



**ST. JOHN  
CHRYSOSTOM  
ALBANIAN  
ORTHODOX  
CHURCH**

**Important  
Dates**

Parish Nameday  
November 9th  
Flag Day Dance  
November 29th

Parish Council  
Meeting

November 4th  
December 2nd

**A Note From  
Fr. Brooks**

**A Women and  
Diaconal Ministry  
Conference**  
is planned for  
Saturday, Dec. 6th  
2014 at the  
Union Theological  
Seminary, in NYC.  
More info can be  
found at  
<http://orthodoxdeaconess.org/women-diaconal-ministry-conference/>

Contact Fr. Brooks  
if you are interested.

# St. John's Newsletter

*(News for You...A Philadelphia Flavor)*

**Volume 1 Issue 6**

**October 2014**

## *From The Pastor's Desk*

*Dear Parishioners and  
Friends,*

Autumn is upon us. I woke up early yesterday, stepped out onto my back porch (still dark), and felt the 52 degree temperature. I knew it was cool because – sleeping with the window opened – I had to throw on a blanket for the first time in months. Back inside, I made coffee and sat down, thinking about my morning ritual. We all have them, rituals we keep personally, rituals that we keep in the family. It's part of being human, for we are a ritualistic – I would even say, liturgical – animal.

As a student at the University of Virginia, I studied symbolic

anthropology. Basically, it is a field where one tries to understand a culture through its symbols, rituals, and myths. This study was one of the reasons I eventually turned from atheism to the Orthodox Church, discovering Her rituals (symbols and myths) to be extremely powerful for the human being. These all made the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit come alive, to affect me in a personal and communal way.

While we all have our personal and familial rituals, it is the Church that gives us the rituals that center our lives. Think of those rituals such as the Divine Liturgy, baptisms, weddings, funerals, the healing service, and so many



others. These rituals give shape to how we live and how we understand our place in the universe. It could be said that these are man-made; however, they are divinely inspired and, we believe, they are actions that are worked out by God and man (what theologians call "synergia" or synergy).  
(Continued on page 2)

## *A Message from our Treasurer*

When I was asked to write this piece for the Newsletter, I wasn't sure what to say. Then Fr. Brooks told me just to write from the heart. I love this parish. It is why I sit on the parish council, and

along with the others, dedicate a portion of my time for this important ministry. Because I am a "numbers gal", I was asked to be the treasurer. You don't need to be an accountant or a bookkeeper to be the

treasurer, though I suppose knowing something about numbers helps. Still, there are some things that a good church treasurer needs to have.

(continued on page 2)

### *From the Pastor's Desk*



Most Orthodox Christians understand the importance of these rituals, these sacraments; unfortunately, we sometimes take them for granted. We have a tendency to think of, say, baptisms and weddings, as "our" personal events, or even the Eucharist as "my" personal act.

We need to remind ourselves that none of these rituals – including confession – is a private or familial event; they are all sponsored by the Church and have implications for all of us. For example, a wedding is an event – a ritual – that takes place in the community. Orthodox priests don't simply marry

anyone off the street or even anyone from another community. At weddings – or at baptisms – all from the community are welcomed (without invitation) because these rituals are part of the community.

This is how we must understand our sacraments, our rituals. It makes no sense to set a wedding date and make plans for the details before consulting with the priest, who stands as a representative of the community. Before anything is planned, it must be discussed. We must understand what the ritual involves and how it plays into our lives. As many at

St. John's are learning, I – as the priest – meet with parishioners before each baptism or wedding, usually several times. We get to know each other better, and we learn what will take place and why. It is crucial for us to learn together about our faith.

As we move into autumn, whether it be the Divine Liturgy, a baptism, a wedding, the Nativity Fast or anything else, may we make a commitment to learn more about our faith and embrace that faith. May God and His peace be with all of you!

Your brother in Christ,  
Fr. Brooks

### *A Message from our Treasurer, Continued*



(A good church treasurer needs to have:

- Honesty and trustworthiness
- Being well organized
- Commitment
- Willingness to learn and seek guidance
- Ability to work well with others

As the treasurer, I am responsible for comparing the church ledger to the bank account to make sure they match up. Each month, I make out a financial report for our parish council meeting and come prepared to explain it

and answer any questions. I am responsible to report what funds were used in the operating expenses, miscellaneous expenditures, and status of investments. This report is accessible to all parishioners at St. John's. At our yearly meeting, I do the same thing for the yearly report, and all parishioners have this before our meeting so that they can take the time to review it. In this way, they can be aware of the finances at our parish and ask any relevant questions. I love my work as the treasurer for St. John's and am proud to sit on the parish council. All of us on

the council work hard to make sure that things here are moving forward, going in the right direction, and making a future for Lily and all the kids at St. John's. I would invite everyone to get involved in the parish council if you have the time and commitment. And, of course, you don't have to be on the parish council to come to one of our meetings. We get a lot of work done, have some good food, and enjoy each other's company. Come visit!

Yours,

Michele Anderson

### Home Blessings

*Home Visitations/Blessings are still going on. It is taking longer than I expected because I'm making sure to spend time with all of you so we can get to know each other. I'm not rushing in for 15 minutes to bless homes and go to the next. As well, this first year has been very busy as the "new" priest! I will get to every family that would like a visit, but there are over 200 households on our list. Please check the most recent list for the day I have you scheduled. Thank you. Your brother in Christ, Fr. Brooks*

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/months 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).

### Home Visitation/ Blessing list for October through December 2014:

If the day specified does not fit, please call Fr. Brooks (210-461-1956); otherwise, Fr. Brooks will call ahead to specify a time.

**23 October**

Phil & Linda Kosta  
Stephanie Kosta /Tommy Highland

**28 October**

Mark and Tish Klus  
Konstandin Oanh Pajcini  
Costina Bacuta

**6 November**

George & Manuela Bello

**8 November**

Gerald & Katherine Kane  
Jorgaq Toshi  
Constantine Calaku  
Dhimitraq & Elida Xhoxhi

**13 November**

Anatol & Diana Kondili

**20 November**

Kymberlee Haberman

**4 December**

Kathy Kane  
Anesti & Doloresza  
Kundraxhi

**6 December**

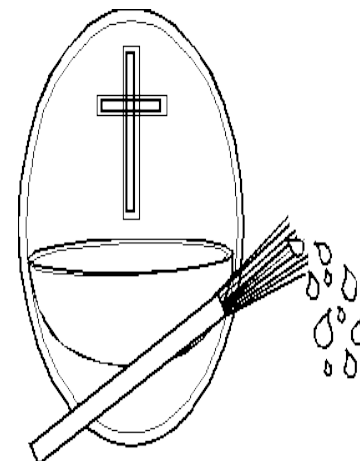
Sergio & Colleen Xhoxhi  
Florina Bacuta  
Dean Dickos

**11 December**

Arjan & Albana Qendro  
James & Elaine Spiro

**13 December**

Michele Anderson  
Lily Shallapi



### Parish Ministry Teams

As most of you know, we are organizing a whole slate of groups in order to set up a more active parish that everyone can get involved in. I am focusing on ministries listed below:

**YAL** - Met in September and are planning to meet again in November. An e-mail will be sent out to determine the exact date. This is a committee of young adults to organize regular meetings, a bible study, and social events. We will decide what works best for the young adults at St. John's and will plan out a calendar. YAL will consist of people who are single, married, married with children and any of their friends who would like to participate.



**Charity and Benevolence** – Will meet the first week in November. Exact date to be determined. This group will discuss ways in which we can effectively reach out to groups in need of assistance. This could include the homeless in our area, Orthodox mission parishes who are struggling to get started, Monasteries that might need our help, community projects that we can get involved with as a parish, and other situations that come up from time to time.

All parishioners are welcomed – and encouraged – to participate in any of these groups. Please contact me by phone or e-mail if you are interested. Let's all get involved to make St. John's a light to the Gospel here in Center City. *Fr. Brooks*

**Outreach** – A meeting is scheduled for October 23rd at 7:00 pm, at St. John's. This group will participate in the best ways to reach out to visitors at St. John's, to people who are sick or in the hospital, to shut-ins, and to anyone else who needs a visitation, a phone call, a card, etc.



**Our Semi-annual parish meeting** was held Sunday, October 12th 2014. The following individuals were elected to parish council: Michele Anderson, Linda Biando, Donna Dimitri, Peter Ghicondey, Elvira Gusho, Michele Lorimer, Nilda Salavachi. The 2015 budget was approved at the meeting. The minutes for the March 2014 meeting are posted on the website.

We learned Father Stephen Siniari, pastor at Ss. Peter & Paul Albanian Orthodox Church will be retiring at the end of the year. We wish Father Stephen a happy and health retirement and Many Years!

Our next parish meeting will be in March 2015. We will elect delegates for the September Archdiocesan Assembly.

#### **Monthly Giving:**

October: Paper Towels



November: Paper Plates



December: Your Christmas Donation Christmas



## Nameday's / Namesday

Orthodox Christians have long chosen the names of Saints to proclaim their link with their spiritual family, the Church. The name may be of a Saint commemorated on or near to the day of the child's birth, or for whom the family has a special devotion. Likewise, an adult received into the Orthodox Church chooses a Saint's name to whom he/she has a strong attachment. In days past, this was often a costly witness for believers living in a non-Christian society, as their very names (Nicholas or George, Elias or Barbara) labeled them as Christians. Each day of the year, the Church honors a number of Saints. The day the Church honors one's Saint is one's "Name Day," an occasion to honor the memory of the Saint whose name we bear, and to give thanks for his/her daily intercession on our behalf. Individuals whose names are not found on the Calendar of Saints celebrate on *All Saints Day*, the Sunday after Pentecost. We are to pray and have a special devotion to our Patron Saint. His or her life should be read and studied so that we learn how our lives should be directed. Our Patron Saint becomes a true hero/heroine for us to emulate. Traditionally, Orthodox Christians celebrate their name day by inviting family and friends to their home. Since this day is to focus on the Saint, his/her icon is prominently displayed. Whoever comes to visit wishes "Happy Name Day" to the celebrant.

Favors or token gifts can be part of the day, but with a significant difference, the person celebrating the Name Day is the giver of gifts rather than the receiver. Giving is the best sign of gratitude for Christians.

Just as a parish's feast-day is the "second Pascha" for that parish every year, so the Christian's annual name-day is her/his personal second

Pascha:

It is a most sacred and joyous day on which she/he celebrates her/his very identity as a Christian, her/his very existence as a living creature and child of God, by glorifying the holy person for whom he is named. It is a day of personal renewal and recommitment to the vows made at Baptism. It is a day of joy for her/his family and friends, as they rejoice in their loved one and in the holy person who is his guardian, guide, and help.

The Church is one Body in Christ: one household of all the baptized living or dead with Christ as its Head. Maintaining and celebrating our association with one of the Saints of Christian history helps us to see the Church, not as an impersonal institution but as it is meant to be: one family under the Lordship of Christ.

Taken from:

<http://www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/family/observerarticles/document.2014-03-12.8118895414>

Taken from: <http://www.saint-spyridon.com/note6.htm>

Parish Council  
Members  
and contact  
information.

Donna Dimitri  
Chairperson

[chairperson@stjohnsphila.org](mailto:chairperson@stjohnsphila.org)

Peter Ghicondey  
Vice-Chairperson

[vicechairperson@stjohnsphila.org](mailto:vicechairperson@stjohnsphila.org)

Linda Kosta  
Secretary

[secretary@stjohnsphila.org](mailto:secretary@stjohnsphila.org)

Michele Anderson  
Treasurer

[treasurer@stjohnsphila.org](mailto:treasurer@stjohnsphila.org)

Linda Biando  
Trustee

[councilatarge.linda@stjohnsphila.org](mailto:councilatarge.linda@stjohnsphila.org)

Diane Lescas  
Trustee

[councilatarge.diane@stjohnsphila.org](mailto:councilatarge.diane@stjohnsphila.org)

Jani Mara  
Trustee

[councilatarge.jani@stjohnsphila.org](mailto:councilatarge.jani@stjohnsphila.org)

### Lay Leadership

Diane Lescas  
Choir Director

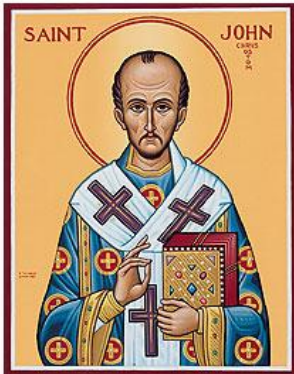
[choirdirector@stjohnsphila.org](mailto:choirdirector@stjohnsphila.org)

Steve Coraluzzi  
Sunday School Director

[Sundayschooldirector@stjohnsphila.org](mailto:Sundayschooldirector@stjohnsphila.org)

**Për Shumë Vjet!  
Gëzuar!**

## Our Patron Saint—St. John Chrysostom



St. John Chrysostom was born in the ancient city of Antioch in 347 to a noble and pious family. He studied to be a lawyer and was an exceptional student. He was led to a religious life where he devoted himself to discipline and spiritual growth. As a Priest, St. John had the innate quality of winning the hearts of his audience, even though many times he would chastise them.

He loved his people and would hold nothing back in order to inspire them, challenge them, and paternally lead them into upright living. He was also a great advocate of social justice and proclaimed the equality of all people before God.

His sermons often spoke of the great disparity between rich and poor, and he placed the blame upon extortioners and the greedy rich. He did not camouflage injustice.

At the age of forty-nine he became Patriarch of Constantinople. He was an outspoken critic of the imperial court and frequently denounced the Empress Eudokia. After a series of exiles and returns to Constantinople, St. John was again banished in 403 and died two years later. He earned the title, Chrysostomos, “golden mouth,” because of his dynamic and forthright preaching. The Divine Liturgy most often celebrated in our Churches also bears his name, “The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.”

We observe the feast day of St. John Chrysostom on November 13, and also honor him with St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory the Theologian on January 30, the feast day of the Three Hierarchs.

Taken from:

[http://www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/religious/sjcof/manual\\_2014/sjcof\\_manual\\_2014.pdf](http://www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/religious/sjcof/manual_2014/sjcof_manual_2014.pdf)

### 2014 Nameday Celebration

On **November 9th 2014**, we will celebrate our 83rd Nameday at St. John Chrysostom Albanian Orthodox Church. We ask all of our parishioners and friends to join us on this very special day. The Divine Liturgy will begin at 10:00 am and we will be joined by Father Stephen and our sisters and brothers from Ss. Peter & Paul Albanian Orthodox Church.

There will be a luncheon in the church hall following the Divine Liturgy. Last year we had a wonderful luncheon provided by our parishioners. Our parishioners brought in their “specialty”; an “Albanian Pie”; Lakror, Byrek, Spinach Pie, or a meat dish, Qofte, etc. and “Albanian desserts”; baklava, finike, kadaif.

Since last year was such a success we have decided to ask our parishioners to bring their special dish again this year!

There is no charge to attend the luncheon. If you are able to donate a dish for the luncheon please email [info@stjohnsphila.org](mailto:info@stjohnsphila.org) or see Kathie Costa or Janice Leyden during coffee hour.

### **2013 Parish Nameday Celebration**



## Albanian Independence Day

1912

### The Declaration of Albanian Independence

During the fifteenth century Albania enjoyed a brief period of independence under the legendary hero, Skanderbeg. Aside from this period of rule, the country did not enjoy independence until the twentieth century. During the 19th century, Albanians resisted the Turks attempts to assimilate Albania. The leaders of Albania led their country with the rallying cry "The religion of Albanians is Albanianism!" They formed the Albanian League in 1878 to unite the country, adopt a new alphabet, and develop the native language, education, and literature. In 1908, the Albanians fought again, and by 1912, they succeeded in making the Turks agree to their demands for autonomy.

Taken from:  
<http://aglobalworld.com/holidays-around-the-world/albania-independence-day/>

*As with many events of Albanian history, the declaration of independence of 1912 was somewhat of an impromptu affair. The Ottoman Empire collapsed in the first Balkan War that began in October 1912 and the Albanians found themselves in an extremely awkward position. Their leaders were more concerned about the coalition of neighboring Christian forces (Montenegro, Serbia and Greece) than they were about the weakened Ottoman military presence in their country. What they wanted was to preserve the territorial integrity of Albania. Within two months, Ottoman forces had all but capitulated, and it was only in Shkodra and Janina that Turkish garrisons were able to maintain position. The very existence of the country was threatened.*

*It was at this time that Ismail Kemal bey Vlora (1844-1919), also known in Albanian as Ismail Qemali, returned to Albania with Austro-Hungarian support and, at the head of a swiftly-convened national assembly, declared Albanian independence in the town of Vlora on 28 November 1912. The declaration was more theoretical than practical because Vlora was the only town in the whole country under the delegates' control—yet it proved to be effective in the vacuum of power. Though Albanian independence was recognized de facto on 17 December 1912 at the London Conference of Ambassadors, it was not until 29 July 1913, after the second Balkan War and the solving of the delicate problem of Shkodra, that the international community agreed to recognize Albania as a neutral, sovereign and hereditary principality.*

Taken from:  
[http://www.albanianhistory.net/texts20\\_1/AH1912\\_1.html](http://www.albanianhistory.net/texts20_1/AH1912_1.html)



**Join us for our Flag Day Celebration.**  
**Saturday, November 29, 2014**  
**In the Church Hall**  
**7:00 pm - 11:00 pm.**

**Tickets \$40.00 for adults**  
**\$10.00 children 10-16 years old.**  
**Children under 10 free**

**Food and dancing all night!**  
**Music provided by DJ Sergio Xhoxhi**  
**See Nilda Salavachi or Fiori Papa for tickets**



**ST. JOHN  
CHRYSOSTOM  
ALBANIAN  
ORTHODOX  
CHURCH**

237 North 17th Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19103  
phone: 215-563-0979

**Don't forget  
to visit our  
website:**

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



Like us on  
FACEBOOK

[https://](https://www.facebook.com/StJohnChrysostomAlbanianOrthodoxChurch)

[www.facebook.com/  
StJohnChrysostom  
AlbanianOrthodox-  
Church](https://www.facebook.com/StJohnChrysostomAlbanianOrthodoxChurch)



**Sunday School Information:**

Sunday school is well underway with 34 students enrolled. We are blessed to have a very dedicated Sunday school director, Steve Coraluzzi, AKA "Mr. Cheeseball". We also have a very enthusiastic and talented group of teachers. Have your children been participating? If you have not been able to attend Sunday school, please mark your calendar and come next Sunday, we would love for your children to be involved!

The Sunday school is planning a trip to the Franklin Museum on Sunday, November 16, 2014. We will leave after coffee hour and spend a few hours touring the museum. Tickets are available, \$10.00 for adults, \$5.00 for children. All parishioners are welcome. See Steve Coraluzzi or email [sundayschooldirector@stjohnsphila.org](mailto:sundayschooldirector@stjohnsphila.org) for more information.

As many of you know, one of the changes that have been made to our Sunday School program is that Dave Biando and I are teaching the high school class. We have some new faces this year; in fact, we had 9 students in class on Sunday, Oct 9th. We are also planning some youth group get-togethers, such as pizza and movie nights at the church. Once a month, I will be going downstairs to visit the younger children in order to spend time with them and their teachers. I'm looking to a great year spending more time with the youth.  
*Fr. Brooks*

**Did you know that?**

Your pledge is tax deductible.

Your pledge is the major way that we pay for the priest's salary, church utilities, Sunday school books and activities, purchase candles, make donations and pay our archdiocese contribution of approximately \$85.00/pledge member.

It costs on average about \$2000.00 per week to do all this to keep the church doors open! No pledge is too small (OR LARGE!).

We receive no outside financial support.

**How does a pledge differ from a donation?**

- Donations are always welcome, but the church's budget is based upon its pledges and only pledged members are eligible to vote in parish meetings.

Please remember Easter, Christmas & Icon donations are not considered to be part of your pledge.

Contributions can be made annually or by installments

*Look what you can achieve by contributing weekly or monthly!*

\$10.00/ wk. = \$520.00/ yr.

\$15.00/ wk. = \$780.00/ yr.

\$20.00/ wk. = \$1040.00/ yr.

\$25.00/ wk. = \$1300.00/ yr.

\$50.00/month = \$600.00/ yr.

\$60.00/month = \$720.00/ yr.

\$75.00/month = \$900.00/ yr.

\$100.00/month = \$1200.00/ yr.

You can pay your pledge by:

Check (please make checks payable to St. John's Church)

Credit card online at [www.stjohnsphila.org](http://www.stjohnsphila.org)

Auto-payment through your online banking services, please use "2014 Pledge" for the account number

Cash may be turned in at the candle stand or given to a member of parish council.

Thank You for Your Consideration  
and Generosity!

**Pledges received to date \$50,335.00. We hoped to raise \$62,000.00 in 2014.**