

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

June/July 2013

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.

DOUBLE ISSUE OF THE MESSENGER—JUNE/JULY

This is our one double-issue of the Messenger that we put out every year, covering June and July. There are many articles to read, including the Oratorical Festival speeches given by our children. **Also, VERY IMPORTANT-Many people have indicated a desire to have a small group ministry at St. John, a men's prayer/Bible Study group, a women's prayer/Bible Study group. In this edition of the Messenger, there is some information and a questionnaire toward the back of the issue. Please take time to read it, fill out the questionnaire and send it back to me. The feedback you provide is CRUCIAL to how we are going to have these ministries.** I am encouraged by the many people who comment on how much they enjoy the Messenger and I wish you not only “Happy Reading” but also a great summer. Remember, God doesn't take a vacation from Church and I hope you won't either. If you are visiting another town, please look up and see if there is an Orthodox Church there, as most major cities in our country have one. God bless you all!
+Fr. Stavros

Editor's Note: Holy Week is truly a “community event.” Many members of the community took part in so many important and meaningful ways throughout the week. Many people who participated in the All-Night Vigil at the Cross of Christ had powerful comments about the experience. I decided that the first comments you should read about our recently completed Holy Week journey should come from the community members, then a reflection by Charlie Hambos, our Seminarian who assisted me throughout Holy Week, and finally my comments will be last. Enjoy!!!

Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis, Priest
2418 W. Swann Avenue, Tampa, FL 33609-4712
Office Phone: (813)876-8830 • **Fax** (813) 443-4899
E-mail: officestjohgoctampa@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com>

COMMENTS ON OUR FIRST ALL NIGHT VIGIL AT THE CROSS FROM THOSE WHO TOOK PART

Maria Xenick-I was thrilled that St. John was going to offer an all-night vigil following Thursday night's services and leading up to Friday morning Royal Hours service. It is something I have hoped we would do for several years. I signed up immediately and requested the early morning shift so I could just plan to stay on Friday morning for the services and set up for the Sunday School retreat. I signed up for the 6:00 and 7:00 am shifts. The night before, I mistakenly set my alarm for 4:15, thinking I had to be at church at 5:00. When I arrived, I realized I had come an hour too early. I was so happy however when I realized that because of my "mistake," I would be praying together at Christ's cross with my first cousin, and the fathers of two of my Godchildren. What an honor! I just listened for the first hour and a half, as the other readers had time limits and since I wasn't going back home, I had none. From the start, I asked Charlie if, when it came time, I could read Psalm 103 (102). The church was peaceful, quiet, and incredibly still. I imagine this is how Golgotha may have been so long ago. There were just a few of us there in the middle of the night, reading the scripture, with Christ looking down on us from the cross.

By the time I started reading, we were close to the 80th or so Psalm. The Psalms vary so greatly in their themes – they cover God's mercy, God's power, the world we live in, sorrow, praise, and more. Some of them are very long;

some of them are very short. I love to read the Psalms, however, I certainly do not know them in order nor did I know when I started one what the theme would be. I got to Psalm 86 (85) and I started to really listen to the words I was reciting. Everyone had left the church except for Charlie and me. I was overcome with emotion as I read, "All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name. For You are great, and do wondrous things; You alone are God. Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name. I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forevermore. For great is Your mercy toward me," It was as if these were my words, and I was telling them, praying them, directly to Jesus Christ. I couldn't hold back the tears and Charlie came, brought me a tissue, and stood right next to me as I finished the Psalm. I gathered myself and I read a few more, then took a break and listened as the next reader took a turn.

I returned to the podium a short time after that as we approached reading Psalm 103 (102). This Psalm has special significance for me, as it was my father's favorite. The night before daddy died, our whole family was in the room with him and we read it together with him. He knew it from memory and he whispered it along with us. It is a moment I will never forget. I felt that on this Holy Friday morning, standing at the foot of the cross, I had to honor my father's memory by reading it out loud before Christ. I knew when I started that I was going to cry, and I kept praying for the strength to make it through. I felt my father standing next to me saying, "Go ahead, Maria. Read my favorite Psalm for me to Christ." I read it slowly and deliberately, emphasizing every word. I could hear my father's voice saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" along with me. Though I was crying, I read it as loudly as I could, and I took time in between verses to look up at Christ, dying for us on the cross. Charlie came back up to the podium, encouraged me to finish, put his arm around me and stood next to me as I struggled through it.

When I was done, Charlie and I sat down on the solea together and he and I talked about my father. We both cried, and he mostly listened to me in

the quiet church. I needed that time to talk to someone about my father, and Charlie gave it to me freely, even though I knew he was exhausted. Although I have always known Charlie would someday make an outstanding priest, I knew right then, I was sitting with a young man with a real gift of ministry.

The most important days of my life have happened inside our church of St. John: my marriage to my wonderful husband, the baptisms of my precious children, the funerals of my dear grandparents, my beloved father and my sweet niece. This experience was the most profound and powerful experiences I have had in our church because I felt so connected to Jesus Christ; I can hardly express it in words. I thought of my entire family while I was there alone and I knew that this was something I would always be grateful to them for allowing me the opportunity to be a part of. When I saw them later that morning, I couldn't wait to give them a hug and tell them about my day. There is no doubt in my mind it was a gift from God.

It filled my heart with gladness to know that we at St. John did not abandon our Lord and Savior in His time of need. He was never alone on the cross – not for one minute. Thank you to Father Stavros for deciding to hold this Vigil, and thank you to Charlie Hambos for organizing and executing the plan. Sign me up for next year. I'll be there at 5:00 am.

Victoria Melton-Holy Thursday's Passion service is truly the most moving service for the life of an Orthodox Christian I never thought anything would ever compare to that night each year. I participated in, what was the first "vigil" at St. John's---in the wee hours of the morning, under the direction of Charlie Hambos. It was truly beautiful and so moving! At the foot of the cross, there was silence, there was peace, there was faith, hope and Love---there was Jesus my friend and savior. The reading of Psalms all alone, keeping watch over Jesus, warmed my heart...it was a feeling that I had finally done something worthy with Jesus by my side, something that left me with comfort and great hope and reassurance through solid prayer, it's a feeling I will never forget and, God willing, I will hope to repeat again!

Mary Maas-Looking specifically at the vigil on Thursday night, two words : grace and strength. When I arrived in the early morning, I was very tired, feeling weak and worthless. The half dozen people that were there gave me strength seeing the love in numbers. People really cared...really wanted to pray...wanted to be with Jesus and each other....isn't this what heaven will be like. The longer I stayed and listened to the psalms I became more awake, aware, and feeling like this is what our church is capable of being. Soldiers guarding our Lord with our love and prayer. As I took my turn reading the psalter, I was amazed at how physically strong I felt, standing a few hours ago was painful...now no pain. My voice was weak and thin, yet as a read I felt strength and conviction in the bible truths. The gifts of strength and grace came from our crucified Lord who gave all His strength and His All, for all of us. In my weakness He gave His strength, to do His work. He gave His Life, His Grace to fill the church with prayer for all of us. Christ Is Risen....He Is Risen Indeed. Thank you to Charlie and all the vigil participants who shared in a labor of love and grace. Thank you Fr. Stavros for trusting your people to keep the Lord's vigil.

Pam Irwin-I suppose you could say I was not part of the first night vigil since I showed up at 6:00 a.m. in the morning! However, it was a pretty interesting experience. When I arrived there were about five people there besides Charlie and one of them was reading the Psalms. We sat there and listened and I followed along in my copy of the Psalms. Shortly after that, it was my turn to read the Psalms and I enjoyed doing it for the few that were there. I said a short prayer at the cross and left around 6:50 as I had to get to school. I think the vigil is a great idea and one that the church should do again - and maybe at other times as well, not just Holy Week.

Anastasia Garcia-I found reading the Psalms at the foot of the cross was truly a gift of immeasurable worth. It was an honor to stand on the alter and pray such profound prayers that glorified our lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The experience seemed to elevate my relationship with Him to a deeper and even more personal level. I am sure I will participate again next year and enthusiastically encourage others to take advantage of this blessed opportunity.

Donna Hambos-The night of the Vigil had arrived and thinking Charlie needed company I thought it would be great if his 14 year old brother spent the night together. They packed items they would need and we traveled to St. John's. "Make sure you lock the door, try to get some sleep and drink plenty of water were my "earthly words of advice. Praying for their safety I traveled home. I planned to read at 8:00am and arrived with Joe to find his brothers in wonderful shape. George explained that no matter where he rested in the church upon opening his eyes he always saw Jesus first. I went to the podium which faced the Cross and alter and began reading Psalm 112. All of a sudden it was just me and the Cross. The surrounding area was gone along with the people and the children I worry so much about...The feeling was like nothing I have experienced before. Feeling myself growing more and more emotional I began to read Psalm 113; "He makes the barren women to be a homemaker and a joyful mother of children. Praise the Lord" I began to cry and was so overwhelmed with the realization how powerful yet all loving our God is and through the crucifixion of His Son we truly receive salvation with a life beyond all words awaiting for us in his kingdom. Charles approached and stood by my side but I could not read on. In just a few minutes with just a few words I felt all that was needed to know. I have not gone by a day without wonderment and peace when thinking of my time at the Cross. I am trying my best to live how I feel and should with God's help of course!

P.S. A wonderful experience that I encourage all to try.

Michael Conner-For an hour during the quiet of the night, I had the privilege to join like minded Christians as we separated ourselves from the world and held vigil at the foot of the cross. In the quiet of the sanctuary, we listened to the Psalms. The verses spoke of the righteous man being reviled and despised. For me personally, I was overjoyed to share this time with my son's Nouna and my Daughters Nouno. I don't know of anything more meaningful then to celebrate Easter knowing that my children have the love and support of this extended family.

Greg Melton-Participating in the vigil psalm readings from 4 to 5AM was a very small sacrifice of my time that generated great returns to me personally. Feeling Gods unconditional love, total peace of mind and heart, the comfort of the solitude time with our Lord, strengthened my faith and totally fulfilled me. Reading psalms at the feet of our Lord Jesus Christ and being able to thank Him for the pain and suffering he endured to save all of us from our sins was a moment in my life that I cherish and will have an impact on my spirituality for the rest of my life. I hope to have the opportunity to participate again next year during the wonderful holy week period. Special thanks to Charlie for his passion, leadership and guidance during the vigil.

Betty Katherine Palios-In our overly connected world, there are few times to find solace and peace in our everyday life unless we seek them out. Even for myself, (who never wanted, but somehow recently purchased an I-phone), find that I check my email every time I have a lull in my day. It was beautiful entering the church in the early morning darkness with my brother-in-law and cousin. The only focus was Jesus on the cross on the solea.

I had been reading the psalms during lent, and when it was my turn to read, I read a psalm that really related to exactly what I had been praying for during lent, but hadn't realized when I read the first time. Maybe I was more focused reading out loud in front of the cross. I jogged home from church and watched the sunrise over the bay and thought about how I felt like my prayer had been heard, which gave me a great sense of peace. Thank you to Charlie for organizing this special event!

Debbie Kavouklis-The vigil was the highlight of my Holy Week! How awesome to stand at the cross of Jesus and read from Psalms. I have no idea how long I read as I got lost in what I was doing. The feelings were overwhelming realizing how much we are loved. We were given the ultimate sacrifice of his precious son! I felt moved and felt Gods presence that night and I am going to continue to seek his love and spirit and look forward to next years vigil! I can't wait.

RUSSELL A. SIBLEY, JR.

LAWYER

Business Disputes & Litigation

Commercial Real Estate & Capital Transactions

Business Entity Formation & Maintenance

Exceptional Student Education

SIBLEY, PL

LAW FIRM

620 E. TWIGGS STREET — SUITE 204
TAMPA, FLORIDA 33602

TEL. 813-223-7808

FAX 813-936-4996

THOUGHTS ON HOLY WEEK

Irene Kostaris-In celebrating my first Holy Week and Easter in Tampa, this Holy Week was a reflection in that despite the personal struggles I have faced, my belief and faith in the Holy Trinity has helped me never give up hope for a better future. I really felt spiritually uplifted this year in particular because despite the struggles and challenges I have faced throughout my lifetime since my mother's diagnosis with cancer in 1990 and later her death in 1991, I continue to strive for a better tomorrow by keeping my faith in the Holy Trinity. Although each and every day I face new challenges, I know that the Lord continues to guide and watch over me to be on the right path to success.

Holy Thursday was a reminder of the sacrifice Jesus Christ had done for us – he was crucified for the sins of entire human race. When I saw my father (Fr. Stavros' predecessor at St. John in Tampa), my former priest in Washington D.C., and Father Stavros, carry the cross around the church, it brings tears my eyes the humiliation Jesus Christ endured during the Passover period. The most powerful statement of the evening for me came from the Gospel of St. Mark 15:31, "Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes said, "He saved others; Himself he cannot save." I found this to be the most powerful statement of the evening because Jesus Christ was ridiculed by the Jews. In this sixth gospel reading, they belittled Jesus Christ and made him unworthy. I can't even to imagine the pain and suffering Jesus endured being nailed to the cross; yet Jesus Christ prayed to God to forgive them. Jesus' crucifixion and even the Resurrection reminds me daily that he continues to be present every moment of our lives. He will not allow us to fail as long as we have faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and have the belief he will watch over us, even in our most dire moments.

Pam Irwin-Holy Week was a wonderfully uplifting time for me. I was able to attend more services than I have in the past and I enjoyed my fifth time celebrating Orthodox Holy Week. It seems to get better every year. I loved Holy Thursday and Good Friday reading of the Hours (one of my favorite services). I also got to be part of the all night vigil and that was a wonder-

ful experience. I attended Agape Vespers for the first time this year and found it to be just the right way to express my joy over Christ's resurrection. It is such a joyful time for everyone and it helps me express my own joy. I hope all of St. John's parishioners have a wonderful Pascha season. Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!

Sandra Pappas-Ward-Services on Holy Thursday (The Passion of Christ) brought a wave of emotion and tears that were unexpected, but maybe not uncommon for those in attendance that evening. Every evening service during Holy Week holds significance but especially Holy Thursday. A lot of people are put off initially by the length of this service and maybe choose not to attend. Fr. Stavros has always talked about the significance of this service and this year was especially moving. The reading of the gospels starts as parishioners arrive and everyone gets settled. I began to settle in and absorb the words of each gospel as the service transpired. The point in the service when Jesus is hung on the Cross and Fr. begins the procession of the Crucified Christ around the church is incredibly moving. I felt the pain and the hymns were sung beautifully by our choir but with great sadness.

About halfway through the service everyone is given an opportunity to venerate the Cross in between Gospel Readings. Taking a few moments of personal prayer and reflection, kneeling at the base of our Lord Crucified on the Cross is incredibly humbling. I walked back to the pew and was immediately overcome with emotion and tears. I felt the pain and shed tears knowing what Jesus had endured for us and thinking of my loved ones and all the suffering in the world today. I was especially touched by Angie Halkias who sat down and comforted me reminding me that this is why we need to pray hard and it's not only about the suffering but hope! I sat in the pew for a longtime almost until the time when Charlie Hambos' all night vigil was to begin. I can only imagine how many more tears were shed throughout the night and the hope that Jesus provided to everyone that evening and the remainder of Holy Week. Christos Anesti!



Computer Repair
Paul Assimiadis

WILL COME
TO YOU!

Good Work
Great Price

813.220-8609



PELAGIA "PEGGY" BRADSHAW
Loan Officer NMLS# 320507

3508 West Azelee Street #101
Tampa, FL 33609

(727) 244-1374 Direct
(813) 353-4222 Office
peggyk65@verizon.net
peggy.k.bradshaw@gmail.com

HUBBARD LENDING
NMLS#881616

Mortgage rates are at record lows.

Please call me and mention this ad, 10% of the
commission will be given to the church.

HOLY WEEK 2013
BY CHARLIE HAMBOS

It had been three years since I spent Holy Week with my family and church family at St. John's. My first year at Holy Cross, I was required to stay on campus for the Holy Week Seminar and my second year, I spent the week at Taxiarchai Church in Laconia, NH. I must say that it was quite the experience to be back home. It was a great feeling to be able to apply all of my years of study at Holy Cross with the community, which has supported me so much. There were so many powerful experiences throughout the week. Giving sermons, keeping vigil at the Cross, chanting, watching the maidens for the first time at the Bridegroom service, helping the altar boys, teaching the Sunday School students at the Good Friday Retreat and all of my interactions with everyone throughout the whole week were incredible. I spent many hours before and after the services with Father Stavros where we discussed the services and where I learned many tips and tricks from someone who really knows what he is doing and I can't thank him enough for all his guidance and support. It was a great honor to serve with him.

Coming from Holy Cross, we are surrounded by the daily cycle of services, the theology and the theory of ministry but it doesn't completely come into full perspective until the rubber meets the road. This is what happened when I came to Tampa this year for Holy Week and Pascha. Throughout the semester, I had been doing research on clergy burnout and one of the things I learned which is applicable for everyone is something called the vitality bucket. Inside the bucket is the energy which we expend on things throughout our day, whether it be work related or spending time with family. Throughout the day we pour a little out here and a little out there in many different things but if we don't leave anything left for our family and ourselves then we will start to burnout. So what we must do is find things in our life, which refill our vitality bucket. Returning home to St. John's is something that refilled my vitality bucket and I came back to Boston with a drive to work harder for my current ministry as a seminarian and my future ministry wherever that may be.

One of the major highlights of the week besides the entire experience was the all night vigil at the Cross. Once the idea began to circulate a couple of months ago, I was so excited to spend the night in the church with my

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ during his most vulnerable and important moments of his life on earth. I packed my bags and just waited. The journey began, when Father Stavros carried the cross around the church and placed it in the middle of the solea. From there we finished that extremely moving service and began reading the Psalms a little bit before 11 p.m. My brother George and I filled in reading wherever we could and it was so nice to have him with me. Many people came throughout the night and many stayed for several hours. I was humbled by all who came to take some time away from their busy schedule to spend some time with Christ on the Cross. It was such an honor to witness such an event. By 4 a.m. we finished the entire Psalter and I did the Great Compline Service at the foot of the cross. That was a pretty surreal and intimate experience to be able to lead those who were there in prayer. After that we started reading the Psalms, a second time and continued until a little after 9 a.m. when the Royal Hours began. It was such a fulfilling experience when Father Stavros came out and concluded the vigil with "Through the Prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, Have mercy on us and save us. Amen." I would like to personally thank all of those who came throughout the night to participate in the vigil, you all truly made my Holy Week.

Let us not forget the incredible experiences we all had this Holy Week and let it fill our vitality buckets for the next year to come. I surely won't forget the experiences I had and I want to thank all of you for playing a huge part in that. If you ever need to reach me, please e-mail me at Charlie.hambos@gmail.com. My mailing address is 50 Goddard Avenue, Box 016, Brookline, MA 02445. I look forward to seeing everyone again when I return home for the summer. Let us all rejoice in the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pray unceasingly, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have mercy upon me, a sinner."

*caring for people
making a difference* SM

BLOUNT & CURRY
FUNERAL HOME MacDILL AVENUE CHAPEL

605 S. MacDill Avenue
876-2421 • www.blountcurry.com

Father Stavros' Message

Christos Anesti! Christ is Risen!

As I write this message to you a couple of days after Pascha, I feel a deep sense of gratitude and joy for the Holy Week journey just completed. This was my ninth Holy Week and Pascha celebrated in Tampa and it was the best yet!!! This was for a number of reasons including we had record numbers of people at every service, there were some new things introduced to our Holy Week celebration that worked out very well, many people took a role in the services of Holy Week, and on a personal note, my voice remained strong and it was a deeply moving spiritual experience for me as well. Allow me to recap a few of the highlights and thank some people along the way:

Welcome Back David Lobue—On Palm Sunday, we welcomed back David Lobue, who had been on a deployment for the United States government in Afghanistan for six months. We thank David for his service to our country and we thank God for bringing him back safely to us and to his family. David carried the Cross of Christ for the Good Friday procession, in recognition of the heavy cross he has carried in service to our country.

Welcome Back Charlie Hambos—Charlie Hambos is our Seminarian who is in his third year of studies at Holy Cross Seminary. For the first time since he left for school, Charlie returned for Holy Week, and did so in a big way. In addition to helping in the altar, he did a lot of chanting, gave a couple of sermons and led our first ever Vigil at the Cross (see below). Charlie was an invaluable help. As I said in one of my comments at the services, it is my fervent hope and desire for Charlie to return to our church next year to work here on a full time basis as a pastoral assistant. This is not to decrease my workload. Rather it is to increase the ministries this church is able to offer. I have wanted to offer a vigil at the cross for several years but I personally cannot lead that, staying all night and then presiding at the remaining Holy Week services. With an additional ministry person, we were able to offer something we've never offered before. Over 20 people participated in this vigil, showing that there is a need for this (and many other) ministry. We just need someone who can lead them. We were pleased to welcome back Charlie and hopefully we can welcome him back on a full-time basis in a year from now.

The Maidens of the Bridegroom Services—This was a new program we instituted this year, inviting the young ladies of our Sunday school program to participate as the "maidens" in the Services of the Bridegroom, standing vigil next to the Icon of the Bridegroom. This new tradition has its roots in the Parable of the Ten Maidens (Matthew 25: 1-13). We thank Victoria Peckham for organizing this, to Tracey Lobue for making the "capes" that the girls wore, and we thank the following girls for their beautiful service in the church on Palm Sunday, Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday evenings: Eirene Courialis, Elizabeth Xenick, Artemis Xenick, Sophia Garcia, Angelina Krinos, Hannah Passalaris, Sophia Diniaco, Sophia Crassas, Madeline Moran, and Alexandra Patrasciou. We definitely will continue with this tradition next year.

Holy Thursday evening best attendance ever—Thank you to everyone who came to church on Holy Thursday evening. This is the most moving service of Holy Week. And for the first time ever, our church was filled to capacity as hundred witnessed the procession of the Crucified Christ.

All Night Vigil—Longest Service in the history of our parish—On Holy Thursday evening, we began the service of the Passion of Christ at 6:30 p.m. It ended approximately 10:00 p.m. This service had the highest attendance it has ever had. Many people are finding out how beautiful and powerful this service is for the first time in their lives. If you have never attended Holy Thursday, next year you must come. As many first-time attendees discov-

ered, this is the MOST powerful service of the entire church year. From 10:00 p.m. until 9:00 a.m. the next morning, there was an all night vigil of Psalm reading and prayer at the foot of the cross. Over 20 people participated for at least one shift. On Good Friday, from 9:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m., we celebrated the service of the Royal Hours. In total, there was constant prayer and worship going on in our church for 16.5 hours, so if you took part in any of these services, you were part of the longest combined service in the history of our parish. Comments on the All-Night Vigil appear later in the Messenger. This was a powerful event for the people who participated and most definitely we will repeat this in the future.

Good Friday—An All-Around Community Day—The number of people who got involved in the festivities in the church on Good Friday was long and impressive. As I write about Good Friday, allow me to thank some of the many people who were involved in a great day. Of course the day began with the ending of the Vigil at the Cross and the chanting of the Royal Hours. This was followed by a Sunday school retreat, attended by about 50 of our children. Thanks to Maria Xenick for directing this, all the people who helped teach the lessons, and all the children who attended. While the retreat was going on, many women decorated the Kouvouklion, the tomb of our Lord. Special thanks to Engie Halkias and all of her many helpers for cleaning and decorating the church throughout Lent and Holy Week. They are too many to mention and I'm afraid I'd leave someone out if I tried. But thank you to everyone to helped out with cleaning and decorating, and who does so continuously throughout the year. On Good Friday evening, the church was again overflowing with people. I want to thank the choir (under Artie Palios' leadership) and our chanters (Nick and Archie) for chanting so beautifully throughout Lent, Holy Week, and throughout the year. I also want to thank our ushers for a great job in making sure everything ran smoothly throughout the week as they also do throughout the year. I want to thank the altar boys, under the direction of Aris Rogers II for their valuable service during Holy Week and throughout the year. Their presence "guarding" the cross and tomb of the Lord was very inspiring. Also, I wanted to thank the Myrrh-bearers of Good Friday—Artemis Xenick, Alexandra Patrasciou, Alexis Witt, Anastasia Papadopoulous, Mia Lenardos, Sophia Crassas and Sophia Krinos—for the graceful beauty they added in attending to the tomb of the Lord.

Pascha—Again a record number of people came for the Resurrection Service and a record number stayed for the Divine Liturgy. After the Divine Liturgy, we enjoyed a wonderful Paschal reception, sponsored by Katherine Sakkis and the Parish Council, a wonderful way to break bread (and meatballs and soup) together after the Holy Week journey. On Easter Sunday morning, we concluded our week with the Agape Vespers service, where the Gospel was read in six languages. Following the Agape service, Lisa Alsina did her usual great job in organizing an Easter egg hunt for our children.

There are so many others to thank for our Holy Week journey that I know I will miss a few, but I wish to thank:

- The ladies who dyed the eggs
- The Philoptochos for the Palm Sunday lunch and bake sale
- The GOYAns for all of their help on Good Friday
- The ladies who cleaned the church before and after Holy Week
- The office staff for their constant involvement in Holy Week preparations and execution.

And most of all, I want to thank the faithful members of our church who shared the beautiful journey of Holy Week. People commented to me, "These services are beautiful." The services are made beautiful by the people who attend them. If I were to offer a service during Holy Week and no one came,

then the service would be moving to me, but not beautiful. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder—when there are many eyes to behold the beauty, the services are even more beautiful, special and powerful.

Heaven Will Never Get Old—There were many people who attended most, if not all, of the Holy Week services. Many came every night, and a few came morning and night. In the days after Easter, many people, including me, feel a little sad. A week of wonderful and moving services had come to an end and it was time to get back into the real world. The truth of the matter is that those of us who went to most or all of the Holy Week services didn't feel that we attended too much church. Most of us put aside our other interests (save for family), including food, TV, free time, work, music, and concentrated on the services of our church and our Christian lives. I, for one, was sad to see the week end. And I take this as a positive sign—if heaven is like a continuous Holy Week, a continuous worship of God in the presence of those we hold near and dear, then it is definitely a place I want to go. For

those who felt the services of the week were a bother, or were too long, or were an inconvenience, or didn't bother to attend many, or any, of them, I have to wonder what are your expectations of heaven? If heaven is a place of continual worship, you may not end up being invited. Just food for thought. I think Holy Week definitely gave us a foretaste of heaven. And people who went to all the services, I don't see as fanatics, but people who have a fervent desire to be in the presence of God, and who take advantage of this special week to continually be in His presence, in preparation and in expectation of being in His presence eternally in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Thank you St. John, for a wonderful and memorable Holy Week—my 9th in Tampa—which was the best of my 15 years as a priest. May we do it again next year in health and in joy.

With love in the Risen Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

God's Unconditional Love for Us-by Fr. Stavros

How many times do we do something "without condition"? We work for a paycheck. Or we go to school for a degree—we study to pass a test. We strive for praise of others. We work hard for acceptance. It seems that in almost everything we do, we put a condition on that. We put conditions on relationships—we love one another so long as we get along with one another. We are guarded when we share thoughts and feelings, fearful of the consequence or whether another will look down on us. We even put conditions on spouses, family members and friends. And because we put conditions on so many things, our freedom is compromised. We express ourselves or we work to meet certain conditions or to avoid others. Our complimenting one another seemed conditioned as well.

It is very difficult for us to let go of all conditions, to accept and love someone unconditionally. It is very difficult for us to tear down our own protective walls and let another person come in. Yet, when we express ourselves openly and without reservation, we experience true freedom and joy as God intended for us to have them. Unfortunately, these moments are few and fleeting.

Christ's death on the cross showed us His unconditional love for us—He didn't put conditions on His love, extending His love and forgiveness even to those who were crucifying Him. He showed unconditional love and mercy to a thief who repented in his last moments. He showed unconditional forgiveness by restoring Peter, who denied the Lord three times, to his position as the rock on which our church is built.

If we are to indeed experience a true relationship with God, we must do two things: We must seek to love others without conditions, and we must seek to love God without conditions either. We must open up with humility and

vulnerability, to express our love for one another, not only in word but in deed; and we must open up our hearts and our souls to express our love for God, not only in word but in deed; not only in deed but in prayer.

I had another moving season of Lent and Holy Week, made possible because I witnessed and experienced unconditional love in this community. I saw dozens and dozens of people come before God in the Sacrament of Confession and with unconditional repentance, own up for past wrongs and make pledges to do better. They experienced and accepted Christ's unconditional give of forgiveness and left the sacrament as new people. I also have had a few encounters with close friends where sentiments of unconditional love were exchanged. These conversations are memorable and powerful. They are what sustain our church and also my priesthood. Where there is fear, there cannot be love. Where there are many conditions, there becomes fear. There is no fear in love, we are told in I John 4:18, and perfect love casts out all fear. Where there is love of God, there cannot by definition be any fear. Perfect love is possible where there is no fear and not conditions, only free and total giving and receiving of loving sentiments. Unconditional love is mark of the ideal relationship, any kind of relationship—whether it is your relationship with your spouse, or your friends, or with God. Eliminate conditions, love unconditionally, and watch love grow in you—love for God, love for one another. The memories of these moments of unconditional love and acceptance, these will sustain you in times when love is hard, or love seems absent.

I wish to thank those with whom I have shared these moments. And I thank God for His unconditional love for us!

Paschal Sermon 2013-by Fr. Stavros

I confided in a close friend last week that the thing that makes me most nervous about Holy Week, besides losing my voice, is distributing Communion on Palm Sunday, because as you saw last Sunday, it took over 40 minutes. Forty minutes is a long time to stand still in one place under any circumstances—take a chalice, full of Communion, move up and down dozens of times for the children who are receiving, try to remember every name, and not drop anything, that's hard. Try to do it with a neurological condition that causes unwanted, involuntary twitching, the task becomes not only daunting but a little scary.

Early Palm Sunday morning, there was a knock at the side door of the altar. I opened it to see my friend, who handed me a small notecard, on which was written "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." This is a quote from Philippians 4:13. My friend said to me, "Remember, you can do anything with Christ. He will get you through today." A simple, yet profound message. I am the priest of this parish, used to leading the worship, offering the sermon, and giving out advice. And here, at the beginning of Holy Week, I was the one hearing a short but moving sermon—don't forget about Christ, He will get you through. I needed to hear that sermon that day. In fact, that sermon set the tone of my whole Holy Week. I've kept that card on the altar for every service. I've thought about it every day. I could feel Christ with me as I was distributing Communion on Palm Sunday. I could feel Christ stretching out my voice all week. I could feel Christ helping me carry the Cross on Holy Thursday. I could feel Christ giving me strength to chant the Lamentations last evening.

There are a lot of intangibles in this life, things that can't be quantified with anything material. There is a fine line between being a positive person and a negative one. There is a fine line between being confident and insecure, between being confident and cocky, between insecure and despondent. There is a fine line between a life that has meaning and a life that has emptiness. There is a fine line between material riches and spiritual poverty. There is a fine line between being alone and being secure. And sometimes there is a fine line between something as simple as being happy and being sad.

And MANY times, if not most times, your relationship with Christ will be the determining factor in which side of the line you end up on. At the difficult times in life, when we are at a cross-roads, which happens so often in every life, if we rely on Christ to strengthen and guide us, we are going to take the right road, we are going to survive the trauma, we are going to past the test. I can honestly say in the times of my life when Christ does not factor into my situation, I often-times do not succeed. In the times I bring Christ whole-heartedly into what I am doing, I rarely fail. And in times of desperation, when all hope seems lost, when I open my heart and cry out to Him, He always provides reassurance that everything will be okay. That's doesn't make prayer a cure-all, nor does it make God a crutch or a good luck charm. But a real relationship with Christ brings a real sense of strength not only in the bad times, but in the good ones as well.

There are many people who go through their entire life and claim to have

no need of Christ. I guess that is until the end of life. At which point there is a great fear of death, rather than a joyful expectation that the end of life brings an even greater reward. If we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, then at the end of our lives, we will be able to rely on Christ to strengthen us, helping us to have a Christian end to our lives, and a good defense at His awesome judgment seat. So that as the years of our lives pass by, we do not grieve over what is lost, but rather rejoice for what is to come.

In a moment, we will again receive the Light of Christ. It will begin a new chapter in each of our lives. The hymns of the Resurrection direct us to make a new beginning, and renewed start, a fresh start in our lives. They call us to reconciliation with one another. They call on renewal of our relationship with God. They call us again to look to Christ for our strength and our hope. A simple card given to me the other day had a profound impact on my Holy Week, and perhaps is a necessary adjustment to my attitude about lots of things in my life. I know that after having experienced this Holy Week journey, I am very motivated to be all the things God wants me to be, I am very motivated to make Christ my anchor, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my strength. I am very hopeful that I can take this experience and make some meaningful changes to my life. If a card with a Bible verse written on it can have an impact on someone, then lighting a candle from a flame that has been burning for years without ceasing can have an impact as well.

We seek strength in so many ways—we seek money to enjoy financial strength; we seek power to give us influential strength; we go to the gym for physical strength. The greatest strength in the world cannot be bought, it can't be won, and it can't be lifted. The greatest strength in the world is the strength that comes from our Lord Jesus Christ, the strength that enables us to walk through the valley of the shadow of death that is sometimes representative of our lives; and the strength that enables us to climb and conquer mountains as well.

When we pray to God, we will find strength. When we help another person, we will find strength. When we carry one another's burdens, we will find strength. Because prayer and acts of love lead to Christ, and He it is who gives us the strength to do all things.

I hope and pray that this year you receive the Light of the Resurrected Christ with this verse in your minds—I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me—It is Christ who gives us the strength to do all things—the wisdom to have success, the courage to overcome failure, and the hope that when this life is over, an even greater one awaits us. For Christ is risen from the dead, by death, He has trampled down death, and to those in the tombs, He has granted Life! Come receive the Light, from the everlasting Light and glorify Christ who is risen from the dead!

Liturgical Schedule for June/July

Sunday, June 2

Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

Orthros 8:45 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: Pete Trakas, Ed Gerecke, David Voykin

Coffee Hour: AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope

Sunday, June 9

Sunday of the Blind Man

Orthros 8:45 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: Nick Kavouklis, Gregory Tisdale, Demetrios Halkias

Coffee Hour: TBA

Tuesday, June 11

Apodosis (Leave-Taking) of Pascha (Evening Liturgy)

Orthros 5:00 p.m.

Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, June 13

Feast of the Ascension of our Lord

Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, June 16

Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

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

Ushers: Peter Theophanous, John Alexander

Coffee Hour: Junior Olympics Luncheon

Saturday, June 22 Saturday of the Souls

Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Memorial Service to Follow

Sunday, June 23

Pentecost

Orthros 8:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.

Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit 11:15 a.m.

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

Ushers: Brett Mourer, Kevin Fentress, Ippokratis Kantzios

Coffee Hour: Philoptochos

Monday, June 24

Feast of the Holy Trinity/Nativity of St. John (Services to be held in Tampa)

Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, June 30

Feast of the Holy Apostles

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve

Ushers: Amin Hanhan, George Mitseas, Mike Trimis

Coffee Hour: Daughters of Penelope

Sunday, July 7

Feast of St. Kyriaki

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve

Ushers:

Coffee Hour: TBA

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, July 14 Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the 4th Ecumenical Council
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers:
Coffee Hour: AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope

Sunday, July 21 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers:
Coffee Hour: TBA
Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers: Chris Kavouklis, George Fellios, Florin Patrasciou
Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Friday, July 26 Feast of St. Paraskevi
Orthros 7:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 8:30 a.m.

Liturgy is beginning earlier because of the choir conference; a combined choir will offer the responses at this liturgy.

Saturday, July 27 Great Vespers 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, July 28 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers:
Coffee Hour: Choir Conference Luncheon

Friday, August 2 Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, August 4 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers:
Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Monday, August 5 Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, August 6 Feast of the Transfiguration of our Savior
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Blessing of Grapes

Wednesday, August 7 Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.

Parish Registry

Baptism-Damien Michael Donovan, son of Patrick and Angela Donovan, was baptized on Saturday, May 11. Michael Buchner and his brother Thomas Buchner were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Ilianna Matassini, daughter of Nicholas and Christina Matassini, was baptized on Saturday, May 11. Fotene Pappas Rooth and Valerie Panou were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Niko Kyros, son of Chris and Kathy Kyros, was baptized on Sunday, April 21. Godparents were Christopher Nicholas, Nikolaos and Antonia Frazis. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Miranda (Ekaterina) McKinnon, daughter of Joseph and Christina McKinnon, was baptized on Sunday, April 21. Godparents was Antonia Kartsonis-Perry. Na Sas Zisi!

Wedding-Joseph Repay and Nicoleta Kakaes were married on Saturday, May 11. Michael Demetriades was the Koumbaro. Congratulations!

Funeral-George Clodakis, passed away on April 27. Funeral services were held at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Tarpon Springs in Monday, May 6, with Fr. Stavros officiating. May his memory be eternal!

COMMUNITY NEWS

Congratulations to our Graduates

- Samuel Alem, graduating from Plant High School, will be attending Florida Atlantic University (FAU)
 - Alexandra Gerecke, graduating from Academy of the Holy Names, will be going to University of Tampa (UT)
 - Christine Gerecke, graduating from Academy of the Holy Names, will be attending Stetson University.
 - Athanasios Halkias, graduating from Gaither High School, will be attending Berry College in Rome, GA.
 - Magdalene Kavouklis, graduating from Plant High School, will be going to Florida State University (FSU)
 - Andy Paloumpis, graduating from Hillsborough High School, will be attending Ripon College in Ripon, WI.
 - Matthew Peckham, graduating from Hillsborough High School, will be going to Florida State University (FSU)
-
- Jenna Mingledorff, graduated from the University of Tampa, was a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication. She graduated cum laude from the Honors Program. Congratulations Jenna!

If you forgot to get us the name of your graduate, please contact the church office and we'll include your graduate in the next issue of the Messenger. A Special Ceremony for our High School Graduates will take place in church on Sunday, June 9, at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. And to our High School Grads headed off to college, please send Fr. Stavros your new mailing address so we can add you to the Messenger list and keep you up to date with the goings on at St. John.

Special Thanks to:

- George and Cindy Xenick, who donated the Lamentations books for Good Friday in memory of Ted and Freda Kladis.
- Carole Fotopoulos, who painted a beautiful mural that is hanging in the church office.
- Sandra Cotterman, who donated mulch and rock for beautifying our landscape.

Junior Olympics-Volunteers Needed-St. John's will be hosting our annual Sunshine State Junior Olympics on June 14-16. This event brings over 200 GOYAns (teenagers) from all over Florida to our parish for a weekend of athletics and spirituality. Byron Nenos (969-2468, nenoslaw@aol.com) serves as the chairperson for this event. But in order for the event to be a success, we need many other volunteers to assist him in many capacities, including working at various athletic venues, cooking and serving at the church, and some administrative jobs, such as entering data as to who won various contests while the event is going on. This event is a chance to not only showcase our community and to do something meaningful for our young people, it is also a chance for us to work together on something and get to know one another better. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Byron Nenos. Thank you.

A call to all young men interested in serving in the altar-Any young men who are entering fourth grade (or older) who are interested in serving in the altar for next year should contact Fr. Stavros in the church office to be added to a team. All returning altar boys will be put on a new schedule to take effect September 1, so current altar boys need not sign up again. This is for NEW altar boys. Please contact Fr. Stavros by June 30 to be added to the list for the fall. If for some reason, you do not wish to continue to serve in the altar, please let Father know and he will remove you from the list.

Anyone interested in being an usher-Tom Georgas, our head usher, is always looking for people to assist him as ushers of our church on Sundays. Those who serve as ushers are assigned a Sunday to serve every 5-6 weeks and also during Holy Week. The ushers insure that we continue to have good order in our services by directing us to empty seats, answering questions, welcoming new people, and guiding people at Communion and after church. You can find Tom at Georgas@verizon.net.

Fr. Stavros to be out of town for vacation-Fr. Stavros will be taking vacation time as follows this summer: June 3-5; July 1-20; August 8-10. Father James Rousakis will celebrate the Liturgy with us on July 7 and July 14. Father Stavros will celebrate all other Sundays of June and July. Additionally, Father Stavros will be out of town June 27-29 to attend the Metropolis of Atlanta Clergy-Laity Conference in Boca Raton, FL. Also, if you have a pastoral emergency while Father is out of town, please contact the church office. Father will not be answering his cell phone while on vacation, so please call the office with any pastoral issues.

Don't take a vacation from Church this summer! If you are in town, church continues all summer long. If you are traveling, there are Orthodox Churches in all major cities in the United States. Call the office and we'll be happy to let you know of Orthodox Churches in areas to which you are travelling.

Parish Assembly Meeting-Sunday, June 9- Every parish is required to have a Parish Assembly Meeting two times per year, once in spring and once in the fall, to discuss church business. Our spring meeting will be on Sunday, June 9. We will get a financial overview of where we are, and also have some

Meeting Schedule for May

Sunday, June 2	Sunday School End of the Year Party	2:00 p.m.	Home of Peggy Bradshaw
Tuesday, June 5	Young at Heart	11:00 a.m.	TBA
Sunday, June 9	Parish Assembly Meeting	After Liturgy	Kourmolis Center
Tuesday, June 18	Parish Council Meeting	6:15 p.m.	Multi-Purpose Room

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

	May 15, 2013	May 15, 2012
Pledged Families	255	270
Amount Pledged	\$291,207	\$259,197
Average Pledge	\$1,142	\$960

If you have pledged for 2013, we sincerely thank you for your support of our church. If you have not pledged for 2013, we ask that you please do so today. If you need a pledge form, please contact the church office and we'll be happy to send you one today. As you can see, we are ahead of last year's pledged amount (good) but behind last year's pledged number of families. Please make your stewardship pledge TODAY if you haven't done so. In order to be considered a member of good standing of the church, you must fill out a form every year. If you need a pledge form, please contact the church office Thanks!

time to actually "discuss" the course of our parish. You are encouraged to come to this meeting to hear how our church is doing and to be part of charting its future course. The meeting is expected to be brief and will be held following Divine Liturgy on Sunday, June 9.

Leave the Church in Your Will

Part of our life's legacy is the inheritance we leave our children. By leaving an inheritance, a part of us lives on through them. When preparing your will, you should consider leaving money to our church—this is the church of your children and part of their future can be positively impacted by leaving some of your inheritance to the church. The ability of the church to spread the Word of God is facilitated by everyone's stewardship. By leaving a portion of your inheritance to the church in your will, you remain a steward in perpetuity, but more importantly, you help cement a solid financial future for the church for your children and your grandchildren. If you are interested in leaving the church in your will, please contact Russell Sibley (church member) at rsibleylaw@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Friends of St. John—Some of you who receive The Messenger do not live in the Tampa Bay area or are members of other Greek Orthodox parishes. We would like to ask for your support of our parish as a "Friend of St. John". Your contribution as a "Friend" will help offset the cost of mailing The Messenger, among other things. Being a "friend" does not make one a steward of St. John or afford membership rights and responsibilities, but gives one who is a member elsewhere, an opportunity to make a gesture of financial support to our parish. If you are interested in being a "Friend of St. John", please fill out and return the form below. Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

FRIENDS OF ST. JOHN

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

I wish to be a "Friend of St. John". I am enclosing a contribution in the amount of:

_____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$200 _____ Other

Please mail this form and check to: St. John Greek Orthodox Church 2418 Swann Avenue, Tampa, FL 33609

MINISTRIES

SUNDAY SCHOOL

The last day of Sunday School classes will be Sunday, June 2. There will be an awards ceremony at the end of the service on that Sunday, and also a special ceremony for our graduates. Also, there will be an end of the year Sunday Pool Party at the home of Peggy Bradshaw on Sunday, June 2, at 2:00 p.m., more details on the way via email.

SUNDAY SCHOOL REPORT

by Victoria Peckham, Sunday School Director

Christos Anesti! Christ is Risen!

We hope your Holy Week and Pascha experience reaffirmed and will continue to strengthen your faith in Christianity. Of course our children's participation in the many services of Holy Week/Pascha made the week even more special. As always our Altar Boys did a fabulous job and the Myrrh Bearers were beautiful. This year we added something new. We had eight girls serve as Maidens for the Bridegroom Services. We also can't forget that our children helped to make the Palm Sunday Crosses and our older students wrapped all the red Easter Eggs. The children of St. John's Church truly understand the meaning of STEWARDSHIP.

Our Holy Friday Retreat, on May 3rd, was the best ever. We must acknowledge Maria Xenick for coordinating this event, the many people who helped, and of course the children for making this retreat a huge success. The five stations, each of which took a period of time from the Last Super to the Resurrection were very uplifting. And of course the craft projects couldn't of been more special.

May 12th was our last Youth Sunday of the year. Our children joined the choir in singing our liturgical hymns, the High School and Pre-K made the Prospora and the Epistle was read by one of our students. These Youth Sundays have been a blessing and wonderful opportunity for our children.

Our last day of Sunday School and Graduation is on June 2nd. At that time the Sunday School will kick off our STAIN GLASS WINDOW PROJECT to raise \$4500 for one window. The students and teachers voted to forgo their end of the year gifts and to put this money towards the windows. As a result, we are starting this campaign with \$600. We are confident that our teachers and parents will contribute to this project and we are also praying that our parishioners will help. On June 2nd our students will pass a tray to collect any donations that you would like to offer. On June 9th we are going to start washing cars, every Sunday after church, until we reach our goal of \$4500. Please support the children of St. John's efforts to help our church with this Stain Glass Window Project.

We are already planning for next year. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A STAFF MEMBER and/or if you have any suggestions on how we can improve our Sunday School Program, please e-mail Vickie Peckham at rpeckham@tampabay.rr.com or call 406-5626.

CHOIR

Choir Conference Coming to Tampa, July 25-28

The Southeastern Federation of Greek Orthodox Choirs and Musicians will have its annual choir conference right here in Tampa on July 25-28, 2013! We hope that many members of our community will come to church throughout the weekend to enjoy the wonderful music and fellowship that the choir federation has to offer!

There will be a special Divine Liturgy on Friday, July 26th at 8:30 a.m. The choir registrants will participate in congregational singing and then proceed to rehearsals. Everyone in the community is encouraged to join us. In addition, Saturday night we will hold Vesper Services at 5:00 p.m. and we would love to see all of you. During the Divine Liturgy on Sunday the choir conference participants will sing the arrangement of Dr. Constantine Limberakis. The choir will have worked so hard on this music all weekend long and Sunday will be beautiful and uplifting! We are expecting over 100 voices, so please plan to attend this service! There will be a youth choir singing on Sunday as well. They will have fun activities all weekend long, including a field trip to the Florida Aquarium! We hope that St. John will have a big group participate in this wonderful weekend!

Please see the ad contract provided for our program book. There are all types of sponsorships available. The proceeds of the entire conference will be split between the SFGOCM and St. John, so our church will directly benefit from the financial success of the conference. Thank you so much for your support. If you have any question, please feel free to contact Donna Trakas- 505-2194.

YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY (YAL)

The Young Adult League is well under way and is now hosting a monthly social event as well as a weekly Bible study. The first social event was held on Friday May 10th at Datz in South Tampa. The first Bible study session will be an 8 week study of the epistles of St. Peter and began on Thursday May 16th. Bible study will take place every Thursday through July 11th at 6:30pm (there will be no Bible study on July 4th). All young adults are welcome and encouraged to join us--even if you have not been able to attend previous Bible study meetings. The next two social events are scheduled for Friday June 7th and Friday July 12th. Mark your calendar and look for an email with further details of place and time. For more information, and to be added to the YAL email list, please contact Mary Ann Konstas at mapkonstas@gmail.com or 813-215-9862.

GOYA

GOYA Meeting June 9—GOYA will have a meeting on Sunday, June 9, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. We will be honoring our graduates and preparing for the Junior Olympics. Dinner, as always, will be provided. **The GOYA Junior Olympics** are Friday, June 14-Sunday, June 16. Make sure you sign up with Elaine Halkias (629-1843) if you are going to attend.

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. Upcoming dates are Saturday, June 15 and Saturday, July 20. For more information or to sign up to serve one Saturday, please contact, please contact Betty Katherine Palios at bettypalios@gmail.com or 813-468-1596.

The Establishment of Small Group Ministries for Men and Women

What is it?

Other churches have established "Small Group Ministries," in the form of "specialized" Bible Studies or prayer groups for specific subsets of their parishioners, for instance, a men's prayer group that meets for breakfast on Tuesdays, or a mom's group that meets mid-mornings on Wednesdays, or a women's group that meets on Thursdays for dinner. These groups are usually small and are led by a lay person, not a pastor or priest (the lay leader interfaces with the priest for guidance and curriculum). The meetings are discussion-based where people get together to talk about their faith. They engage in a structured study of either a book of the Bible or a religious-based book. They pray for one another and with one another, so that people are not only brought together socially in church but spiritually connected as well. St. Paul tells us to "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ," (Galatians 6:2) and the small groups help in this regard as well. It is a chance for fellow parishioners to help one another bear burdens, i.e. Dads talking about the challenges of fatherhood, or Moms talking about the challenges of motherhood, or adults talking about the challenges of work, and everyone talking about the faith.

What is it not?

These small groups are NOT a substitute for any of our current ministries. What they will be, I hope, is an opportunity to come together in a small group to talk about and grow in our faith. These small groups will not necessarily meet at the church, but rather in homes around the Tampa area. Our church is not a neighborhood church, as many others are, since it is the only Greek Orthodox Church in Hillsborough County. The idea is to establish small groups that can meet at places and times convenient to members so that there can be more discussion and spiritual growth on days other than Sundays.

Why do we need this at St. John?

BECAUSE YOU HAVE ASKED FOR IT!!! Several people have approached me over the past few months asking about having small group Bible studies. Several members of our church are actually attending Bible studies at Protestant churches and are deriving benefit from them and want to have something like this at our church. How did those people from our church decide to attend a small group ministry at another parish? They were invited. If we are serious about growing in our faith as individuals, and if we are serious about growing our church (and I think that we are), this is among the next steps we need to take. As our community matures spiritually, and the members mature spiritually, it seems that many of you have a desire to talk about God and learn about God but to do it in small groups, not necessarily at a retreat or a traditional Bible Study, and this is great!

As you hopefully read in my Paschal sermon, I received a great piece of spiritual advice that made the difference in my Holy Week. This piece of advice did not come from a priest, or from a sermon, or from a theology book—It came from a FRIEND! We need groups of people, to come together, as friends, to support one another, to pray for one another and to encourage one another to grow in faith. In some ways, we also need people to hold us accountable in our Christian lives. A small group of friends (or even people who don't know one another well who will become friends) is a perfect way to accomplish all of this and more. The priest is not the only one who should bear our burdens, nor is the priest the only one who can pray for us. We have many wonderful, positive, spiritually alive people in this parish. We should enjoin one another to help share and lift our burdens, through help, through support and especially through prayer. Of course, these groups are not only spiritual support groups, but opportunities to learn and discuss in small groups matters of faith applied to our daily lives.

How will this work at St. John?

What I'm looking to do RIGHT NOW is gauge interest and identify people who are interested in attending, hosting or leading a group, and how often people would like for a group like this to meet.

1. Fill out the attached short questionnaire and mail it back to Fr. Stavros in the office.
2. We will hold a meeting in August to divide up into small groups and each group will figure out times, places and frequency of their meeting. I hope that some of these meetings will be held in homes. We certainly can accommodate the South Tampa meetings at the church if desired. Hence I would like to get your responses by the end of June.
3. The goal is to eventually establish small groups in various places around town.
4. I will help each group get off of the ground, with the goal to get small groups of people together with discussion questions and curriculum, like reading a book together, so that the group is led by a group member and not by me.
5. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT—We need a strong nucleus of committed people who are going to commit to starting and staying with a group until the group establishes a firm foundation. So, when you are filling out this questionnaire (and for those who are married, fill out a separate questionnaire for each spouse and mail it in), please consider your involvement seriously and prayerfully.

What kind of commitment are we talking about here?

How often will these groups meet? Again, you will help determine that. There are three ways a group can meet:

a. Once a week concurrent with the school year (breaks for Christmas, summer, spring break, Holy Week)

b. Twice per month throughout the year with hiatus for Christmas, summer and Holy Week

c. As a series, where the group meets every week for six weeks for one curriculum/book, then takes a break, then meets another six weeks, etc. As an example, a group meets for September-October; then again January-February; then meets after Easter let's say for late April-May, so the groups do three "series" a year, something like that.

The Establishment of Small Group Ministries for Men and Women

Please fill out the sections below and return it to Father Stavros:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Your involvement:

- _____ I would love to attend and participate in a small group
 _____ I would feel comfortable leading a discussion group if materials and guidance are provided
 _____ I would love to host a group in my home/office on a regular basis
 _____ I would consider hosting a group in my home/office on a rotating basis.

Frequency of meeting:

- _____ I can commit to meeting every week (in this case, we would meet concurrent with the school year)
 _____ I can commit to meeting every other week
 _____ I can commit to meeting once a month
 _____ I can commit to doing a series of meetings (i.e. six week series, followed by time off, then followed by another series)

Time of Day: (*Times are approximate, they can be flexible)

- _____ I would like to meet early morning before work, 7:00 – 8:00 am
 _____ I would like to meet mid-morning, 10:00 – 11:00 am
 _____ I would like to meet at lunch time, 12:00 – 1:00 pm
 _____ I would like to meet in the evening, 7:00 – 8:00 pm



Commemorative Album Advertising Contract 37th Annual Choir Conference of the SFGOCM, July 25-28, 2013 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church of Tampa, Florida

Date _____ Name of Business Patron _____

Address _____

Phone () _____ - _____ Email _____

The undersigned agrees to pay the sum of \$ _____ for a _____ ad size (see Sponsor Levels and Rate Schedule below) in the 2013 SFGOCM Commemorative Album, subject to the terms of this contract.

Signature _____ Printed Name _____

1. If placing a business ad, or personal patron ad, please enclose black and white camera-ready artwork (or a business card). Do not staple. (We prefer camera-ready artwork). Please send by e-mail in Word, JPEG or PDF file format to: Mary Ann Konstas at mapkonstas@gmail.com.
2. If camera-ready artwork cannot be furnished, the ad will be set in type specified by the Album Committee. Please type your information or message on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this form along with your payment.

Make checks payable to SFGOCM Conference 2013 and mail with SIGNED CONTRACT:

Choir Conference 2013

c/o Mary Ann Konstas
 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
 2418 W. Swann Ave
 Tampa, FL 33609

Deadline for all advertisements and choir photos is JUNE 28, 2013

Rate Schedule:

Back Cover Outside	\$500	Full Page	\$200
Front Cover Inside	\$350	Half Page	\$100
Back Cover Inside	\$300	Quarter Page	\$ 50
Eighth Page (Business Card)	\$ 35	Friends	\$ 20

*The Commemorative Album for 2013 will be a keepsake album of Choir pictures and supportive friends.
 We encourage all choirs to participate by sending a picture & roster. Friends & family can send encouragement with a patron ad.*

THE SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ORATORICAL FESTIVAL SPEECHES OF THE PARTICIPANTS FROM ST. JOHN

Editor's Note: Since Angelina Bartucci is still in competition (she will be competing in the Metropolis level of the Oratorical Festival at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Tarpon Springs on Saturday, May 18) as of the printing of this edition of the Messenger, her speech will be printed in the August edition.

Considering the Lord's words to His disciples, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35), discuss the relationship between service and leadership by Savvas Ferekides

"That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve, not be served—and then to give away his life in exchange for the many who are held hostage." in Matthew 20:28, Jesus said this to his disciples; little did they know he was setting down a roadway for servant leadership.

Jesus mentions serving many times in the bible even though he is the greatest of all leaders. For example in Matthew 20:26 Jesus says "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant." Jesus is saying that in order to be a great leader you must serve. Jesus though doesn't only say this but does it too. In biblical times roads were full of dirt and sand and peoples feet got very dirty from the roads because they wore sandals. When they would go to gatherings the lowest servant would wash the feet. Jesus at the last supper washes the disciple's feet. Jesus displayed one of the ultimate signs of serving, but still was leading the disciples, through this teaching, toward God.

Priests are leaders that come from the worldly and heavenly perspective. They lead us toward God every week but also lead us in the right things to do in our daily lives. Every Sunday when our priests serve us communion they are not serving they greatest of all masters Jesus Christ but leading sinners like you and me by giving us the greatest gift of all his body and blood

Martin Luther king Jr. was one of the most influential servant leaders of the twentieth century. The African Americans, like the Jewish people in their time, wanted a military leader. But neither Martin Luther King nor Jesus provided that. Martin Luther king was peaceful and even while his people were being shot with water hoses. Someone showed him a picture of these peaceful protesters in Birmingham, Alabama and he said "I am startled that out of so

much pain beauty came." He was a leader and a servant to the African American community.

Modern day examples of servant leaders are thinning out, but Bono is one of the few left. Many people know Bono from his band U2. Many don't know that he has been serving people and leading people through his power in the music industry. When Bono's band was popular they put out a one of the first singles that the proceeds go to a charity called "Do they know it is Christmas time." He also worked with Bobby Shriver to make the foundation called D.A.T.A. that helped Africa with their ongoing Aids epidemic, debt, and trade. Bono served the people in Africa and led them to a better tomorrow.

A servant leader that I would like to be like is Bill Gates. He didn't only change the world technologically but also philanthropically. He gave away 28 billion dollars and his spot as the richest person in the world to help charity. He also founded the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that helps people all over the world. The reason I would like to be like him is because he didn't only change the world, but also helped the world.

Martin Luther King, Bono, and Bill Gates weren't trying to be first but through their actions they will be first. Jesus once said, "If anyone desires to be first he shall be last of all and servant of all." Neither Jesus nor these men desired to be first. Ironically those who become first put themselves last. Those who will become last put themselves first. The secret to the kingdom of Heaven lies in humble service. This is the message that Christ wants us to absorb, and the most for which anyone can hope.

Savvas Ferekides is in 8th Grade.

In Psalm 103/104, God's care for the natural world is praised. Select elements from the psalm and discuss how they may help us "grow" in our Faith.

By Larissa Krinos

Nature, a key part of everyone's life. It provides us with everything we need to survive- food, shelter, water. We should be grateful for all these things God has granted us in life.

The world has gone through immense physical and cultural changes throughout time, which is evident just by looking outside. Skyscrapers tower in the place where trees once stood. Where there was once nothing but dirt and grass, civilizations thrive. Paving the roads, cutting down the trees. . . our natural world is slowly dwindling away from us.

People are beginning to realize that the world is in danger. I'd bet that there isn't a person out there who hasn't heard something about global warming. It was first thought to be a myth, but it's been professed to be real by many scientists. The efforts of environmentalists like Al Gore have been heard.

Nature has run itself since the beginning of time. In life, everything has a purpose to tend to. In Psalm 103(104), we read, "He made the moon for seasons. The sun knows its setting." Though almost everything has been changed by humans, the moon continues to control the seasons, and the sun still rises and

sets. We live, despite how it seems with all of our various technologies, on the Earth God created. . . the Earth that never changes.

Human existence used to revolve around survival, when we developed our civilization to the point that survival wasn't generally a problem for most anyone, we moved on to create better ways of existing. But all of these things that humans create—cars, planes, fuels—have an effect on the circle of life.

Nonetheless, these things have been introduced, and there's no taking them back. Humans have grown dependent on them. In a hundred years, humans have gone from environmentally sound transportation like horse riding to driving in cars to almost anywhere and everywhere.

Coastlines are something that has been majorly affected. Greece, for example, has some of the most beautiful beaches in the world. But, due to Athens populated and very polluted cities, some of the beaches have been ruined past the point of return. Just in the last few years, the amount of trash floating around has increased, and the clarity of the water has decreased. When people think of Greece, they think of the crystal clear sparkling blue water, gorgeous sandy white beaches, and an overall beautiful place. But places like Athens and Thessaloniki are gradually losing that effect.

Someone I've really grown to admire is Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. The Ecumenical Patriarch has dedicated his time to environmental conservation, and woven together the words of God with today's environmental issues. He has based environmental issues on issues with human spirituality. "Sin against the environment is sin against God," stated by Patriarch Bartholomew, He believes that the environment is tied with our relationship with God, since everything on Earth was created by God, by harming the environment, we're going against God. His eminence Patriarch Bartholomew has met with religious and political leaders around the world, voicing his religious beliefs. He has been called 'The Green Patriarch' a title which accurately describes his religious standpoints.

Personally, I try my hardest to conserve the environment. By the time I was six, I refused to eat meat. I think that the treatment animals are receiving is unjust, so I stopped eating meat as a whole. I'm no champion of environmental conservation like Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. But as both human beings and Christians, I believe we all have the responsibility to keep our world clean.

Larissa Krinos is in 9th Grade.

Considering the Lord's words to His disciples, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35), discuss the relationship between service and leadership.

By Christos Nenos

In the Bible, it says, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." I see this happen every day with the people I come into contact with, especially with my friends. One of my friends is Drew. Drew is one of my really good friends. He helps in basketball and tells me what to do. He tells me "you're in the game; let's work together so we don't lose." He directs me in what spots to take. He puts himself last in order to serve me.

In Matthew 18:1-4, it says, "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." This reminds me of my friends Jimmy, Nick, Ivan, and Nico. On the first day of school, they helped

me with my lock on my locker. They said hi to me in the hallways between classes.

In Matthew 20: 20-28, Jesus asks, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" I think Jesus is telling people to do what he did. He put his friends first. We are his friends. That's what my friends do when they help me. They are sometimes even late for class and they get in trouble for it. They even check my papers to make sure it's right. They always help me finish laps during P.E. when I have trouble finishing.

The way my friends help and serve me is a great example of what great leaders they are. I really appreciate everything they do for me.

Christos Nenos is in 8th Grade.

Katherine Sakkis, CRS

Fine Homes Specialist

Sakkis & Sanders Real Estate Consultants
Premier Sotheby's International Realty
202 S. Moody Ave Tampa, FL 33609

Tel: **813-309-1073**

E-mail: **KSakkis@gmail.com**

www.BestTampaRealEstate.com



The importance of participating in the life of the Church in light of Jesus's teaching in John 15:5: "I am the vine, you are the branches."

By Nedi Ferekides

"What is Truth?" These were the words spoken by Pontius Pilate as Christ stood on trial. His reply was mere silence. Little did Pilate know that his answer stood before him. Truth is Christ. John 14:6 says the words of the Lord, "I am the way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

In John 15:5, the Truth, Jesus Christ, is represented as the Vine. We are the branches who remain in Him or face consequences. Those who remain bear "fruit" in the form of good works and mission. Those who do not, wither and are cast into the eternal fire. To remain in the Vine, you must know the one and only Truth. As Orthodox Christians, we do this through our Church, the living, working body of Christ. Our Orthodox Church, which is considered to be the real church of Christ, is firmly rooted in the bible and Christ's teachings. It has been passed down through the Apostles and Holy Fathers, who worked and always stood for the wholeness of the truth.

St. Basil the Great is an example of a Holy Father who was steadfast to the Vine. Around the year 370, he was elected as bishop and was entrusted with the Church of Christ. It was during this time that the Emperor Valens believed in Arianism, the theology concerning the relationship of God the Father to the Son of God. He believed that the Son was a subordinate entity to the Father. Valens tried with threats of exile to force the Saint to his beliefs, because he was the stronghold of Orthodoxy in all of Cappadocia, and preserved it from heresy. St. Basil the Great was more willing to give himself up to suffering and trusted in God to take care of the disputes.

Today there are many great televangelists, who proclaim a wide range of theologies. Joel Osteen is one. He broadcasts to seven million viewers weekly

and is famous for his books, *Become a Better You* and *Your Best Life Now*. The majority of what he teaches revolves around people being able to be or do anything because they ask God. However, is this staying true to the Vine? In any of the scriptures does it tell us that we will be rewarded on Earth? In the Anaphora, St. Basil the Great's Divine Liturgy, it tells us that instead, the prize for following the Vine is heavenly gifts. Gifts that are eternal and incorruptible. So by following in the Vine, is it okay to believe that we will receive all, here on Earth? The Bible's one true message tells us to remain in God's teachings. From there, God's will will be done.

It is our Orthodox faith that has fought to keep Christ's true message. We are part of His vine and as His branches reach out to all, so that they might also find the Truth. My church, Saint John's Greek Orthodox Church, participates in a Community Outreach program, in which we partner with First Presbyterian Church to feed the homeless in downtown Tampa. As I am helping the homeless, I am hoping to follow Christ's words in 1 John 3:17-18. "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and in truth." God's love is our "fruit" that we produce as the branches of the great Vine. Once we have planted the seed of God's Truth in others, they too may be connected. From the first planting, the Vine will grow and the branches will become numerous, connecting us all in God's glory.

Nedi Ferekides is in 10th Grade.

Light in Our Orthodox Faith

By Mihail Kaburis

What is light? In the bustling world that we live in today we see the blinding lights of a city at night, street lights, the flashers of a police car, and numerous other forms of man-made light on a daily basis. There is also the light that we feel, the light that touches our hearts; spiritual light. As when the Lord spoke to Moses in Leviticus 24: 1-4 saying, "Command the children of Israel to bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to make the lamps burn continually. . . you shall burn the lamps before the Lord until morning." God came to Moses on Mount Sinai in the form of a burning bush, one that shines with light. Thousands of years later, God's physical flame may have been put out, but His spiritual flame still shines bright. The most copious form of light, though, both spiritually and physically can be displayed in the sun. Maybe the sun is the Lord's beacon to all to "come receive the light?"

When we enter our Orthodox church we find ourselves in the narthex. The narthex consists of the iconostasia or icon stand and the manoualias or candle holders. This is an area for the faithful to prepare for their journey into the holy sanctuary of God. One of the most important items located in the narthex and throughout our church are candles. Not only do the candles provide our church with an abundance of light, but also the spiritual presence of the Lord's realm.

When I walk into church and see the light illuminating off of the candles, I become consumed in a place where there is no chaos or criticism. I see angles fly in the distance, white clothed and glowing; this is the place where the power of God shines the most, Heaven. It is during the Resurrection Service that AGION FOS, or the Holy Light, is received by the entire Orthodox community, and this is the moment when the light from Heaven touches the Earth. As in Acts 9: 1-4, "Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest . . . As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'" As heard from this biblical quote, God's watching light does not just follow us in the church, but in life as well. When we do things for others, even saying a simple "hello," we glow in God's eyes. God can also see the darkness in one too, like he did with Saul. We are human beings: we get frustrated, we get angry, and we get stressed. But in order to shine, God wants us to learn to deal with the way world is and not just shine for ourselves, but for others as well.

There is always a constant battle between the forces of light and darkness. Just as almost every action movie depicts heroes and villains, so does the Bible and

every history book available. Mathew 10: 27 - 28 demonstrates what salvation and damnation are by saying, "Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light . . . fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." God's light can shine in the darkest of times if people start to believe that there is hope in our world.

The commodity of light goes beyond our faith though; it illuminates throughout our world. However, the places in the dark are the ones in need of the strongest light to be shined upon them. For instance, Ki-Mombasa in Kenya is where atrocious slum life is mixed with prostitution and drugs. I think that the world should work together to solve this problem. Ecclesiastes 4: 9 - 10 says that "Two are better than one . . . For if they fall, one will lift up his companion."

When people from all over the world attempt to spread the light to places like Ki-Mombasa, it is a true fulfillment of altruism; spreading light goes beyond the Christian faith, and into the hearts of those who comprehend moral goodness and compassion for all.

Light is a strong force both in our physical and spiritual worlds. Light is able to guide ships lost in the night safely to shore. Light is God's true eye on the world, for everywhere it shines, even in the places where one sees darkness, He is with us. As humans all of us are on our own individual spiritual ships. Maybe the lighthouse in the distance is God's light paving the path to true spiritual bliss?

Mihail Kaburis is in the 11th grade.

In 313 AD, St. Constantine the Great proclaimed the Edict of Milan, which allowed Christians to practice their faith freely. What did religious freedom mean then, and what does it mean for people of faith today in countries where violent religious persecution occurs?

By Arianna Krinos

When Emperor Constantine the Great issued the Edict of Milan in 313 AD, he had undergone a personal revelation. In a dream, he confirmed the truths of our Savior within himself. With the cooperation of Emperor Licinius of the west, Christianity was legalized throughout the Roman Empire. Those who prayed underground with trembling hands breathed a sigh of relief. Is the violent persecution that presently takes place in the far reaches of our world the result of a deficit of religious fervor? Would a simple revelation by a modern dictator like Kim Jong-Un mean the millions of people tortured by the inability to worship would be free?

I have long been interested in astronomy, and it has never ceased to amaze me how, on this small planet of an insignificant system in a massive universe of everything, mankind has determined not only personal spiritual inclinations, but also a sort of need to manipulate others, especially religiously.

It is important for the Edict of Milan to be recognized in light of those who live through religious turmoil and persecution. There are currently fifty countries of the world that suffer from extensive and violent oppression, and countless others in which Christianity is condemned, whether or not by official report. The most violent of these countries is North Korea, where the maltreatment of Christians has taken place since 1910. Imagine living in fear of mentioning Christ, at the risk of not only being put to death, but knowing that your family would be tortured. For me, this existence would be purely unbearable. Even Istanbul, Turkey, the home of His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarchate Bartholomew, an area encompassed in the 313 Edict of Milan, is subjected to periodic menacing threats regarding Christianity from the Muslim community. For all spells of religious criticism, the Lord counters, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good," from Romans 12:9.

Orthodoxy and all Christianity have endured countless bouts of abuse throughout the ages. But thus far, as we come about celebrating the 1700th anniversary of Constantine's Edict, we claim a religion that has largely survived massive blows. And is it not worth this effort towards its protection? After all, the Lord said, ". . . [I] shall take vengeance on the men having scorned their charge, the ones saying in their hearts, 'The Lord shall not do any good, nor shall He do any

harm,'" in Zephaniah chapter 1, verse 12. Religious freedom meant hope in 300 AD. It meant the creation of a climate of goodwill and spiritual flourish that became the Byzantine Empire, like a dark sky studded with the glistening gems that are stars.

In a world where we cannot be sure of what we see when we look into a mirror, and a beam of light can be separated into a rainbow of colors—a world where the very air that we take into our bodies bustles with life—we must remember those who are stripped of the ability to express themselves through their religion. In Revelations 3:15, God says, "I know that you are neither cold nor hot. . . So then, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth." The Lord condemns complacency. Today, we have the power to see the day in which the truth of the Edict of Milan rings out for all children of our Lord.

Where is the Emperor Constantine the Great in the lives of the millions who endure the travail of religious persecution and torment in our modern world? Emperor Constantine dared to know. He refused to be complacent by opening his mind, a principle that holds great weight for every Christian who has considered the universe that surrounds us. . . and felt, rather than doubt, strength in our Lord. Throughout my life, there have been days on which I just laid on the carpet and stared at the ceiling, thinking about the vastness of that which is everything. This was part of how I came to the realization that, in the grand scheme of things, God is what takes us to infinity and beyond. Christ tells us, ". . . whoever drinks of the water that I give him will never thirst," in John 4:14. For many of those who reside in the countries where this basic freedom is suppressed, religious freedom is nothing less than a fight for water that is safe to drink. Thank you.

Arianna Krinos is in 11th Grade.

List of Pledged Stewards for 2013— as of May 15, 2013

Akrotirianakis, Fr. Stavros & Lisa
 Abramis, John & Nicky
 Alexander, John & Anetta
 Alikakos, Maria
 Alithinos, Maria & Kathy
 Alsina, Angel & Lisa
 Ambrozy, Edward & Philip
 Anagnost, Deno
 Andreadakis, Nicholas & Doris
 Antonakakis, Nickolas & Judith
 Argyros, Harry & Linda
 Armstrong, James & Myra
 Assimiadis, Paul
 Badrane, Denise
 Bakirdgi, Joan
 Balasis, Matthew & Suzy
 Bedran, Rita
 Betinis, Giovanna
 Blackburn, Robert & Kathryn
 Blakenbaker, James & Michelle
 Blankenship, Wayne, Athanasia, & Alexander
 Borgeas, Heidi & Ken Beach
 Bouglas, Constantine & Angela
 Bradshaw, Pelagia & Harold
 Brown, Chrysanthi
 Bush, Dorothy
 Calamunci, Alex
 Calamunci, Catherine
 Calamunci, Chris & Crystal
 Cantonis, George & Maria
 Carter, John & Georgia
 Cauthorn, Ken & Helen
 Chagaris, George & Kalliope
 Chakonas, Ethel Athena
 Charalabakis, Terry
 Cherpelis, Basil & Alyssa
 Zwarych
 Choundas, Marina & Greg
 Thachter
 Choundas, Peter
 Christodoulou, Louis & Maryann
 Christou, Tammy
 Circello, Vincent & Tamera
 Colado, David & Alexandria
 Colado, Mary & Hector
 Conner, Michael & Artemis
 Cotterman, Sandy
 Courialis, Telly & Toula
 Crassas, Alkis & Aime
 Cunavelis, Frances

Cunavelis, John
 Dalaklis, Joanne
 De Maio, Alexandra
 Demas, Anna
 Demas, John
 Diamantakes, Georgia
 Diamantides, Melpo
 Dimas, Gregory & Evelyn
 Patsavos
 Diniaco, Peter & Rebecca
 Doucas, Deborah
 Drossos, Patricia
 Edquid Marc & Maraquet
 Eggleston, Charles & Catherine
 Evdemon, Stan & Maryellen
 Fallieras, George N.
 Fallieras, Lauren
 Fallieras, Nicholas & Susan.
 Farkas, John
 Fellios, George
 Fentress, Kevin & Maria
 Ferarolis, Alexandra
 Ferarolis, Stamatis & Cheryl
 Ferekides, Christos & Debbie
 Forde, Dwight & Ewana
 Fotopoulos, Anthony & Carole
 Frazier, Chris
 Frinmenko, Mary
 Garcia, Mark & Anastasia
 Garcia, Richard & Stamie
 Garos, Victoria
 Georgas, Thomas & Janet
 Georgiou, Aristos & JoAnna
 Georgiou, Speros & Eleanor
 Gerecke, Edward & Terri
 Gombos, Jack & Harriet
 Gorter, Maria
 Halikoytakis, Alex
 Halikoytakis, Michael
 Halkias, Evangeline
 Halkias, George & Elaine
 Hambos, George & Donna
 Hanhan, Amin & Gloria
 Hartsfield, Christine
 Hartung, Mark & JoAnn
 Harvie, Andrew & Krista
 Henderson, Nickollet & Kenneth
 Higdon, Skip
 Hoppenstand, Anna
 Horack, Scott
 Horrigan, Paulette
 Iraklianos, Michael & Sharon
 Irwin, Jon & Pam
 Jacobsen, Anne
 James, Arthur
 Johnson, Aphrodit
 Kabougeris, Pete & Voula
 Kaburis, George & Kathy

Kafantaris, Michael & Amy
 Kalojiannis, Nic & Alicia
 Kane, Lance & Georgia
 Kantzios, Ippkratis
 Kapetan, Martha
 Karagiannakis, Keith & Katerina
 Karaku, Ellen
 Karas, Anthony & Sophie
 Karpelenia, Loretta & Daniel
 Katsadouros, Konstantin & Katherine
 Katsamakis, Perry
 Katsifis, John & Margaret
 Katzaras, George & Elina
 Katzaras, Nick & Helen
 Katzaras, Stefan & Kara
 Kavakos, Estelle
 Kavouklis, Chris & Debbie
 Kavouklis, Laz & Maria
 Kavouklis, Nicholas & Edie
 Kladakis, Katherine
 Kladis, George
 Koch John & Cathie
 Kokkas, John
 Konstas, Demetrios & Maryann
 Korakis, Alexander
 Korakis, Alexandros & Louise
 Korakis, Tina
 Kostaris, Irene
 Koudouna, Dora
 Kouimanis, Despina & Frank
 Bartos
 Krinos, John
 Krinos, Dimitri & Melissa
 Kwasny, Foti & Fatin
 Kyrusm Chris & Katherine
 L'Hommedieu, Timothy & Tia
 Laliotis, Stavros & Adriana
 Laskey, Fred & Coleen
 Lavdas, Steve
 Lenardos, Steve & Melissa
 Leontsinis, Nicole
 Letobarone, Domenic & Melanie
 Liakos, James
 Liakos, Nicholas
 Lobue, David & Tracy
 Luter, Thomas
 Maas, Mary
 MacLaury, Kathryn
 Madill, Chad
 Maltezos, Stephen
 Manikas, Bill & Nancy
 Manikis, Clara & Nicholas
 Martin, Tyson & Marissa
 Matassini, Nicholas & Christina
 McKinnon, Joseph & Christina
 Mellon, Andria, Keith Lynn & Andrew

Melton, Gregory & Victoria
 Metcalf, Maria
 Milligan, David & Mary
 Milonas, Lula
 Milonas, Taso & Thay
 Mitchell, John & Edith
 Mitseas, George & Catherine
 Moran, Andy & Stefanie
 Morgan, Theodora & Christopher
 Mourer, Brett & Ana
 Moutsatsos, Spero
 Mueller, William Jeffrey
 Myer, Ronald & Magdalini
 Nakis, Betty Ann & Emmanuel
 Nenos, Byron & Jeanie
 Nenos, Mary
 Nenos, Peter
 Neyland, Bill & Marilyn
 Nicklow, Thomas & Demetra
 Nicolaou, Chris & Dee
 Nolen, Pamela
 Nolas, George & Cheryl
 Norcross, Diane
 Olsen, Scott & Elpida
 O'Malley, Rachel & Zaharis,
 Constantine
 Palios, Artie
 Palios, Betty Katherine
 Palios, George & Julie
 Palios, Michael & Bessie
 Panos, Euripides & Denise
 Papadakis, Alec & Lauren
 Papadeas, Venetia
 Papadopoulos, John
 Papakosta, Peter & Vasiliki
 Papas, George
 Pappas, Paul & Georgia
 Passalaris, Isidoros
 Passavanti, Anthony & Brittany
 Osgood
 Passavanti, Robert & Debbra
 Patellis, Theophilos
 Patrascoiu, Florin & Marenca
 Pavlopulos, George
 Payne, Georgia
 Peckham, Richard & Victoria
 Perdicas, Ernest & Nancy
 Piperaki, Eleni & Tom Sheridan
 Plakas, Theodore & Kyriakoula
 Quinn, Mary Elisabeth
 Rindone, Ryan & Megan
 Rogers, Aris
 Rose, Mary
 Roussos, Archie & Eleftheria
 Royack, Florian & Jeanie
 Saavedra, John
 Sakellaris, Leo & Anne
 Sakkis, John & Katherine

Scarfogliero, Alexis & Gennaro
 Scharbach, Michael
 Scourtes, Christine
 Serbanos, Michael & Patricia
 Sermier, Eustace & Bennette
 Shanahan, Kenneth & Katrina
 Shearer, John & Fifika
 Sibley, Russell & Despina
 Skourellos, Dante & Lindsey
 Skourellos, Michael & Shirley
 Skourellos, Petros
 Slater, Sam & Joanna
 Sorolis, Eftihia & Krista
 Sorolis, Sophia
 Sotiropoulos, Paul
 Sotiropoulos, Peggy
 Sotiropoulos, Vasilios & Jenny
 Spanos, Peter
 Spencer, Wayne & Pauline
 Stavropoulos, Jane
 Stavrou, George & Katina
 Stephanides, Christos
 Stephanides, Marios & Ourania
 Theophanous, Peter
 Tingiris, Mary
 Tisdale, Gregory
 Trakas, Alysa
 Trakas, Andrew & Adrienne
 Trakas, Pete & Donna
 Trimis, Michael & Diane
 Tsibris, John
 Valaes, James & Lynn
 Vasilopoulos, Kostadinis & Toula
 Voykin, David
 Voykin, Mary
 Wade, Deborah
 Wagner, Christine
 Ward, Gary & Sandra
 Whallen, Donald
 Worley, Chistene
 Xenick, Emanuel & Maria
 Xenick, George & Cindy
 Xeroteris, Evangeline
 Yohai, Eleni
 Yotis, Victor
 Yotis, William & Eleonora
 Zabetakis, Maria
 Zoumberos, Stavros & Kathy

**If your name doesn't appear on this list and you have filled out a pledge form for 2013, please contact the office.



June 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
2 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Last Day Sunday School End of Year Party 2:00 pm	3	4	5 Fast Day	6 YAL Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	7 YAL Social Event Fast Day	8
9 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Parish Assembly Meeting GOYA 5:00 p.m.	10	11 Leave-Taking of Pascha Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.	12	13 Ascension Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. YAL Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	14 Junior Olympics Fast Day	15 Junior Olympics Community Outreach
16 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Junior Olympics Luncheon/ Awards Ceremony	17	18	19 Fast Day	20 YAL Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	21	22 Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Memorial Service
23 PENTECOST Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Kneeling Vespers 11:00 am	24 Holy Trinity/Nativity of St. John the Baptist Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	25	26 No Fasting This Week	27 Fr. Stavros at Clergy Lay Conference in Boca Raton June 27-29 YAL Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	28	29
30 All Saints-12 Apostles Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.						

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

Office Phone: (813)876-8830

Fax (813) 443-4899

stjohngoctampa@gmail.com

www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TAMPA, FL
PERMIT NO. 461

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.

Parish Priest: Rev.Fr.Stavros Akrotirianakis

813-876-8830 (office) 394-1038 (cell)

frstav@gmail.com

Parish Council:

Katherine Sakkis, President 813-309-1073

Bill Manikas V. President 813-716-8185

Diane Trimis, Secretary 813-968-9038

Skip Higdon, Treasurer 813-831-9021

Nick Antonakakis 813-477-6639

Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947

Byron Nenos 813-789-0729

Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534

Despina Sibley 813-251-5384

David Voykin 727-415-5603

Stewardship Chairperson:

Bill Manikas 813-716-8185

.....

Office Staff:

Christine Bostrom, Operations Coordinator 813-876-8830

Michele DeLally, Administrative Assistant 813-876-8830

Office Fax: 813-443-4899

•Choir: Artie Palios, Director 813-831-1294

Jim Leone, Organist 813-254-7844

•Chanter: Nick Andreadakis 813-876-8830

•Sunday Sch.: Victoria Peckham 813-406-5626

Maria Xenick 813-839-9897

•Finance Committee: Mike Xenick 813-340-8737

•Adult Greek School: Magda Myer 813-909-2327

•AHEPA: Gregory Tisdale, President 813-922-9979

•Community Outreach: Chairperson

Betty Katherine Palios 813-215-9862

•Daughters: Ourania Stephanides, Pres. 813-546-4711

•Food Pantry: Anetta Alexander 863-224-3001

•GOYA Adv. Elaine Halkias 813-968-9129

Byron Nenos 813-789-0729

•JOY/HOPE: Maria Xenick 813- 839-9897

•Philoptochos: JoAnn Hartung, Pres. 727-432-0228

•Oratorical Festival Chairperson

Peggy Bradshaw: 727-244-1374

•Young at Heart: Nick Antonakakis 813-477-6639

Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

•Jr Olympics: Byron Nenos 813-789-0729

•Ushers: Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

•Altar Angels:

Engie Halkias, Viorica Kirby &
Sia Blankenship. 813-932-5859

•Bookstore: Jon & Pamela Irwin 813-679-4113

•H XAPA ΜΑΣ Dance Group:

Alex De Maio & 813-340-9668

Marina Choundas 813-877-6136

•Glendi Dancers:Jenna Mingleddorff 813-610-7365

•Panigyri Dancers: Vanessa Aviles 813-221-2194

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.

.....

The *Messenger* of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is published on a monthly basis. Publication is the first of each month. Deadline for notices and announcements for the Messenger is the 15th of each month. You may send announcements to the church office or through **email to: stjohngoctampa@gmail.com**

Website: www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

“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