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# THE TORCHBEARER

The Newsletter of the Church of St. John of Damascus, Dedham, MA

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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2004

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## *From the Pastor...*

For those who carefully read this newsletter, you may remember this article, which was published some time ago. This article by Khouria Joan really "hit a nerve," as it was reproduced in scores of church bulletins/newsletters etc. My 10<sup>th</sup> grade biology teacher used to say that "repetition is the key to retention" ...so here goes! Enjoy.

### **SHOULD CHILDREN BE IN CHURCH?**

**By Joan Teebagy**

In some parishes today, there has been much debate about the scheduling of church school during Divine Liturgy. Some churches are contemplating or have already implemented a nursery for infants and toddlers during church services. Should children be in church? The answer lies in how the church is viewed and what you see or want for your children in the life of the church in the future.

Should children be in church? Definitely. Disagree? Please read on. In my early twenties as a young single woman in charge of a Sunday School and as a professional teacher, my answer from a theoretical viewpoint would have been "Definitely. You can't teach in a vacuum. You can't teach about the life of the Church if children are excluded from that life." In my home parish at that time, such a question would not have even been entertained. Children were part of the church family. They were expected to be in church and were a welcome part of the services, even with their "holy noise", "liturgical movements" and all. We never knew any different. Are they a distraction to others? Sometimes. But they are Orthodox Christians in the making; they will become regular churchgoers if they attend church on a regular basis from the beginning. Did I know how difficult it was to bring children to church at that time? No.

Now as a young mother of three children, Alexander, who at this writing, just turned five, Elizabeth who is almost three, and Nathaniel who is 9 1/2 months, my answer to "Should children be in church?" would, from a theoretical viewpoint, practical viewpoint, spiritual viewpoint, developmental viewpoint, etc., still be a resounding yes. Is it easy? No. Does it take preparation and planning? Yes, lots of it. Is it worth it? Definitely.

Being a wife of a priest, some people now believe my children somehow behave differently in church because they are used to it or because my husband is the priest. Being used to it? Well, that's the point. Any child will learn certain behaviors in certain situations if they are used to it and exposed to it on a regular basis. Is it easier because my husband is the priest? I am able to use the term "Daddy" instead of "Father John" when pointing out things during the church service. However, growing up in my home parish, we all had a closeness with the priest and I remember my parents saying the same things to my brothers and sisters and me. We had the same reverence and respect - perhaps even a little more since to very young children, the priest may represent God while Daddy is just Daddy. In an answer to a mother's question of "Who is that?" instead of saying "Father John", a child of three responded "That's God!"

In reality, my children are no different from any other children their age. Alexander, at five, can be expected to pay attention a little bit longer than Elizabeth who is two and, of course, nine month Nathaniel will just look and take everything in and let out a scream here and there. I have had my moments when I wonder whether it is worth it or not. I have made my treks to the back of the church when my children have become a little too noisy or rambunctious or made trips to the bathroom - often at the most inopportune times during the Liturgy. At some bleak times, I wonder if those who say children should not be in church are maybe just a little bit right. These moments are rare since I am shaken back into God's Kingdom and His welcome of little ones when my son suddenly asks about a particular icon or asks what "mercy" means or my daughter sings along with the choir with a chorus of "Alleluia" or "Lord Have Mercy" or how she crosses herself every time she hears "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" or even when my infant son just watches with great curiosity the censer being shaken or listens intently as the bells are being rung.

Is my time in Divine Liturgy different now with children? Yes. Would it be easier for me during Divine Liturgy if they were in a class instead of church? Yes, but that's not what I want for my children. I want them to be involved with Christ and the Church. This is what I want for them now and in the future. If I keep them on the fringe now, they will be involved only in the fringes of the Church later. At this time, being with my children during Divine

Liturgy is my work for God and His Church. If I don't have the opportunity to hear every word of the Liturgy or miss the response to one of the petitions or even not be able to sing in the choir as I have all my life, I can believe that my job now is to raise my little children to worship the name of God, to know my prayers are offered through my children, as I watch them at their tender age recite the Lord's Prayer and receive the Body and Blood of Christ through Holy Communion - to know I have tried my best to make them a welcome part of God's worshipping family.

By regular attendance in church, children learn and notice more than we will ever know in the short term but this knowledge and habits will become a reality and a part of their existence in the long term. One parent in my local parish admitted that she thought that she would be the last person to say children should be at Divine Liturgy rather than Church School. She has noticed that her children have learned so much during their time in church, have become used to the length of the service, and have made observations and asked questions about what they see and hear. However, it is not without a great deal of effort and patience on the parent's part. Following are some suggestions that will help you with your little children as you make the life of Christ and His Church part of their life.

1. **Sit as close to the front as possible.** Children need to see what is happening. This also helps with their attention and eventual understanding of the service. You may feel uncomfortable doing this, thinking your children will be a distraction to adults. Please don't. It is the children's job to learn how to be a part of the Divine Liturgy at their level, and it is the adult's job to be tolerant of this learning process and not expect children to be adults. (Look around and see some of the adult behaviors, such as talking. This is more of a distraction to priests than a child's "holy noise.") Don't expect young children to sit still for the whole service or stay quiet. This is unrealistic and counter-productive. I never say to my young children "Don't talk" but rather "Whisper." Movement can be restricted but not prohibited. My five year old is expected to sit on the pew and stand with minimum of movement while my two and a half year old can move around a little bit more.

2. **Bring materials for the children.** This can be children's liturgy books, picture books, crayons, and small snacks. Let the children know what is acceptable and what is not - this will change, as the children get older. I don't expect my two and half year old to stay still as much as my five year old is expected to do. As children learn to read, an illustrated Divine Liturgy book may be sufficient. Don't overdo on activities. At times, our pew was so cluttered with the various things packed for the children. Now I have learned to bring much less and set up routines for the children to follow.

**3. Prepare your children for the Liturgy.** Try to read the Gospel reading for the day to your children on Saturday night. Explain to the children that they will hear this in the church and have them listen for key words during the Gospel. During church, whisper to them to remind them to listen to the gospel story. On special days, such as Elevation of the Cross or Orthodoxy Sunday, have them bring in their own cross or icon so they can participate in their small way. Have children prepare an offering envelope that they can place in the collection baskets. Children as young as two can recite the Lord's Prayer. Teach it to your children and encourage them to recite it during church.

Teaching your children certain routines such as lighting a candle before church, watching for the Little and Great Entrance, listening to the Gospel, receiving Holy Communion on a weekly basis, reciting the Lord's Prayer, etc., not only breaks down the service so it is manageable for young children but also teaches them a lot about the Divine Liturgy itself. (Your children will surprise you with their own observations and habits as my daughter has, who, without any coaxing, crosses herself at every "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" and who sings "Alleluia" and "Lord Have Mercy" - this from a child who is described as the "wild" one of the family.) As your children grow older, expect and teach more. If you do not know enough about the Liturgy to teach it to your children, find out. What a great opportunity to enhance your own spiritual life. As your children grow older, encourage them to participate in the Divine Liturgy and the life of the community by singing in the choir and serving in the altar.

**4. Ignore comments that belittle your effort to make your children part of the church life.** People who make these comments about behavior of children have little understanding of what the Church is about or Christ's acceptance and welcome of little children. I have found that my tolerance level is lower and my children's behavior appears to be worse when I am more concerned about what people are thinking rather than concentrating on encouraging my children during the Divine Liturgy. Don't let "bad" days discourage you. Evaluate what has happened, change expectations if necessary and try again. You are not alone so seek advice from other parents as well.

**5. Make the Church an important part of your life.** Your own spiritual life is an important role model to your children. If the children see that God and the Church is an important part of your life, this will make a great impact as children grow older and one day, accept this faith as their own. Pray at home, read the scriptures, and involve your children in good works. Your own spiritual strength will also give you that extra strength to tolerate those less than perfect but child-like behaviors in church and to bring your children on a regular

basis to the Liturgy, even during those summer months when there is no Church School. Parents, who bring their children just to Church School, whether it is before or after church, do not realize that the real class is IN CHURCH. The other class is only reinforcement. It is only an enrichment of what is being taught at home and what is being absorbed through all five senses in church. When Church School is put first rather than the Liturgy, it sends a mixed message about the importance of the church in your own life and, unfortunately, it is a much stronger message than whatever they could learn in church school.

6. **Attend extra services with your children.** Make an effort to attend weekly Vespers and other special services with your children. This is where our Elizabeth learned her “Alleluias” and “Lord Have Mercy” and where Alexander (starting at four years old) is getting his feet wet as an altar boy. Although it is not always possible with young children to attend all the extra services during Great Lent, attending a few extra services including Presanctified Liturgies, special Divine Liturgies and Akathist exposes the children to the cycle of services. Again, learn about these services and prepare your children to know what they will see and hear.

In conclusion, you need to examine how you view the Church and what you see and want for your children in the life of the Church to answer for yourself if your children belong at church services. If you want your children to experience the fullness of Christ and His Church and possess a full liturgical life that will one day enhance their own spiritual life when they struggle with the question of making this faith truly their own, then you must answer “definitely”.

### *Liturgical notes:*

❖ We will return to our regular liturgical schedule on Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, which is the observance of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, with Matins at 9 a.m., the Divine Liturgy at 10 a.m. Confession is offered from 8:45-9:40 a.m. or by appointment. As a reminder, confession is *NOT* available after Liturgy.

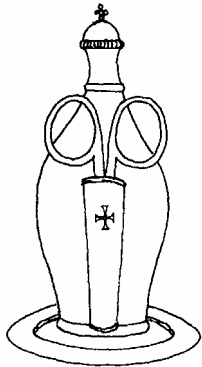
❖ To celebrate the Elevation of the Holy Cross on September 14<sup>th</sup>, we will join St. George, Norwood for church on Monday, September 13<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. The procession of the Holy Cross will also take place on September 19<sup>th</sup> here at St. John’s.

❖ It is the teaching of the Holy Orthodox Church that only those Orthodox Christians who have **prepared** themselves through prayer, recent confession, and fasting (and being on time

for church) should approach the chalice. It is likewise the teaching of the Church that our non-Orthodox guests and friends **should not** approach the chalice or that Orthodox Christians **cannot and should not** take communion in non Orthodox Churches.

## Church Records...

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



Matthew Charles, son of Michael and Janice (Zahka) Esty of Foxboro was baptized on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

Charles George, son of Mark and Michelle (Maloof) Hallal of Hingham, was baptized on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2004

Lillian Elizabeth, daughter of Timothy and Rita (Rawan) Gwinn, was baptized on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004

Andrew Norbert, son of Andrew and Jennifer (Kassatly) Lavigne of Wilmington, was baptized on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2004

Thomas Stuart, son of Matthew and Rachel (Sabbag) Reynolds of Brookline, was baptized on June 20, 2004

*Many Years!*

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

Paul Tawa (45) of Needham fell asleep in the Lord on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004. His son, brothers and sisters survive him. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Rose Cahaly (89) of Pompano Beach, FL fell asleep in the Lord on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004. A daughter, and 2 sons, along with their families survive her. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

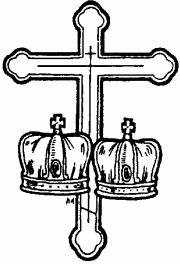
Fozy Hallal (97) of West Roxbury fell asleep in the Lord on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2004. His wife, daughter, and son, along with their families survive him. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.



Alfred Saidnawey (75) of Belmont fell asleep in the Lord on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2004. His wife, 2 daughters, and 2 sons, along with their families survive him. Burial was at Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge.

*Memory Eternal!*

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



Robert Walmsley and Jaclyn Neill were united in marriage on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2004. We congratulate them as they begin their new life together in Franklin.

Michael Kaufman and Kristen Sabbag were united in marriage on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004. We congratulate them as they begin their new life together in Hoboken, NJ.

Mark Bradshaw and Kimberly Kadehjian were united in marriage on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004. We congratulate them as they begin their new life together in Boston.

*Many Years!!*

*From the Executive Board Chairman...*

Hello to all

The summer is just flying by and our children are keeping us busy. Although it seems so short it has been a full and fun summer with still a little more to come. I hope you are enjoying it as we are.

It is a new year for the board. I need to thank all the members who served for the past three years or more who completed their terms, Cheryl Mattar, Kathleen Tawa, Olivia Waishek, John Najjar, and George Matthews. The work they did and will continue to do is surely appreciated by all, thank you again. And for the new and continuing members, Linda O'Hara, Michael O'Hara, George Maloof, Jolaine Hamwey, Chris Bezreh, Sheila Hamwey, and Cynthia Capobianco thank you for your help and we look forward to working with you or working with you again.

We installed our board, Paula Hamwey and I will be the VP and Pres., Treasurer will be Dan Capobianco with Kathy Tawa as Assistant Treasurer, Recording Secretary will be Roberta

Maloof and Corresponding Secretary will be Laurie Bradley, thank you all for your support and I look forward to working with you all again.

Sheila, Paula and Kathy have started the Bazaar business already and I am sure you will be hearing from them soon. They did a great job last year and I am sure it will be great again. Any help is welcome as always.

Gail and Debbie are working on the Feast Day and it sounds like it will be another great weekend. Again, I am sure you will be hearing from them soon, too. And again all help is welcome, as usual.

With the days flying by as they are I find myself rushing to finish this letter because it is already past the deadline for printing but I want to mention just one more thing that is approaching quickly. We have St. John's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary coming in the near future, which is no small milestone. Anyone who has any ideas of what they would like to see or how the celebration should be please do not hesitate to bring your ideas forward I will welcome all suggestions.

I am sure there is more to say but I will have to finish and wish everyone a great rest of the summer and we look forward to seeing you again healthy and happy.

Sincerely,

Alan Cardoos, Chair

*From the Church School. . .*

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's "*Back to School Time*" here at St. John of Damascus Church School! Classes begin on September 12<sup>th</sup> for grades Preschool 2 through Grade 10.

We also offer a Preschool 1 class for children who will be three years old by September 1, 2004. This class is organized as a "Parent Cooperative" – all parents of Preschool 1 students help out on a rotating basis. There will be a brief parent meeting on Sunday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> (during Church School time) to explain how this class operates. The first Preschool 1 class will be held on Sunday, October 10<sup>th</sup>.

In order for children to benefit from our Church School program, regular attendance at the Divine Liturgy and in class is essential. The continuity provided by weekly attendance makes it possible for students to understand, appreciate, and embrace our Orthodox faith. It's also a lot more fun for the students when they are involved in our weekly activities, and feel "at home" in Church School.

If it's been a while since you've brought your children to Church School, now's the time to come back! We have a busy, productive year planned. We will offer some new activities at all age levels, as well as repeat some tried and true favorites ... make sure your kids are part of the action!

Also, would you like to try your hand at teaching or assisting in a classroom or the office? Whatever your talent, you can definitely put it to good use in the Church School! We welcome your ideas, input and genuine interest in our Church School!

*As our Fall Service Project, we are again collecting school supplies for St. Innocent Orthodox Orphanage. St. Innocent provides a loving home for abused or orphaned teenage boys in Tijuana, Mexico. Collection day is Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup>. Let's think of these boys when we do our own Back-To-School shopping!*

In Christ,

Nancy Close, Church School Director

*From the Virgin Mary Society...*

We hope all our parishioners are enjoying a pleasant summer. The Virgin Mary Society is sponsoring a Family Dinner on Sunday, September 12, 2004 after Church. Please contact Lillian Khouri at 781. 237.1655 or the church office for reservations.

<p>VMS FAMILY DINNER September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2004 @ noon Donation: \$10 for adults; \$5 for children; 3 and under free Kibba, Salad, Sfeeha, Rice with Peas, Laban Coffee-Tea, and Dessert</p>
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We would also like to "thank" all the parishioners who picked and donated grape leaves for the Bazaar. God Bless you for all your help, it is greatly appreciated.

Lillian Khouri, President

## *From the Church Office...*

Just a reminder that the pledge statements are now mailed quarterly instead of monthly. Those that prefer to pay monthly may continue to do so. Please make a note of your envelope number on your check. As always please call the church office with any questions.

## *Order of St. Ignatius...*

We would like to congratulate Fr. John Teebagy on his appointment as spiritual advisor for the New England Region of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. We look forward to working with Father John on increasing our parish membership. We have a goal of 15 new members by December 2004, when Metropolitan Philip will visit St. John of Damascus. Please look for a special mailing about the Order, which you will receive shortly.

Please also support our sale of Krispy Kreme doughnuts this fall. The Village Campers will join us in this fundraiser for the Antiochian Village.

If you have any questions about the Order, please contact Fr. John or Chris Bezreh.

Chris Bezreh, Order Ambassador

## **ANNOUNCING BAZAAR AND AUCTION 2004 NOVEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup>, 6<sup>TH</sup>, 7<sup>TH</sup>**

The Annual Bazaar and Auction will be held on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> 2004. If you are interested in either chairing a committee or being a part of a committee, please call the church office. We would love to see many parishioners help us with this major fund raising event.

We look forward to some of the classics – Middle Eastern cuisine, snack bar, country store, video arcade, live auction, craft table, religious table and more. We also look forward to any new ideas. We will need auction items and other donations too. Mark your calendars! Keep these dates open! Hope to see you all soon.

Paula Hamwey, Sheila Hamwey, and Kathy Tawa Bazaar Co-chairs

## *Announcements . . .*

❖ **MANY THANKS** to all who donated to the Food For Hungry Program. Because of your generosity, the church was able to send \$2,925.39 to the Archdiocese to help those in need.

❖ **GREAT NEWS...AT LAST!!** Thanks to all of you, the bazaar chairs are pleased to announce that the profit for the 2003 bazaar was \$42,661.67!! Plans are already under for Bazaar 2004, to be held on November 5<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup>, under the chairmanships of Paula Hamwey, Sheila Hamwey, and Kathy Tawa.

❖ **ST. GEORGE, WEST ROXBURY** announces their 27<sup>th</sup> annual bazaar and food fair on October 15<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> at their church hall. For more information, please call 617.323.9861.

Dear Fellow Parishioners:

I am writing to you as the Vice President of the Executive Board and the Volunteer Coordinator of the Long Range Planning Committee. We need your help!!

The Executive Board needs more involvement from you, the parishioners, in the running of the Parish. There are many areas in which you can help: Ballroom dancing – it's a fun night out for the whole family and a great source of revenue for the church. How about helping out at the Bengari? We are always in need of help. Have you ever wanted to read the Epistle and nobody asked you? Now is the time to come forward and volunteer. What about Coffee Hour? Do you realize that a Board Member has to stay until everybody leaves on Sunday? We're not trying to rush people out the door, but we want to go home, too. We are blessed to have the hall that we have where we can comfortably stay and relax and enjoy each other's company, but how about offering to help with the cleanup once in a while?

Are you a strong, able-bodied male or female who is available during the week? Even if you can only help one day, let the Virgin Mary Society know. They need help with their cooking during the coming months. If you're interested in getting involved in Church School, contact the Church School. The Choir is always looking for new members. They sound awesome.

Don't forget about the Bazaar. We have many people that we depend on every year to help us out. If you haven't been involved before (other than attending and enjoying the delicious food), let us know what you would like to do and we'll find a place for you to help. If you have new ideas, share them with us.

Once the summer is over and we're all back into the school year routine, we will be holding a Volunteer Fair like we did a few years ago. This is a great way to find out what each group and organization does and what the different activities involve from a volunteer standpoint. Please come out and get involved. Every year we struggle to get people to run for the Executive Board, and part of the reason is because of the time commitment. If more people volunteer to help out with different functions, it won't all fall back to the Board and maybe then we'll be able to get more people interested in running for the Board.

I wish you all a happy end of summer and look forward to seeing you in the fall. Please feel free to leave a message at the church office or contact me directly at [hamweys@comcast.net](mailto:hamweys@comcast.net) or at 978-840-0559.

Sincerely,

Paula Hamwey

**Church of St. John of Damascus**  
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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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**Sunday Services:** 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 10 a.m.

Please plan accordingly.

**DEADLINE** for the November/December 2003 *Torchbearer* will be October 7th.

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