



**ST. JOHN
CHRYSOSTOM
ALBANIAN
ORTHODOX
CHURCH**

**Important
Dates**

Parish Council
Meeting
Tuesday,
July 8, 2014
7:00 pm

If you have information or something you would like to have included in the Newsletter, please let us know. We will be happy to share it with our parishioners and friends.

St. John's Newsletter

(News for You...A Philadelphia Flavor)

Volume 1 Issue 4

May/June 2014

From The Pastor's Desk

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

Spontaneously, the neighbors broke into the song "Memory Eternal". The old man had not been Albanian, was not even Orthodox; however, he had been, indeed, a neighbor. He was always kind, always someone to help out when he was needed, always a light to those who lived around him. A blue-collar worker, the old man was forever reading, forever trying to improve himself, forever sharing what he had learned throughout his life. He did not think of himself as a person who was influential; but his neighbors knew better.

Moving toward the light, trying to improve ourselves,

is what the Feast of the Ascension is all about, and it closes off "Paschaltide" preparing us for the next journey.

The great German writer, Goethe, supposedly gasped his last words, saying, "Mehr licht", which means, "More light"! Isn't that what we all need, more light? The only way that happens is for us to ascend in THIS life, to better ourselves, to become more than what we are...a journey to more light, for ourselves and for those around us.

Dylan Thomas, a fellow Irishman, wrote, "Rage, rage, against the dying of the light". We need to heed his call, and ascend.



Some of us have had a difficult year, have experienced suffering, pain, the death of a loved one. This is the very time when we all need to reflect on the Ascension of our Lord and ask what it means to us. (Continued on page 2)

Parish Council by Steve Coraluzzi

Leaves are returning to the trees, flowers are blooming, and the days are getting longer. All around us the world is changing and we celebrate the color and life that God brings each spring. At this time I would like to stop for a moment and reflect on our Sunday school year. In

September when the days were still warm we had 35 children registered for 2013-14 Sunday school program. While attending Sunday school the children learned about Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection. We discussed many topics each week that pertained to gospel readings, and

Fr. Brooks' sermons. Our children's knowledge of Orthodoxy has grown and they have bonded as a community and have created memories that they will share for a lifetime. In addition to our class time we had several field trips this year. We had a fall outing to the Adventure

From the Pastor's Desk



(continued from page 1)

The season of repentance and reflection (Great Lent) is behind us, and yet, more than ever, we need to reflect, to rediscover who we are and how to improve ourselves, how we can bring more light into our lives. And this, because we are Christians, is not merely some self-help idea; it is part of our spiritual journey to help others, to be like the old man in the

story who was loved by his neighbors because of the light he showed to those around him.

After celebrating the Ascension of our Lord this year, let us reflect on our own ascension. We may have had a good year, or we may have had a difficult, trying year; nonetheless, we are called upon to attain more light that we can pass on to those around us, and "to

show that we are Christians by our love". May the peace, love, and light of Christ be with all of you.

Your brother in Christ,
Fr. Brooks

Parish Council Message, Continued

Aquarium, and we went on our annual winter ice skating event. Our Lazarus Saturday retreat was a success and our end of year trip to Dave & Busters is now being planned.

The true heroes of our Sunday school program are the teachers who dedicate their time and energy to educating our children. They arrive with a smile each week prepared to discuss the weekly lesson

and help the children understand what is going on in our church. Our church community benefits greatly from the knowledge, patience and devotion each teacher provides. We must remember that these children will be our members, clergy and board someday.

Finally I wish to thank Father Brooks for his guidance, the church board



for their support, and my family Diane, Michele & Adam for their help with the Sunday school program. Without everyone's support, energy, and time it would not be possible to have such a successful Sunday school program.

Steve Coraluzzi
"Mr. Cheese Ball"



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).

Home Visitation / Blessing list for June and July 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.

1 June

Greg Dardaris family
Leslie Contoudis family
Chanoine/Tarazi family

4 June

Diamanti family

7 June

Lakuriqi, Andon
Lakuriqi, Perparim

11 June

Subashi, Betty

14 June

Pescatore, Jeannine
Bortner, William,
Dardaris, Michael and
Carolyn

18 June

Satir, Bessie
Costalis, Gus
Prifti, Evangeline

22 June

Shallapi, Lilly
Levitsky, Michael and Lisa
Anderson, Michele and Bill

25 June

Bendo, Jim and Paula
Fiss, Sandy and Robert

28 June

Grabovari, Mike and
Ariana
Kosova, George,
Dhandili, Edward

2 July

Nowmos, Stephen and
Margaret
Kane, Kathy
Kundraxhi, Anesti

9 July

Papa, Ilirjan and Fiori
Nasto, Ylli and Liljana

12 July

Leyden, Michael and
Janice
Notskas, Linda
Thack, Gerald and Erin

16 July

Ghicondey, Jim and
Roxanne
Xhori, Paul

17 July

Kane, Jerrold and
Katherine
Furxhi, Victor and Greta
Xhoxhi, Dimitraq and Elida

19 July

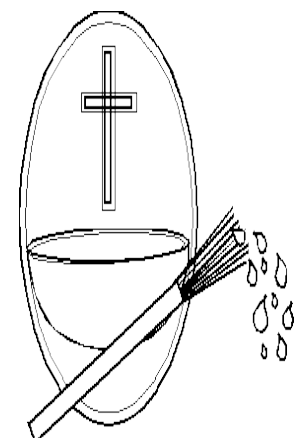
Bello, George
Melnik, Vlad and Susan

23 July

Bitri, Edmund

24 July

Burdumy, Richard
Pajcini, Konstandin and
Oanh



Some thoughts about church

St. John's Albanian Orthodox Church is one of the best parishes I've ever been associated with. The people here are kind, giving, and dedicated. Most drive for miles to get here on Sunday mornings, passing other Orthodox churches on their way here. I have been welcomed with open arms, and am pleased to be here. We enjoy each other's company, we have great parish functions, a well-run Sunday school program, classes in the fall, and a host of other things that should make everyone realize what a gem this parish is. Still, there is much work to do apropos of building up our parish and making it a true example of the Orthodox Church. Let's consider a few things.

One of the main things we need to do is, for most parishioners, to arrive at church on time on Sunday mornings. It is, to say the least, a bit embarrassing when visitors show up on time, and there are only six people in the church. It seems odd to me that when we begin, we have six – maybe ten – parishioners, and by the time of communion, there is a long line. I think we need to be more reflective about how we view our worship. Yes, there are some difficulties on Sunday morning. Parents with young children sometimes have a particular problem. Still, we need to consider what we are teaching them. We can always come up with some excuse – and some are particularly reasonable – however, we need to make every effort to worship in a proper manner, not just for ourselves, but for others.

Once here, we need to understand that this is the Church, and the way we act is different than in other place. We need to recognize that this is the house of God, and we need to be reverent. Except for worshipping, or something necessary (a parent talking to their child), we need to keep silent and as focused as possible. I have reinstated the "kiss of peace", an ancient and important part of the Divine Liturgy. It is the time when we greet one another with a handshake or embrace and remind each other that Christ is, indeed, in our midst. It is not a "break" from the Liturgy (a time when it is "free" to talk); rather, it is part of the Liturgy, and should be approached as such. Throughout the service, we need to keep this in mind.

Communion, the Eucharist (which means "thanksgiving") is the most important part of the Liturgy. It is why we come to church. It should not be taken lightly. We arrive at church prior to the Liturgy because it is the beginning of our walk, our journey, to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. It is not



something where we arrive thirty minutes late (or later) and then get in line to "take" the Eucharist. The Eucharist is freely given; we cannot do anything to earn it (it is a free gift from God); however, out of love, we are to respect it, prepare for receiving this most precious gift, and "receive" this gift gratefully. During this most holy moment, we are to stand and keep silent, unless we are singing. Even if, for whatever reason (we are late or unprepared), we are standing with our brothers and sisters who are receiving communion, and as such, we are in communion with them. Again, I am so happy to be with you, thankful for the love you have shown, and very, very glad to be a part of St. John's. My love goes out to all, and the Love of God is with each of you.

Your brother in Christ,
Fr. Brooks

Holy Week & Pascha:



Holy Thursday—Reading of the Twelve Gos-



Decorators of the Epitaphios—Friday Morning



Holy Friday—The Funeral Procession



Pascha— Reading the Gospel



Agape Service—The Gospel read in many languages

Thank you to our parishioners and friends who made donations for Pascha. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

Schedule of Memorial Services August 3, 2014, Qiriako (Charlie) Adams, 3 year Memorial.
August 10, 2014 Maria Kosta, 20 year memorial August 17, 2014, Marguerita Rubis, 1 year memorial

Parishioner News:

Congratulations and Many Years to our Graduates:

- **Gregory Costa** graduating from Harriton High School, attending George Washington University, Washington D.C. Gregory is the son of Greg & Eleni Costa and the Grandson of Kathie Costa and Jennie Sapnas.
- **Eda Petuqi-Prifti** graduated from Saint Joseph University with a degree in Finance and Management. Congratulations are in order for proud parents Janaq & Liliana Petuqi, son, Christian Kosova and proud spouse, Julian Prifti. Eda will be pursuing a Master's Degree in Financial Planning and hopes to have her own insurance business.
- **Traci Cosmo** graduated from Rutgers University, Camden, with a degree in Sociology. Traci is the daughter of Michael Cosmo & Donna Dimitri. Traci, one of our Sunday school teachers, is planning to return to school to earn a teaching certificate. In the mean time she has been getting experience as a substitute teacher.
- **Marinela Prifti** completed the Master's Degree Program at West Chester University, earning a degree in Public Health Administration.
- Long time parishioner and past Parish Council Chair, **Tim Pappas**, earned a Doctor of Philosophy (Human Sexuality Education) degree from Widener University. Throughout his journey to earn his Doctorate, Tim was encouraged and supported by his wife, Donna, and his children, Nicole & Mike, Timmy & Laura and Daniel and grandchildren Michael and Alexandra. Congratulations to the entire Pappas Family!



If someone in your family has graduated and you would like to share the news please send the information to us info@stjohnsphila.org and we will include it in our next Newsletter.

Upcoming Baptisms :

June 8th, Zoey Angelina Cokos, daughter of Brie Cokos & Constantinos Bulgarides

June 21st, Anna Diamanti, daughter of Fiori & Theodor Diamanti

July 26th, Emma Moy, daughter of Greta & Aaron Moy



Parish Council Members

Donna Dimitri
Chairperson

chairperson@stjohnsphila.org

Peter Ghicondey
Vice-Chairperson

vicechairperson@stjohnsphila.org

@stjohnsphila.org

Linda Kosta
Secretary

secretary@stjohnsphila.org

Michele Anderson
Treasurer

treasurer@stjohnsphila.org

Linda Biando
Trustee

councilatarge.linda@stjohnsphila.org

@stjohnsphila.org

Diane Lescas
Trustee

councilatarge.diane@stjohnsphila.org

@stjohnsphila.org

Jani Mara
Trustee

councilatarge.jani@stjohnsphila.org

@stjohnsphila.org

Lay Leadership

Diane Lescas
Choir Director

choirdirector@stjohnsphila.org

Steve Coraluzzi
Sunday School Director

Sundayschooldirector@stjohnsphila.org

@stjohnsphila.org

Stewardship:

As we are called to be stewards for the Lord here on earth, please consider your role as a steward of St. John's. Can you sing with the choir, be a greeter at the door, help with the Sunday school, make a mesh for church a few times a year, donate the "item of the month" as often as possible, visit someone who is unable to attend church? A small gesture can go a long way to help! We are in the process of forming and updating our Parish Ministry Teams. We would like to have you on one (or more) of our teams!

Please see Fr. Brooks or any committee member with questions and thanks to all of our St. John's stewards for all that you do!

Parish Ministry Teams:

- 1) Charity and Benevolence
 - raise money
 - find three or four places to invest in
 - find local projects to get parishioners involved in
- 2) Outreach/Evangelism
 - find ways to get St. John's known in Center City
 - reach out to visitors
 - reach out to parishioners who need help
- 3) Stewardship ministry
 - Make people aware of the gifts of Time, Talent, and Treasure
 - shift the giving mentality from dues to supporting our ministry
 - make our fundraising projects just projects (no charge)
- 4) Young adult ministry
 - target those between the ages of 18 and 33
 - get them involved in our projects and outreach
 - find out what they need and help them
- 5) Youth ministry
 - we've got a good thing going
- 6) Women's guild
 - help with Charity and Benevolence and Outreach
 - focus on the younger women to get them involved
 - continue get-togethers to build camaraderie
- 7) Men's Club
 - social events
 - get involved with Charity and Benevolence and Outreach

Monthly Giving Items:

June - Paper towels
 July - Olive Oil
 August - Snacks for the Sunday school, juice boxes, small bottles of water
 September - Ream of paper
 October - Paper towels
 November - Paper Plates
 December - Your Christmas donation

**ST. JOHN
CHRYSOSTOM
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237 North 17th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
phone: 215-563-0979

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

www.stjohnsphila.org



Parish Pledge Update

Thanks to all of our church family who have pledged so far! You are truly our Pillars of St. John's. If you haven't already pledged already, you still have time! Please pledge today.

Why we pledge ...

We pledge (contribute) gifts (money, time, talents) to the church to support the good works that the church in turn gives to us and others when in need.

How the money is used ...

Money and other gifts by parishioners are used towards providing a wide range of services (for God's people) such as:

- Providing essentials for the poor and needy.
- Providing our parishioners with a place to worship God.
- Providing a full time priest to serve parishioners each day and in their time of need (baptisms, weddings, consoling, prayers, visitations, last rights, and funerals—to list a few). These should not thought of as "a la carte" services to be "purchased," when the time comes, but rather as a commitment that an extended family provides for it's loved ones!

God gave us a commandment to Love (care for) one another. Please be sure to help support our (YOUR) family by making your pledge today.

(1 Peter 4:10 –11) Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

As of May 31, 2014, we have received 94 pledges totaling \$51,210.00. Our goal for 2014 is \$62,000.00, which is what we included in our 2014 budget.

If you haven't submitted your pledge card yet, it isn't too late. Cards are available upstairs during coffee hour, at the candle stand or you can make you pledge online by going to: www.stjohnsphila.org/memberpledges.html

Our sincere thanks to those who have pledged.



**Pascha— The Faithful after receiving the Light
Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!
Krishti u Ngjall! Vertet u Ngjall!**