

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

May 2014

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.

Father Stavros' Message

Father Stavros' Paschal Message

During the Divine Liturgy on Holy Saturday morning, it is Tradition that the priest scatters bay leaves throughout the church as a sign of Christ's victory over death. For many children including our son, it's their favorite service of the year. Many children, including ours, brought bags to collect leaves and take them home. While I was throwing leaves this morning, I looked at the faces of the children, and I saw eyes that were filled with joy. It was innocence and joy in the purest way that you can have them. As I looked into their eyes, I not only saw my son and his peers. I saw myself, in a much different place than where I am. I saw myself as a child, I even acted a little bit like a child today. I had a lot of fun throwing those leaves today. And I saw what my life is and wondered where did that child-like joy go. Life goes by so fast and is so busy and stressful, it's easy to forget to be joyful or lose joy all together.

Our children don't understand necessarily the meaning of what they saw this morning. They think it's neat to see the priest littering the church with leaves and that's good enough for them. Many of us don't have enough joy in our lives—whether it is a marriage that has gotten stale, parenting that is mundane and repetitive, a job that's going nowhere, or a faith that is stagnant rather than dynamic. We don't spend enough time laughing. We're so busy getting, that we forget to be grateful for what we've already got.

The best thing about joy, however, is that it is easy to have joy. You don't have to spend money to find joy, you don't have to take a class either. See, joy is a choice. You can choose to find joy in just about anything. You can also choose to find something bad in just about anything. Joy is a choice when it comes to relationships, to work and to God. If you want to know God better, and have Him as the source and center of your life, work on your joy. Faith and love follow very closely behind.

Anyone who uses a computer knows what a restore point is—it's when your computer has gotten messed up and you pick a point back in time when you knew the computer was good, you go back to that point, and restore the efficiency of the computer to what it once was. Well, tonight there is an opportunity to create a restore point in your life, in your relationships, in your work, and in your relationship with Christ. We're not going to press control-alt-delete though. We are going to light a candle with a light that has been burning constantly on our altar for many, many years. The light of the resurrected Christ gives us an opportunity to create a restore point—not in a few days or a week, but right now. When we proclaim the Resurrection in a few minutes with the words Christ is risen, that doesn't suggest a response is needed, it demands a response be made. As I said last night, it's not enough to just be a hearer, you have to be a do-er. You can't love God if you don't have love. And you can't have love if you don't find joy. And if you don't have the joy you once had in your life—be it in a marriage, a friendship, a job, or in your faith, receive the Light of the Resurrected Christ and make a decision—I will seek joy, I will find joy, in

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whatever area of my life needs more joy. I will seek the joy of Christ, so that when I find it, my joy will be full and lasting. The hymns of the church tell us “Let all things begin anew in the Light of the Resurrected Christ.” We have the permission and the encouragement to create a restore point in our relationship with God and with one another. I encourage you to seize this opportunity—receive the Light and choose to do so with joy. You can even do it with the joy of a child, who doesn’t fully understand but knows that this is special and wants to learn more. Joy is the perfect cure for anger, sadness and frustration. And real joy is found not in big things, but in little things. Tonight there is joy to be found in a simple ritual of lighting a candle, because as we will hear in the Gospel at the Liturgy, Christ is the true Light who enlightens every person who comes into the world, and the Light cannot be overtaken by darkness. If you need more joy in your life, create a restore point tonight as you receive the Light. If your life is filled with joy, receive the Light with joy, so that your joy can be even greater. And receive it with a commitment to share your joy, so that others can have your joy in themselves.

I close our Lenten journey this year with a prayer, that God lightens hearts, purifies minds, cleanses souls and inspires us all start anew in whatever it is we are doing—as children of God, as stewards of marriages, children, and talents; as people who genuinely love their neighbors as themselves.

Create in me a clean heart o God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the JOY of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit. Psalm 50: 10-12

Come receive the Light from the everlasting Light and glorify Christ who is risen from the dead.

A Word of Thanks for our Holy Week Journey

Christos Anesti! Christ is Risen!

The journey of Holy Week in the Orthodox Church is a real team effort. There are a lot of “moving parts” to carrying off the service. And all of them worked in sync, which is why this week was so special. This event was truly an event of community. I would like to offer thanks to many people who were a part of it:

Charlie Hambos is finishing his studies at Holy Cross Seminary this month. In June, he will become the first pastoral assistant at our parish. He is going to not only help me in the various ministries of the church, but will add things to our church life. For the second straight year, he did both. He assisted in the altar and at the chanter’s stand, gave a couple of great sermons and organized our second All-Night Vigil at the Cross on Holy Thursday night which this year was attended by over 35 people!

I am thankful to Nick Andreadakis, our Protopsalti, who shared in EVERY Holy Week Service this year, as well as each service of Great Lent. What a comfort to have such a dedicated and gifted not only chanter, but true servant, as the number one assistant. I am thankful also to Archie Roussos, our second chanter, for all of his help and assistance during Holy Week and throughout the year. They were also assisted by many readers who came to the various Lent and Holy Week services, including Peggy Bradshaw who came to all the Compline Services, Pauline Spencer who read at the Pre-Sanctified Liturgies and some of the evenings of Holy Week, and Mike Xenick who came all the mornings of Holy Week, and several others.

Our choir, directed by Artie Palios, did their usual AWESOME job. We tend to take our choir for granted. But you know that the choir is good when people who visit the church compliment them so much. We know what we have is good, but it is only confirmed by those visiting. Thanks to all the members of the choir for the time they took to practice and prepare, so that the hymns were chanted so beautifully and prayerfully.

The altar boys were wonderful. Your vigilantly keeping watch over the cross and tomb of Christ as well as your assistance in the processions and other parts of the services were noticed and appreciated. You had the precision of soldiers while showing the grace of angels. Seeing young men of our parish take such care in their duties truly inspired all.

The Myrrh-bearers who assisted in the services on Good Friday and Pascha helped us re-enact the scriptural passages which tell us how only a few courageous women ministered to the Lord after His death on the Cross and came and found the empty tomb. We know of seven women who came on Good Friday and three who found the empty tomb. Hence I give thanks to our 7 Myrrh-bearers on Good Friday and the three who assisted on Pascha. Last year, we added the role of “Maidens” who took part in the Bridegroom services early in the week. This year, a dozen girls participated in this ministry, showing us that the innocence of youth plays a big part in keeping our lamps filled with the oil of faith.

Engie Halkias and those who worked with her did a beautiful job in decorating our church for the many services throughout the week. The flowers, the candles, the Tomb of Christ, all the little touches added a great deal in setting the scenes for the services.

When visitors from other parishes come to our church for Holy Week, the first comment I often hear is “what a great sense of order you have at St. John.” And for this, I must thank Tom Georgas and all the ushers who assist him. During these services, we typically have many more people than usual in attendance. And with the additional processions and procedures, Tom and his crew did a great job in assuring that the services were well-coordinated, made sure everyone got a seat and helped keep everything in good order.

I am grateful to our Parish Council Members, who assisted the ushers and who also were responsible for the Paschal reception, and to Carole Fotopoulos who chaired this event this year. What a great way to cap off the week of services and fasting with an opportunity to break bread together and enjoy fellowship after our week of spiritual renewal.

The Palm Sunday luncheon, sponsored by our Philoptochos Society, was well attended, enabling our Philoptochos to raise funds for its various charities and ministries, and I am thankful to all who attended.

A big thanks to those who organized the Good Friday Retreat, especially to Maria Xenick, Debbie Nicklow and Amy Kafantaris, who also had a lot of help from parents and Sunday School Teachers. While I do not have the opportunity to observe Sunday School classes, because I am always in church during the time they are held, I had the opportunity to observe our teachers in action and I hope that you will feel the joy that I have to know that we have some very talented teachers, who make the study of our faith relevant and fun at the same time. It was truly inspiring to kneel in front of the Cross with all of our children and to sing hymns and offer prayers with them.

Thank you to all those who donated towards the cost of the flowers and other expenses involved in the Holy Week Services.

And thanks most especially to those who attended the services—more important than decoration and preparations are the faithful worshippers who came to pray, to learn, to cry, and to rejoice.

Until you see it written on paper, you don’t realize how many moving parts there are to the Holy Week experience. Thank you for the part that you played in this special journey that we take each year.

With love in the Risen Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

Liturgical Schedule for May 2014

Friday, May 2 Feast of St. Athanasios
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 4 Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew (Karter Lenardos, Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, Brigham Sibley, Benny Hidermichel, James Kavouklis)
Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, Perry Katsamakias, Peter Theophanous
Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Sunday, May 11 Sunday of the Paralytic—Mothers' Day
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark (John Karamitsanis, Lukas Karamitsanis, Andrew Mellon-Lynn, Dominic Garcia, Demetri Karounos, Grayson Borgeas)
Ushers: Gregory Tisdale, John Tsbiris, George Trimikliniotis
Coffee Hour: AHEPA/Daughters

Thursday, May 15 Fr. Stavros Anniversary of Ordination
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 18 Sunday of the Samaritan Woman
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke (Christos Nenos, Dean Mitseas, Nicholas Katzaras, James Katzaras, Nicholas Yotis)
Ushers: Brett Mourer, Christopher Kavouklis, Amin Hanhan
Coffee Hour: Young Adults

Wednesday, May 21 Feast of Sts. Constantine and Helen
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 25 Sunday of the Blind Man
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas
Coffee Hour: TBA

Tuesday, May 27 Leave-Taking (Apodosis) of Pascha—Evening Liturgy
Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 29 Feast of the Ascension
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, June 1 Sunday of the Holy Fathers
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (Alexios Diniaco, Thomas Shearer, Nicholas Alsina, Antonio Bavaro, William Sotiropoulos)
Ushers: Mike Trimis, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis
Coffee Hour: Community Outreach

Saturday, June 7 Saturday of the Souls
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, June 8 Pentecost
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.
Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit (Kneeling Vespers) 11:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers: Florin Patrasciou, Kevin Fentress, John Alexander
Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Liturgical Notes for May

No Kneeling until Pentecost-It is actually the Tradition in the Orthodox Church that we not kneel on Sundays in honor of the Resurrection of Christ (exceptions being if you are receiving the sacrament of confession on a Sunday, or are present at an ordination on a Sunday). Because we do not worship on a daily basis in our church communities, priests have encouraged people to kneel on Sundays, the thought being that if we do not kneel on Sundays, that we'll never kneel in church. It is a Tradition, that for 50 days after Pascha, we do not kneel in honor of the Resurrection. The next time we will kneel after April 20 is on the Feast of Pentecost, after the liturgy, at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says "Again and again on bended knees let us pray to the Lord." Until you hear that petition, do not kneel from April 20-June 8.

Father Stavros' Anniversary of Ordination-Fr. Stavros was ordained to the Holy Priesthood of the Greek Orthodox Church on May 15, 1998. This will mark his 16th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. Every year, Fr. Stavros marks this anniversary by celebrating Divine Liturgy in thanksgiving for the gift of priestly ministry. This year, Fr. Stavros will celebrate Liturgy for his anniversary on Thursday, May 15, in thanksgiving for 16 years of priestly ministry. Please come and join him in prayer that day.

Sts. Constantine and Helen-May 21 commemorates the feast of Sts. Constantine and Helen. St. Constantine was the emperor of the Roman Empire who decided to make Christianity the official religion of the empire. For the first time in history, the Christian church would not fall under persecution. St. Constantine also moved the capital of the Empire from Rome to Constantinople (present day Istanbul, Turkey), where he inaugurated the Byzantine Empire which flourished from 325 until 1453. He also convened the first Ecumenical Council in Nicea in

the year 325, which inaugurated what is known as the "golden age of Orthodoxy," and resulted in the writing of the Nicene Creed (edited to its current version in the year 381). St. Helen, the mother of St. Constantine, is recognized as being the person who found the true cross of Christ in Jerusalem. She went on a pilgrimage to the Holy City and searched diligently for the Cross, finding it under a patch of Basil (Vasiliko) on the Mountain of Golgotha. Sts. Constantine and Helen have the title "Isapostolou," "Equal to the Apostles" because of the tremendous contributions they made to the Orthodox Christian Church.

Apodosis (Leavetaking) of Pascha marks the end of the Paschal Season. It is a repeat of the Resurrection Service and Liturgy of Pascha and is the last time of the Liturgical year that we sing Christos Anesti. We will celebrate this feast on **Tuesday, May 27, with an evening Liturgy at 6:00 p.m. (Orthros will begin at 5:00 p.m. and is a replication of the Resurrection Service from Pascha).**

Ascension marks the feast where Christ ascended to heaven, 40 days after the Resurrection, thus completing His earthly ministry. This year we will mark this feast on **Thursday, May 29.**

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The Pentecostarion—The 50 Days After Pascha

The period of 50 days between Pascha & Pentecost is referred to as the "Pentecostarion". The period of forty days between Pascha Sunday and the day of the Ascension is known as the period of Pascha (or Easter). It is a period set aside by the Church for the specific celebration of Christ's glorious resurrection. It is a celebration of "rebirth"... The rebirth of God's creation which surrounds us, and the rebirth of the spirit within each and every one of us! This period is not merely a ritualistic celebration but a celebration which can be seen, felt, heard and talked about. It is a very **REAL** celebration which **CAN** make our entire being jump with **JOY**. It is a celebration which offers us **HOPE**. It is a celebration which offers us the **TRUE FREEDOM** found only in Jesus Christ! During the 40 days of Pascha, we are to greet each other with the greeting "Christ is Risen" or "Christos Anesti", to which the response is "Truly He is Risen" or "Alithos Anesti."

The *THEMES* of each week during the *PERIOD OF THE PENTECOSTARION* ARE:

SUNDAY OF ST. THOMAS (April 27)—The Church brings to our mind the unbelief of Thomas followed by his belief after seeing the scars of Christ. (The first week is called the New Week, Renewal Week, or **BRIGHT** Week. It is a week of **REBIRTH**. There is **NO** fasting this week.)

SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN (May 4)—Who came to anoint Jesus' body, but found an **EMPTY** tomb. We also commemorate Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC (May 11)—The healing of the paralytic who was afflicted for many years. This event bears witness to Christ's authority over the human body: He who can overcome death in His own body has power over all human flesh.

SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN (May 18)—Christ talks about the water of eternal life which will never make us thirst again. The woman here is St. Photini.

SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN (May 25)—The theme of **LIGHT!** Commemoration of the healing of the blind man which leads us to the reality of the healing of our own spiritual blindness.

ASCENSION THURSDAY (May 29)—The departure of the **PHYSICAL LORD**. The feast of Pascha is over the day before which is referred to as the "APODOSIS" or Leave-taking of Easter. (Which we will celebrate at St. John on Tuesday, May 27)

We now look toward the feast of Pentecost (50 days after Pascha).

SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FATHERS (June 1)—Of the 1st Ecumenical Council. We pay homage to the collective triumph of the Church over false doctrine.

SUNDAY OF PENTECOST (June 8)—The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the 12 disciples, filling them with power, strength, wisdom and courage to spread the **GOOD NEWS** of Jesus Christ to the entire world. Pentecost is the celebration of the birth of the Christian Church!!!

SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS (June 15)—The period of the Pentecostarion is now complete with the commemoration of "All Saints."

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Kindling Holy Zeal

by Fr. Jeffrey Frate

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice. Let the whole world, visible and invisible, keep the feast. For Christ is risen, our eternal joy." (From the 1st Ode of the Paschal Canon)

The sheer brightness of the feast of Pascha is something that everyone remembers; the way the darkness of the Church, long before the rising of the sun, is rapidly overcome by waves of light. The Church is bright, the hymns are bright, and our faces are bright.

I recall telling a friend once after Vespers on the Sunday of Pascha, that, for once in my life, I found it impossible to be unhappy.

But by Tuesday of that same week, I felt differently. All that joy was more than I could stand for any length of time. The intensity of Holy Week, its pleasing and graceful tautness of soul and body, slackened, and I was like a flabby string on a violin. No more than a few days earlier I had found it impossible to be unhappy, and now it seemed impossible not to be somewhat sad, or worse, indifferent. I wondered where all the brightness had gone, or if, perhaps, it was only an illusion?

But we know that the light of Christ is one that never wanes. Clearly, if I had found myself engulfed by a shadow, it was not a fault of His. Every Sunday throughout the year is a manifestation of that same unwaning stream of Paschal brightness and joy into our lives, but we, as I was only days after Pascha, are often unable to receive it. We waver, even as the Lord continues to offer light and life for the life of the world.

And it seems that if progress is to be made for us in abiding in that joy and life, then we have to learn to remember and build upon the efforts of the Fast, so that we can begin to move from glory to glory, rather than from glory to disgrace, or from brightness to shadow.

So I have reflected on one aspect of spiritual life that we are taught by the fast - the need for zeal - and offer it for the reader's consideration.

Throughout Great Lent we are called to be watchful, to be alert, to shrug off the weight of sleep. That is, we are called to manifest some zeal in our lives when it comes to seeking after God, some fervor, some passion; and to actively oppose anything within ourselves that would snatch away His gifts from us.

St. Isaac of Syria illuminatingly describes zeal as a watchdog attribute of the soul. If a dog has gotten hold of a steak, we know what will happen if we try to tear it from his mouth. Furthermore, if even a bird flies by overhead to disturb our yard, or a man passes by on the street, a watchdog immediately howls in protest. We have this same vigilance, and watchful character within our souls, but oftentimes it is turned, like the dogs, towards guarding the food in our mouths, or various pleasures of the body and nothing more. But St. Isaac suggests that this aspect of our soul can and should be directed towards spiritual life. So that any perverse thought, any slip into stagnant sleepiness, would be greeted by snarls and howls of protest from within ourselves.

Further he puts forward two ways that zeal comes about in the soul; 1) by fear of losing what we have; 2) by increasing our longing for more

brightness.

Fear of losing what we have

This is the healthy fear that the hymns of Holy Week inspire in us: the constant mindfulness that all could be lost or gained in a moment. Judas is in attendance at the luminous mystical supper and yet in a moment is darkened and betrays the Lord, and he is ultimately unable to overcome his despair. The thief on the cross, condemned for his sins, in a moment enters paradise. And Cassiani, unlike Eve, who ran and hid herself from the footsteps of the Lord in paradise, goes to anoint the feet of God made flesh, and in that moment receives forgiveness. We have to hold on to the moment of grace, to be afraid, knowing that while no one can take it away from us, we just may give it up by negligence; like Judas, captive to the love of money; and like the scribes and Pharisees, asleep in the false-security of their pride. When we bring these characters constantly before our mind it evokes in us a saving fear that produces zeal, watchfulness, and a jealous guarding of the brightness of the feast. So we increase this saving zeal by considering that each day is the day of salvation, that there may not be time to turn back if we go to sleep in sin. While we have the light, we should be active in it, pursuing the Lord and not slackening. Indeed, St. Isaac says, "This [fear] is divine, it is a good anxiety, and its affliction and agony are from God's providence." (Ascetical Homilies, 55)

Increasing our longing

"Now the second cause of strengthening and enkindling the dog [of zeal] is when desire for virtue increases in the soul. For the more this desire increases in the soul, the more natural zeal for virtue becomes inflamed." (St. Isaac, Ascetical Homilies, 55) To increase our desire we need only recall our first love. We need to remember the light that emerges from the tomb, and how our soul was filled with such sweetness by its rays; to recall that while virtue appears hard, whenever we have embraced it we have found it to be a joy in the end; while on the other hand, sin appeared sweet in the beginning but ended in suffering. We reclined in sin and found ourselves pinned by its heaviness to our couch. We withheld our cash from the poor, but bill collectors took it away anyway; and a deadening, rather than quickening, anxiety gnawed at our soul. But the Lord comes to us and says, "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." That is, all you who are weary and worn down by the course, heavy, and sluggish pleasures of sin. Come, take up the cross and turn your zeal towards following me, for, "my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

Let us remember how He first loved us, and His love will kindle holy zeal in our hearts, enabling us to hold firmly to the resurrected Christ, our eternal joy.

Fr. Jeffrey serves at the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Welcoming Committee

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Hebrews 13:2

As part of our Stewardship Committee, the Welcoming Committee has been busy at work, updating our welcome packets, greeting visitors and guests as they come to our church. Our mission is to practice hospitality to all who enter our doors. We are not just about welcoming people, but about developing relationships – with each other and with Christ. The most important person for a visitor to talk to in order to feel at home in a new church is you. It is not the priest, or the greeter, but a regular attender. One of the most impressive gestures we can extend to first time visitors is for people with no official position to take the initiative and welcome them.

How can you do this?

- Treat first time visitors as guests of God, not strangers.
- Offer a smile or a handshake with a simple “Good Morning!”
- Rather than saying, “Are you new here?” ask “Have we met before?” and offer your name.
- Take the initiative; don’t wait for visitors to initiate conversation.
- Learn people’s names and remember them.
- Invite visitors to join you at something, anything!
- Never let new people sit alone and introduce them to others.
- Invite people to fill out your church’s connection card.
- Tell people you’re glad they are here.
- As visitors are leaving, make sure to smile and thank them for coming.
- Pray for them throughout your week.

You don’t have to travel to a foreign country, to another state, or even get in your car to do the work of a missionary. The Great Commission of Christ can be fulfilled simply by picking up the phone, speaking to a new person you don’t recognize, sitting with someone who is alone. Can you call a parish member you haven’t seen in a while? A personal invitation to attend church is a great way to reintroduce them to the wonderful things we have going on at St. John.

If you are interested in joining this exciting and fun new ministry of the Welcoming Committee, please contact Maria Xenick at mpxenick@gmail.com.

For the past six weeks, we have been welcoming 4-5 new members per week—this is very exciting for the future of our parish and we need everyone’s help in welcoming our new members.

Connection Cards—We now have what are called “Connection Cards” in the pews of our church. Obviously we want everyone to be connected to our church. If someone is new to our church, we should encourage them to fill out a connection card and join our church. **If your contact information has changed, please fill out a connection card and send it to the office so we can update your address, email, etc.**

Stewardship Update

	April 15, 2014	April 15, 2013
Pledged Families	262	230
Total Pledged	\$375,568.04	\$277,197
Stewardship Goal	\$400,00	\$300,000

If you have pledged for 2014, 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!

Small Group Bible Study Update

Our Small Group Bible Studies continue to meet each week. If you haven't been part of one of these groups, please come and join one. They are on different days, at different times and in different parts of town, with the hope that we can accommodate everyone who wants to participate. Days and locations and contact information is below. For questions about small groups, please contact Fr. Stavros or any of the group leaders. New members are welcome at any time. Your non-Orthodox friends and neighbors are also welcome to participate—we have several who come to small groups. If we are going to grow our church, it is going to be from outside our church. Please feel free to invite not only your fellow parishioners but your non-Orthodox neighbors and friends to join us.

Women's Group (for adult women of any age)

Location: Meets at the home of Debbie Kavouklis, 3315 Jean Circle, Tampa, FL 33629—Debbie lives in South Tampa, a mile or so from the church.

Group Leader: Debbie Kavouklis—you can email Debbie at dkavouklis1@verizon.net, or call her at 690-0155.

Meeting time: Tuesday mornings from 10:00-11:00 a.m. (coffee and refreshments at 9:30 a.m.)

May Meeting Dates: May 6, 13, and 20

Men's Group (for adult men of any age)

Location: Kourmolis Center

Group Leader: Group Members rotate who leads each week. For more information, however, please email Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com or contact him at 813-394-1038.

Meeting time: Wednesday mornings from 7:30-8:30 a.m.

May Meeting Dates: May 7, 14, 21 and 28

South Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults) Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient for those who live in South Tampa

Location: Home of Helen and Ken Cauthorn, 3922 W. Palmira Avenue, Tampa, FL 33629. Helen's Number is 813-505-1059 and her email is hcauthorn@chubb.com

Group Leader: Bessie Palios—Her email is bmp1126@yahoo.com, and her cell number is 813-523-0347. If you are going to attend this group, please

RSVP to Ellen, Bessie and Fr. Stavros

Meeting time: Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

May Meeting Dates: May 6, 13, and 20

North Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults) Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient to those who live in North Tampa, Lutz, Land O'Lakes, Wesley Chapel and Carrollwood

Location: Home of Michael and Artemis Conner. They live in Lutz near George Steinbrenner High School off of Lutz Lake Fern. Their address is 5524 Reflections Blvd, Lutz, FL 33558. Their number is 813-920-4404 and Michael's cell is 813-784-0182. Michael's email is conner.mike.01@gmail.com, and Artemis' email is artemisia004@yahoo.com. Please contact them before you attend the first meeting to get the gate code to their community.

Group Leader: Michael Conner

Meeting time: Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

May Meeting Dates: May 6, 13, and 20

East Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults) Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient to those who live on the East side of town—Riverview, Brandon, Valrico, Seffner, Lakeland

Location: Home of George and Donna Hambos—They live in Valrico at 2604 Herndon Street, Valrico, FL 33596. Their home number is 813-651-9226 and Donna's cell number is 813-843-8412, and Donna's email is dhambos@msn.com

Group Leader: Donna Hambos

Meeting Time: Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

May Meeting Dates: May 6, 13, and 20

Young Adult Group (for adults ages 18-40)

Location: Homes of group members, this one rotates, contact group leader for location each week

Group Leader: Mary Ann Konstas, who can be reached at 813-215-9862 or at mapkonstas@gmail.com. Please contact Mary Ann if you are interested in joining this group so she can tell you where the next meeting will take place.

Meeting time: Wednesday evening (at various homes, contact Mary Ann for location—group members will be notified via email)

May Meeting Dates: May 7, 14, 21 and 28



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Get Acquainted Sunday, May 4—In an effort to get to know one another better, we are going to continue our “get acquainted Sundays” one Sunday of each month. We will have nametags and markers in the entry way of the Kourmolis Center and will ask that each person put one on during coffee hour and introduce yourself to at least one person that you do not know. This will serve to help us increase our fellowship and sense of community. Our “Get Acquainted Sunday” for May will be Sunday, May 4.

Graduates—If you have a student who is graduating from high school or college or graduate school, please contact the church office by May 15 so we can include graduates in the June/July issue of the Messenger. Please provide the name of the graduate, the institution graduating from, any degree, in the case of a college graduate, and what college the person plans to attend, in the case of the high school graduate.

Successful Lenten Retreat—35 Adults from our parish and surrounding communities attended the Adult Lenten Retreat on Saturday, March 23. The subject of the Retreat was “The Services of Great Lent and Holy Week.” We did a couple of hours of work in small groups, and this was well received. Our next adult retreat will be in the fall.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgies WELL ATTENDED—Thanks to our ministries!!!—The Lenten Dinners following Pre-Sanctified Liturgy were a resounding SUCCESS again!!! Attendance continued to build throughout Lent. One week, 100 people came to the dinner. And all were attended by at least 50. Thanks for our ministries—Choir, Sunday School, AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope, Young at Heart, Philoptochos and Small Group Bible Studies for providing the dinner each week. The food was tasty and showed us all that it is possible to eat REALLY WELL while also keeping a fast. But most importantly, many people who had never attended this beautiful service had an opportunity to partake in it.

Get Daily Bible Readings Sent to your Email or Phone—One of the best ways to start each day is by reading from the Bible. There are prescribed readings for every day of the year in the Orthodox Church. You can go on the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America website at www.goarch.org, go into the search box and type in “Receive Daily Readings,” follow the prompts and have this valuable resource sent right to your phone or email. Reading the Bible is so important and for those of us who don’t make the time or are lazy to reach for the Bible, have the readings sent in a way that is easy to remember. Spend some time this new ecclesiastical year in God’s Word, the sacred Scriptures!

Constant Contact Emails—Our parish utilizes Constant Contact as a way of staying in touch with parishioners, particularly on subjects that are time sensitive, i.e. funerals, special events, and last minute announcements. To keep you apprised of news in our parish, we will probably be sending out 1 (and no more than 2) message per week. This is an effort not to clog your inbox but to keep you informed of the goings on in our parish.

Junior Olympics-Volunteers Needed—St. John’s will be hosting our annual Sunshine State Junior Olympics on June 13-15. 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.

Scholarships Awarded—Congratulations to this year’s recipients of the AFGLC Peter and Sophia Kourmolis Scholarships—This year’s students are Alexandra Gerecke (Tampa) and Despina Lucas (Tampa/Clearwater). This year’s recipients of the AFGLC Dr. Demetrios Halkias Scholarships are Jonathan Pajak (St. Pete) and Michael Konstantinides (Clearwater)! Congratulations to these students on a job well done!

A Special Thank You to Diane Trimis who served on the Parish Council for several years and has recently left the Board. She served in many capacities, most recently as our secretary. Thank you Diane for your many years of service on the Parish Council at St. John. Diane also has been involved in the Junior Olympics and continues to sing in the choir, as she has for many years.



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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, May 17 and Saturday, June 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.

BIBLE STUDY

WITH DR. BILL MANIKAS

Bible Study is held every Monday from 6:30-8:00 p.m. in the multi-purpose room. Newcomers are welcome to join us. Dr. Bill Manikas leads the Bible study, which meets every Monday night. During May, we will meet on May 5, 12 and 19, with the final meeting for the spring on May 19.

Parish Registry

Baptism-Evangelia Lawrence, daughter of John and Despina Lawrence, was baptized on Sunday, March 16. Godparents were Angie Korakis and George Maminakis. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Olivia Marie Axelrod, daughter of Scott and Christine Axelrod, was baptized on Sunday, April 6. Godparents were Cara Lynn Curts and Tonya (Curts) Thomas. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Sky (Ourania) Ricalde, daughter of Russell and Pat Ricalde, was baptized on Thursday, April 10. Godparents were Ioannis Ioanopoulos and Ed Wrage. Na Sas Zisi!

Chrismation-Wayne (Luke) Blankenship was chrismated on Sunday, March 16. Thomas and Alexander Blankenship were the Godparents. Congratulations!

Chrismation-John Dana DeYoung was chrismated on Sunday, March 16. Nick and Bessie Manos were the Godparents. Congratulations!

Chrismation Carrie Leigh (Eleni) Alexander was chrismated on Sunday, March 23. Sophie Leimonitis was the Godparent. Congratulations!

Chrismation-Daniel Bavaro was chrismated on Sunday, March 30. Perry Katsamakis was the Godparent. Congratulations!

Chrismation-Alina (Marie) Sanchez was chrismated on Sunday, April 6. Nancy Manikas was the Godparent. Congratulations!

Funeral-Christine Swoyer passed away on March 29. Funeral services were held at St. John on April 3. May her memory be eternal!

Memory Eternal Fr. Constantine Chokanis-Fr. Constantine Chokanis, who served St. John Greek Orthodox Church as our priest from 1962-1965 passed away on April 3 at the age of 82. May his memory be eternal! A memorial service for Fr. Gus will be held on Sunday, May 11.

Condolences to Katherine Sakkis and family, on the passing of Katherine's mother, Pauline Heretz, on April 8. May her memory be eternal!

Condolences to Peter Theophanous and to Magdalini Theophanous, on the passing away of their mother, Revekka, on April 4. May her memory be eternal!



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St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival

On Sunday, March 23, we held our Parish Level St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. Participants in the Junior Division included Christos Nenos, Brigham Sibley, Nicholas Katzaras, Sophia Krinos and Larissa Krinos. Senior Division Participants included Katina Smith, Angelina Bartucci, Peter Hanhan, Nedi Ferekides and Mihail Kaburis. Arianna Krinos participated in the essay contest portion of the Festival. Larissa Krinos and Sophia Krinos were the Junior Division winners, while Mihail Kaburis and Angelina Bartucci won the Senior Division. These four competed on the Metropolis level at St. Katherine Greek Orthodox Church in Naples on Saturday, April 5. A special thank you for our judges—Dr. Bill Manikas, Brett Mourer, Fr. Jim Moulkietis, Amy Kafantaris, Dr. Karina Findlay and Irene Kostaris, and our timekeeper, Dory Passalaris. And most of all, we thank Peggy Bradshaw for coordinating this event year after year. Some of the speeches are printed in this edition of the Messenger. Others will appear in June. And the four speakers who went to the District Competition will offer their speeches in church. Congratulations to our young people! We are so proud of you!

There are Many Ways to be an Orthodox Christian -by Christos Nenos

There are many ways to be an orthodox Christian. Some of the ways I try to be a good Christian are by learning about the faith, helping others, helping the church and trying to expand the faith.

There are also challenges that we have to overcome. Christians throughout time have read the same bible and if you read the bible you can learn about the history of God and what he did for us when he died for our sins.

When I pray every day I include my love for everything that I do through Christ

Because I play sports I can share my faith with other athletes. Another great reason on why you should pray is because if you pray and talk to god in your life, your heart will be glorified.

When I go to Metropolitan Ministries I help the poor by giving them food, water and supplies that will help them today in their lives with God. Just like God is there for us, I want God to be there with them to help if they are struggling in their life.

I also help people at school by helping those who have been bullied and standing up for them to make sure that they don't get hurt like high-schoolers do.

I think that Christians have a duty to go to church and to worship God every Sunday but in the twenty first century there are many distractions that make it tempting to not go to church.

Even though I love to play video games, and all the technologies available that are major temptations, I know that it is very important to make time for church.

I enjoy being a part of the church and serving in the altar on Sundays because it gives me a feeling of security that is only possible with God.

In Psalms 33 verse 12 it says "Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord." In this feeling, we are able to tell the difference between right and wrong, and to get one step closer to God's kingdom.

As a Christian I tell others about God, the bible, and why church and its aspects are important. At school I often tell my friends about everything that they do like a sport's game. In Timothy 4:12, God says "don't let anyone look down on you because you are young but, but set an example."

Even though I am young I am still able to do this by being kind to others. I am an example to other non believers.

Through my actions I am still able to introduce others to God as well, so that they too may go to the kingdom of heaven.

Christos Nenos is in 8th Grade. He is the son of Byron and Jeanie Nenos.

Why are the martyrs of the Church characterized as great athletes? By Brigham Sibley

When you think of determined, what do you think of? You might think of Michael Jordan or maybe Ryan Lochte (US Olympic swimmer). They might seem like they were born with a special skill for baseball, basketball, or any sport in general. The same thing might be true with saints and martyrs in Christianity. However, they like anyone else, had to practice for years to do what they have done; to do what made them famous. For every great athlete, there have been many others

that have given up on the same path of sports stardom. Maybe those that gave up had natural talent. However, natural talent only does so much, yet not everything.

Like everything else, the winner has to train to win as evidenced by the following Bible verse by Saint Paul found in 1 Corinthians 9: verses 24-27: 24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only

one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 27 No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize”.

While an athlete might compete for a gold medal in the Olympics, a martyr is trying to receive a place in heaven. However, an eternal place in Heaven is so much harder to earn than ripped muscles. Specifically, the following biblical verse applies: 1 Timothy 4:verse 8 “for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come”.

So do you really know the difference between a great athlete and a martyr? They are similar in that both spend their lives dedicated to what they love, both have goals, both fight hard for the desired outcome, and both face temptation to give in and give up.

Martyrs however, are totally different in that they want a place in Heaven where an athlete wants a trophy, glory, or fame. They are also very different in that martyrs pay a greater price to achieve their goal. An example of the price paid is what many saints and martyrs endured. Some of the most brutally tortured saints were St. Paraskevi, St. Haralambos, St. Bartholomew, St. Erasmus, St. Mark, St. Katherine, St. John the Baptist, and St. George.

I Am an Orthodox Living In the 21st Century by Nicholas Kataras

I am an Orthodox Christian living in the 21st century, which can be an easier time to live in for Orthodox Christians from America. We are not as discriminated against as other Christians in other parts of the world. Sometimes though, children are not even allowed to say the word God let alone pray or bring a Bible to school here in America. I have a unique schooling experience because I am homeschooled which allows me to be able to say the word God and pray and do my cross without being picked on or teased.

My view of the 21st century is that more people are living life pretending there's no devil, no demons and no after life. Through my faith, I have come to know that there is a God, angels, devil and demons and that there will be an afterlife, which means we'll live in paradise forever. Psalm 23 says, “And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

My main goal, which should be everyone's main goal, is to focus on my journey to heaven. Jesus told us in Matthew 18 that “whoever humbles himself as the little child will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” However, children in our society today would rather sit on a couch for an afternoon instead of going outside and enjoying the natural landscape that God put here. Especially in America, kids are getting distracted by TV, social media, videogames, and endless texting. These activities are not all bad but do not help people on

Specifically, St. Paraskevi who was one of the many brutally tortured saints was forced to wear a steel helmet lined with nails, hung by her hair, had her limbs seared with torches, was immersed in a kettle of oil and tar and came out unscathed, was tied and beaten with a large rocks, thrown into a pit with a large snake and finally decapitated.

St. Haralambos was dragged by his beard through the streets of Magnesia by soldiers on horseback, had his body slashed with heavy cutting irons, and then tied to a public post and ridiculed. St. Bartholomew the Apostle was skinned alive then crucified upside down. St. Erasmus had his intestines ripped out while he was still alive. St. Mark was dragged through the streets of Alexandria and then ripped to pieces. St. Katherine was severely beaten and tied to a rolling spiked wheel; after surviving this was beheaded. Also tortured and beheaded were St. George and St. John.

So in conclusion, great athletes and martyrs are similar in that they both accomplish great feats in their life's journey, but a martyr does it for the glory of God instead of a trophy or fame and hopefully finds the ultimate reward; an eternal place in Heaven.

Brigham Sibley is in 7th Grade. He is the son of Rusty and Despina Sibley.

their life long journey to heaven. Living where I live, which has some property with a three acre lake in my back yard, I can enjoy more of God's natural landscape. So, I spend a lot of my time fishing in our lake instead of playing videogames. I am also not the kind of kid that enjoys sitting on a couch for the rest of an afternoon and play video games. I do follow sports teams and watch some of the teams' games on TV, but when the games are over, I like to go outside and shoot the basketball if I watched a basketball game or hit a baseball around my yard if I watched a baseball game.

My faith has helped me to not fall prey to all of the huge distractions that the 21st century has brought, which can make living as an Orthodox Christian a challenge. We are also called to be good stewards and to serve other people, not just serve our needs. In Matthew 25:40, He said, “if you have done it to one of the least of these my brothers, you have done it to me.” I try to be a good steward and help other people by going to an assisted living center once a month and help elderly people make crafts. It was scheduled to happen just one time, but the elderly people had so much fun and enjoyed themselves so much that they asked our group if we could come once a month. Even though it's not “fun” it's what my parents call “storing up my treasure in heaven.” God sees all that we do good or bad.

There was once a story I heard about a tax collector who would cheat

and steal to become wealthy. The one good thing he did was he threw a piece of bread at a poor man. That night, he had a dream and he saw a scale which showed all of the good things he had done and all of the bad things he had done in his life. The one piece of bread weighed more than all of the bad things he had done. Once he woke up, he remembered the dream and spent the rest of his life repenting. This story proves how merciful God's grace can be and how important it is to do for others. So storing up treasure in heaven is also part of

my journey to paradise. Even though I still have much to learn, being an Orthodox Christian has already taught me a lot about the bigger picture.

Nicholas Katzaras is in 7th grade. He is the son of Stefan and Kara Katzaras.

Fifty years after some of the landmark events of the American Civil Rights movement, racism and discrimination persist in American life. How should an Orthodox Christian respond?

By Katina Smith

It's 1950, a white man and woman are walking into a grocery store, reaching for the American cheese. These "white" people are Russian immigrants, and fear to reach for the "wrong" cheese. They are striving for normalcy, and to be perceived as American's. They dream of a white picket fence, and want to live in their cookie cutter society. They are striving for the American Dream. But, they live during the red scare, and they fear they will be labeled communists, and sent back to Russia. These people are Russian Orthodox, and they are afraid to show their faith. They wear their crosses under their shirt, and because of that, they treat the African American's walking by as inferior. They let Mr. And Mrs. Jackson wait for them to get their groceries, and walk through the door, then the African American couple can grocery shop. Although they don't believe it in their heart, they let societal norms take over, and treat the African American's poorly. Can we say we are any better today?

2014, we have an African American President. Mr.Barack Obama, therefore, we are no longer racist, right? No, that's a misconception, today, in most cases, racism is just as prevalent as it was back then. Like the Russian couple hiding their cross, many of us are hiding our racism. Mr.Obama is the figurehead of our country, however, most of his advisors are not African American. Therefore, our huge leap towards an equal nation of all races was only a baby step in the right direction. Although, a baby step is better than a step back, we still have a long way to go.

As Orthodox Christians, it's crucial that we remember our faith. Not only should we practice while we are in church, but when we are surrounded by others, those who have different backgrounds than us. As in Genesis Chapter 1 Verse 27, "So God made man, in the image of God He made him, male and female He made them". It's imperative that we remember, God has made each and everyone of us, and we are all a portrayal of Him. When faced with the temptation to judge, we should think, would we want God to judge us like we judge others. Would we be comfortable being put on the same scrutiny that the African American's have and do face. When our earthly life is over, would we want God to judge us on our entrance to the kingdom like we have judged people with a different skin color? In John Chapter 4 Verses 9 to 10, Jesus is our perfect model of impartiality. While in Samaria He asks a Samaritan woman to get him a drink from the well.

The woman responds that she is a Samaritan and who is she to get water for a Jewish man, at that time the Jews and Samaritans were not speaking. Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." Jesus is the perfect example to us not to judge. He went to the woman, and looked past her background, and treated her as a fellow human being. He looked past the views of society, and followed his own heart, and feeling of right and wrong.

As a human, I have judged people based upon the color of their skin. Up until this year, I had lived in the same 99% non-minority town of Bedford, NH. Living there, I was unaccustomed to seeing anyone with a different skin color than my own. I was not privy to discrimination, and therefore, I did not discriminate. I have now moved to Florida, and I have seen much more racial diversity. While at school, I have witnessed discrimination, and I have judged others based upon their skin. Like the Russian Orthodox couple mentioned previously, I have followed the societal norm. Throughout this Lenten period, I am working to become less judgmental and more understanding to people who have different backgrounds than me.

We are Orthodox and strong. Jesus Christ is our savior, and we will remember all of God's children have the right of equality. As in the Dream of Reverend Martin Luther King Junior we need to look and see "our destiny is aligned with their destiny". All people are equal and should be treated so. Our Archbishop Iakovos was not afraid to stand up for civil rights, as he walked with Martin Luther King Jr.. We should not be afraid either. Whether black or white, we are God's children, and need to act in a way so He will be proud. We need to follow Jesus' and Archbishop Iakovos' example and treat everyone with the respect they deserve.

Katina Smith is in 11th grade. She is the daughter of Chuck and Tamam Smith.

Fifty years after some of the landmark events of the American Civil Rights movement, racism and discrimination persist in American life. How should an Orthodox Christian respond?

By Mihail Kaburis

Freedom and equality sound like two extremely similar words, right? They sound like similes, but, in reality, they are not. "Freedoms" are essentially the rights that have been established in a country. Take the American Bill of Rights for example. On the other hand, equality deals with who has access to freedoms. Fifty years ago people, like Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks, began to question the meaning of these terms. History, unfortunately, is filled with many tragic incidents of discrimination and racism. The Bible depicts these tragic incidents too. However as Orthodox Christians we must remember what Paul wrote in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one Christ Jesus." I feel as if we must question our moral and ethical basis to find solutions to this question on equality. Never forget that when one plunges into the darkness of the real world that the light of God will guide us back to safety.

When people hear the word racism, they usually think about Jews, African Americans, Mexicans, the Japanese, and so on. There's only one issue with the former, the Jews: they're not a race at all, but peoples under the same religion - Judaism. This is an interesting point that I feel we need to view Biblically and historically to discover the true meaning of racism. In Revelation 2:9, John wrote to the church in Smyrna, "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Biblical verses like to this one are easily misinterpreted. The German philosophers Johann Fichte and Houston Chamberlain, for example, made assumptions on "race" between the 18th and 20th centuries. They advocated radical German nationalism and emphasized the elimination of all of the other races. This Volk ideal, meaning "nation" or "people," became infused within German politics. Anti-Semitic parties were common before World War I, but Germany's loss in the war popularized these parties. This gave rise to the Nazi party led by Adolf Schicklgruber, or as he is more commonly known as: Adolf Hitler. No one in this room can argue that concentration camps were not effective. If the camps were larger and Hitler was able to keep control of the German state for a longer period of time, many more people would have died. This was a butterfly effect set in motion of pure hatred and monetary jealousy of minority groups, like the Jews. Even during the American Civil Rights Movement extremist racial groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan and the Black Panthers were causing havoc over of racial pride. Racism is a dangerous force and it still exists today. Prejudices between other people are very much prevalent in the form of nationalism. The supposed difference between "Southerners" and "Northerners" is still prevalent today. The Olympic Games are supposed to be a time when people play sport for "sports sake," but it has become a frolicking competition to see which country can earn the most medals. Racial slang is popularized in the form of rap music, where almost every other word begins with the letter "N." I feel as if societies are forgetting that pride should can

be displayed with love and not racist fervor.

Discrimination tends to be another factor that still is with us today. One of the most commonly applied Biblical quote from Galatians 5:14, is: "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" I could conclude this speech right now if the masses of population that make up the Earth could "love" their "neighbors." This is where the problem lies, though. If you have ever been through a United States airport security checkpoint, you know what discrimination is. In many cases, security officers will make those who appear to be quote-on-quote "Muslim" or "foreign" undergo extra screening. The impact of the tragedies on 9/11 still affect how people in the United States perceive "Muslims" today; is it right to discriminate because of the way someone looks? The whole concept of discrimination is perception. Many people freak out when they hear the word "Allah", but do they realize that it is Arabic for God? Aside from Muslims, many Arab Christians will use the word "Allah." Discrimination is not just applied to race and religion. It is also applied to everyday standards, such as appearances. Many people tend to look at what one wears to make an impression. If a person was wearing shorts and a t-shirt in church, how many people would think of that individual differently. In James 2:4 The Law of Love is discussed: "For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, 'You sit here in a good place,' and say to the poor man, 'You stand there,' or 'Sit here at my footstool,' have you not shown partiality among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?" I think society will have to start realizing that discrimination is simply a concept of perception to save itself from implosion.

Finding solutions to solving deeply embedded racist and discriminative within societies is a very difficult task. However, as Orthodox Christians we have all the tools necessary to solve this complex issue. It starts with following through on the concept of "love thy neighbor." We should help others regardless of the color of their skin, sex, nationality, and religion. I feel as if sometimes that we all forget that we are all human beings. There is no superhuman. If we are truly created from the image of God, why don't we start appreciating this ideal? Do a kind act for someone whether at your workplace, home, or in a public place. Doing a kind act doesn't mean you have to spend money. For example, you could open a door for someone or give someone directions. Your action could make that person's day. You may not think much about this action, but it may have a big impact on the person you have helped. You may have saved them from being late to a meeting if you gave them directions or have made someone's day by saying "hello" to them. One figure, in particular, who exemplifies these characteristics, is Archbishop Iakovos. His eminence was the president of the World Council of Churches and an advocate for

the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. He marched on the side of Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma, Alabama. He attempted to sort out crisis between Israelis and Palestinians, Cyprians and the Turks, and the U.S. and Vietnam. Archbishop Iakovos showed the world that faith could unite the people. I think that we should all follow in his eminence's footsteps.

Discrimination and racism do not have to cripple societies. Learning about the history of the world and the Bible tells us of the many mistakes humans have committed in the past and the present. I feel as if some are fearful to learn from the mistake of the past, so I offer

The Artoklasia service concludes with the hymn Plousioi eptohefsan, "Rich men turned poor and went hungry; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing" (Psalm 33/34, verse 11, from the Orthodox Study Bible, SAAS). Discuss the meaning of this hymn for our contemporary world by Larissa Krinos

Were the problems in existence at the time of the bible the same problems that are in existence now? When you think about it they are. It isn't people who have changed, it is what we treasure. When the Bible was written it was always animals or property, now it is often laptops or cell phones. But, we still put material possessions over the Lord. How many of us spend as much time praying or reading the Bible as we do worrying about what we are wearing or what kind of tablet we own? How many of us draw a line between the rich and the poor that should never be crossed? Often, people who have more money than others decide that they are better than those who are not as well off. I know in my school, the girls who wear a different outfit every day from an expensive store and the girls who wear t-shirts every day do not typically associate with each other. The boundaries between the upper class and the lower class are drawn at a young age. God does not want us to feel separated from our peers. That is where the hymn that concludes the Artoklasia service comes in, "Rich men turned poor and went hungry; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing" (Psalm 33/34 verse 11). In the eyes of God we are all equal, whether rich or poor, until we lack faith. Those who are faithful to the Lord will receive eternal life, while those who obsess over earthly possessions can only live one life.

The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19-31) shows how true the fact that money will not buy you eternal life is. The rich man "wore purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day." Purple is a sign of royalty, and this man was clearly very wealthy. But when a poor man, Lazarus, came to his gate begging for just the crumbs off the rich man's table, the rich man refused and Lazarus died at the gates of his home. The rich man died soon after, and instead of being sent to a life of comfort he was sent to Hades where he will eternally suffer. He begged Abraham to have mercy on him, to which Abraham replied that in his lifetime he received good things and Lazarus evil things, so now they each receive the opposite.

Even if you are the wealthiest person on the planet, you are not necessarily a bad person. There are many rich or famous people who ded-

icate time to help those in need, those who genuinely care for others will be the ones who are going to have riches forever. One example of someone who possesses wealth yet continues to help those in need is Angelina Jolie. Despite her controversial past, she is associated with nearly thirty charity organizations, and has participated in numerous field missions. The foundations she has established and the work she has done has had a significant impact on multiple people's lives.

Mihail Kaburis is in 10th grade. He is the son of George and Kathy Kaburis.

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"Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire." James 5:1-6, Warning to Rich Oppressors, "You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter." This is a reminder to those who live without helping others or listening to the word of God that one day, the riches that they covet will disappear.

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24) In this bible verse mammon is a word used to describe wealth that is an object of worship or devotion. Basically, you cannot be obsessed with your money and at the same time follow the word of God. You cannot spend an endless amount of time worrying about what car you drive, or how expensive your clothes are. You can't worship God if you are absorbed in your material possessions.

Even a rich man can seek the Lord, help the poor, or dedicate their time to others, being rich does not make you a bad person, similar to how being poor does not make you a good person. A rich man who does not seek the Lord shall "turn poor and go hungry" in the kingdom of God; but if you follow the word of God you may receive eternal happiness.

Larissa Krinos is in 9th Grade. She is the daughter of Demetri and Melissa Krinos.

Jesus said, “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4, Deuteronomy 8:3, NRSV). Discuss the relevance of this teaching for Christians today by Arianna Krinos

Food is among the universally named survival necessities. The alternate use of the word—to mean a procurer of the sustenance of life and growth—alludes to a similar need, shared by believers in Christ. As Orthodox Christians, the words of Christ are our nourishment; His Father’s commandment our source of food, for Jesus once stated, “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

Bread, a historically precious commodity for the impoverished, appears frequently throughout the Bible. A Christian may associate bread with the sacrament of Holy Communion, through which Christ aligns bread, a source of nourishment and comfort, with a feeling of spiritual enrichment. In John, chapter 6, verse 35, “. . . Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.’” With God’s word proceeds the promise that material things like bread, associated with earthly happiness and safety from starvation, are unable to plague us. Christ sustains us in life and in death, the physical food we require merely a reminder of the world’s imperfection. For with Christ, and in the God’s perfect Kingdom, this type of transient and exigent nourishment is unnecessary, and the fear of famine vanishes. With Christ, our hearts and bodies are eternally perfectly filled, for He is the bread that truly sustains us. Dough-made bread, although pleasing to those wanting, is not alone enough to keep a person alive. One needs myriad biological molecules not found in bread to perpetuate one’s internal processes. As a teenager who devoted years to the study of earthly sustenance and subsequently lost almost a hundred pounds, this truth is self-evident to me. Bread’s imperfection pales in comparison to our Almighty God.

We can also associate the mention of bread with our spiritual reinvigoration. Christ transforms His Body into bread through Holy

Communion. In Luke 22:19, Christ resolves, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” Through Communion, we honor Christ as our Savior and our provider. It is not by food that we sustained; it is by bondage to our Lord. The ultimate realization—that He is the true bread—is our quintessential provision.

When Christ uses five loaves and two fish to feed five thousand people in John chapter 6, Christ again delineates bread as symbolic of His absolute power. Anything is possible in our Lord, and His blessings connect us. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 17, it is said, “For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.” I find comfort in the idea that the perceptions of others are similar to my own. If I was unable to share my findings, what use would they be? In writing this essay, if it means everything to me and nothing to my counterparts, of what worth is it in communicating my beliefs? Following Christ’s commandment entails communion with everyone in God’s kingdom. Through collective bread-breaking, literal and figurative, God resides in everyone.

It is imperative that, when reflecting upon indubitable essentialities for survival, we go further than the superficial response. It is reflexive to list things like food, water, shelter, and sleep, emblazoned as foremost concerns by our nature. Ultimately, all physiological needs are compensated for by Godly love and devotion. We must look to our Lord, who is capable of miracles, for the fulfillment of both earthly and heavenly requirements, so that in this confidence, we might sate both simultaneously.

Arianna Krinos is in 11th grade. She is the daughter of Demetrios and Melissa Krinos.



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Some other Interesting Articles for you to Read

Prune Juice by Fr. Mark Sietsema

A meditation on the feast of the Righteous Prophet Job on May 6.

Why do bad things happen to good people?

Many are asking this nowadays. Why must a successful businessman of twenty years close up shop? Why do graduates with good grades struggle to find jobs? Why are senior citizens—who worked hard all their lives—now squeezed financially?

Anyone who tells you they have the absolute answer to these Whys would be lying. Human troubles are not something to be speculated about casually. When it comes to suffering, we tread on sacred ground. But suffering also has a power to push the human spirit into exploring questions of meaning and purpose. It is generally in hard times that we ask “What is God thinking?” and so begin to open up to higher realities.

Time for a new Job

One of the great figures of the Old Testament is the righteous prophet Job. Job suffered terrible things: financial loss, of course, but even worse, loss of health, of reputation, and of loved ones. Several “friends” stepped forward to comfort Job by explaining why these bad things happened. Their words were salt in the wound (mixed with lemon juice and vinegar!). Job rejected their pat answers and demanded that the Lord explain Himself.

God finally does show up, but Job isn’t given a reason. For the Why is not what Job’s soul ultimately needs. Instead, it is Job’s direct experience of God that changes him (Job 42:1-6). It alters his outlook, his values, his sense of what’s truly important. The experience changes Job’s sense of who he is, in a way that goes beyond the power of words to explain. Suffering can be like a sacrament, a mystery of transformation that defies definition, that must be lived to be understood. Through those painful events, something in Job died and was born anew for God.

Grape Expectations

This is just how Jesus Christ speaks of suffering in His famous Parable of the Vine in John 15. “I am the vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, so that it will be more fruitful.”

Maybe this passage resonates with you as you work on your garden: trimming down raspberry canes and pinching back tomato plants. If plants have feelings, then pruning must hurt! But . . . pruning makes the plant put its energy into bearing fruit. In the end, it is the pruned plant which accomplishes the gardener’s plans.

We as Orthodox Christians are branches on the grapevine that is Jesus Christ. Which branches have it the easiest? The ones that bear lots of grapes? Or the ones that just do their own thing, soaking up sun and rain, but yielding only leaves? Jesus tells us that pruning—the painful, repeated, unwelcome pruning—happens to the good branches, to the best branches. These get the knife so that they bring forth all the more

fruit for the joy of the vineyard’s Master. The lazy, unfruitful branches? They get lopped off, cast into brush pile, and burned.

Why do bad things happen to nice Christian people? Sometimes it is so that through a reassessment of their values, their purpose . . . their very selves . . . they can become even more fruitful for God. Weren’t they fruitful already? Yes, but the Heavenly Horticulturist sees in them the potential for even greater fruitfulness. So it was for the prophet Job in ancient times, and so may it be for us today.

Sweet Wine, Not Bitter Whining

What kind of fruit is God looking for in the well-pruned soul? Saint Paul tells us (Galatians 5:22-23): love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control. It’s a paradox, really. It is in undergoing evil, hateful things that some people grow to be more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, forgiving, and so on. Others, of course, respond to suffering by growing more bitter, spiteful, and mean.

What makes the difference? Jesus Christ—His life, His teachings, His Church. Grafted into Him, we learn to respond constructively to suffering. And so one more fruit of a well-pruned soul is gratitude towards God, leading to thoughtful, proportionate, meaningful gifts to the Church—gifts that reflect our transformed sense of values. We call this stewardship, and in a world of givers and takers, it is the ones who suffer most who tend to be the most grateful and generous givers.

Life in Christ is never a bed of roses. He promised pruning. But if we respond to the Gardener’s tending as fruitful branches, yielding the sweet wine of virtue, we have the joy of knowing that He chose and appointed us to go and bear fruit—in good times, in bad times, and in eternity. Glory be to God!

Fr. Mark Sietsema is the Proistamenos of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Lansing, Michigan.

Editor's Note: The following two articles are about marriage improvement—one is for men, the other for women, but whether you are the husband or wife in a relationship, both articles are relevant to both genders.

10 Marriage Tips Every WIFE Needs to Hear by Karen Lodato

There's a blog post that's recently gone viral (see below), written by a divorced man featuring some really sound advice about marriage. I really have to applaud this guy. It takes guts to stand up and be transparent about your failures. It's equally as commendable to stand up and say how you'd do things differently.

One thing that his post is lacking, however, is the female perspective. After reading his post, I wanted to take some time and write down some things that I've learned in the last ten years. You see – I'm now in my third marriage. When people learn this fact about me, their reaction is usually pretty awkward. It's almost as if they're waiting for me to be embarrassed by my admission. While going through two divorces was some of the most painful times of my life, I'd only feel ashamed if I'd gone through it without being able to say I've learned a thing or two. My husband and I had both been through divorce before we married each other, and with that brings a unique perspective into many do's and don'ts of how to treat your spouse. Don't get me wrong – our marriage isn't perfect, but our failures in past relationships have shaped decisions we make about the way we treat each other, and to be honest, I'm glad I went through it. We've learned better, so now we do better.

And with that, I'd like to offer up my version of his wise marriage tips – from a woman who has triumphed the murky waters of divorce.

Respect your husband. - Notice how it doesn't say "Respect your husband if he has earned it". A man's greatest need in this world is to be respected, and the person he desires that respect from the most is his wife. The trap that we've all been ensnared by is that they only deserve our respect when they earn it. Yes, we want our husbands to make decisions that will ultimately garner our respect, but the truth is that your husband is a human being. A human being who makes mistakes. This is the man that YOU have chosen to walk alongside you for the rest of your life, and to lead your family and he needs to be respected for that quality alone. Take it from me – when respect is given even when he doesn't deserve it, it will motivate him to earn it. That doesn't mean you pretend that his choices are good ones when they aren't. Things like that still need to be communicated, but you can flesh out your differences WITH RESPECT. It makes all the difference in the world to him.

Guard your heart. - The grass is not greener on the other side. Do not believe the lie that with a slimmer figure, a higher salary, a faster car, or a bigger house, you will be a happier woman. The world is full of things and people that will serve as reminders that you don't have the best of the best, but it's simply not true. Live the life you've been blessed with, and BE THANKFUL. I get that we all have struggles, and there are even times

when I would love 1,000 more square feet of house to live in, but square feet is not fulfilling – relationships are. Guard your heart from things and people that will try to convince you that your life or your husband is not good enough. There will always be bigger, faster, stronger, or shinier – but you'll never be satisfied with more until you're fulfilled with what you have now.

God, husband, kids...in that order. - I know this isn't a popular philosophy, especially among mothers, but hear me out. It's no secret that my faith is of utmost importance, so God comes first in my life no matter what. But regardless of your belief system, your husband should come before your kids. Now unless you're married to someone who is abusive (in which case, I urge you to seek help beyond what my blog can give you), no man in his right mind would ask you to put your kids aside to serve his every need while neglecting them. That's not what this means. When you board an airplane, the flight attendants are required to go over emergency preparedness prior to takeoff. When explaining the part about how to operate the oxygen mask, passengers are instructed to first put the mask on themselves before putting it on their small child. Is that because they think you are more important than your kids? Absolutely not. But you cannot effectively help your child if you can't breathe yourself. The same holds true with marriage and parenting. You cannot effectively parent your children if your marriage is falling apart. Take it from me – I tried. There will also come a time when your kids will leave the house to pursue their dreams as adults. If you have not cultivated a lasting relationship with your spouse, you will have both empty nests and empty hearts.

Forgive. - No one is perfect. Everyone makes mistakes. If you make forgiveness a habit – for everything from major mistakes to little annoyances (every day, I have to forgive my husband for leaving the wet towel on the bathroom counter ;) – you will keep resentment from growing.

Over-communicate. - I used to have a bad habit of not speaking my feelings. I played the standard "You should know why I'm mad" game, and that's just downright unfair. Men are not wired like women, and they DON'T always know that they've been insensitive. I'm still growing in this area, and there are often times when my husband has to pry something out of me, but I'm trying to remember that I need to just communicate how I feel.

Schedule a regular date night. - This one isn't new, but it's very important. Never stop dating your spouse. Even if you can't afford dinner and a movie (which we seldom can), spending some regular one-on-one

time with your spouse is essential. Don't talk about bills, or schedules, or the kids. Frankie and I often daydream about our future, or plan our dream vacation. We connect emotionally and often learn something new about each other – even after four years.

Never say the “D Word”. - If you're gonna say it, you better mean it. Plain and simple, threatening divorce is not fighting fair. I did this a lot in my previous marriages. I'm not proud of it, but I learned better. I was hurting deeply, and I wanted to hurt back, but it never helped me feel better.

Learn his love language. - Everyone has a love language. The way you perceive love is often different from the way your spouse perceives love. Does he like words of affirmation, or does he respond better when you give him gifts? Whatever his love language is – learn it and USE IT. Edited to add: If you are unfamiliar with the principles behind love languages, you can learn more about it.

Never talk negatively about him. - I learned this lesson the hard way too. If you're going through a difficult time in your marriage and you need advice, see a counselor. Family counseling is a great tool, but

This Guy Got Divorced And Said This About His Ex-Wife... And I Agree With Him. Gerald Rogers got divorced after 16 years of marriage. Recently he wrote a eye-opening public confession on his blog... after I saw it, I'm totally with him. He writes:

MARRIAGE ADVICE I WISH I WOULD HAVE HAD

Gerald Rogers

Obviously, I'm not a relationship expert. But there's something about my divorce being finalized this week that gives me perspective of things I wish I would have done different... After losing a woman that I loved, and a marriage of almost 16 years, here's the advice I wish I would have had...

1) Never stop courting. Never stop dating. NEVER EVER take that woman for granted. When you asked her to marry you, you promised to be that man that would OWN HER HEART and to fiercely protect it. This is the most important and sacred treasure you will ever be entrusted with. SHE CHOSE YOU. Never forget that, and NEVER GET LAZY in your love.

2) PROTECT YOUR OWN HEART. Just as you committed to being the protector of her heart, you must guard your own with the same vigilance. Love yourself fully, love the world openly, but there is a special place in your heart where no one must enter except for your wife. Keep that space always ready to receive her and invite her in, and refuse to let anyone or anything else enter there.

3) FALL IN LOVE OVER and OVER and OVER again. You will constantly change. You're not the same people you were when you got married, and in five years you will not be the same person you are today. Change will come, and in that you have to re-choose each other everyday. SHE DOESN'T HAVE TO STAY WITH YOU, and if you don't take care of her heart, she may give that heart to someone else or seal you out completely, and you may never be able to get it back. Always fight to win her love just as you did when you were courting her.

try to remember that your family members and friends are not the most objective people to give advice. The argument they are hearing is one-sided and they often build up negative feelings toward your spouse, which usually doesn't subside once you and your husband have gotten past it. Protect his image with those that you're close with and seek help from those that can actually be objective. News flash, ladies – your mother cannot be objective!

Choose to love. - There are times in a marriage that you may wake up and not feel in love anymore. Choose to love anyway. There are times when you may not be attracted to your husband anymore. Choose to love anyway. Marriage is a commitment. In sickness and health, in good times and in bad. Those vows are sacred. They don't say “if you have bad times”. They say “in good times AND in bad”, implying that there WILL be bad times. It's inevitable. So choose to love anyway. He's worth it.

4) ALWAYS SEE THE BEST in her. Focus only on what you love. What you focus on will expand. If you focus on what bugs you, all you will see is reasons to be bugged. If you focus on what you love, you can't help but be consumed by love. Focus to the point where you can no longer see anything but love, and you know without a doubt that you are the luckiest man on earth to be have this woman as your wife.

5) ITS NOT YOUR JOB TO CHANGE OR FIX HER...Your job is to love her as she is with no expectation of her ever changing. And if she changes, love what she becomes, whether it's what you wanted or not.

6) TAKE FULL ACCOUNTABILITY for your own emotions: It's not your wife's job to make you happy, and she CAN'T make you sad. You are responsible for finding your own happiness, and through that your joy will spill over into your relationship and your love.

7) NEVER BLAME your wife If YOU get frustrated or angry at her, it is only because it is triggering something inside of YOU. They are YOUR emotions, and your responsibility. When you feel those feelings take time to get present and to look within and understand what it is inside of YOU that is asking to be healed. You were attracted to this woman because she was the person best suited to trigger all of your childhood wounds in the most painful way so that you could heal them... when you heal yourself, you will no longer be triggered by her, and you will wonder why you ever were.

8) Allow your woman to JUST BE. When she's sad or upset, it's not your job to fix it, it's your job to HOLD HER and let her know it's ok. Let her know that you hear her, and that she's important and that you are that pillar on which she can always lean. The feminine spirit is about change and emotion and like a storm her emotions will roll in and out, and as you remain strong and unjudging she will trust you and open her soul to you... DON'T RUN-AWAY WHEN SHE'S UPSET. Stand present and strong and let her know you aren't going anywhere. Listen to what she is really saying behind the words and emotion.

9) BE SILLY...Don't take yourself so damn seriously. Laugh. And make her laugh. Laughter makes everything else easier.

10) FILL HER SOUL EVERYDAY...Learn her love languages and the specific ways that she feels important and validated and CHERISHED. Ask her to create a list of 10 THINGS that make her feel loved and memorize those things and make it a priority everyday to make her feel like a queen.

11) BE PRESENT. Give her not only your time, but your focus, your attention and your soul. Do whatever it takes to clear your head so that when you are with her you are fully WITH HER. Treat her as you would your most valuable client. She is.

12) BE WILLING TO TAKE HER SEXUALLY...To carry her away in the power of your masculine presence, to consume her and devour her with your strength, and to penetrate her to the deepest levels of her soul. Let her melt into her feminine softness as she knows she can trust you fully.

13) DON'T BE AN IDIOT...And don't be afraid of being one either. You will make mistakes and so will she. Try not to make too big of mistakes, and learn from the ones you do make. You're not supposed to be perfect, just try to not be too stupid.

14) GIVE HER SPACE...The woman is so good at giving and giving, and sometimes she will need to be reminded to take time to nurture herself. Sometimes she will need to fly from your branches to go and find what feeds her soul, and if you give her that space she will come back with new songs to sing... (okay, getting a little too poetic here, but you get the point. Tell her to take time for herself, ESPECIALLY after you have kids. She needs that space to renew and get re-centered, and to find herself after she gets lost in serving you, the kids and the world.)

15) BE VULNERABLE...You don't have to have it all together. Be willing to share your fears and feelings, and quick to acknowledge your mistakes.

16) BE FULLY TRANSPARENT. If you want to have trust you must be willing to share EVERYTHING... Especially those things you don't want to share. It takes courage to fully love, to fully open your heart and let her in when you don't know if she will like what she finds... Part of that courage is allowing her to love you completely, your darkness as well as your light. DROP THE MASK... If you feel like you need to wear a mask around her, and show up perfect all the time, you will never experience the full dimension of what love can be.

17) NEVER STOP GROWING TOGETHER...The stagnant pond breeds malaria, the flowing stream is always fresh and cool. Atrophy is the natural process when you stop working a muscle, just as it is if you stop working on your relationship. Find common goals, dreams and visions to work towards.

18) DON'T WORRY ABOUT MONEY.

Money is a game, find ways to work together as a team to win it. It never helps when teammates fight. Figure out ways to leverage both persons

strength to win.

19) FORGIVE IMMEDIATELY and focus on the future rather than carrying weight from the past. Don't let your history hold you hostage. Holding onto past mistakes that either you or she makes, is like a heavy anchor to your marriage and will hold you back. FORGIVENESS IS FREEDOM. Cut the anchor loose and always choose love.

20) ALWAYS CHOOSE LOVE. ALWAYS CHOOSE LOVE. ALWAYS CHOOSE LOVE. In the end, this is the only advice you need. If this is the guiding principle through which all your choices is governed, there is nothing that will threaten the happiness of your marriage. Love will always endure.

In the end MARRIAGE isn't about Happily ever after. It's about work. And a commitment to grow together and a willingness to continually invest in creating something that can endure eternity. Through that work, the happiness will come.

Marriage is life, and it will bring ups and downs. Embracing all of the cycles and learning to learn from and love each experience will bring the strength and perspective to keep building, one brick at a time.

These are lessons I learned the hard way. These are lessons I learned too late.

But these are lessons I am learning and committed in carrying forward. Truth is, I LOVED being married, and in time, I will get married again, and when I do, I will build it with a foundation that will endure any storm and any amount of time.

If you are reading this and find wisdom in my pain, share it those those young husbands whose hearts are still full of hope, and with those couples you may know who may have forgotten how to love. One of those men may be like I was, and in these hard earned lessons perhaps something will awaken in him and he will learn to be the man his lady has been waiting for.

The woman that told him 'I do', and trusted her life with him, has been waiting for this man to step up.

If you are reading this and your marriage isn't what you want it to be, take 100% responsibility for YOUR PART in marriage, regardless of where your spouse is at, and commit to applying these lessons while there is time.

MEN- THIS IS YOUR CHARGE: Commit to being an EPIC LOVER. There is no greater challenge, and no greater prize. Your woman deserves that from you.

Be the type of husband your wife can't help but brag about."

Meeting Schedule for May

Saturday	3	Philoptochos District Meeting	9:00 a.m.	Kourmolis Center
Sunday	4	GOYA	5:00 p.m.	Kourmolis Center
Tuesday	6	Young at Heart	11:30 a.m.	TBA

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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.

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Melpo Diamantides
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Moshos Doulassa

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Charles & Catherine Eggleston
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Stanley & Mary Ellen Evdemon
Lauren & George Fallieras
Nicholas & Susan Fallieras
George Fallieras
Nicholas & Susan Fallieras
George & Zeina Fellios
Alexander Fellios
Maria & Kevin Fentress
Alexandra Ferarolis
Stamatis & Cheryl Ferarolis
Christos & Debbie Ferekides
Karina & Andlen Findlay
Dwight & Ewana (Balasis) Forde,
Anthony & Carole Fotopoulos
Chris Frazier
Pres. Mary Frimenko
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Stamie & Richard Garcia,
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Speros & Eleanor Georgiou
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Jack & Harriet Gombos,
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Maria Karounos
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Chris & Debbie Kavouklis,
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John and Cathie Koch,
Demetrios & Mary Ann Konstas
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Jeffrey & Melinda (Fallieras)
Mueller,
Ronald & Magdalini Myer,
Betty & Emaniel Nakis
Mary Nenos
Byron & Jeanie Nenos
John Nenos
Byron Nenos, Sr.
Bill Neyland
Christos & Deloris Nicolaou,
George & Cheryl Nolas,
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Artemis Palios

Julie & George Palios
Michael & Bessie Palios
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Euripides & Denise Panos,
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John & Irene Papadopoulos,
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Isidoros Passalaris,
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Aris Rogers,II
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Emanuel (Mike) & Maria Xenick,
Evangeline Xeroteris,
Victor & Lisa Yotis
William & Eleonora Yotis,
Maria Zabetakis
Constantine & Rachael Zaharis,
Peter Zeban
Stavros & Kathy Zoumberos,

**If you have submitted a form and are not on this list, please contact the church office

If you have not submitted a stewardship form for 2014, please do so today.

Thank you for your support of St. John Greek Orthodox Church!



May 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
4 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m.	5 Dr. Bill's Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	6 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Young at Heart 11:30 a.m. Bible Study East Tampa 6:30 p.m. Bible Study South Tampa 6:30 pm Bible Study North Tampa 6:30pm	7 Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Young Adults 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	8 Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	9 Fast Day	10 Fast Day
11 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	12 Dr. Bill's Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	13 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study East Tampa 6:30 p.m. Bible Study South Tampa 6:30 pm Bible Study North Tampa 6:30pm	14 Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Young Adults 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	15 Fr. Stavros Anniversary of Ordination Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	16 Fast Day	17 Community Outreach Fast Day
18 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Last Day of Sunday School End of Year Party	19 Dr. Bill's Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	20 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study East Tampa 6:30 p.m. Bible Study South Tampa 6:30 pm Bible Study North Tampa 6:30pm	21 Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Sts. Constantine and Helen Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Young Adults 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	22 Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	23 Fast Day	24 Fast Day
25 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	26 Memorial Day Office Closed	27 Leave-Taking/Apodosis of Pascha Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.	28 Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Young Adults 6:30 p.m.	29 Ascension Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	30 Fast Day	31 Fast Day

**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK
ORTHODOX CHURCH**

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ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Timetable of Services

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

Parish Priest: Rev.Fr.Stavros Akrotirianakis
813-876-8830 (office) 394-1038 (cell)
frstav@gmail.com

Parish Council:
Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867
Carole Fotopoulos, Vice President 813-982-0947
Dante Skourellos, Treasurer 813-765-9534
Nick Antonakakis 813-477-6639
Skip Higdon 813-831-9021
David Voykin 727-415-5603
Mike Xenick 813-340-8737

Stewardship Chairperson:
Pete Trakas 813-505-2193
Welcoming Committee:
Maria Xenick 813- 839-9897
.....

Office Staff:
Debbie Bowe-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- 516-6081
Sunday Sch.: Victoria Peckham 813-406-5626
Finance Committee: Mike Xenick 813-340-8737
Adult Greek School: Magda Myer 813-909-2327
AHEPA: Mike Trimis 813-968-9038
Community Outreach: Chairperson
Betty Katherine Palios 813-215-9862
Daughters: Diane Trimis 813-220-3389
Food Pantry: Anetta Alexander 863-224-3001
GOYA Adv. Elaine Halkias 813-968-9129
Byron Nenos 813-789-0729
JOY/HOPE: Debbie Nicklow 813-920-0892
Amy Kafantaris 727-743-1297
Young Adults (YAL) Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862
Philoptochos: JoAnn Hartung, Pres. 727-432-0228
Oratorical Festival Chairperson
Peggy Bradshaw: 727-244-1374
Young at Heart: Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947
Mary Nenos 813-935-2096
Jr Olympics: Byron Nenos 813-789-0729
Ushers: Tom Georgas 813-985-0236
Altar Angels:
Engie Halkias & 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.

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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