



**ST. JOHN
CHRYSOSTOM
ALBANIAN
ORTHODOX
CHURCH**

Important Dates

- Home Blessings continuing in February and March
- 23 February - Meatfare Sunday; Sunday School ice skating outing
- 2 March - Forgiveness Sunday Great Lent Begins
- 5 March - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts; pot-luck and discussion. 6:30 pm
- 15 March - Soul Saturday
- 23 March - Veneration of the Cross

February Giving:

Paper Napkins



All donations help.
Thank you!

St. John's Newsletter

(News for You...A Philadelphia Flavor)

Volume 1 Issue 2

February 2014

From The Pastor's Desk

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

T.S. Eliot, in his great poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," writes, "Do I dare, do I dare disturb the universe?" It is, for those of us who are baptized, an interesting question. We are not called upon to stand at the corner and shout out pages from the Bible. We are, however, called upon to proclaim the Gospel in the way we live, to be an example for what we believe.

Jesus did not "hang out" with the religious people of his time; he milled around with the blue collar workers, with fishermen, those in the tavern, even with prostitutes. He was there to meet with them, get to know them, help them change.

He showed, by example, what God was like. When called upon, he spoke; and he disturbed the universe by what he said, much to the dismay of the religious leaders.

We are, by our baptism, called upon to disturb the universe as Jesus did; we are called upon to be authentic. God made each of us as unique, unrepeatably human beings, and trying to be someone else simply doesn't fall into God's plan.

As we approach Great Lent, our most holy time of the year, each of us needs to reflect on what it means to be authentically who we are, to use the gifts God gave us in order to reach out to others.

(Continued on Page 2)



Parish Council Message — Our Church & Technology

Dear Parishioners and Friends of Saint John's Church,

I am pleased to share with you this digital version of Saint John's Newsletter **Volume I, 2nd Edition**. Developed around the theme "Our Church and Technology," this month's article

builds on our efforts over the past year to communicate Saint John's identity and better serve the needs of all. Whether you have been coming to Saint John's for 80 years or 8 days, our young website is designed to provide a glimpse into the inner workings and

history of Saint John's Church. Check it out here: www.stjohnsphila.org.

In today's dynamic landscape, technology evolves on a daily basis. Here at Saint John's, we asked ourselves what we really needed to accomplish, and (Continued on page 2)

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

John 13:34

From the Pastor's Desk

(continued from page 1)

We are not flawless, and there are some things we need to change. To admit where we fall short — where we sin — and to take the steps necessary to become more like Christ.

Yes, let us “disturb the universe” with the message of the Gospel of Jesus and

the radical love that he puts forward; however, may we first look into our own heart and soul to make sure we are in line with that radical love and all that it means.

Peace to all,

Your brother in Christ,

Fr. Brooks



Parish Council Message, Continued

(continued from page 1)

how much technology we wanted to use. One thing is for certain: we were way behind our peer parishes.

In August 2012, Parish Council approved an initiative to search for a website provider that would be easy to manage, informative to our parishioners and friends, yet reasonable from a cost perspective. We took a closer look at Eastern Orthodox web sites and learned that some were magnificent with rich content, and others were nicely tailored to better suit our needs.

In November 2012, Parish Council selected Orthodox Web Solutions (OWS) as our new service provider. OWS provides web design and hosting for hundreds of religious organizations around the globe. We were very impressed by the over 300 active sites it manages, and the cost of the service fit comfortably into our yearly budget.

OWS also supports another website, orthodoxyinamerica.org, which uses mapping software to show where all the Orthodox churches in the United States, Canada, and Mexico are located, and is linked to Google to provide driving directions and satellite imagery. We at Saint John's already have this link on our own site

<http://www.stjohnsphila.org/directions.html>. We also invite you to learn about the 13 [Jurisdictions](#) in North America. It is interesting and fun to see how other parts of our religious nation embrace technology today!

Other features of our [website](#) include a [Donations](#) page for any type of giving that you would like to contribute to Saint John's. Memorial donations, as well as yearly, monthly, or weekly pledges can be made in this secure manner. Our website also provides easy access to [Photos](#), [Calendar](#), [Sunday School](#), [Contact](#), and [Parish Administration](#).

This month, we are happy to announce the appointment of **Tish Klus** as Saint John's **Webmaster Associate**. Tish brings certified experience in web design and is enthusiastically looking forward to improving our technology communication in the Church today. If you have any suggestions for improvement, please feel free to email tish@stjohnsphila.org.

I would like to personally thank you for taking the time to read this Newsletter.

In Christ,

Peter Ghicondey
vicechairperson@stjohnsphila.org



Home Blessings

It is traditional in the Orthodox Church for the priest to go to each household of his parishioners and bless their homes. This takes place, typically, after the Feast of Theophany, but can be celebrated at any time of the year. The blessing of the homes, of course, is more than a quaint tradition; it is an opportunity for the priest to visit and pray with the individuals, couples, and families in their own homes.

In the early days, priests could actually do this by

walking to the homes in the village or town. Now, it is a somewhat daunting task, especially for St. John's in Philadelphia because we are so spread out. Be patient. I will get to everyone. You will be contacted by e-mail or phone as to when I will be in your area. If you are not available during that time, I will make special arrangements to come at another time. It is, after all, an important time for the priest and Parishioners.

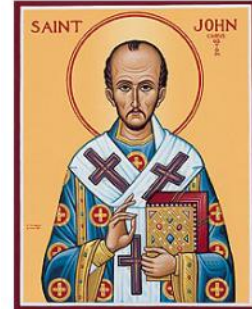
I look forward to visiting

and praying with all of you in the weeks ahead.

Fr. Brooks

What to have ready:

- Icon
- Candle
- Small bowl for the Holy Water
- List of family names to be prayed for (one column for the living; one for deceased).



2014 Home Blessings Schedule

Tue. 11 Feb.

Jani & Adriana Mara
Leonard & Entela Beqiraj
Kozma Gjika
Kathy Costa

Thu. 13 Feb.

Jim & Roxane Ghicondey
Costa/Levitsky
Paul & Magdalini Xhori
Petrika & Valentina-
Grabocka

Sat. 15 Feb.

Ilirjan & Fiori Papa
Pandeli & Dodona Papa
Dimiter & Arjana Gjidede
Marsel & Natasha Kosova
Kosta /Highland

Tue. 18 Feb.

Steve Ghicondes
Marinela Prifti
Viljan & Eleni Gore

Thu. 20 Feb.

George & Nikoleta Prifti

Sat. 22 Feb.

Nina Melito
Ariana & Michael Grabovari
Nikolla & Luiza Salavachi
John & Tueta Sevo
Constantine Duka

Tue. 25 Feb.

Bessie Satir
Koco & Mimoza Priftanji
Vasil & Kozeta Zogo

Thu. 27 Feb.

Richard Burdumy
Greg & Eleni Costa

Sat. 1 Mar.

Linda Notskas
Eduard & Elena Papa
Lili Shallapi
Michele Anderson

Thu. 6 Mar.

Gentian Dano
Janaq & Liljana Petuqi
Eda & Julian Prifti

Sat. 8 Mar.

John & Janice Cokos
Peter & Nancy
Ghicondey
Jen & Louis Waldhauser
Michele & Tom Lorimer

Tue. 11 Mar.

Gus & Lee Costalas
Evangeline Prifti

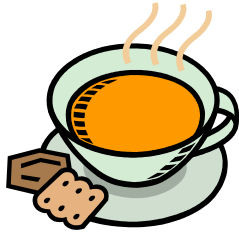
Thu. 13 Mar.

Zisi & Marjana Kashari
George Kosova
Edmund & Zhaneta
Dhandili

Sat. 15 Mar.

Jeannine Pescatore
William Bortner
Michael & Carolyn





**Soup-er
Bowl
Sunday,
A Smokin'
Hot Success!**

Souper-Bowl Sunday

Our First Soup-er Bowl Sunday was a huge success. We had 20 different soups and chili. Our sincere thanks to the parishioners who donated soup and crackers: Amanda Schneider, Anila Xhori, Betty Subashi, Carolyn Dardaris, David Biando, Dean Dickos, Diane Coraluzzi, Donna Dimitri, Father Brooks, Janice Leyden, Linda Biando, Linda Kosta, Linda Notskas, Michele Anderson, Michele Lorimer, Peter Ghicondey, Stephanie Kosta, Susan Melnik, Traci Cosmo, William

Bortner. Everything was delicious!! As a result of the generosity of our parishioners, we raised \$351.00. This money will be donated to Covenant House which was founded in 1972, and is the largest privately-funded agency in the Americas. They provide loving care and vital services to homeless, abandoned, abused, trafficked, and exploited children.

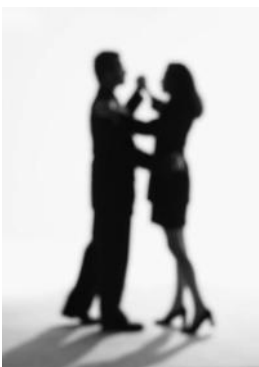
Special thanks to Linda Biando, who had the **terrific** idea and created Soup-er Bowl Sunday at

St. John Chrysostom; to Amanda Qendro, Juliana Melnik, and Lillie Whitney for collecting the money and to all of our "Soup Servers". We hope this is the first of many Soup-er Bowl Sundays!

We also extend our sincere thanks to Mike, Carolyn, Zack and Michele Dardaris for taking the containers of soup that were not purchased, to our homeless brothers and sisters in Philadelphia. It was a wonderful day for our Parish!

Albanian Women's Day Celebration

Our Parish will host our 7th Women's Day Dance on Saturday, March 8, 2014, beginning at 7:00 pm. The only time you will stop dancing is when you eat! International Women's Day receives scant attention in the United States, but in Europe it is a big deal. And in the Balkans it is a very big deal. Albania, like the rest of Europe goes all out in its recognition of all women- mothers, sisters, and daughters alike. International Women's Day is celebrated annually on



March 8th. In different regions, the focus of the festivities ranges from general celebration of respect, appreciation, and love towards women, to a celebration of women's economic, political, and social achievements. In many regions the day has become an occasion for men to express their love for women in a way somewhat similar to a combination of Mother's Day and Valentine's Day. It's again that time of the year! It's the time for our fabulous Albanian

Women's Dance Party. As everyone joining in these last few years has said 'This is the best Albanian Women's Dance Party in Town'!!! We'll have delicious food, great company, superb Albanian music and all for only \$40 donation.

Come and join us March 8th 2014 at 7:00+ p.m. at our church hall. Tickets are \$40 for adults and \$10 for children.

Contact Fiori Papa or Nilda Brahollari or email info@stjohnsphila.org

Stewardship News

Our 2014 Stewardship Drive is in high gear! Hopefully, everyone has received their pledge cards in the mail. If not, please pick one up at the candle stand or simply go to our website, stjohnsphila.org, to download and print a copy. Pledge cards can also be completed and returned online via our website.

Your pledge amount does not have to be paid all at once. Many people pay in monthly or weekly installments. If you choose to, your pledge can be paid online through the website via PayPal. You can also pay

by check. If you wish to pay using cash, please do not mail your donation. Cash donations can be returned in envelopes provided at the candle stand.

Are you a fan of auto-payments? If yes, you can pay your pledge this way as well. Simply go to your account on your bank's website, find the category for auto-payments and type in, St John's Church. You will be asked to type in the mailing address as well. When you are prompted for the account, type in the words, "2014 Pledge".

It is that easy! You will

choose the pledge amount (in installments or in full) then click on when you want the payments sent (for example, each week, month, or in one sum). As with all auto-payments, you can make changes at any time.

Please return your completed pledge card today. An added reward to pledging is knowing that you have helped to strengthen our ongoing commitment to serve our loving community and others in need.

Many thanks for your continued support and generosity!



Forgiveness Sunday

Each year, Great Lent begins with Forgiveness Sunday, which is also Cheesefare Sunday (2 March, this year).

Traditionally, in the Orthodox Church, the Rite of Forgiveness is celebrated at Vespers; however, in many churches this rite is done immediately after the Divine Liturgy on that Sunday morning. This is when we will celebrate Forgiveness Sunday. The rite entails forming a line

around the inside of the church and each person present going up to the others and asking forgiveness. Sin reverberates, so even if we don't know the person, we still ask forgiveness for any harm or hurt we have caused. It is a very healing rite, a very loving process.

In addition, it is also Cheesefare Sunday.

Traditionally, all of the meat was eaten up the week before (Meatfare

Sunday), and on Cheesefare all of the dairy products were eaten up. At St. John's, we are celebrating this tradition by having a luncheon after the Divine Liturgy, and asking all of you to bring a meatless dish to share. It is a wonderful way to celebrate this tradition.

Please contact Linda Biando if you plan to bring a dish on that day.



St. John's Book Club by Dorothy Tomassini



A member's personal quest:

Lord Alfred Tennyson said, "Knowledge comes but wisdom lingers." Every Sunday, we hear our priest say "Wisdom Let Us Attend." We then hear the Gospel reading of the day. "Let him who has ears hear." Thus we hear the Wisdom of the Gospels.

As I look in the mirror and see this wrinkled face, I can't help but think "I am old now; I have been to college; read thousands of books, magazines and newspapers but have I gained 'Wisdom'? It has been said that "knowledge is just random facts of information that we sometimes keep and sometimes don't but Wisdom is a culmination of lessons learned from that knowledge or even life-experiences that stay with us." Thus I continue to read, which brings me

to the book club that David Biando and his lovely wife Linda started.

A few years ago, David Biando suggested we start a "religious book club" in our Church. Many of us who love to read at first met either in the church or at various attendee's homes. Now we meet in my apartment every month or so and discuss various books that deal with searching: religion, life, science, happiness, etc. Through this knowledge, we are also hopeful of gaining "Wisdom." For me, our St. John's book club is what Buddhist teaching names the "Pure land." The Pure Land is in your heart; those who come to the book club are in my heart. Also, "Mindful time spent with the person we love is the fullest expression of true love and real generosity." A member's personal quest:

All you readers out there are welcome to join us. We first enjoy a delicious supper; then discuss the book of the month. The knowledge that I gain from the book may not be what someone else gets. But we learn from each other. Thus, I continue to gain knowledge from those who have it and, perhaps, even gain "Wisdom," which can only be gained through a personal quest to acquire it. Perhaps one day (if ever) I will discover it in myself.

March 21, 2014, book is *The Cloister Walk* by Kathleen Norris

April 24, 2014, book is *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks

Can you join us? Please RSVP if you can attend: lindabiando@live.com

by 3/18/14.

We are a loving group of people.

Everyone had a wonderful time at our 2014 Icon Auction. Thank you to all of our parishioners and friends who made this a very successful event!



**ST. JOHN
CHRYSOSTOM
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We're on the Web!
<http://www.stjohnsphila.org>

Lay Leadership

Donna Dimitri
Chairperson
chairperson@stjohnsphila.org

Diane Lescas
Choir Director
choirdirector@stjohnsphila.org

Steve Coraluzzi
Sunday School Director
Sundayschooldirector@stjohnsphila.org



Join St. John Chrysostom Sunday School on Sunday, February 23, 2014 for an afternoon of fun as we go ice skating at the U of Penn Class of 1923 Ice Skating Rink. We will leave after the Divine Liturgy and will have access to the facilities

from 1:00—3:30 pm. We have once again rented the party room where it is warm and dry. Lunch and hot chocolate will be served. Remember to bring gloves and hats as it gets cold on the ice! The cost is \$3.00 for adults, and children are

free. For additional information contact our Sunday School Director, Steve Coraluzzi. Please join us for a fun-filled afternoon! email: Sundayschooldirector@Stjohnsphila.org



**Our 2013
Ice Skating Outing**



Albanian Heritage at the Pine Wood Derby

Jimmy Kosta, an altar boy and Sunday School student at St. John's, is so very proud of his Albanian heritage that he made his pinewood derby race car for Cub Scouts an "Albanian car."

His Uncle, Tom Highland, helped him with the wood cutting, but the design was all Jimmy's. The car, pictured is red and black with an Albanian licence plate and a double-

headed logo on the hood. It did not win the race, but it was most unusual design there.

Many young boys participate in this annual event with their Cub Scout Troops, but few if any, have an Albanian themed entry.

Jimmy is the grandson of Phil and Linda Kosta.

