



# St. John of Damascus Orthodox Church Newsletter

August 2020

## Welcome!

...to all who desire to gather to follow Jesus Christ and manifest the Kingdom of God in the Liturgy (common work) of His Church!

Whether it is your first time with us or you are a long-term member, we are grateful to God for your presence and look forward to growing in Christ together!



## A Word from the Saints

"As I have already observed, the Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points [of doctrine] just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down."

St Irenaeus of Lyon



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## The Conclusion of the Church Year

Dear Faithful Members & Friends of St. John of Damascus Church,  
Christ is in our midst! He is and ever shall be!

With the month of August comes the conclusion of the Church Year. The life of a Christian has always been challenging and Christians have always needed help. Even the most faithful followers of Christ and His commandments have needed (as we presently need) continual reminders about the Good News (Gospel) of Righteousness. We need direction about what it means to live a life reflecting that Jesus Christ is born, crucified, risen, ascended, and the Holy Spirit is poured out on to us.

The Church Year developed for us to be renewed and grow deeper in our knowledge of the Truth in Christ in manageable pieces. These celebrations help us to be able to live that Truth. We celebrate God's saving events and moments to remember WHO it is we worship and who we are called, by God's Grace to be.

In the month of August, we have the opportunity to celebrate 2 of the 12 Great Feasts of the Church in addition to our weekly celebration of the Resurrection. The Transfiguration of our Lord on Mount Tabor is an event that not only revealed Jesus to be "God from God", but also revealed what our humanity can be once it is united to Him. The Dormition of the Mother of God not only shows us how she died in this life and was born to eternity, but also reveals what is possible for every human who becomes a bearer of Christ.

It was not long ago when coming to church and celebrating the saving acts of the Lord was not possible for us. Many of us may be tempted towards an indifference to the Grace offered by the Church's celebrations. I pray that we will not allow this world to cool our faith but will compel us to renew it and seek the Kingdom that has no end. If we are feeling a bit lost, let us come and enter into the reality of these incredible moments and renew within ourselves the sense of what is good and healthy as well as be able to identify and flee from what that which corrupts and misleads us.

With love in Christ, Fr. Michael

St. John of Damascus Orthodox Church  
Newsletter July, 2020

# Many Years!

## Name Days

Contact Fr. Michael with the date of your name day celebration, whether revised-Julian or old-style.

## Birthdays

- |    |                         |
|----|-------------------------|
| 1  | Nataša Vuskovich        |
| 2  | Alan Martot             |
| 4  | Igor Bishaev            |
| 5  | Stephanie Gammo         |
|    | Lilian Coyle            |
| 6  | Alexis Rahal            |
| 7  | Mike Pichette           |
| 8  | Darla Wang              |
| 10 | Jerry Mendoza           |
| 11 | Don Rylander            |
| 13 | Pearl Elizabeth Keeling |
|    | Val Neskin              |
| 15 | Dee Leger Pluta         |
| 17 | Layla Kathryn Menig     |
| 20 | Anna Martot             |
|    | Miloš Vuskovich         |
| 24 | Eliza Malda Boyle       |
| 26 | Kimberly Klavzar        |
| 28 | Charlene & Leo Hayes    |

## Wedding Anniversaries

- |    |                            |
|----|----------------------------|
| 10 | Emily & Anthony Lorelli    |
| 11 | Gene & Judy Francello      |
| 12 | Bob & Irene Stone          |
| 15 | Dn George & Carole Shumaik |
| 21 | Jim & Patty Pelachik       |
| 22 | Masha & Jason Jones        |
| 25 | Edward & Vera Klavzar      |

## Memory Eternal!

### Anniversary of Repose

- |      |                      |
|------|----------------------|
| 23rd | Fr Michael Prokurat  |
| 25th | Honey (Sarah) Liolin |
| 26th | Renate Taurianen     |
| 28th | Fr John Psinka       |

### Don't See Your Celebration?

If your celebration was not included for the month, please let Fr. Michael know so he can update the parish records.

**Blessings...** The frequent use of the material of creation in the Orthodox Church reminds us that matter is good and can become a medium of the Holy Spirit. Most importantly, it affirms the central truth of the Orthodox Christian faith: that God became flesh in Jesus Christ and entered into the midst of creation thereby redirecting the cosmos toward its vocation to glorify its Creator.

## Fruit

It is the tradition of the Day of Transfiguration to consecrate grapes, apples and other fruit after the Divine Liturgy. The custom of bringing fruit to the temple for consecration originates in Old Testament times (Gen 4:2-4; Ex 13:12-13; Num 15:19-21; Deut 8:10-14). The Apostles brought this tradition to the Church of the New Testament (1 Cor 16:1-2). Instruction regarding bringing fruit to the church is found in the Third Rule of the Apostolic Canon, the earliest collection of ecclesiastic laws (canons), known since the second century. Since early times, the faithful have been bringing them to the church for consecration and as Thanksgiving to God. St. John Chrysostom wrote, "The plowman receives fruit from the earth not so much for his labor and diligence, as out of goodness of God Who grows this fruit, because neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

Grapes are brought to temple because they are directly related to the Eucharistic sacrament; that is why in the prayer for consecration of grapes the priest says, "Bless, Lord, this new fruit of the vine which reached ripeness because Thou didst kindly provide good weather, drops of rain, and stillness. Let the partaking of this fruit of the vine make us joyful. And give us the honor of offering this fruit to Thee, as the gift of cleansing of sins, altogether with the Holy Body of Thy Christ."

## Flowers & Herbs

Holy Tradition tells us that all the Apostles, with the exception of St. Thomas, were transported mystically to Jerusalem in order to be with the Mother of God – the Theotokos – as she reposed, and to be present at her burial. When the Apostle Thomas arrived the third day after her repose, the Apostles opened the tomb so that he could kiss her farewell. As the tomb was opened, the body of the Most Pure Virgin was missing, and the cave was filled with flowers and the sweet fragrance of Paradise. This was a sure sign of her great purity and holiness to the faithful.



Therefore as part of our celebration of Dormition we bless flowers and fragrant herbs – and the faithful traditionally keep them in their homes. The herbs, used as natural medicine, are blessed in commemoration of the numerous healings and the extraordinary grace bestowed on the pilgrims at the blessed tomb of the Mother of God. During times of family strife or illness, it is a pious custom to place the flower petals in the house censer, together with the incense, and cense the whole house with it.

# Coming to Church

Church Services  
Now Being  
Celebrated Outside

## Before You Arrive

Remember we need to know you are coming. Make sure you have contacted Dn George of your intent to attend EACH service before you arrive.

## On the Day of the Service

If you are feeling at all unwell on the day of the service, please stay home and take care of yourself. If you need to, contact your healthcare provider so he or she can give you guidance. Please also call Fr. Michael and let him know so he can include you in the church's prayers.

## Arriving at Church

Arrive and wait for the Greeters to greet and assist you. Please be patient. As you wait, find a shady spot. Standing in the sun can alter the reading of your temperature. If your temperature is over 100.4 you will need to go home and get care.

- At all times we all must maintain social distancing standards
- If you can, bring a portable chair and/or shade structure for yourself or someone else.
- Icons may be venerated without kissing or touching
- Candles are available for people to take home or ask Fr Michael or a Greeter to light one in church



## Face Coverings

Remember all persons ages 8+ must wear face coverings during the service with the exception of serving clergy and assigned choir singers who are to remove theirs as they serve. Children ages 2 and under are NOT to wear face coverings.

Parents, be prepared to keep your children close to you during the service.

**12•** As God's elect, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, humility, and perseverance. **13•** Bear with one another, and forgive each other! If anyone has a complaint against anyone else, forgive, even as Christ forgave you.

**14•** Above all, walk in love, which is the bond of perfection. **15•** Let the peace of God (to which also you were called in one body) rule in your hearts, and be thankful!

(Col 3:12-15)

## Weekend Services Live-stream

People can electronically attend the weekend services at St John via live-stream.

You can find the live-stream here...

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuzmdJHmKyTMAx3uqocW\\_1w/featured](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuzmdJHmKyTMAx3uqocW_1w/featured)

## Pastoral Visits

If you are not able to attend church please contact Fr. Michael to arrange a pastoral visit with Confession & Communion

# The Deacon's Beacon...

## Reflections On & From the Pearl

Our Lord Jesus Christ frequently taught in parables. Some are lengthy narratives while others are brief metaphors – “the kingdom of heaven is like...” He explained the reason for doing so to his disciples using the Prophecy of Isaiah – “Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” (Matthew 13:13) In fact, the entire 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Matthew is devoted to parables including the familiar Pearl of Great Price – “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.” (Matthew 13:45-46)

Volumes have been written over the centuries commenting on this passage of scripture. Some exegetes think the pearl is Christ Himself, others His Wisdom, still others the Church. The emphasis is often placed on the merchant who is searching for that most valuable jewel sacrificing everything to acquire it. In this analysis, we are cast in the role of that merchant seeking truth, wisdom and communion with Him who “brought us from non-existence into being”. In our case, the selling, the sacrifice, is the release through repentance those passions whether material or spiritual that separate us from God.

Through the history of humankind rarity has always been the primary determinant of the value of any material thing. Even something as simple as salt that we can now possess for a pittance was once the focal point of warfare between nations. In the ancient world, the pearl was counted among the most valuable of gems not only for its beauty but also for its scarcity. It is interesting that among all the geologic debris that we pronounce and value as gemstones, the only one that is the product of a creature, a living organism, is the pearl. Moreover, all the other stones require refinement or manipulation by humans to enhance their beauty. The pearl emerges from the oyster complete and radiant, not requiring the hand of man to release its fire. It is also worth contemplating that the pearl is formed by this



mollusk in defense of an irritant, a foreign intruder, presenting a threat to its life.

Chances are that we have never seen a natural pearl because their scarcity today exceeds even that of biblical times. What we find in our jewelry stores are pearls still constructed by an oyster but with the impetus of a human hand. The luster of a pearl comes from a covering called nacre layered by the oyster over a nucleus placed within its body. In the mass production of these “cultured” pearls, the amount of luminous nacre is scant in comparison to the size of the foreign body inserted. The distinction of what can viewed as genuine and that which is a facsimile has been blurred by clever merchandizing.

In extending the metaphor of the pearl to today’s culture, we are confounded by a plethora of distorted aberrations of Christianity that appear to have a luminous exterior but at the core contain little of redemptive value. Chapter 24 of the Gospel of Matthew is devoted to Jesus’ prophecy of the end-times in which He predicts this occurrence. “For there shall arise false Christs,

(continued on last page)

# Parish Life

## Adult Education Sessions



In September we will begin offering classes & discussions online and (hopefully) perhaps in person. Each week there will be a session during the day and one during the evening. If there is a topic or topics that you would like to explore please contact Fr. Michael.

## Bulletins

We are planning on creating weekly bulletins with the hymn and scripture texts as well as more regular news about things going on in the parish.

It will be available via QR code. If you have ideas about how to do this well, please contact Fr. Michael.



## Children & Teen Church School

Fr Michael will be meeting via video conference with church school teachers and interested parents in August to discuss options for offering opportunities for the younger members of the parish to continue growing in the knowledge of the Faith.



## Security Committee



Through the hard work of our Security Committee, the parish has officially been awarded a large grant from the federal government to augment our safety and security measures.

This is an incredible achievement and opportunity for the parish. THANK YOU! to the authors of the proposal.

Updates will be forthcoming as we move through the process of obtaining and using the grant funds. Please contact John Thayer, the Committee Chair, if you would like to be involved.

## Please Remember to Support our Parish

With the pandemic and now the summer months upon us it is understandable that some people may have fallen behind on their pledges & offerings to the parish.

Please plan on catching up.

You can bring your offerings to a church service or you can mail it to PO Box 28291, San Diego, CA 92198

## Auxiliary News

We are still distributing Scrip. It is a great way to support the parish while making your usual day to day purchases. You can speak to Beth Brown at church or you can call her or email her at [missbeth2269@yahoo.com](mailto:missbeth2269@yahoo.com)

Also, if people would like to purchase pierogis, nut rolls, etc. you CAN do so. Just speak to someone at church and they will help you.

## Reflections On & From the Pearl (cont.)

and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

In the Orthodox Christian Church, we hold that the Kingdom of Heaven, acclaimed as that Pearl of Great Price by the Lord Himself is fully present when we gather for Liturgical worship. The Divine Liturgy begins with the proclamation, "Blessed is the Kingdom". It is here, it is now, and it shines forth more luminous than any gemstone. We ascribe beauty to a precious gem based on how it reflects light. The diamond requires faceting to release its fire and the number of facets for the ideal cut is fixed. The deep luminescence of the pearl comes without manipulation, without faceting. In some sense, one could say that the facets of the Pearl of Great Price are infinite in number all reflecting the Divine Light. In the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, Saint Ephraim the Syrian composed this hymn:

On a certain day a pearl did I take up, my brethren;  
I saw in it mysteries pertaining to the Kingdom;  
Semblances and types of the Majesty;  
It became a fountain, and I drank out of it mysteries of the Son.  
I put it, my brethren, upon the palm of my hand,  
That I might examine it:  
I went to look at it on one side,  
And it proved faces on all sides.  
I found out that the Son was incomprehensible,  
Since He is wholly Light.

(The Pearl – Seven Hymns on the Faith)

By Deacon George Shumaik



## Parish Contact Information



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### Website:

[www.stjohnofdamascus.org](http://www.stjohnofdamascus.org)

### Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/stjohnspoway>

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We are a parish of the  
Orthodox Church in America,  
committed to be  
the Body of Christ in  
North County San Diego,  
to witness to the  
Kingdom of God,  
and to be faithful to the  
life in the Holy Spirit  
as lived in the  
Holy Orthodox Church  
since the time of the Apostles.