SYNAXARION: After feast of the Nativity; Stephen, Archdeacon & First Martyr; Theodore the Confessor, brother of St Theophanes the Poet; Theodore, Patriarch of Constantinople

Apolytikion of Feast of Nativity (4th Mode): Your Nativity, O Christ our God, has caused the light of knowledge to rise upon the world. For therein the worshippers of the stars were, by a star, instructed to worship You, the very Sun of Righteousness, and to know You as Orient from on high. Glory to You, O Lord.

Resurrectional Apolytikion (4th Mode): When the tidings of the Resurrection from the angel was proclaimed unto the women disciples, and our ancestral sentence also had been abolished, to the apostles, with boasting did they proclaim: that death is vanquished evermore and Christ our God is risen from the dead, granting to the world His great mercy.

For St. Stephen (4th Mode): O Stephen, a crown of royalty was laid on your head, for contests you courageously endured for Christ our God, as first among Martyr saints, You stood in accusation of the raging Judeans, and you saw your Savior at the right hand of the Father. We pray that you will ever entreat Him to save our souls.

For the Ancestors of God (2nd Mode): Annunciate the miracles to David the ancestor of God, O Joseph. You saw the Virgin pregnant. You glorified with the shepherds. You worshipped with the Magi. And you were warned by an Angel. Entreat Christ God to save our souls.

Kontakion: The Virgin gives birth today to Him Who is above all-being and the earth offers a cave to Him Whom no man can approach. Angels, with the shepherds, Glorify Him. Magi, with a star make their journey. For unto us is born today as a newborn Child, the Pre-Eternal God.

For more substitutions for the Feast of the Nativity, go to page 104 of the Divine Liturgy Book.
Epistle Reading is from Acts 6:8-15; 7:1-5, 47-60;

In those days, Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, arose and disputed with Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. Then they secretly instigated men, who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, and set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us." And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel. And the high priest said, "Is this so?" And Stephen said: "Brethren and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Depart from your land and from your kindred and go into the land which I will show you.' Then he departed from the land of the Chaldeans, and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living; yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him in possession and to his posterity after him, though he had no child. "But it was Solomon who built a house for him. Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands; as the prophet says, 'Heaven is my throne, and earth my footstool. What house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?' "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it." Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and ran together upon him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Gospel Reading is from Matthew 2:13-23

When the wise men departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because she had no children." 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But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaos reigned over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene."
Mary, to—

In the midst of a crisis a verse or two from the Bible has brought encouragement. Christ is the peace that comes in the midst of the

many times prayer has brought calm into a situation, when in the midst of stress, the Divine Liturgy has brought relief,

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ending 2020 and beginning 2021 with worship

The year 2020 has been a challenging year. Covid 19 and social unrest dominated the news headlines. In the meantime, our parish set two records this year—most liturgical services ever celebrated, and most money ever given to charity. We will end this year with prayer and we will begin the new year with prayer as well. There will be Divine Liturgy on Monday, December 28. Our final Divine Liturgy of the year will be on Wednesday, December 30, the feast of St. Anysia, whose relics are interred in our altar. The final service of the year, appropriate-ly, will be Paraklesis. We have offered this service nearly every week since the pandemic started, so that we can pray by name, for all the members of our parish. We will pray for everyone one final time in 2020, asking the Lord, through the intercessions of the Virgin Mary, to grant health to our parish, our nation and our world in the New Year! We will ring in 2021 with Divine Liturgy as we do each year. We encourage you to end 2020 and begin 2021 in worship, either in person or on-line.

Stewardship 2021 Update

A Special Message Regarding Epiphany this year

Because of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Epiphany celebration in Tarpon Springs is being scaled back significantly. Because of this, ALL churches in the Tampa Bay area will be open for Divine Liturgy on Wednesday, January 6. As is the Tradition with the Feasts of the Nativity and Pascha, two Divine Liturgies are celebrated in connection with the feast of Theophany. The Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil is celebrated on January 5. The Orthros and Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom will be celebrated on January 6. In an effort to accommodate as many people as possible, we will hold the Divine Liturgy on January 5 at 6:00 p.m., hoping to attract those who are working and who can’t come during the day. Divine Liturgy will be held on Wednesday, January 6 at 10:00 a.m. The Blessing of the Waters will follow the Liturgy each day. At a time when we need prayers over the whole world, I humbly ask each of you to make every effort to attend one of these two services. We will have room for overflow seating if necessary. This is a time for all of us to focus our prayers on the healing of our whole world. This is what the prayers of Theophany ask each year. Never has it been more important for us to come and offer them together.

St. John the Baptist
Orhthos 9:00 a.m.

Thursday, January 7

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Circumcision of Christ / New Year’s Day / St. Basil
Orhthos 8:45 a.m.

Friday, January 1

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Orhthos 8:45 a.m.

Sunday, January 3

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Orhthos 8:45 a.m.

Sunday, December 27

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Orhthos 8:45 a.m.

Monday, December 28

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia

Orhthos 9:00 a.m.

Wednesday, December 30

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

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Paraklesis

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Royal Hours of Theophany

Tuesday, January 5

Evening Liturgy for Forefeast of Theophany

Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

Blessing of the Waters

Divine Liturgy 9:30 - 11:00 a.m.

6:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.

Blessing of the Waters

Orhthos 8:45 a.m.

Theophany (to be celebrated at St. John)

Blessing of the Waters

Orhthos 8:45 a.m.

Great Vespers for St. John the Baptist

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

11:00 a.m.

6:30 p.m.

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1 Fr. Stavros

Two Weeks: The Bible Project

In the world, there will always be tribulation

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Ending 2020 and Beginning 2021 with Worship

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Fifty-Two Verses in Fifty-Two Weeks: The Bible Project

December 27 - January 2

I have said this, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

Normally, we think of peace as the absence of conflict. In other words, peace and conflict cannot co-exist. The peace of God is peace that can exist in the midst of conflict. In this verse, which Jesus said shortly before His betrayal and Crucifixion, He told His disciples that “in ME, you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation.” If we reverse these two sentences, it reads “in the world you have tribulation, in ME, you may have peace.” In the world, there will always be tribulation—politics, bad weather (I’m writing this in the middle of Tropical Storm Eta), crime, stress—these are tribulations that come upon us no matter what. Whether we are the greatest saint or the greatest sinner, we are not immune to these kind of tribulations. Add things like illness, job loss, financial struggle, problems in marriage, problems with kids, and the list goes on and on, there is a lot of tribulation in life. In Christ, we can find peace in the midst of conflict. There is a peace that transcends conflict—it doesn’t end conflict but it allows us to rise above conflict. I can’t tell you how many times prayer has brought calm into a situation, when in the midst of stress, the Divine Liturgy has brought relief, or in the midst of a crisis a verse or two from the Bible has brought encouragement. Christ is the peace that comes in the midst of the storm.
Update and Announcements

Sunday School will continue January 10.

Click here for the 2020 Virtual Christmas Pageant!

Click here for the 2019 Christmas Pageant!

Monday, December 28, 20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia — 20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia refers to victims of persecution of Christmas in Turkey by the Roman Emperors

Wednesday, December 30, St Anyisia — St. Anyisia was martyred in Thessaloniki in the year 304. Her relics are interred in our altar table.

Friday, January 1 - The Circumcision of Christ / St. Basil - New Year’s Day — Three things are commemorated on the first day of each year. First, the circumcision of Christ, which occurred historically 8 days after His Nativity. He was circumcised according to the rites of the Jewish law and given the name Jesus. Secondly, we commemorate the feast of St. Basil the Great, one of the Great Hierarchs of our church. St. Basil authored one of the Divine Liturgies used in our church, which is celebrated on his feastday. He also helped found monasticism. St. Basil was a friend to the poor, often baking bread with money in it and throwing it through the windows of widows and the poor. Hence the tradition of the Vasilopita, the bread with the coin baked inside, which we cut at the New Year. Finally, we are supposed to pray every day and commemorate all of life’s milestones with prayer. So, we open a new year, 2021, with prayer and the Divine Liturgy.

Looking for Ushers - We are looking for more ushers to help at the Divine Services of our church. If you are interested, please email Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com.

Women’s Bible Study will meet in January on Tuesday, January 12; Tuesday, January 19 and Tuesday, January 26. — We are studying the Epistle of St. James. We meet via ZOOM. Fr. Stavros leads this group. If you would like to join our women’s Bible study group, please contact Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com and he will add you to the Zoom link. At some point, we will be resuming in person, however when we do, there will continue to be a zoom option.

Monday Night Bible Study with Charlie will be held on Mondays, January 11, 18 and 25, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Bible study is held via Zoom. If you are not part of the Monday night Bible study and would like to join in, please contact Charlie at chambos@stjohtpta.org and he will add you.

When God Is Not There, a Book Study on Suffering, January 26 — “The world we live in has been called a ‘vale of tears’, a ‘place of weeping’ — perhaps with good reason. This book records simple events and conversations, all the while grappling with difficult questions. Its aim is to convey the sense of the discreet yet persuasive presence of the true God precisely in situations where He is not visible: in pain, in disability, in the tragedies of life, in inexorable death, as this comes across in true events and is reflected in the lives of real people.” Alex Limberatos will be hosting a Zoom Book Study on Tuesday Nights at 6:30 p.m. starting January 26 in six sessions. If you are interested in joining, please e-mail Alex at alex@stjohtpta.org or call the office phone. Books will be provided.

GriefShare Ministry Starting on Thursday, January 21 — It may be hard for you to feel optimistic about the future right now. If you’ve lost a spouse, child, family member, or friend, you’ve probably found there are not many people who understand the deep hurt you feel. This can be a confusing time when you feel isolated and have many questions. “Going to GriefShare feels like having warm arms wrapped around you when you’re shivering.” GriefShare groups meet weekly to help you face these challenges and move toward rebuilding your life. Each GriefShare session has three distinct elements: Video seminar with experts, support group discussion with focus and personal study and reflection. We will meet from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the Administration Building Meeting Room on Thursdays, starting January 21, for 13 weeks, ending on Thursday, April 22. For January, GriefShare will meet January 21 and 28. For more information please contact Donna Hambos at 813-843-8142 or dhambos@msn.com. Books for the program will be provided. Donation for the book suggested but not required. Open to all family and friends. Griefshare remains open enrollment with support towards healing and hope. You can begin at any time. If you attended last semester and missed a day or two, you can come for those days or repeat the whole thing. For the time being, Griefshare is meeting via zoom.

My Word 2021 — For the past two years, we’ve encouraged parishioners to identify one word that will shape their year. With 2020 now a month away, it’s time to start thinking of the word that will define you in 2021. It is also time to start thinking of a word that will define our parish for 2021. If you have an idea for a word for our parish for 2021, please send it to Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com. Towards the end of December, he will send out a request for individual words to define you for 2021.

Prayer List: Lord Jesus Christ, Physician of our Souls and Bodies, visit and heal your servants: Kathy & Andrew Bouzinekis; Anastasia; Amanda, Andrew, Colton, Miranda, Charlotte Elizabeth, Nuha, Nabeel, Michael, Amal, John, Elaine, Olga, Virginia Georgiou, Ron Myer, Toula Tsaros, Fr. Pat Legato, Nellie Pringle, Yolanda Webb, Angela Bougas, Tony Ekonomou, Ron, Jason Vickers, Rex Garrison, Tina Chakonas, Ann Demas, Alex Martinez, Adriana Martinez, Aaron Martinez, Christina Noel Kouzes Houck, Evangeline Xeroteres, Nichole Ross, Daniel Ross, Daniella Ross, Ashley Henderson, Natalie Henderson, Chris, Debbie, James, Avery, Lily, Jacob, Jesse, Ann, Rosario, Antonia Caffentzis, Alissa, John, Angela, Joey, Christine Scourtes, Steven, Matthew & Family, Phyllis, John Zelatis, Reagan, Peter Zaharis, Alexandra Ferrarolis, Leon & Despina Botham, Cindy Xieck, Mary Ellen Eyvemon, Marie Sofia Panagopoulos, Maria Hursey, Chris Vamvakias, John Myer, Mike Trims, Robert and Alice Stoccardo, John Alexander, Michael Romero, George Hambos, Dean Kondilis and Family, Bill and Nancy Manikas, Patricia Costello, Anastasia Smyrnakis, Ekaterina & Anna Shushaulykova, Dora Koudouna, Ana Mourer, Debbie Phelps, Mary Voykin, David Voykin, Anne Sakellaris, Denise Badrane, Sia Blankenship, Don Payne, Zhania Temelkova, Stanislava Terzieva, James, Jude and all victims of war, terrorism, crime, natural disaster, and all of whom we are unaware.