated by Papa Gino's of Dedham. God willing it will become an annual Sunday event during Lent.

Currently we are involved in our "Food for Hungry People" drive. You all received the brochures and in the April issue of "The Word" you can read about it in further detail. I'm sure you are all grateful for what you have. Deadline for donations is June 1st. No amount is too small.

In closing I personally want to thank all those who have helped us in our endeavors. It would be appreciated if when you see an upcoming event publicized, you would volunteer yourself in some capacity. All parishioners are members of the Fellowship!

Our prayers for a blessed summer to all. Hope to see you at the June conference.

Faithfully,

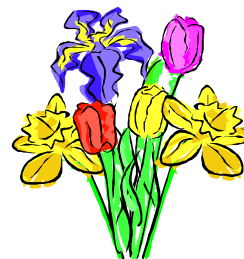
Barbara E. Khouri

From the Teen SOYO...

The Teen SOYO has had a wonderful year, and we owe it to all of the parishioners of St. John of Damascus Church. Without the support, and generosity of the members of our church, many of the things we do would not be possible. This is why the Teen SOYO would like to thank any person that has ever attended, or helped out with any venture the SOYO takes on.

More personally though the Teen SOYO would like to thank the people who helped out with the Friday Night Vigil. Their help was greatly appreciated by the teens who spent the night at the church. The Teen SOYO sincerely thanks Laurie Bradley, Cynthia Capobianco, Andrea LaRosa, Jennifer George, Lauren George, Lisa Zahka, and Linda Hakar. A special thanks goes to Elaine Sabbag who helped us through the night by preparing food, and also to Abe Sabbag and Kathy Tawa who stayed the whole night to read with the teens. I hope everyone had a happy Easter, and once again thanks to everyone in the parish for supporting the Teen SOYO this year.

HAVE A BEAUTIFUL



SUMMER!

Announcements...

- **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** will be held on Tuesday, May 18th at 7 p.m. Your attendance and input will be most appreciated. Please plan on participating!
- **61st ANNUAL PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE, New England Region Fellowship of St. John the Divine, hosted by St. Mary Church of Pawtucket, RI. will be held June 24-27, 1999** at the Sheraton Inn Plymouth, 180 Water St., Plymouth, MA. The plans have been confirmed! Activities will include: Oratorical Festival, Parish Council Dinner, Antiochian Women's Meeting and Luncheon, Teen SOYO Meeting, Bible Bowl, St. Ignatius Meeting and Dinner, Grand Hafli and MORE! More details to follow.
- **SVS SUMMER INSTITUTE - SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS...** Juniors in high school (entering their senior year in Fall 1999) are invited to apply for admission to a special program of the annual St. Vladimir's Seminary Liturgical Institute of Music and Pastoral Practice held June 20-25. The theme of this year's Institute will be "Contemplative Prayer and Corporate Worship." Participants will study the relationship between personal prayer and liturgical worship. Guest speakers will include Sister Magdalen of St. John the Baptist Orthodox Monastery at Essex, England and Archpriest George Timko of St. George Orthodox Church at Buffalo, N.Y. Fr. Thomas Hopko, the seminary's dean, and other members of the faculty. A limited number of students will be selected to participate in the Institute, which is normally open only to adults. There will be special discussion sections and activities for the students. Applicants should be active in their churches and at school and have good grades. Those selected will receive full scholarship aid for tuition, room and board. They will, however, be asked to cover their own travel expenses. Interested students currently in their junior year should contact Fr. Michael Arbanas at marbanas@svots.edu or by phone at (914) 961-8313, ext. 328.

***You can submit donations to your favorite church organization fund to be printed in the Sunday bulletin,
On-line – 24 hours a day – from your PC!***

Give it a try!

Our church web site has a new look and a new web address!

www.stjohnd.org

- **Donation Request Form** – now you can submit donations to your favorite church organization fund on-line – 24 hours a day – from your PC. Your donation will be automatically sent to the church e-mail box. You can submit up to 3 donations per form. You will receive a confirmation immediately of the donation information. In testing this with several parishioners, we have received very positive feedback. Give this simple to use form a try to see how easy it is to submit a donation on-line!
- **E-Mail addresses for Church** – You can now reach us at the church via e-mail. Several mailboxes have been set up and more are coming. Feel free to send e-mail to these individuals directly. All these addresses are listed in the Contact Us section of the web site.

Fr. John Teebagy	frjohn@stjohnd.org
Church Office (Linda Bekerian)	office@stjohnd.org
Executive Board President (Bob Zahka)	execboard@stjohnd.org
Church School Director (Nancy Close)	school@stjohnd.org
Webmaster (John Haddad)	webmaster@stjohnd.org

- **Other Features** – There are many other features on this web site that you may or may not have known existed ... History of Our Church, Church Bulletin Board, The Torchbearer (past and present issues), Church Calendar, Organization's web pages, Altar Boy Teams and Schedule, Constitution and By-Laws of St. John of Damascus, Directions to our church ... and more.

We encourage everyone who has access to the Internet to take a look at this site. Please feel free to offer any comments and suggestions for improving our church web site. You can submit comments via the Feedback form on the web or by writing an e-mail to the webmaster (webmaster@stjohnd.org).

Guidelines for Sane and Faithful Living:

1. Strike a balance between work and play – between seriousness and laughter. Go to church regularly and also to the ballgame.

2. Stick with the truth, even if it makes you look or feel bad. The truth is easier to remember than a lie.

3. Forgive your enemies as part of the price you pay for the privilege of being forgiven. Realize that sometimes you are a pain in the neck yourself.

4. Walk. Get lots of air and sunshine, and occasionally get some rain or snow in your face and some dirt on your hands.

5. Don't underestimate the ability of God to straighten out a situation even when you can't, and give God a little time.

6. Talk your troubles and mistakes over with someone you trust, and your dreams, too.

7. Discriminate among your fears. Learn to tell which ones are useful, which ones are not helpful.

8. Remember that the ultimate death rate is still 100 percent. You would be getting gypped if everyone got to die but you.

9. When you can't sleep, say, "Aha, here's a chance for a little privacy and creative thinking. All day I've been too busy to pray, now is a good time to have a talk with God."

10. Fall in love with life – with children, older people, the theater, movies, music, art, reading, the land, the sea and the Bible, everything but money.



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THE TORCHBEARER
is the Monthly Newsletter of the Church of St. John of Damascus

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.

(June 20th – September 5th : Divine Liturgy @ 9:30 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.

Summer Office Hours...

As in the past years the office hours for the summer months will be modified as follows:

June 28th – September 4th

Tuesday through Thursday, from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

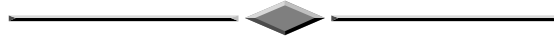
The deadline for the Sunday bulletin will be Thursday at 10 a.m.

Please watch the weekly Sunday Bulletin for any changes or exceptions.

DEADLINE for the **September 1999 Torchbearer**
will be August 10th. This will be the final Newsletter until September 1999.

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

THE PARENT GUILD
will be holding their
ANNUAL PENNY SALE
on Friday, May 21, 1998 at 7:00 p.m.



Pizza Supper 6 p.m. – 7 p.m.
Adults \$4.00 Children \$2.00
(includes admission and ticket for door prize)

Admission after 7 p.m. - \$1.00 per person *(includes ticket for door prize)*

- Cake Walk during intermission
- Coffee and Dessert will be served.

*Please plan on joining us
for this evening of fun for all!
Support your Parent Guild and Church School.
There will be toys, clothes, household goods, Beanie Babies, and lots of raffles!*

**Our M.C.'s for the night will be
Ray Hamwey and Fred Hamwey.**
