

St. John Of Damascus Orthodox Church Newsletter

June 2020



Let Us Pray to the Lord!

O Heavenly King,
the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth,
Who art everywhere present and
fillest all things;
Treasury of blessings and Giver of life,
come and abide in us, and cleanse us
from every impurity, and save our souls,
O Good One!



A Word from the Holy Fathers

They partook of fire, not of burning but
of saving fire. This is a fire that
consumes the thorns of sins
but gives luster to the soul.
This is now coming upon you also in
order to strip away and consume your
sins, which are like thorns, and to
brighten yet more that precious
possession of your souls, and
to give you grace,
the same given then to the apostles.
St. Cyril of Jerusalem

Thank you, Fr. Al & Vickie!

Fr. Al and Vickie are entering into much-earned retirement.

For over 42 years Fr. Al & Vickie have nurtured and guided St. John's to be the loving, dynamic and faithful community people see today. In the large and small things of daily life they have reflected God's love for all, making St. John's a home for people from all kinds of backgrounds and ethnicities. We are grateful to God for not only all the things you have worked so hard for and have accomplished over the years, but even more so for just being themselves.

Fr. Al, thank you for being a leader, a friend, an example and a beloved father. You have opened minds, enlarged hearts and given people a wonderful example of a life of faith in Jesus Christ. You have changed countless lives. You, by God's grace, have changed the world.

We have no doubt that Fr. Al will continue to answer whenever the Lord calls him as His priest and servant, but now he can do so without all the responsibilities of parish leadership. Your new job is to enjoy your retirement. The hours are flexible.

May the Lord
grant Fr. Al &
Vickie many
blessed years
(and some well
deserved rest
& fun) in
retirement!



Faithful from St. John's parade by in their cars wishing Fr. Al & Vickie many blessed years in retirement



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Many Years!

Birthdays

5/24 Newborn Jacob Samuel
Gammo

1st Archbishop BENJAMIN
3rd Fr. Alexander Federoff
Carole Shumaik
4th Kelly Martot
6th Ana Marie Griebing
Aurora Solis
10th Vicky Pluta
Birdie Worth
Nino Kapanadze
13th Annie Keeling
14th David Ray Boyles, Jr
16th Anna Rahal
17th Anastasia Michaud
23rd Kathrine Minakov
25th Nika Federoff Carlson
Grace Cooper
29th Weston Henry

Wedding Anniversaries

1st Fr. Kirill & Sophia Sokolov
3rd Stacy & Dennis Seitz
Walter & Elaine Kowalik
9th Elaine & Sergio Perez
17th Kon & Birdie Worth
28th Steve & Cyndi Zmina

Other

3rd Fr. Michael Anderson
(Ordination to the Priesthood- 20yrs)

Memory Eternal!

Newly Departed

May 25 Walter Kowalik

Anniversary of Repose

6th Heloisa Castaneda
10th Sonia Tarris
20th Matushka Irene Kasaty
30th Dmitra Sacks

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The Holy Spirit - Gifts, Fruits, Aim of our Lives

The Holy Spirit provides all things: He pours forth prophecies, He leads priests to perfection, He teaches unschooled people wisdom, He reveals fishermen as theologians, He confirms the Church. O Comforter, one in essence and enthroned with the Father and the Son, glory to Thee!
- Great Vespers Hymn

The Holy Spirit is this same Spirit who is the "breath of life" for all living things and particularly for man, made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1.30; 2.7). It is He who makes everything alive, the "Giver of life" Th Who upholds and sustains the universe in its existence and life (e.g. Ps 104.29; Job 33.4).

The Holy Spirit is also the One who inspires the saints to speak God's word and to do God's will. He anoints the prophets, priests, and kings of the Old Testament; and "in the fullness of time" it is this same Spirit who "descends and remains" on Jesus of Nazareth, making him the Messiah (anointed) of God and manifesting him as such to the world.

On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples of Christ in the form of "tongues as of fire," with the sound "like that of a mighty rushing wind" (Acts 2.1-4). The coming of the Spirit on Pentecost is the final fulfillment of Christ's earthly messianic mission, the beginning of the Christian Church. It is the fulfillment of the Old Testamental prophecy that in the time of the messiah-king, the Spirit of God will be "poured out on all flesh" (Joel 2.28; Acts 1.14). It is the condition of the age of the final



and everlasting covenant of perfect mercy and peace (Ezek 34.37; Jer 31-33; Is 11.42, 44, 61).

The Christian Church lives by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit alone is the guarantee of God's Kingdom on earth. He is the sole guarantee that God's life and truth and love are with men. Only by the Holy Spirit can man and the world fulfill that for which they were created by God.

In the Holy Spirit men have the possibility of receiving every gift from God, of sharing His divine nature and life, of doing what Christ has done by fulfilling His "new commandment" to love God and one another even as He has loved us, "because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which He has given us" (Rom 5.5).

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control . . . And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit . . . he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life (Gal 5.22-25; 6.8).

Taken from The Orthodox Faith

Restoring A Fuller Church Life after the Shelter in Place

Our OCA Holy Synod of Bishops has established stages for parishes to proceed through as they work to restore church life after the current shelter-in-place. We, at St. John's, are currently at stage 0. At the direction of our Archbishop, we are developing a plan to move through stages 1-3 and enter stage 4 to submit for his blessing. We understand that people have a variety of concerns and we will remember everyone and will keep everyone informed.

Questions & Concerns?
Contact Fr. Michael.

Federal Guidelines		Descriptions
Phase 1	Stage 0	Services are completely suspended; no Divine Services are served
Phase 1	Stage 1	Sunday liturgy served by limited cohort
Phase 1	Stage 2	Additional weekly liturgies served by limited cohort
Phase 1	Stage 3	The Divine Office is offered by a limited cohort
Phase 2	Stage 4	Adding parishioners to liturgical cohort according to limits set by civil directives; Allowance for Baptisms, Reception of Converts, in person Confession, Marriages, with strict limits on attendance
Phase 2	Stage 5	Allowance for in person meetings: Parish Council, Coffee Fellowship according to limits set by civil decrees; Allowance for Baptisms, Reception of Converts, in person Confession, Marriages, with slight loosening for limits on attendance
Phase 2	Stage 6	Careful increase of the number of parishioners to liturgical cohort according to limits set by civil directives; Allowance for Baptisms, Reception of Converts, in person Confession, Marriages, with equivalent loosening for limits on attendance
Phase 3	Stage 7	Continued increase of activity that leads to full re-opening

*Taken from Directives of the Holy Synod of Bishops
May 1, 2020*

**St. John of Damascus Orthodox Church
Newsletter June, 2020**

A Little About Us

I was blessed to be able to grow up in the Church. As a child, my home parish was Holy Annunciation Orthodox Church in Maynard, MA, where I began serving in the altar at the age of 3, singing in the choir, and reading the epistle for the first time at 11. During my undergraduate studies at New York University, I attended the Orthodox Church in America's Protection of the Holy Virgin Mary "Pro-Cathedral" on 2nd St in NYC. During my senior year there, His Eminence Archbishop Peter of New York tonsured me a Reader. I then attended St. Vladimir Seminary while also serving as an intern for the OCA Department of Youth and Young Adult (YYA) Ministries, and also directing the choir at Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church in Wayne, NJ. Upon graduating in 1994, I was appointed the Director of the YYA Department. I held this position for 11 years, traveling to parishes and dioceses throughout North America and occasionally overseas, conducting and developing materials for youth and young adult retreats, youth camps, training workshops, and various inter-Orthodox conferences. I am especially grateful to God for being part of the development and expansion of the youth and young adult programs at our OCA All-American Councils, which at their height included over 500 youth, young adults as well as adult volunteers. I was also blessed to be part of the revitalization of the Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) Inter-Orthodox college ministries movement and a member of their Board of Directors.

During my many travels, I had the blessing of meeting the woman who would eventually agree to marry me. In 1992 I met Vickie Teshin, who had grown up in St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Saratoga, CA, at the local Youth Camp Director's home. We met again at the All-American Council in Miami, FL later that summer, and again at a youth retreat I was leading in

Danville, CA that Fall. Over the next two years, we exchanged many letters and spent many hours on the phone. In 1994, during Bright Week of my final year of seminary, I traveled to San Diego, CA to visit her as she was finishing her studies at the University of California San Diego. On the Sunday of that week we attended Divine Liturgy at a certain parish in Poway, CA dedicated to St. John of Damascus. That was and will always be a very special time for us as a couple.



We were married on August 20, 1995 at Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco and began our lives together living on Long Island, NY where the OCA's central headquarters was located.

During this time, we were blessed to start a family and be with and learn from an array of incredible priests and matushki from all over the country, including Fr. Sergei and Matushka Gerry Glagolev, learning from their real-life

experiences and insights. His Beatitude Metropolitan Theodosius ordained me to the Holy Diaconate on February 2, 1997 and on June 3, 2000 to the Holy Priesthood. During our time there, the Lord blessed us with three boys: Victor (December 3, 1998), Peter (November 27, 2000) and Timothy, aka Timo (February 9, 2004). In addition to caring for us "guys", Vickie taught in and helped to expand a Spanish dual-language program in Freeport, NY, and together we led the church school for the children at St. Sergius of Radonezh Chapel.

At the end of the summer of 2005, His Grace Bishop Tikhon assigned us to the recently formed St. Christina of Tyre Mission (now Parish) in Fremont, CA. For these past 15 years, we have been blessed to help build and be part of a Church family where love of God, our neighbor, and each other is the norm. We went from worshipping in a hall with a bar and stools (and the smell of stale beer) to leasing a regular space in which we could worship our Lord, and from which

A Little About Us (cont.)

we could witness to Him to the community in which He placed us. Eventually, the impossible happened. This small mission was able to purchase and renovate 3 properties in the incredibly expensive SF Bay Area that could serve as a permanent home of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ in the Tri-Cities.

Through the years we witnessed and experienced that for which Orthodox Christians hope. We saw the Lord receive new people into His Church, baptize beautiful children of all ages, bring people to repentance, and unite couples into one flesh through the Sacrament of Marriage. We prayed for each other during trials and illness as well as at celebrations, and "sang away" loved ones into the Kingdom of God at their repose. We fed the poor, clothed the naked, visited the sick, and grew in the Faith, OUR Faith, while doing it. In short, we lived the life of the Kingdom of God. During this time, Vickie taught in the mission's church school, coordinated parish outreach events, and continued her God-given vocation as a bilingual educator at a K-8 school in Livermore, CA. Eventually, she took a position with the Santa Clara County Office of Education, first as the County's Biliteracy Coordinator and then as Assistant Director of Charter Schools.

As you know, His Eminence Archbishop BENJAMIN has now assigned us to serve the faithful at St John's following Fr. Al's retirement beginning on June 1. From the early days in our relationship, Vickie and I often spoke about the dream of ending up at St. John's at some point. It seems the Holy Spirit has brought us to the fulfillment of that dream. From what we have already experienced of St. John's, we can see a community very much like the one we are leaving. So many of you have already embraced us, and your love for the Lord and each other is palpable.



Fr. Al sent me a contact list for all the folks in the parish which I have been using to remember you all during the Proskomedia at the Divine Liturgy in Fremont. Fr. Al also invited me to be part of a couple of video Parish Council Meetings as well as your Sunday video gatherings. It has been such a joy to hear wonderful stories about life at St. John of Damascus Church over the years. I look forward to hearing more as time goes by.

Fr Al has also been sharing the history of St. John's. During a trip to pick up one of our sons from college a couple of months ago, I was able to come down for a short visit and was able to spend 2.5 hours with him as he showed me around telling me the story behind so many things. We also continually speak over the phone. Fr. Dn. George also continues to be a gracious ambassador for and guide to the parish.

You have a beautiful story, a beautiful community, and a beautiful Church building and grounds. We look forward to starting this next new chapter of that story with you. Our hearts are full of joy and anticipation at the thought of praying and worshipping with you and of serving our Lord Jesus Christ alongside you.

While the current time is full of challenges, and we know we can never replace or live up to Fr. Al and your current Matushka Vickie, we are genuinely excited for the years to come. We rejoice in what the Lord will do in and through us all, as His Church in the San Diego North County area for the years to come!

Please be assured of our prayers for you, and please pray for us.

With Love in Christ, Fr. Michael, Vickie, Victor, Peter & Timo