

THE TORCHBEARER

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

Dedham, MA

MAY/JUNE 2010

Pentecost – The birthday of the Church

In the Old Testament Pentecost was the feast which occurred fifty days after Passover. As the Passover feast celebrated the exodus of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt, so Pentecost celebrated God's gift of the ten commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai.

In the new covenant of the Messiah, the Passover event takes on its new meaning as the celebration of Christ's death and resurrection, the "exodus" of men from this sinful world to the Kingdom of God. And in the New Testament as well, the Pentecostal feast is fulfilled and made new by the coming of the "new law," the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Disciples of Christ.

When the day of Pentecost had come they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came

from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed as resting upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ... (Acts 2:1-4). The Holy Spirit that Christ had promised to his disciples came on the day of Pentecost (Jn 14:26, 15:26; Lk 24:49; Acts 1:5). The apostles received "the power from on high," and they began to preach and bear witness to Jesus as the risen Christ, the King and the Lord. This moment has traditionally been called the birthday of the Church. In the liturgical services of the feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit is celebrated together with the full revelation of the divine Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The fullness of the Godhead is manifested with the Spirit's coming to man, and the Church hymns celebrate this manifestation as the final act of God's self-disclosure and self-donation to the world of His creation. For this reason Pentecost Sunday is also called Trinity Day in the Orthodox tradition. Often on this day the icon of the Holy Trinity -- particularly that of the three angelic figures who appeared to Abraham, the forefather of the Christian faith - is placed in the



center of the church. This icon is used with the traditional Pentecostal icon which shows the tongues of fire hovering over Mary and the Twelve Apostles, the original prototype of the Church, who are themselves sitting in unity surrounding a symbolic image of "cosmos," the world. On Pentecost we have the final fulfillment of the mission of Jesus Christ and the first beginning of the messianic age of the Kingdom of God mystically present in this world in the Church of the Messiah. For this reason the fiftieth day stands as the beginning of the era which is beyond the limitations of this world, fifty being that number which stands for eternal and heavenly fulfillment in Jewish and Christian mystical piety: seven times seven, plus one. Thus, Pentecost is called an apocalyptic day, which means the day of final revelation. It is also called an eschatological day, which means the day of the final and perfect end. For when the Messiah comes and the Lord's Day is at hand, the "last days" are inaugurated in which "God declares: ... I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." This is the ancient prophecy to which the Apostle Peter refers in the first sermon of the Christian Church which was preached on the first Sunday of Pentecost (*Acts 2: 1 7; Joel 2: 28-32*). Once again it must be noted that the feast of Pentecost is not simply the celebration of an event which took place centuries ago. It is the celebration of what must happen and does happen to us in the Church today. We all have died and risen with the Messiah-King, and we all have received his Most Holy Spirit. We are the "temples of the Holy Spirit." God's Spirit dwells in us (*Rom 8; 1 Cor 2-3, 12; 2 Cor 3; Gal 5; Eph 2-3*). We, by our own membership in the Church, have received "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit" in the sacrament of chrismation. Pentecost has happened to us. The Divine Liturgy of Pentecost recalls our baptism into Christ with the verse from Galatians again replacing the Thrice-Holy Hymn. Special verses from the psalms also replace the usual antiphonal psalms of the liturgy. The epistle and gospel readings tell of the Spirit's coming to men. The kontakion sings of the reversal of Babel as God unites the nations into the unity of his Spirit. The troparion proclaims the gathering of the whole universe into God's net through the work of the inspired apostles. The hymns *O Heavenly King* and *We have seen the True Light* are sung for the first time since Easter, calling the Holy Spirit to "come and abide in us", and proclaiming that "we have received the heavenly Spirit." The church building is decorated with flowers and the green leaves of the summer to show that God's divine Breath comes to renew all creation as the "life creating Spirit." In Hebrew, the word for Spirit, breath and wind is the same word, *ruah*. The Great Vespers of Pentecost evening features three long prayers at which the faithful kneel for the first time since Easter. The Monday after Pentecost is the feast of the Holy Spirit in the Orthodox Church, and the Sunday after Pentecost is the feast of All Saints. This is the logical liturgical sequence since the coming of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled in men by their becoming saints, and this is the very purpose of the creation and salvation of the world. "Thus says the Lord: Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I your God am holy" (*Lev 11:44-45, 1 Pet 1:15-16*).

This year, Pentecost is on May 23rd. Please join us for Vespers and the Kneeling Prayers at 2:30 pm, following the church school picnic.

Church Records...

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

+Lillian Hallal (93) of West Roxbury fell asleep in the Lord on February 19th, 2010. She is survived by 1 daughter and 1 son, along with their families. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park

+Evelyn Zahka (102) of Bedford fell asleep in the Lord on March 19th, 2010. She is survived by 1 daughter and 3 sons, along with their families. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

+George Bargoot (90) of Somerville fell asleep in the Lord on April 8th, 2010. He is survived by one son and his family. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

+Rose Beram (99) of Westboro fell asleep in the Lord on April 12th, 2010. She is survived by 3 sons, along with their families. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Memory Eternal!

From The Executive Board...Greetings Fellow Parishioners. Christ is Risen!
Truly He is Risen!

I would like to thank Fr. John for a wonderful Lenten season and beautiful Holy Week and Pascha. I hope you had the opportunity to attend some of the Lenten and Holy Week services, and pray with fellow parishioners.

So much happens behind the scenes with the Religious Coordination Committee, chaired by Olivia Waishek, to make this a fulfilling journey. I wanted to share with you a section of Olivia's report to the Executive Board at the April meeting to thank all of those involved in this process, "This year was a wonderful success thanks to many individuals who devoted their time and energy. Father John, the clergy, John Najjar and the altar servers, the choir, the chanters, the Religious Committee, the members of the Executive Board who helped, Richard Cahaly, Abe Sabbag and his Goddaughter, Aly, Loretta Borghi and her son Anthony, Mary Topjian and myself who decorated the biers of Christ. A special thanks to Debbie Leotsakos who decorated the necessary icons, made baskets for the urns, etc.; the Parent Guild, headed by Carol Hazerjian and Bertina Kurker, for hosting the brunch after liturgy on Holy Thursday and after liturgy on Lazarus Saturday; Elaine Sabbag for ordering the eggs and coloring them (with her team of volunteers) and those who wrapped them in mesh; and Elaine



Sabbag who chaired the meal after Pascha service. And for the volunteers and members of the Board who prepared, set up, served and cleaned up. Gail Kurker chaired the Agape Services which we hosted this year. Thanks to her and her committee. Thanks to all members of the parish who helped during these weeks.

During this time, Fr. John and the Religious Coordination Committee attend to every last detail of Lent, all the services, Lazarus Saturday, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Pascha. This year we also hosted Agape Vespers which we always share with St. George West Roxbury and St. Mary's Cambridge. There is a five page list of all of the details which this committee makes sure are taken care of. As Chairman of the Executive Board, I just need to show up and they let me know all of my duties.

I look forward to seeing a big crowd at the Parish Meeting on Wednesday, May 19th at 7 pm. *With the Love of Christ, Don Khouri, II, Executive Board Chairman*

Announcements...

❖ **Ascension Liturgy** for the Feast of the Ascension will be held on Wednesday, May 12th at 6 pm here at St. John's. The clergy and faithful of St. George, Norwood will join us for this Feast.

❖ **The Annual Parish Meeting** will be held on Wednesday, May 19th at 7 pm. Your attendance and input would be most appreciated. Please plan on participating!

❖ **Food For Hungry People Program** – The Food for Hungry People Program is concluding. Please remember the homeless throughout the world during this holiest time of the year. Please consider offering a generous donation to this most worthy cause; make your check payable to “St. John's Fellowship” and earmark it “FFFP” and return it by **June 1st**. Thank you!

❖ **Church Closed** The church will be **closed** on Sunday, June 20th, due to the Parish Life Conference. Please join us at the Sturbridge Host Hotel for liturgy that day, starting at 10 am, or another local Orthodox church in your area.

❖ **Summer Church Hours** As usual, the Divine Liturgy will start at 9:30 am from **June 27th through September 5th inclusive**. Please mark your calendars. The church will be closed on Sunday, June 20th, due to the Parish Life Conference.

❖ **Blessing of Graves...** As is the custom, Fr. John will be at Fairview Cemetery on Sunday, May 30th beginning at noon to bless the graves of our loved ones.

❖ **N.G. Beram Scholarships** – If you are a senior in high school and come from an Arabic speaking background, you are encouraged to apply for this scholarship, now in its 44th year. An

application, along with the instructions, is available at www.stjohnd.org/ngberam. All applications must be postmarked no later than June 1, 2010.

Greetings from The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch... Thanks to all of those who participated in the annual Easter card. The funds raised will continue our sponsorship of a child through the Children's Relief Fund. The annual dinner meeting of The Order will take place at the Diocese of Worcester and New England Parish Life Conference at the Sturbridge Host Hotel in Sturbridge, MA on Saturday, June 19, 2010 at 6:00 pm. For further information, see the PLC web page at <http://www.stgeorgeworcester.org/2010plc.html>

In 2011, St. John of Damascus will host the Parish Life Conference. At this time, we hope to induct a large group of members to the Order of St. Ignatius. Membership, which is a lifetime commitment, starts at \$500 per year (\$42 a month which can be automatically deducted from your bank account.) Please consider joining us in this charitable arm of the Archdiocese. One of the most outstanding features of The Order is that almost every dollar collected goes directly to charitable purpose. Only 2% is used for administrative purposes. The Order spends over \$1 million a year to fund many programs in the Archdiocese, including Christian Education, Antiochian Village, College Conference, Missions and Evangelism, etc. The Order also helps those in need around the world through International Orthodox Christian Charities, Project Mexico, the Al-Kafaat Foundation, and others. Since its start in 1976, the Order of St. Ignatius has distributed over \$20 million and now distributes \$1.4 million annually: 38% of the archdiocesan annual budget. For further information, visit <http://www.antiochian.org/order>.

Greetings from the Parent Guild... The Parent Guild just held its annual Penny Sale, thanks to the hard work of Loretta Borghi and her small group of helpers. This fun, family event was attended by many, and hopefully all went home feeling like a winner. Loretta does such a great job of organizing the Penny Sale every year, making it look effortless, but a lot of work goes on to produce this event. Our next happening will be the parish picnic which follows the church school graduation program taking place on Sunday, May 23rd. Please plan to attend this parish-wide event and enjoy the company of your fellow parishioners, as well as a delicious barbecue. There will be plenty of activities for children and adults, both indoors and outside, including a 3-on-3 basketball tournament run by the teens. Hope to see you there!! *Bertina Kurker and Carol Hazerjian, Co-chairs*



Save the date!!! To celebrate our 25th anniversary in Dedham, a weekend of festivities is being planned for the weekend

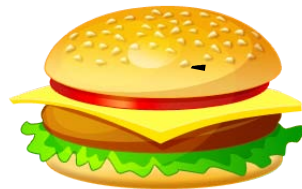
of October 1st. Be on the lookout for more information!!

St. John's Parish Picnic
at the church
Sunday, May, 23rd, 2010

Following Divine Liturgy &
Graduation Exercises



* Hamburgers, Hot dogs, Salads &
Desserts *



* Activities & Games *

3-on-3 Basketball Tournament

* Fun & Fellowship with your Parish Family *

If you can help in any capacity (grilling, setting up, running an activity, cleaning up), please contact Carol Hazerjian.

THE VIRGIN MARY SOCIETY

KIBBEE SALE

The ladies of the Virgin Mary Society will be making Kibbee for sale
If you are interested, please fill out the form below.

**PICK-UP DATE WILL BE MAY 16, 2010
AFTER CHURCH IN THE CHURCH HALL**

Name_____
Address_____
Telephone Number_____
_____ Small trays of Kibbee @ \$12.00 each_____

Thank you and enjoy!!

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The deadline for the September/October 2010 issue of *The Torchbearer* will be announced

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