

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

# ***THE MESSENGER***

“Behold I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.” Mark 1:2-3



***St. Haralambos-February 10***

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# ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

## *Timetable of Services*

**Sundays:** Orthros 8:30 a.m.      Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.  
**Weekdays:** Orthros 9:00 a.m.      Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

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St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is a parish under the spiritual and ecclesiastical oversight of His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of the Metropolis of Atlanta, of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America in the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

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•**Bookstore:** Jon & Pamela Irwin 813-237-5537

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“May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father and the Communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.” From the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

# Father Stavros' Message

Every month when I sit down to write a message for The Messenger, I look back at the messages from the same month in previous years in order to make sure that the message for the same month this year isn't the same as what I have written in previous years. In previous February issues of The Messenger, I have written about the Triodion or "Pre-Lenten" period of the church year. With Pascha occurring usually in April, Lent begins in early March or sometimes even late February and Triodion almost always dominated the month of February. Not so this year. Pascha will not occur until May 5, Lent does not begin until March 18, and the first Sunday of the Triodion will be February 24, at the tail end of this month. So, we'll leave the Lenten/Paschal seasons for ensuing months. For this month, there are several unrelated themes I would like to address, so please bear with this message which will have a few distinct parts:

## FOLLOW UP ON THE NEWTOWN MASSACRE

My January message had already been written and The Messenger was already at the off-site publisher when 26 students and teachers were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. I wrote a reflection the night of this tragedy, which can be found on our church website, or I can email you a copy if you did not receive it at church. Like all of us, I have strong feelings about this event. I read in the newspaper on January 5, how the town of Newtown has struggled with how long to leave the myriad of memorials for the dead up around town. Some were removed as early as December 28, only two weeks after the shootings. Many of us in Tampa, Florida, have moved on from the emotions we had on December 14. Time has healed the wounds. And space (we're many miles away from Connecticut) has made this tragedy almost seem unreal. Heck, to one professor at a Florida university, he didn't believe a tragedy had happened at all, that it was just some kind of massive government conspiracy. Tell that to the parents who buried their children the week before Christmas.

Part of the problem in our society is how quickly we forget and move on from tragedies like the Newtown shooting. I'm not sure if that is because we are an optimistic people who would rather cling to only good things, or because we live in some kind of denial that these things happen or are as bad as the news reports them. Or perhaps it is because we are complacent and think it can't happen to our children, or can't happen in our town, our schools, our malls, or our theaters.

There are several events a year that get me glued to the TV set—last year it was the shootings in Aurora, Colorado, the Presidential Election and the Newtown tragedy. There are several events in my life that have captivated my attention years after they happened—both space shuttle explosions and 9/11 are events I remember, and through youtube, and google occasionally relive, but often recall. And I think that Newtown, Connecticut, will be another one of these events that I will remember years from now. I would like to think that this event was a "watershed" event—that perhaps society will finally get serious about preventing massacres like this in the future. This isn't going to happen because there is a Republican or a Democrat in the white house, or whether one party or the other controls congress. It won't happen if we all own a gun and it won't happen if we ban all guns. We as a society, in America anyway, in my opinion, have really come to a nader point in our existence. There is so much anger in our country that I often think that a "civil war" is possible on one of many fronts—perhaps along a racial divide, a religious divide, a moral divide, a political divide or a socio-economic divide. Because there are still deep-seeded feelings on all

of these fronts. Ironically, in our effort to preach "tolerance," we have done just the opposite. We tolerate so many kinds of aberrant behaviors, that anyone who wants to stand up for law and order, civility and responsibility, and moral behavior is now seen as the intolerant one, and is not tolerated in many corners of our society.

In the weeks after the Newtown shooting, I found two letters to the editor in our local newspapers that I want to reprint because they speak to what I believe is the root of our problems—we as a society need to change—it's not just gun owners, it's not just the mentally ill, it's everyone that needs to change.

### Society's ways, not guns, must change (by Randy Eisenberg)

*I was born in 1949. I had a mom and dad under one roof. They weren't my "buddies" or "friends"; they were my parents. When they spoke, my siblings and I listened. The consequences of disobedience were swift and sure. My grandparents lived across the street, my aunt and uncles lives four houses down. My parents took me with them to church. I learned that God loves all people that there are things we are not supposed to do and things we should do. In my public school, we said prayer and stood and pledged allegiance to the flag. Neither was an option.*

*I read lots of hunting magazines. However, growing up in the city (Miami), hunting wasn't really an option for me. Target shooting was something I could do, so on Saturdays, my mother would drive me to the Tamiami Gun Range so I could target shoot. Never did the idea of taking a gun to school to settle an argument enter into my head. Neither did hitting or cursing a teacher.*

*Fast-forward 63 years: too many homes with one parent raising the children. Shame on the men for not being the fathers they need to be. Too many moms and dads being friends or buddies to their kids. We kicked prayer out of school a long time ago, and the Pledge of Allegiance is optional. At sporting events for kids, everyone is a winner, even those who lose the game. How does that prepare them to handle loss when they grow up?*

*America must change. We need to revisit what we worship, what we respect, and what we are teaching our children through our own behavior. Until that happens, all the gun laws in the world won't help.*

### Wake up to Reality (by Hope Henchey)

*What can drive a man to kill 20 children, six women, his own mother and himself without even leaving a note or making a statement? I think the emptiness of American culture drives people to seek escape (through*

*drinking, pornography, drugs, video games, movies, etc.) in such excessive measures that reality takes second place to obsession.*

*I've had this happen on a small scale to myself when I spend too much time watching a TV show or reading a book. The characters become more real than my peers, the plot becomes more real than my situation. I can easily see how even "innocent" means of escapism, taken to extreme levels, can drive a person to step out of reality and see a massacre as just another part of the game.*

*I think that Americans desperately need to weather storms instead of medicating ourselves out of them. When our minds have questions, we need to seek truth until we find it instead of distracting ourselves until we forget our need. Americans need to embrace reality instead of getting lost in fantasy, oftentimes not only to the harm of themselves but to others.*

If you read just these two short letters above, look at all the roles in society that have been mentioned—are you a mother? A father? A child who plays violent video games? A student? A gun owner? A grandparent? An aunt or an uncle? A Christian? An American? A coach? A sports fan? A Soccer Mom or Dad? Most certainly everyone in our community fits several of these roles. All must change in order for society to change.

A few weeks ago in church, I told the story of how we used to train in high school in the offseason on the soccer team. We would run laps in a shallow pool, about 3.5 feet deep. When all 20 of us were running quickly, the current we created was very strong. And just as the current got going, the coach would blow the whistle, we'd all stop and have to reverse course. And it was hard running against the current. In fact, if only one of the 19 of us had reversed course as instructed, he would have been powerless to stop the current, in fact, he would have been swept away in it. One person, no matter how strong he is, cannot reverse the flow of a current created by 19 others. Five strong people probably can. It doesn't necessarily take a majority to reverse the course. It does take a strong-willed minority though.

Orthodoxy will probably never be the religion of the majority in this country. Christianity may not be the majority much longer. There are almost as many children born out of wedlock as in it. There are almost as many people who are divorced as there are who are married. But there can still be a voice for Orthodoxy, for Christianity, for marriage, for two-parent households, for morals and values—there can still be a voice for these things, but it must be united, strong, and perseverant.

We can't be a voice in society if our church community isn't unified in purpose. And we can't be united unless we, individually, take a good, long and hard look at ourselves, and evaluated honestly and with humility, what is it that we are contributing to the solution and what is it that we are contributing to the problem. There is NOBODY that doesn't contribute to the problem in some way. There is NOBODY who can't contribute to the solution.

As for my answer to the Newtown tragedy—we live in a society that has no standards of any kind it seems. Almost any kind of behavior is accepted and mitigated. The only thing that surprises me is that these kind of tragedies aren't happening in even greater number. Change is not going to happen

with stricter gun laws, or armed troops in our schools. It's not going to happen by raising taxes or handing out more entitlements. Change in the world begins with change in the individual. It begins when I as an individual decide not to play a violent video game, or watch a violent movie, when I stop using profanity, when I stop littering, when I stop gossiping, and when I start helping, when I stop looking out only for number one and start looking out for the other guy. It starts with the decision to love God, and to see God in my neighbor, not just my friends, but my neighbors—the people I share the road with, the people I share the office with, the people I share the pews in church with. It starts with being grateful for what I have rather than coveting what I don't have. It starts with seeing what I have as a blessing rather than an entitlement. It starts with being a peacemaker rather than a peacemaker.

I demonstrated in church a few Sundays ago, what happens when you build a tower out of blocks and then remove the foundation—the tower collapses. For those who were not in church that Sunday, I actually built a tower of blocks and put a very solid foundation under the tower. When I started removing the blocks of the foundation, the tower quickly toppled. And so it is with our society. When you take the basic building blocks out of society—God, faith, family, marriage, hard work, standards, morals, respect, decency, modesty—you see what happens, the society collapses.

If a builder knows he is building something without a solid foundation, does he destroy what he has built, redo the foundation, and then build the structure again? Or does he keep building on the bad foundation, reasoning that it will take too much time to start over again? If he does the latter, eventually his building collapses. But if he is smart, he will step back, "destroy" what he has built improperly, and start over again. This will take time, and it will take effort, but he will end up with something strong. If he continues building, he thinks he will save time and money, but ultimately, he will spend even more time and more money, and when the building comes crashing down, which it inevitably will, many others will be hurt or killed. There will be lots of collateral damage. We're destroying our society, one brick at a time. Unfortunately it is the foundational bricks that are being damaged and destroyed. Eventually the whole society is going to come down if we destroy enough of the foundation. It is architecturally possible to repair some of the foundation without destroying a building, and where this is possible in society, this is what we need to do. But there are parts of our building (society) that are going to have to come down and totally be redone, or we can look forward to even more collapse.

While I don't agree with our President on many things, he hit the nail on the head when he said "We've got to do better." That's a statement I agree with wholeheartedly.

*Now, switching gears. . . .*

## **ORTHODOXY—NOT A NEW FAD AND WHY ST. HARALAMBOS IS IMPORTANT**

On February 10th each year, we honor St. Haralambos. St. Haralambos was born in 89 A.D. and died in the year 202 at the age of 113. He was a priest

from a very young age who served with great zeal. He refused to worship the idols of the Roman Empire and for this he was tortured. He was tied to a post in the public square and ridiculed by the pagans. Soldiers slashed his body with heavy cutting irons. Still, he refused to deny Christ. St. Haralambos survived so much torture that he gained the reputation as “the man they cannot kill.” Miracles were attributed to him while he was in prison. He was dragged by his beard through the city streets by soldiers on horseback and nailed to a cross with over 100 large spikes that pierced his skin. Still he would not relent in his faith or die. The emperor ordered him beheaded. As the two executioners raised their swords to kill the Saint, suddenly a voice was heard from heaven saying, “Well done My faithful servant, enter into the kingdom of Heaven.” At that very moment, St. Haralambos passed away without a single blow being struck. The executioners were dumbfounded. They knelt before the body of the Saint and asked God for forgiveness. The Emperor became even more enraged, and ordered the two would-be executioners of Haralambos beheaded. Their names were Porphirios and Baptos, whose feast is celebrated also on February 10th. Thus the beloved Saint Haralambos truly had become “the man they couldn’t kill,” for he was taken by God Himself into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

St. Haralambos is important for several reasons:

1. He is one of the great saints of our church, because of his witness for Christ. In the early centuries of Christianity, when Christianity was illegal in the Roman Empire, many people were tortured and executed because of their faith in Christ. Ironically, rather than people fleeing from the churches and Christianity for fear of death, people were flocking to the churches in record numbers. In the first three centuries of Christianity, the Church grew at a rate of 40% per decade, a rate that has never been reached again. Why is this? Because people saw Christians who were willing to die for their faith and said, “If this faith is worth dying for, it is a faith worth calling my own.” Today, can you distinguish the Christian from the non-Christian when it comes to lifestyle and behavior—Christians stay away from church just like their non-Christian counterparts. They play violent video games, drink heavily, are not faithful in their marriages, and so many other things, almost to the same tune as their non-Christian counterparts. St. Haralambos is a reminder that we cannot water down our Christianity. But we must go forth with zeal, a zeal that would even cause us to die for Christ if necessary.
2. St. Haralambos links the Orthodox Church to the 2nd Century. We live in a world that is obsessed with new things. It is amazing how quick we dub some technological device “old.” People don’t drive cars for 20 years anymore, or live in the same house, OR stay in the same marriage or same career. We are obsessed with change. Change, in some respects is good. But faith is something that doesn’t change. The message of Jesus Christ does not change. Just like God’s love for us doesn’t change, or His might and power. God never stops bestowing blessings on people in our world. Everyday someone with a new talent emerges, a new child is born, new hopes and possibilities rise like the sun. The Orthodox Church is not a new church. The overwhelming majority of Christian denominations (now numbering 38,000 and counting) were born in the

past 100 years. We are now in the year 2013. St. Haralambos is a link for our church back to the year 113, when he would have been 24 years old, already serving as a priest and celebrating the Divine Liturgy, much the same way we are still doing it to this day. Think of that, a 1,900 year connection between our Orthodox Church of 2013 and the Church of 113. And this is not only an historical link, it is a physical link. Why?

3. The relics of St. Haralambos are interred in the altar table of our church. At the time of St. Haralambos, when the church was under persecution, the church was not building beautiful edifices in which to worship. Worship was done under the streets of the cities, in sewers and in catacombs, the place where the dead were placed. It became a tradition to build altars on which the worship services were conducted from the bones of the “righteous” people of the community. When Christianity became the legal religion of the Roman Empire in the year 313 and church buildings were erected, the Church kept the tradition of celebrating services over the bones of the “righteous” people by placing bone fragments of saints into the altars of the churches, in a service called “the Consecration” of a church. When a church is consecrated, bone fragments of three saints are placed into the altar of the church and sealed into it. This ceremony is only done ONCE in the life of a church community. In our church in Tampa, the church was consecrated in 1986. And the bone fragments in our altar are of St. George (fourth century), St. Anysia (sixth century) and St. Haralambos (89-202 A.D.) So each time we celebrate Liturgy in our church, we are celebrating the service over the relics of St. Haralambos. And each time we step into our church, we are in the “presence” of a 2nd century saint of our church. Each time we are in church, we are linked to the early church through the presence of this saint in our altar. And as the world changes (and not necessarily for the better) continually outside the doors of our church, inside the church, the presence of the saints, the Tradition of worship, and the ability for us for commune with God does not change.

St. Haralambos gives our church a solid foundation of Tradition and history, faith, and zeal upon which to build.

*And now an abrupt segue to a totally unrelated topic. . .*

## **YOUR STEWARDSHIP WILL DETERMINE THE KIND OF COMMUNITY WE WILL BE**

Well, I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is that 138 families have pledged \$178,822 towards our church for 2013. More good news: That’s an average of \$1,295 per pledged family.

The bad news: There are over 300 families in our parish. Where are the forms of the other 160+ families? More bad news: We need \$300,000 in stewardship to balance the budget for 2013. That means we need \$122,000 in order to balance our budget.

More bad news: We still have the stained glass window project to finish, as well as some more repairs/ maintenance updates to the air conditioning/ heating systems in the Kourmolis Center to make. We still need approximate-

ly \$95,000 to finish these projects.

But more good news: In the past month, we have received nearly \$20,000 in anonymous donations from several parishioners who wish to give large sums of money to either the stained glass fund or the general fund and don't want any credit for that. In fact, I received a letter with one of the checks that talked about "scraping money together to give to the church because it is the right thing to do" but asking me not to even acknowledge the letter with a thank you note—this person was happy to just give. I don't cry often. This letter made me cry actually. And I'm sorry to the letter-writer, I wanted to acknowledge your "anonymous" gift to let our parishioners know that there are people who step up privately and offer sacrificially. Ironically, when someone hears about a large "anonymous" donation, many times they try to guess who gave money, surmising it is a family of some financial means. Actually, these large donations are coming from families who live on modest incomes, I'm guessing way below the mean income of our community. That's what makes these contributions so moving in my opinion—those who are giving the most actually have the least.

I'm never sure how to approach the topic of stewardship when I'm speaking or writing about it—it is very hard to speak or write about stewardship without sounding like I'm cajoling or begging. So, allow me to "factually" state a few things:

1. God calls us to be stewards. We each have been given a talent by God—God tells us that we are to use these talents to be good stewards of our lives, our world, our relationships and our church. Our entrance into God's kingdom will be the result of a "judgment" which will be based on the kind of stewards we were in this life.
2. The biblical standard for giving is the "tithe," meaning that ten percent of what we have is supposed to be offered back to God. Yes, this represents a sacrifice, but this is a sacrifice that is supposed to be offered in joy.
3. While sentiment, emotion and good feelings are welcome and needed in our church community, the fact is that the church needs to raise a certain amount of money each year just to keep it's doors open. Did you know that the church spends \$7,000 a month in just utilities? That's right—with the square footage of our buildings being MANY times the size of our houses, the utility expense of our parish comes out to over \$80,000 per year. Then there is insurance, another major expense. Then there is office supplies—copier, phone system, cost of printing The Messenger. And of course, there is personnel expense.
4. Our church is not adequately staffed—In most Protestant Churches, there is one full time employee for every 100 PEOPLE, not families. That's why a modest sized Protestant Church, let's say a church with 500 people, approximately 150 families, may have 2 full time pastors, a minister of music, a youth director and an office worker. For nearly the entire time I have been at St. John, we've tried to run a Parish of 300+ families (1000+ people, and these are just the ones who are stewards, not the ones who just call the church when they need something. Truth be told, we're probably serving 600+ families because about 50% of the pastoral calls in this church come from non-members. That means that

half of the baptisms, weddings, funerals, hospital calls, etc. are from non-members. As the "pastor" of the parish, how do I handle these calls? Do I tell the people, "sorry, become members or I can't help you?" Of course not, I take all of these calls in the hopes that my witness for Orthodoxy will motivate these people to become members. Sometimes it does. Many times it doesn't.) with a full-time priest, one secretary, a part-time book-keeper and a part-time maintenance man. And what have we ended up with—buildings and grounds that are not kept in good condition as far as cleaning and maintenance, records that are a mess, and people who are not being adequately served or reached.

5. In order to run a parish of this size effectively, the following is needed:
  - a. A full-time priest (check, we have that)
  - b. A full-time book-keeper/office manager—we have that. Christine Bostrom, our book-keeper, is still in the process of correcting our books from years of errors. She has also become very gifted at stretching every dollar by researching every purchase carefully.
  - c. A full-time secretary—Skip Higdon has filled in this job over the past few months on a temporary basis. We are in the process of identifying someone we can hire on a full-time basis. Why is a full-time secretary needed? Because there is a lot of "administrative" work that Father Stavros has had to do over the years. As the ministry needs go up, which they have as the parish has grown, there is a need to get many of the administrative tasks shifted over from Father to someone else. Also, in the area of stewardship/membership, we need someone who can continually keep up with people who haven't been to church in a while, who can manage all of the volunteer talent that has been offered through stewardship, and can be a coordinator of our ministries, in addition to answering phones, handling correspondence and coordinating parish activities.
  - d. Maintenance—Felix, our maintenance man, has done a wonderful job. He not only cleans but knows how to repair many things. We have had him on a part-time basis. With his ability to repair things, he saves us a lot of money. Yes, we're still going to bring in repairmen for major maintenance on air condition, electrical, plumbing and other systems. But Felix is about to do routine maintenance on just about all of these things. The problem again, is time. We need him for more time.
  - e. Ministry help—I have a couple of friends who are not Orthodox, one of them is a pastor, the others are just friends I have made over the years. And they are all shocked that a parish of our size has only one full-time priest/pastor. **You've probably noticed that it takes me longer to return an email or a phone call than it did years ago. That's not because I'm working any less. In fact I'm working more hours than ever. That's because there are more phone calls and more emails and more people to serve than ever before. I'm sorry that it takes me so long to respond to you. In fact, sometimes I feel guilty about that. But I'm doing my best.** We've added (and are still

adding) many people to our parish. We still have the same one priest we've always had. And we have to start thinking and preparing to change that. We all know that Charlie Hambos, our Seminarian, is graduating in May 2014. My hope and my goal is to bring Charlie back to St. John's to serve as a pastoral assistant. No, we're not going to be able to get a second priest, because there is a shortage of priests in this country. And on the positive cash flow side, a pastoral assistant is not going to command the salary of another priest, which we probably can't afford anyway. But having another "pastoral" employee is going to mean that the church will be doing a better job of "pasturing" the congregation. There will be another person to meet "pastoral" needs, whether that means additional ministries offered, additional help for ministries we currently have, or another person available for pastoral care and counseling.

If we are going to "do church" in the right way, it is going to take more people working on a full-time basis. Yes, we get a lot from our volunteers. But the "problem" if you want to call it that, with a volunteer, is that when something else comes up, that becomes more important than the "volunteer" job. Again, if we are going to move this community forward, and if we are going to get the salvific message of Christ to more people (heck, if we want to get the salvific message of Christ more adequately to our own people), then we need more workers doing that work on a consistent and full-time basis.

And if we are going to add the people we need to add, it is going to require more money, which requires additional stewardship funds be raised. There are two ways to raise money—either we all give more or we get more people to give. Both are needed. Some of us have increased our stewardship dramatically over the past several years. Since we've arrived in Tampa, our stewardship has doubled—we made a decision to increase our stewardship every year by a certain amount each week. We've trusted in God every year, that even when I don't get a raise, even when we added a child, even when inflation and taxes go up, it doesn't matter, we still raise our stewardship a little each year. And over the past eight years, our stewardship is now double what it was when we got here. We also give 10 percent of all gifts/unexpected monies back to the church on top of our pledge each year. We are working our way up to a tithe on the regular money. We tithe 10 percent on the extras every time. So, here are some concrete ideas in how to increase our stewardship:

1. Make your pledge on a weekly basis—if you start off with \$20 per week, that is \$1,000 per year. If you add \$5 a week to your pledge next year, your pledge will go to \$1,250, and you probably won't even notice the effect of an additional \$5 on your weekly income—that's just one cup of coffee at Starbucks or one drink in a restaurant. If you increase your pledge by \$5 a week over the next four years, you will have doubled your pledge in four years.
2. Small steps add up to big gains. When I started working out again after many years of not working out, I could barely make it 20 minutes in the gym. Now, I am up to almost an hour. How? Because I focused on adding 3 minutes a week to the gym routine. I didn't start out at almost an hour—I started slow and built up slow. This is how you can increase

stewardship—a steady increase over time.

3. Tithe your extras—when you get a "bonus", that's exactly what a "bonus" is—money you weren't expecting or counting on. So, if you got an extra gift for \$100, give \$10 of it back to God in thanksgiving.
4. Be a steward "in death"—Leave a "tithe" or a portion of your inheritance to the church. Most of us have a will, so that a portion of our lives is left to our loved one when our earthly lives are over. There are many people and causes that I love—when I die, of course I want to leave something to our son (and to wife if she survives me). I want my vestments to go to brother priests or new priests. I want my books and priestly belongings to help other priests and other parishes. Perhaps part of this is a hope that my memory will live on through my things being used by other people. And certainly part of this is a recognition that these things are not mine to retain for eternity, but rather things that God allowed me to use in this life, and when this life is over, they should be left to be used by others. Remember our church in your will (we've left a portion of our inheritance to the church in ours). Leave a portion of God's gifts to you for the future generations of this church. Not only will your memory live on through your gift to this church, but the Gospel will live on and be moved forward because you will have given the means for that to happen. But leaving a portion of your inheritance to the church is also a sign of thanksgiving to God, that what you received in this life was a gift, a blessing from God, and is a blessing that should be used by others through the church when your life on earth is over.
5. We have spoken of endowments in this church in years past, and even established a small endowment. But imagine if everyone who lived and died in our church left an average of \$10,000 to the church at their death. For some of us, that is a negligible amount of our estate, many can do much more. But let's say a person left \$10,000 a year to the church. Over 10 years, that would bring in over a million dollars to the church. And imagine what the church could do with that. One church that I grew up in started endowing money years ago, when I was a child, we're talking 30 years ago. Dollar by dollar, their fund grew and grew. They bought properties and kept growing the fund. They now have two priests and still the fund grows. They just did an \$8 million dollar building/renovation project. Yes, there was a capital campaign. But a good portion of the funds used for this project came from funds raised over the past three decades. And yes, this church congregation is actually SMALLER than ours.

*Which brings me to my final point. . .*

On January 12, our parish hosted a "lock-in" for GOYAnS from several parishes in the area. We had 32 teenagers spend the night in our parish. I got all of two hours of sleep that night, did Liturgy the next morning, had an appointment on Sunday afternoon and got into the office on Monday morning, still tired from the weekend. This is not a complaint, so please don't take it that way. If we get a pastoral assistant or an assistant priest one day, I'll still spend the night at church a few times a year.

What I wanted to share with you were some of the questions I was asked and experiences I had at this event. Here are some of the questions our teenagers want to know:

1. What is the difference between Orthodoxy and Catholicism
2. How do we reconcile the story of creation as told in Genesis 1 with evolutionary theory as it is being taught in our schools?
3. How come there is no mention of the dinosaurs in the Bible? Don't we believe they existed?
4. Can you talk about human sexuality—how do people end up homosexual or bi-sexual?

This is just a sampling of some of the questions I was asked. I will answer some of them in ensuing issues of *The Messenger* as I'm sure some of you have the same questions.

Here was the schedule for our lock-in

Between 6:00 and 7:00 p.m., the retreat participants arrived and had some time for fellowship.

At 7:00 p.m., dinner was served.

About 7:30 p.m., an impromptu indoor soccer game ensued

From 8:00-9:00 p.m., we did icebreakers and games to get kids to know one another, as well as to get them laughing and having fun.

From 9:00 p.m. until 12:30 a.m., for three and a half hours, we broke into small groups for substantive discussion. (It was impressive that teenagers could gather for over three hours to discuss matters of their faith).

At 12:30 a.m. we broke for a "midnight snack."

And from 1:00 a.m. until people went to bed around 4:00 a.m., they gathered in small groups just to hang out. During this time, I was approached by several people, both GOYAns and adult advisors, who wanted "to talk" individually.

I met several people individually for 15-30 minutes at a time, "just to talk." By 4:00 a.m., everyone was exhausted and went to bed.

I'm sharing this information to let you know that there are lots of questions about our faith out there in our community. Doing retreats is a great way to engage people in learning and dialogue and to answer the ensuing questions that are inevitably generated. And there are lots of people who "want to talk" about matters of faith, personal problems, etc. And the fact is, there isn't time to get to everyone and to give them a generous amount of time. There is only so much time. And even getting to everyone who asks is still just "reactionary" ministry. It is not proactive ministry that is evangelical, in the sense of going out and "spreading" the Word of God. The kind of ministry I am doing is merely reacting to people, questions and situations that present themselves to me. To truly be a church, in the way that Christ intends for us to be a church, it requires us to "go forth" and preach the Gospel, not merely set up shop for whoever happens to come in.

To sum up my lengthy message: 1) Our world needs change, and it needs it be swift and strong. 2) The Orthodox Church has the history, the theology and the Tradition to change the world for the better. 3) The Church needs your help, in the form of your stewardship in order to be a vehicle for change. 4) There is so much work to do—our own church is a field that is ripe for harvest, so let's start here, but let's not stop here. Let's all throw in to offer our time, our talent and our resources, so we can make our church as God intended for it to be—serving those we know, evangelizing those we do not. Thank you for your patience in reading my lengthy article this month. May God bless you and your families!

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

# The Life of Jesus—Chapter Seven

## Famous Sayings of Jesus

### Adapted from “The Life of Christ: Rediscovering How His Life, Death and Resurrection Changed the World”

By the American Bible Society, 2011

Jesus’ words of wisdom are woven into our everyday lexicon; they are so much a part of our cultural heritage that we don’t always recognize them. It was Jesus who originated phrases like “the faith to move mountains,” when he was using an object lesson to teach his disciples.

The scriptural passage known as John 3:16 is perhaps Jesus’ most famous saying. It is recorded as part of a conversation he had with a religious leader who came to visit him in secret, since some Jewish religious leaders opposed Jesus. This man, Nicodemus, wanted Jesus’ own explanation of what it meant to be a part of the kingdom of God. Jesus told him that God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son to redeem them, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and will never die spiritually (John 3:16).

Jesus’ words, as recorded in the four Gospels, have moved generations. They have been quoted by authors in every age and in every literary form, from the plays of William Shakespeare to the novels of Ernest Hemingway to the poems of Doctor Seuss. The sayings in this chapter are some of the most popular quotes taken from Jesus’ teachings, prayers, and parables, explored in their original context. Each of them resonates with the principal themes of his ministry and life: they speak of God’s unconditional love, of the forgiving grace he bestows on us, and of the splendor of God’s kingdom.

### Jesus Said That?

*Modern expressions that find their source in the teachings of Christ*

*Like a camel through the eye of a needle.* This is Jesus’ famous description of how difficult it is for someone who has great wealth to recognize their need to trust God in order to enter the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 19:23-26).

*Don’t let the right hand know what the left hand is doing.* Jesus recommended that people should give in secret to the poor rather than advertise their charity (Matthew 6:3).

*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.* The “golden rule, as it is often called, was part of Jesus’ teaching as recorded in Matthew (7:12) and Luke (6:31). Jesus’ teachings in Matthew’s Gospel (Chapters 5-7) and in Luke’s Gospel (6:17-49) are often referred to as the “Sermon on the Mount” and the “Sermon on the Plain” respectively.

*Be wise as serpents, harmless as doves.* This is the advice Jesus gave the twelve disciples before he sent them out on their own mission (Matthew 10:16)

*Turn the other cheek.* This instruction urging us to shun vengeance is from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:39; Luke 6:29).

*Judge not, lest you be judged.* This warning, included in the Sermon on the Mount, reminded Jesus’ listeners that they would be judged by the same standard with which they judged others (Matthew 7:1).

*An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.* Jesus also quotes this ancient standard of Jewish justice (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21) in his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:38, 39). His message of loving forgiveness introduces nonviolent resistance as a means for opposing evil.

*Love your neighbor as yourself.* This remarkable call for compassion for others was included in the second part of Jesus’ answer when asked to name the greatest commandment of all (Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31). Jesus adapted this saying from Leviticus 19:18 in the Jewish Scriptures (known to Christians as the Old Testament).

*The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Jesus said this to his disciples in the garden on the night before his death when they fell asleep instead of praying (Matthew 26:40, 41; Mark 14:37, 38).

*Oh ye of little faith!* Jesus said these words while he was walking on water in the midst of a storm! The disciple Peter, in a moment of great faith, had come out to meet Jesus – also walking on the water – but along the way he became afraid (Matthew 14:22-33)

*Get the plank out of your own eye before you talk about the speck in someone else’s.* The Gospels according to Matthew and Luke record this saying as a part of Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” or “Sermon on the Plain,” specifically in his teaching on judgment (Matthew 7:3; Luke 6:41).

*You can see the speck in your friend’s eye, but you don’t notice the log in your own eye* (Luke 6:41).

# Metaphors of the Kingdom

Jesus used metaphors and word pictures throughout his teaching to describe the ethics of those who are part of God's family. We may describe a decent, hardworking person as "the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13), but Jesus, who originated that term, had a much more specific meaning. He meant that his people should flavor and preserve the world with God's kingdom, just as salt was used in his day to flavor and preserve meat. Jesus used metaphors to describe his role in the kingdom, too declaring himself the "bread of life" (John 6:35), who can satisfy the spiritual hunger of humanity in such a way that lives are transformed forever.

## He Spoke With Authority

*Jesus often assumed the role of a traveling preacher. He taught in cities as well as the countryside. As an observant Jew, he also taught in synagogues. Perhaps his most famous oration is the one called the Sermon on the Mount. As recorded in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus walked up mountainside, presumably so he could be better seen and heard by a large crowd (Matthew 5:1). Luke, another Gospel writer, also records his version of these teachings, but he describes the site where Jesus was standing as a "level ground" (Luke 6:17).*

The Gospel writers recorded Jesus' teachings in a variety of situations:

When challenged by the religious establishment (John 8:12-18)

When instructing his disciples (Luke 11:1-13)

When face with situations that required explanation or guidance (Matthew 10:5-15)

When teaching in a formal setting (Luke 4:16-19)

When saying a final farewell (John 13-16)

When worshipping (Luke 22:14-20)

As God-in-the-flesh, Jesus repeatedly instructed his disciples on how to participate in God's kingdom. He not only expected them to follow "the golden rule" of treating others as they would want to be treated, but he also challenged his followers to radically rethink how they love those around them – especially those they didn't consider friends or who didn't treat them well (Matthew 5:43-48).

When someone hits you, Jesus urges you to "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39). When someone asks you to give them something, he suggests that you give beyond what they ask or "go the extra mile" (Matthew 5:41). Jesus' mission was to change the status quo and usher in a whole new way of living and relating to God. When he said "store up your treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:25-34), he was challenging his disciples to trust that God would take care of their worldly needs if they sought the spiritual kingdom first.

John includes the detail that, after Jesus calmed the wave, the boat suddenly arrived at its destination (John 6:21). Since John wrote to encourage his readers to put their faith in Jesus, including this kind of detail supported his intent.

## He Spoke In Prayers

Jesus often sought a place to pray away from the distractions of his work. He four(unclear) strength and purpose in God's presence. There are deep theological mysteries that surround prayer – as humanity interacts with the divine – and Jesus' life revealed that making time to pray should be a priority to us.

Jesus prayed publicly as well. For instance, he gave thanks before breaking the bread and dividing the fish that would miraculously feed 5,000 people (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-14). He also gave us instructions on the reasons we pray: we should not do so for show or simply out of habit (Matthew 6:5-7).

One of the most beautifully telling things Jesus said about prayer is that "your Father knows what you need even before you ask" (Matthew 6:8). In other words, nothing we could share with God could be news to him, because God knows what we need even better than we do. Nevertheless, sharing our needs with God is a vital part of the mysterious relationship.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, just before Jesus is arrested, he separates from the group of disciples to pray. In the riveting moment we see Jesus wrestle with his Father's will (Matthew 6:39; Mark 4:35, 36; Luke 22:41, 42). Then, coming back to his disciples, he finds they are sleeping instead of sharing the watch. "You want to do what is right, but you are weak," Jesus declares (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38). Understanding our own weakness and recognizing the importance of prayer, we should each strive to carve out time for one of life's primary spiritual disciplines and our best way of connecting with God.

*When you pray, go into a room alone and close the door. Pray to your Father in private. He knows what is done in private and will reward you. When you pray, don't talk on and on as people who don't know God. They think God likes to hear long prayers. Don't be like them. Your Father knows what you need even before you ask.--Matthew 6:6-8*

## The Prayer of Unity

(Called the High Priestly Prayer of Christ by the Orthodox Church)

### John 17:1, 15-26

After Jesus had finished speaking to his disciples, he looked up toward heaven and prayed: . . .

*I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth. "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known thee, but I have known thee; and these know that thou hast sent me. I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."*

## The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us evil. (Matthew 6:9-13)*

## He Spoke in Parables

One of Jesus' favorite teaching strategies was to speak in parables, using simple stories to illustrate compelling truths. Some parables involved narratives, while others were simply short object lessons, much like proverbs.

Often the parables were prompted by the specific situation Jesus was facing at the time. He told the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) when some local Jewish religious leaders were assailing him for spending so much time in the company of reckless, irreligious people. He told the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) when a lawyer asked for a definition of "neighbor." When Jesus was approached by a rich, young ruler who wanted to get to heaven, but couldn't bear to give up his wealth, Jesus drove home his point with a short parable about how difficult it is for a rich man to find salvation, saying this was as unlikely as seeing a camel pass through the eye of a needle (Matthew 19:23-26).

Jesus explained the kingdom of God over and over again in parables. It's like an expensive pearl, he said, or a fisherman's net, or a wedding banquet, among others. Sometimes Jesus taught in parables to enlighten; other times he did so to conceal. He told his disciples that those who had ears that were listening for spiritual truth would find that truth in the stories he told, while those who were only interested in Jesus' celebrity would simply hear a good story (Matthew 13:9-13).

### How Many of Jesus' Parables do you know?

<i>Don't put your light under a bushel basket</i>	Matthew 5:14-16; Mark 4:21-23; Luke 8:16-18
<i>Putting a new patch on old clothes</i>	Matthew 9:16; Mark 2:21; Luke 5:36
<i>Putting new wine in old wineskins</i>	Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-39
<i>Faith as small as a mustard seed</i>	Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13: 18-19

#### **Parable of the . . .**

<i>Sower</i>	Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:3-20; Luke 8:5-15
<i>Weeds</i>	Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
<i>Lost Sheep</i>	Matthew 18:10-14; Luke 15: 3-7
<i>Unmerciful Official</i>	Matthew 18:21-36
<i>The obedient and disobedient sons</i>	Matthew 21:28-32
<i>Fig Tree</i>	Matthew 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-31; Luke 21: 29-33

<i>Good Samaritan</i>	<i>Luke 10: 25-37</i>
<i>Faithful servant</i>	<i>Luke 12: 42-48</i>
<i>Rich fool</i>	<i>Luke 12: 13-21</i>
<i>Lost Coin</i>	<i>Luke 15:8-10</i>
<i>Persistent Widow</i>	<i>Luke 18:1-8</i>

**The Kingdom of Heaven is like . . .**

<i>A hidden treasure</i>	<i>Matthew 13:44</i>
<i>A pearl of great price</i>	<i>Matthew 13:45-46</i>
<i>A fishermen's net</i>	<i>Matthew 13: 47-50</i>
<i>Yeast</i>	<i>Matthew 13:33; Luke 13: 20-21</i>
<i>Workers in the vineyard</i>	<i>Matthew 20: 1-16</i>
<i>A Wedding banquet</i>	<i>Matthew 22:1-14</i>

## **The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard—Matthew 20:1-16**

Jesus said: "For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place; and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the householder, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you, and go; I choose to give to this last as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' So the last will be first, and the first last."

## **The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price—Matthew 13:45-46**

The kingdom of heaven is like what happens when a shop owner is looking for fine pearls. After finding a very valuable one, the owner goes and sells everything in order to buy that pearl.

## **The Parable of the Good Samaritan--Luke 10:25-37**

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live." But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

## The Parable of the Prodigal Son--Luke 15: 11-24

Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry. "Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

**Next Month: Jesus' Final Week—Leading up to Good Friday**

# Liturgical Calendar for February

Friday, February 1      Evening Divine Liturgy for the Presentation of Christ  
Orthros 5:00 p.m.    Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 3      Orthros 8:30 a.m.    Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Rev. Fr. James Rousakis, Guest Celebrant**

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke (Yonathan Alem, Christos Nenos, Alexios Diniaco, Nicholas Katzaras, James Katzaras)

Ushers: Peter Theophanous, Ron Myer, John Alexander

Coffee Hour: Glendi Dancers

Sunday, February 10      **Feast of St. Haralambos**  
Orthros 8:30 a.m.    Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (Mihail Kaburis, Dean Mitseas, Dominic Garcia, Nicholas Alsina)

Ushers: Brett Mourer, Kevin Fentress, Jason Pill

Coffee Hour: Sunday School

Sunday, February 17      Orthros 8:30 a.m.    Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew (Nicholas Kavouklis, Karter Lenardos, Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, Brigham Sibley)

Ushers: Amin Hanhan, Florian Royack, Mike Trimis

Coffee Hour: Philoptochos Missions Luncheon

Sunday, February 24

**Beginning of the Triodion—Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee**

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark (John Karamitsanis, Lukas Karamitsanis, George Hambos, Andrew Mellon-Lynn, Nicholas Yotis, Tyler Shanahan)

Ushers: Chris Kavouklis, George Fellios, Florin Patrasciou

Coffee Hour: Choir Breakfast

Sunday, March 3

**2nd Sunday of the Triodion—The Prodigal Son**

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke (Yonathan Alem, Christos Nenos, Alexios Diniaco, Nicholas Kazaras, James Kazaras)

Ushers: Pete Trakas, Ed Gerecke, David Voykin

Coffee Hour: Daughters of Penelope/AHEPA

Sunday, March 9

**1st Saturday of the Souls**

Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Memorial Service at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy

**Presentation of Christ-February 2-(we will celebrate Liturgy on Friday evening, February 1, at 6:00 p.m. for this feastday)** The Presentation of Christ is a major feastday of the church and commemorates the day, 40 days after the Nativity, when Christ was brought to the temple when He was 40 days old. According to the Law of Moses, every male child was brought to the temple on its 40th day, together with a sacrifice of pigeons or turtle doves by the parents, and the child was “consecrated Holy to the Lord.” Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the temple on His 40th day, because it was the law to do so. In the temple was a priest named Simeon, who was an older man, who had been promised by God that he would not die until he saw the Christ. When Simeon saw the baby Jesus, he knew in his heart that this was the Lord’s Messiah. He took the child in his arms and prayed “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light to enlighten the Gentiles and for glory to Your people Israel.” This prayer is recited over every child in the Orthodox Church when they are brought to church for the first time when they are 40 days old. That’s where this beautiful tradition comes from. February 2 is indeed a special day for all parents and all young children.

**St. Haralambos-February 10-** St. Haralambos was a Saint of the first century and lived in Greece. He was a priest who was martyred. Our parish has a special connection to St. Haralambos since his relics were interred in our altar table when the church was consecrated in 1986.

**Parish Registry**

**Baptism**-Alexander LeRoy Manninen, son of Steve and Maria Manninen was baptized on December 16. Godmother was Dora Iakovides. Na Sas Zisi!

**Wedding**-Chris Mantzanas and Nicole Andriso were married on January 12. Koumbaro was Yianni Stathakis. Congratulations!

**Funeral**-Stella Captain passed away on December 26. Funeral services were held December 31. May her memory be eternal!

**FESTIVAL 2012-Follow Up**

The 2012 Festival was a great success; netting us \$68,000! We had hoped to meet or exceed our record breaking 2011 Festival that netted us \$75,000. We did not meet this goal due to our lack of a Festival Album chair. Our income from our booths/admissions/advertising and donations were very similar; we were only missing the income from our album. Hopefully this will inspire someone to come forward this year and chair this very important segment of our Festival. Thanks again to our Festival Committee who worked countless hours along with our many community and hospice volunteers.

**Festival Chairman** Katherine Sakkis

**Advertising** Catherine Mitseas

**Baking** Mary Nenos/Lisa Alsina

**Baklava Sundae** Goya

**Bookstore** Bill Manikas

**Buffet/Kitchen** George Hambos  
Dean Koutroumanis

**Buffet Line** Dona Hambos

**Decorating** Joann Hartung

Victoria Melton

Dolmathes Marina Paras

**Entertainment/Band** John Demas

**Entertainment/Dancers** Alex Demaio

**Festival Secretary** Diane Trimis

**Festival Website** Kevin Fentress

**Kafenion** Peter Theophanous

**Kids Area** Alex Scarfogliero  
Sunday School

**Loukomades** Angie Halkias

Joann Hartung

**Manpower** Ourania Stephanides

**Meze** Byron Nenos

**Mobile Taverna** Victoria & Greg Melton

**Money Room** Alkis Crassis/Florin Patrasciou

**Parking** David Voikyn

**Pastry** Lisa Alsina

**Raffle** Jean & Florian Royack

**Sandwich/Gyro** Ari Georgiou

**Schematic** Bill Ney

**Take Out** John Alexander

**Taverna** Theresa Smyrnakis

**Vendors** Joann Hartung

# COMMUNITY NEWS

**Epiphany in Tarpon Springs-** On Sunday January 6, three young men from our parish dove for the cross in Tarpon Springs at the annual Epiphany celebration. We are so proud of Andreas Paloumpis, Thanasi Halkias and Nicholas Kavouklis, for representing our parish!

**St. John Feastday-** On January 6-7, we celebrated our annual Feastday of St. John the Baptist, the Patron Saint of our Parish. On January 6, His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios presided over the Vespers, assisted by Fr. Stavros, Fr. Christodoulos Papadeas (Metropolis of Atlanta Ierokyrix), Fr. James Rousakis (Vicar), Fr. Emmanuel Hatzidakis (retired), Fr. Soterios Rousakis (St. Petersburg), Fr. Vasilios Tsourlis (New Port Richey), Fr. Gregory Trakos (Tarpon Springs) and Deacon John Pantelis (St. Petersburg). Mary Nenos offered an Artoklasia, and also decorated our icons of St. John. The Philoptochos sponsored a reception following Vespers. On January 7, His Eminence officiated at the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, assisted by Fr. Stavros, Fr. Christodoulos, Fr. James, Fr. Emmanuel, Fr. Michael Eaccarino (Tarpon Springs), Fr. Jim Paris (Clearwater), Fr. John Bociu (Sarasota), Fr. Soterios, Fr. Gregory and Deacon John. The Parish Council sponsored a luncheon following the Liturgy. Special thanks to the Hambos family for cooking an excellent lunch! Thank you to all those who helped make our Feastday a success!

**Successful College Retreat-** On Monday, December 17, 19 college students from the Tampa Bay area gathered for a retreat led by Fr. Stavros. The subjects discussed included challenges college students face, how to maintain your Orthodox faith while in college and how to discuss Orthodoxy with those who are not Orthodox. We will definitely be having other events for college students in the near future.

**Father Stavros will be out of town February 2-6** to attend the baptism of his nephews, Nicholas and Michael Akrotirianakis, which will be held in Pasadena, CA on Sunday, February 3. Father James Rousakis will celebrate the Liturgy with you on Sunday, February 3. Father will be back in the office on Thursday, February 7.

## Orthodoxy 101

Orthodoxy 101 Class to begin in February-Fr. Stavros offers this class a few times per year, in spring and in fall. This will be the SAME CLASS so no need to take it again if you already have. This will be a three-week course of study on Monday nights to make people aware of the basics of being an Orthodox Christian. Who should attend the Orthodoxy 101 class?

- ~Interfaith couples—this will help the non-Orthodox person understand more what is going on in our church when they attend.
- ~Anyone who is considering joining our church. Going forward, this class will be a requirement for those who wish to join our Orthodox faith.
- ~New converts to Orthodoxy—For those who recently joined our church and who want to know a little bit more about it.
- ~Anyone who wants to know more about the basics of our faith, or who wants a refresher course in the basics of Orthodoxy is encouraged to attend.

The classes will be part lecture, part discussion, with lots of time for questions and answers. The three sessions will be done as follows:

Monday, February 11	A Tour of the Orthodox Church: What we see in the Church and what it means
Monday, February 18	Orthodox Spirituality—The Seven Sacraments and the Divine Liturgy
Monday, February 25	Orthodox Traditions—fasting, icons, prayer and separating Theology from “yiayialogy” (what our grandparents taught Us wasn’t always right)

Classes will be held on these three Mondays from 6:30-8:30 p.m. and will be held in the CHURCH Sanctuary.

## Meeting Schedule for February

Sunday, February 3	Philoptochos	After Liturgy	Zaharias Room
Tuesday, February 5	Young at Heart	11:00 a.m.	TBA
Sunday, February 10	GOYA	5:00 p.m.	Kourmolis Center
Tuesday, February 12	Parish Council	6:15 p.m.	Multi-Purpose Room
Sunday, February 17	AHEPA/Daughter’s of Penelope	After Liturgy	

# MINISTRIES

## GOYA

**GOYA Meeting-** The GOYA Meeting for February will be Sunday, February 10, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

**Clearwater GOYA Winter Event**—The Annual Clearwater GOYA Winter Event will be held from February 15-18 at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Clearwater. For information and to sign up to attend, please contact Elaine Halkias at 813-629-1843.

**Oratorical Festival-**The St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival is a public speaking contest for students in the 7th-12th grades. Our parish has had GOYAns participate in this for the past several years. It is a great opportunity to learn about our faith and get some public speaking experience. The local level competition for our parish will occur on Sunday, March 3, after Divine Liturgy. For more information, please contact Peggy Bradshaw at [peggy.bradshaw@freedommortgage.com](mailto:peggy.bradshaw@freedommortgage.com).

## SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

We would like to wish everyone in our parish a blessed New Year. The first half of our Sunday School year has been extremely busy and successful thanks to all the teachers, Fr. Stavros, the parents, and especially the students of St. John's. One of the new additions to our program is the YOUTH SUNDAY which is held once a month. Our students are doing a great job singing the hymns that they have learned in our music program and the Narthex Angels are a nice addition to this service. It is also great to see our students read the Epistle (Savvas Ferekides-Dec. 2nd and Christopher Scarfogliero on Jan. 13th). Our students also prepare the PROSFORO for these services. They do not only learn how to bake this special bread, but we also explain the parts of the SEAL and why this bread is so important. Our first graders made the Prosforo for our Jan. 13th Youth Sunday.

WOW, wasn't this year's Christmas Pageant the best ever? The parishioners of St. John's Church are truly blessed with such wonderful and talented children. We would like to thank these children and their parents for helping to make this pageant a success. But the BIGGEST thank you goes to MARIA XENICK, our Director of Music/Programs, for planning the Christmas Party and producing this pageant. We would also like to thank the many parents and teachers who helped.

The Sunday School is looking forward to an exciting second half of the year. The Oratorical Festival is coming soon. We are looking forward to Lent/Pascha and the special programs and retreats that are being planned. Due to limited space in this Messenger, we will no longer include a detailed list of the lessons that are taught in Sunday School. We do e-mail this list to all our parents on a weekly basis. If you would like to be added to this weekly Sunday School Update e-mail list, please e-mail Victoria Peckham at [rpeckham@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:rpeckham@tampabay.rr.com).

## JOY/HOPE

**Sunday, February 3—SOUPER Bowl of Caring!** Join us in support of this nationwide youth initiative to stop hunger in this country. We encourage the entire community to please bring a non-perishable food item or monetary donation to church on Super Bowl Sunday, February 3.

**Service Project Sunday-On Sunday, February 24,** after church and the luncheon, we will have a community service project for our families to participate in. Look for more details to follow.

## PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

On Sunday, December 16, 2012, we hosted a community luncheon to benefit the students at Chester W. Taylor Elementary School in Zephyrhills, FL. Thanks to the generosity of all of you who joined us that day, \$630 was collected for those needy children. Last year, we raised \$300, so we doubled that amount. JoAnn Hartung, President of our Chapter, will convert the money to Payless Shoes gift cards and present them to the school. One of our parishioners, Kathy Kaburis, who is the school's Assistant Principal, will take the Payless Shoes gift cards and purchase shoes for the children at the school. A special "thank you" to all of our members who cooked, donated, and served all of the food for the luncheon.

Philoptochos is also participating in the National Philoptochos project "adopt a family" for the victims of Hurricane Sandy. We will be partnered with a family who was affected by this devastating disaster.

This is the true mission of the Philoptochos—to be a "friend of the poor" and needy. We invite all the women in our parish, ages 18-100, to join us in the New Year!

## Philoptochos Membership Form

The Annunciation Chapter #501 of Philoptochos, St John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, would like to invite you to join us in our mission of outreach for the 2013 Membership year

Name _____	Date _____	
Street Address _____		
City _____	State _____	Zip _____
Home Phone _____	Cell _____	Work _____

Please return form and \$30 check payable to Philoptochos to: Melissa Krinos, 8728 Hickorywood Lane, Tampa FL 33615 or to the Philoptochos mailbox in the church office.

### OCMC LUNCHEON—FEBRUARY 17 FOLLOWING SERVICES IN THE CHURCH HALL

#### THE JOY OF THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH

Have you ever wondered what the Joy of the Lord is? For those fortunate enough to serve in the Mission fields it is the peace and joy seen on the faces of those who did not know Christ and have found HIM! Some of us are called to do mission, others are called to support mission in any way we can with the talents God has given to us. We are ALL called to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, THE GOOD NEWS.

On February 17, the Philoptochos will hold its 2nd Annual Luncheon to benefit the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC). Mr. Kenny Kidd from OCMC, together with long-term missionary candidates Stephanos and Alexandria Ritsi, will be with us to share the work being done by Orthodox Missionaries throughout the world. All proceeds from the luncheon will go to support the Mission Programs. Watch for more news in our church bulletin.

#### BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study will resume on Monday, January 14 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. in the multi-purpose room. Newcomers are welcome to join us. Dr. Bill Manikas leads the Bible study, which meets every Monday night.

#### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Thank you to everyone who continues to support our Community Outreach ministry to serve the homeless and those in need. For those who don't know, we serve breakfast at First Presbyterian Church on the third Saturday of each month from 8:00-10:30 a.m. For more information or to sign up to serve one Saturday, please contact, please contact Betty Katherine Palios at [bettypalios@gmail.com](mailto:bettypalios@gmail.com) or 813-468-1596.

#### STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

	January 15, 2013	January 15, 2012
Stewardship Goal	300,000	\$300,000
Amount Pledged	\$178,822	\$182,625
Number of Pledged Families	138	152
Average Pledge	\$1,295	\$1,201

Thank you to all those who pledged in 2013! If you have not made a pledge for 2013, please do so today! If you need a pledge form, please contact the church office and we'll be happy to send one.

#### YOUNG AT HEART

Young At Heart-The Young At Heart meeting for February will be Tuesday, February 5 at 11:00 a.m. More details to follow. For more information on our group, contact Ron Myer at 909-2327.

The Saint John's "Young at Heart"  
Invites everyone young and old to join us in celebrating a traditional Greek Apokries

**APOKRIATIKO GLEND—"MARDI GRAS"  
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2013**

**7:00-11:00 P.M.**

Kourmolis Community Center at St. John Greek Orthodox Church

Dinner will be served

Dancing to Greek and American Music by John Demas and his orchestra.

Costume contest

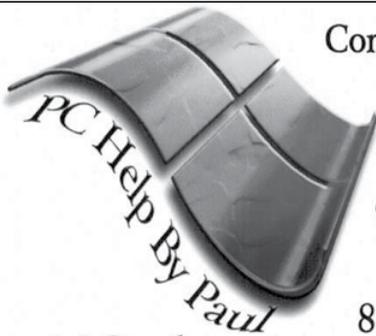
Cost is \$25.00 per person in advance, \$30.00 at the door.

Children under 10 are free.

Children 10-18 at \$15 per person.

Make your reservations today by calling Marina Paras (813-254-6980/813-966-9527)

Or Ron "Kiriakos" Myer (813-909-2327/813-523-5583)



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# February 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3 Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fr. James Rousakis, Guest Celebrant	4 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	5 Young at Heart 11:00 a.m.	6 Fast Day	7	1 Evening Liturgy for Presentation of Christ Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Fast Day	2
10 Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m.	11 Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m.	12 Parish Council 6:15 p.m.	13 Fast Day	14	8 Fast Day	16 Choir Seminar 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Community Outreach
17 Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Philoptochos Missions Lunch	18 Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m.	19	20 Fast Day	21	22 Fast Day	23 Apokreatiko Glendi
24 Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Choir Breakfast	25 Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m.	26	27 No Fasting This Week	28		



**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK  
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**MISSION STATEMENT:**

St. John Greek Orthodox Church is dedicated to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.

**VISION:**

The church shall seek to fulfill its mission by:

1. Embracing the Spiritual Life of the Orthodox Church through regular prayer, worship, and frequent participation in the sacraments.
2. Supporting the Church through stewardship of time and talent and sacrificial giving.
3. Providing a welcoming, caring, loving environment.
4. Having its members exemplify Orthodox Christian character and morals.
5. Supporting ministries that facilitate the overall mission of the Church
6. Exemplifying commitment to community service and charitable outreach.
7. Creating an environment which encourages members to grow in their faith.