

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

January 2015

Καλή Χρονιά! Happy New Year!

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 member to grow in their faith.

Feast of Epiphany - Tuesday, January 6

Feast of St. John the Baptist - Wednesday, January 7

Visit of Archbishop Demetrios and Metropolitan Alexios

We will mark the feast of St. John the Baptist, the Patron Saint of our Parish, with Great Vespers on Tuesday, January 6, at 6:30 p.m. His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta will preside over Vespers, assisted by Father Stavros and clergy from around the Tampa Bay Area. The Philoptochos will host a reception in the Kourmolis Center following the service.

On Wednesday, January 7, His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios will officiate at the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy in honor of St. John the Baptist. Orthros will begin at 8:30 a.m., followed by the Hierarchical Liturgy at 9:30 a.m. The Parish Council will host a luncheon in the Kourmolis Center following the Divine Liturgy.

Please come and welcome our Spiritual Leader and Hierarch as we celebrate the Feastday of our Parish.

Father Stavros' Message

Here is a Riddle for You...

In his song "Happy Christmas", John Lennon, a self-proclaimed agnostic, wrote "So this is Christmas, and what have you done, another year over and a new one just begun. . . . A very merry Christmas, and a happy New Year, let's hope it's a good one, without any fear." It's interesting, when you break down the lyrics to popular songs, whether they are for the Christmas season or any other part of the year that many of these songs that are so joyfully and enthusiastically sung have no real joy in them at all. When I actually study the words of this song, I interpret them, "Oh well, another year is over, I hope you had fun, and well, the new year is starting, I hope it's a good one." Nowhere in this song is there mention of Christ, or of hope, or of gratitude, or new beginnings for another year, nothing but the passage of time being marked. If the ending of one year and the beginning of another is just time passing for us, without hope for progress in some way in life, indeed there's not much to be happy for as the New Year is upon us. But if we reflect on the year past, approach the new year with gratitude that we are blessed to even enter into a new year, with hope in ourselves and our ability to make something of 2015, we have taken the first steps toward making this coming year a "happy" one indeed.

In last month's message, I reflected on a year of progress at St. John. I also set some goals for our community for 2015. This month's message is not going to focus as much on community, but rather on us as individual members of that community.

Reflecting on my own life this past year, it had its good moments and it's challenging ones. When we turned the calendar to 2014 a year ago, I had a feeling that my dad wouldn't be with us when we turned the page to 2015. Turns out that was correct, as he passed away on June 16. The year 2014 saw me return to summer camp after a two year absence, I also passed the ten year mark in my ministry at St. John. Our son is one year older, now 8, I am a year older, now 42, and have been married for 19 years.

As time rolls along though, and more so as I get older, I think about the deeper meanings of life in general and my life specifically. I sometimes wonder am I making progress as a Christian, as a priest, as a human being. Are we making progress as a society or are we regressing? It's kind of a cliché rhetorical question when someone asks "What is the meaning of life?" and there is the rhetorical response that one could write books on the subject, or travel to the ends of the world trying find the answer, and then there are those who think they can encapsulate the meaning of life into a mere word or two or three.

One of my favorite songs is entitled "The Riddle" by the group Five for Fighting. For those who aren't familiar with this song, I'm reprinting the lyrics here:

*There was a man back in '95
Whose heart ran out of summers
But before he died, I asked him
Wait, what's the sense in life?
Come over me, Come over me*

*There was a man back in '95
Whose heart ran out of summers
But before he died, I asked him
Wait, what's the sense in life?
Come over me, Come over me*

*He said, Son why you got to sing that tune?
Catch a Dylan song or some eclipse of the moon?
Let an angel swing and make you swoon
Then you will see, you will see"
Then he said, Here's a riddle for you
Find the answer: There's a reason for the world
You and I"*

*Picked up my kid from school today
Did you learn anything? Cause in the world today
You can't live in a castle far away
Now talk to me, come talk to me*

*He said, Dad I'm big, but we're smaller than small
In the scheme of things, well we're nothing at all
Still every mother's child sings a lonely song
So play with me, come play with me"*

*And hey Dad, here's a riddle for you
Find the answer: There's a reason for the world
You and I*

*I said, Son for all I've told you
When you get right down to the
Reason for the world who am I?"*

*There are secrets that we still have left to find
There have been mysteries from the beginning of time
There are answers we're not wise enough to see
He said, You looking for a clue? I love you free*

*The batter swings and the summer flies
As I look into my angel's eyes
A song plays on while the moon is hiding over me
Something comes over me*

*I guess we're big and I guess we're small
If you think about it man you know we got it all
'Cause we're all we got on this bouncing ball
And I love you free, I love you freely*

*Here's a riddle for you
Find the answer: There's a reason for the world
You and I*

If you have a few moments, I encourage you to google this song, it's got a catchy tune.. The song makes a good point though—what is the reason for the world? The answer is rather easy: "YOU and I". More specifically, YOU and I growing in the image and likeness of God, working our way through this life with the ultimate destination of eternal life. Let's examine this song in greater detail. A quick search on "google" (where would we be without "google" or "Wikipedia") reveals that John Ondrasik, the singer for "Five

for Fighting” spent 18 months writing this song and went through over 100 drafts until he came up with the final version. What began as a song on the meaning of life later evolved into a song about the love between a father and son, inspired by his relationship with his own son. Now as you read through the lyrics, you can read through it from the perspective of a parent (if you are a parent) with your own child, from the perspective a child in relation to your own parent, or (even though he didn’t write this with over religious overtones), you could read it as the relationship between us (children) and God (our Father). Let’s examine in greater detail.

*There was a man back in '95
Whose heart ran out of summers
But before he died, I asked him
Wait, what's the sense in life?
Come over me, Come over me*

A man whose heart ran out of summers—as I said above, my dad’s heart ran out of summers in 2014. It did for people like Bess Paloumpis, Leo Sakellaris, and Dr. Byron Nenos, among others, long-time members, pillars, of our community. We’re all going to run out of summers. As we turn the page to 2015, there are people in the community who have had their final Christmas, who may have their final Pascha, whose hearts may run out of summers in 2015. We do not know who they are going to be, it could be any of us really. Here is the thing though—if one does not know what is the sense in life, what is the point of life, they we are merely marking time, passing milestones, only to pass away from life and to what end. If there is no sense of God in your life, one has to wonder, “What is the sense in life?” And unless one is a famous figure in history, each person will be forgotten as the last person living who remembers them passes away. I didn’t know my paternal grandfather. My father knew him, but now that my father is gone, with him goes the memory of my paternal grandfather. What was the point of his existence, if he is now forgotten? Again, it’s the relationship with Christ that defines both this life and the life to come.

Goal for 2015

A Sense of Gratitude and a Sense of Urgency

First a sense of gratitude for making it to 2015, a sense of thankfulness for another year of life, with all the joys that life holds for us. Secondly, a sense of urgency - at some point every heart will run out of summers. Are we working TODAY to grow in our faith, in our love, in our gratitude!

*He said, Son why you got to sing that tune?
Catch a Dylan song or some eclipse of the moon?
Let an angel swing and make you swoon
Then you will see, you will see"*

*Then he said, Here's a riddle for you
Find the answer: There's a reason for the world
You and I"*

So, now to the riddle - what is the reason for the world? It is YOU and I. God created the world. God created the human

being in His image and likeness. God placed the human being in the world. And the world, in its natural state, was a paradise. You and I, the human beings, were set as masters of creation. God’s intention was for us to live in oneness with Him. That was His hope for us. However, you cannot compel someone to love someone else. You can’t compel someone to be grateful. So, God gave the human being free will—we could choose to be loving, we could choose to be grateful. But we chose the route of ingratitude, we chose not to love God. And the world then fell away from God. But God’s intention for the world remains the same—it’s supposed to be about love, about you and I together, and you and I together with God. The world now seems to be all about the “I”, and not “You and I.”

Goal for 2015 -

Focus on “You and I”, not just “I.”

Take time to develop meaningful relationships, and strengthen relationships that you already have. No one is perfect, therefore no one has truly mastered anything. There is ALWAYS room for growth and improvement.

For those who are married, make one goal to change your marriage for the good. For those who are parents, make one goal to better your relationship with your children. For those who have parents, make one goal to better your relationship with your parents. To often, we seem satisfied with settling, without challenging ourselves to become better. Make 2015 a year you look for opportunity for positive change and growth. Challenge yourself to set at least ONE goal in each of your meaningful relationships.

*Picked up my kid from school today
Did you learn anything? Cause in the world today
You can't live in a castle far away
Now talk to me, come talk to me*

Many of us live in “castles far away.” We live in front of our computers. It’s hard to imagine what life would be like without the Internet, without emails, without cell phones. Constant emailing and texting has caused us to converse less and less. We’re losing the human contact to the cyber world. How many of you sent an email this past year that was misunderstood, or fired off an email in anger, or instantly regretted hitting “send”? I know I did. And I know I received emails like this. The lesson here is that we need to be more careful and thoughtful in our interactions with people. And as the song says, we need to “come talk” more and email less. And when we are “talking” with someone, we need to listen more and speak less. Another problem many of us have, which is made worse by our quasi-addiction to our electronic devices, is that we are not “present.” People walk up and down the street with their heads down on their phones and they miss opportunities to converse with other people, or enjoy the beauty of the outside. We are so distracted with things, we all have a hard time being present. And because we are so busy chasing after things, many times we also are not present, as if we are in castles far away.

Goal for 2015

Focus on More Thoughtful Conversation

If we were each given a limit on how many words we were allowed to say per day, we would use our words more judiciously. No one is going to put a limit on your ability to speak, but learning to use our words more wisely is something we can all do. Save important conversation for face to face, don't have them over the internet or text. I read a book recently on marriage which used the phrase "speak the truth in love." Sometimes, the truth may be hard to hear, or it may be hard to say, but if you are speaking the truth in love, then the voice of love will be heard over the voice of a negative truth.

Be Present-Be present in conversation, put away the mobile devices when having conversation. Don't have both eyes on the future so that you are not enjoying the present. At our recent Sunday school Christmas program, I acted like a Dad to record our son to save this moment for future joy, but I also enjoyed the present moment. Many people are so concerned about the future that they do not enjoy the present.

*He said, Dad I'm big, but we're smaller than small
In the scheme of things, well we're nothing at all
Still every mother's child sings a lonely song
So play with me, come play with me"*

*And hey Dad, here's a riddle for you
Find the answer: There's a reason for the world
You and I*

"In the scheme of things, well we're nothing at all." Who is at the center of your world? Is it you? Your career? Your material possessions? Your family? Where do you spend the great concentration of your time and energy? Where do you spend the bulk of your money? How much of your time goes to volunteer work? How much of your money goes to church/charity?

When you think of Christ, what kinds of words come to mind? Do think of Christ as fitting in a compartment in your life? Do you think of Him as an obligation? Do you ever meditate on words like "Almighty God," or "I am the Lord your God". Do you ever read some of the powerful sayings of Christ in the Bible—"I am the good shepherd," or "I am the door," or "I am the way and the truth and the life." In the scheme of things, we really are nothing at all. I am one man, amidst 6 billion people. My life will last less than 100 years in a history of billions of years. My place in history will be significant only to my family probably. So, my sense of self-worth has to be tied to my eternal future, not my immediate material future. Because in the scheme of things, my material worth is not much at all. It's my spiritual worth that is of infinite value. And in order to realize my spiritual worth, I have to realize that in the big scheme of things, I am accounted as not much, but He who is accounted for much, Christ, is infinitely greater than me. This is why He must be afforded the greater effort from me than my pursuit of material gain. That doesn't mean to quit your job and spend all

day in church, but it does mean to live your life under a framework of Christian spirituality, following the commandments of God, living in the joy of the Lord, preparing for what is to come at the end of your earthly life.

Goal for 2015

Make Christ the Priority, or at Least a Priority

Where will you be on January 1? Will you start the year off in worship? Where will you be January 4? Will you be in church the first Sunday of the year? For those who have not made it a habit of coming to church, the new year affords us a new start. You can come to church January 4 and say honestly "I've been to church every Sunday this year." You can pray on January 1 and say you've prayed everyday this year. Same for reading the Bible. Start the new year off with some spiritual goals—make them challenging but achievable. Write them down, refer to them daily. Make your practice of Christianity something you think about and act upon on a DAILY basis.

There is also a plea from child to parent, "come play with me." When we were kids, we loved to play, I know I did. I would run through my homework (I did it well mind you) but I couldn't wait to be done to go out and play. Our son is the same way - I guess that's how children are. And as the parent of an 8 year old, who still likes to play and to draw, I am often invited to play. And as I am able, I try to play, and at 42, I still enjoy the opportunities to "play" and not be so serious. We all need that.

Goal for 2015-

Take Time to Play and Relax

Anyone remember the old Fred Flintstone cartoons? Fred would be working at the rock quarry, and then the bird would squawk at 5:00 p.m., and Fred would slide down the back of the dinosaur and head on home. Well, leaving at 5:00 p.m. isn't possible today in many jobs, mine included. But there has to be some time when we are "off", whether it is to sleep, to relax, to enjoy family, to exercise, whatever. So, here's some advice—for those especially who have jobs that you never finish, set a quitting time each day, work hard until quitting time (no facebook, no time wasting) and when quitting time comes, quit and go home and don't feel guilty. People talk about working an 80 hour week as if it is some kind of trophy. I think it is very difficult to work 80 hours a week every week and think you are going to stay focused and sharp. Work hard, but take time to play and relax.

*I said, Son for all I've told you
When you get right down to the
Reason for the world who am I?"*

*There are secrets that we still have left to find
There have been mysteries from the beginning of time
There are answers we're not wise enough to see
He said, You looking for a clue? I love you free*

I'm not sure if it's nature or nurture that makes us see the glass as half empty or half full. But having a positive outlook is a game changer. There are people who are inherently trusting and people who are inherently distrustful. Each person has his own unique perspective on trust and on love. There are some who trust a new person until that person blows it, and there are others who will not trust until someone earns their trust. Just like there are some teachers who tell their students that everyone starts out with a 100 and the A is there to lose, while there are other teachers who say everyone starts out with a zero and they have to advance from there.

And in the area of love, there are some who give love freely, who truly know what it means to serve someone else. When we truly serve and we truly love, we do so without an agenda of any kind. We give expecting nothing in return. We give without disappointment if nothing comes in return. This is what it means to love and what it means to serve. It is said that nothing in life is free. And it seems to be true - even love, for the most part, isn't free. But it should be.

What is the mystery from the beginning of time? How God could exist in a perfect oneness, how could a Trinity at the same time be one. As the years go by, we are figuring out a lot of life's mysteries - there are better and better medical treatments as an example, and new technological advances. But the mystery we can't seem to figure out is how to love in the way that God loves us. Or maybe we can figure it out, we just choose not to do it. In either case, the clue to the mysteries that elude us as a society is, loving freely, and serving without expectation of reward.

Goal for 2015

Learn more about what it means to serve, to give and to love and you will learn more about what it means to be a child of God.

Make it a goal to do some volunteer work this year. It doesn't have to be every week or every month, but take at least two opportunities this year to do something for nothing. Take a couple of opportunities this year and go serve, do something that brings no material benefit to you. In loving freely, in giving freely, we will have a better sense of how God loves us freely and without condition, how He can forgive us so easily, and how He was motivated to give us His own Son, to serve us, to die for us, to save us.

*The batter swings and the summer flies
As I look into my angel's eyes
A song plays on while the moon is hiding over me
Something comes over me*

*I guess we're big and I guess we're small
If you think about it man you know we got it all
'Cause we're all we got on this bouncing ball
And I love you free, I love you freely*

It seems that so much of life is the pursuit of what we do not have, rather than the joy of what we do have. When you think

about it, we've really got it all. Yes, there are some people out there who do not have a lot—they lack the basic necessities in life. But virtually everyone who is reading this article has food to eat, a roof over their head, a talent to offer the world which will bring financial and material gain, and most of us have the opportunity for a better tomorrow. What more can we really want! I look at my own life from a strictly material standpoint and think, other than some greater sense of financial security, what is it that I really need? And the financial security is not a high priority for two reasons—one, I believe that God is never going to let me go hungry. And two, I know that security is an illusion. Financial security can be wiped away by a health crisis or a natural disaster at any time for anybody. The gains I hope to make in 2015 are not material gains at all. I hope for a better sense of God, and in turn a better sense of myself and what I can and should be. Again, it goes back to gratitude and love—gratitude for what I have, and a desire to serve and love others freely, without agenda.

As for the notion “we're all we got on this bouncing ball,” well, I'll amend that to, “there is me, there is you, and there is God.” We can't love a house that is here today and gone tomorrow. We can't love a job that we will eventually retire from. We can't love a car that eventually will break down. We can't love a body that eventually will grow old. But we can love God and love one another and in doing so, we will gain everlasting life, where there will never be sorrow, sighing or loss.

We have individual talents that let us work. We have collective talents that are used to balance out our world. But no person is the center of the universe. The uniting force for everyone and everything is God. He is the source and center of all things.

Matthew 18:20 reads “Where two or three are gathered in My name, there I am also in the midst of them.” When it gets down to it, the only meaningful things we end up with on this earth are our relationship with God and our relationship with other people. And never is this verse more meaningful or actualized than when we receive Holy Communion—we gather two people, the priest and the communicant, the Christ is there in the midst of us. That's one of the many reasons that receiving Holy Communion is so important. But gathering in His name is not limited to Communion—when you gather with someone in love, in service, in joy, in any of the good and perfect gifts provided by God to us, there He stands in the midst of us.

Goal for 2015

Keep Christ in Your Relationships With People

Thank God for the gifts of friendship he has bestowed on your life. And look for opportunities to bring a consciousness of Godliness into your interactions. One of the greatest joys I have as a priest is that I get ASKED to bring God into conversations. A growing number of people are asking me to pray with them, who ask if we can speak with God together in prayer. They don't just ask me to keep them in my private prayers, but they ask

me to pray with them. This need not be limited to the relationship between priest and parishioner. It can go between parent and child, husband and wife, friend and friend. Anytime two people are together, Christ can be there. And even if you aren't praying, if you are having joy, having peace, or engaging in self-less service, this is how Christ is brought into our relationships.

Here's a riddle for you

*Find the answer: There's a reason for the world
You and I*

There IS no riddle - there IS no mystery. There IS a reason for the world - it's you and I AND God. Imagine your life as a car ride. At the beginning of the journey, there is nothing in the rearview mirror except your house, your origination point. At the end there is nothing in front of you except your destination point—it's all in the rearview mirror. Thus it is in life. At the beginning of life, all of it is in front of us, in the rearview mirror is God our creator. At the end of life, all of life is in the rearview mirror, and the only thing left in front of us is God waiting as our judge. In between the beginning and end of the journey, we encounter countless people and countless opportu-

nities to use the things which the Creator has blessed us with to our benefit, to their benefit and to His Glory.

No one knows for sure what this year will bring for any of us. I do know a few things, however. I know that at the end of this year, there will be less in the front window of my life and more in the rearview mirror. That I know for sure, and that holds true for all of us. The other thing I know for certain is that I will have countless opportunities to do positive things for other people and make positive choices that can affect positive things in my life and in the life of people around me. This, also, holds true for all of us.

Goal for 2015

Make it about "You and I AND God"

If you make an effort each day to focus on God, and to make it about "we" instead of "me", you are going to have a great year. If we keep this focus as a parish, we are going to have a great year as well.

On behalf of Presbytera Lisa and Nicholas, we wish you all a Happy, Healthy, and Joyful New Year 2015!

With love in the Lord,
+Fr. Stavros

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

Friends of St. John

Barbara Akrotirianakis—Whittier, CA
Mary Hatzikazakis—from Bristol, TN
William J Camarinos—Alexandria, VA
Richard Bass—Asheville, NC

FRIENDS OF ST. JOHN

Name _____

Address _____

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

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

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

Important Dates for 2015

January 1	New Year's Day-Church services
January 6-7	Feast of St. John the Baptist - Visit of Metropolitan Alexios
January 11	Vasilopita Sunday
February 1	GOYA Lock-In
February 8	Philoptochos Missions Sunday
February 14	Apokreatiko Dinner Dance
February 21	Saturday of Souls Liturgy at Garden of Memories - Blessing of Graves
February 22	Forgiveness Sunday - Sunday School Pre-Lent Retreat
February 23	Beginning of Lent
March 1	Sunday of Orthodoxy-Procession of Icons
March 6-8	GOYA Lenten Retreat
March 15	Greek Independence Day Luncheon and Program
March 21	Adult Lenten Retreat
April 4-12	Holy Week
April 10	Sunday School Good Friday Retreat
April 12	PASCHA
April 19	Parish Picnic
May 21	Ascension
May 31	Pentecost
June 7	Last Day of Sunday School
June 19-21	Junior Olympics
July	St. Stephen's Summer Camp
August 9	Meeting of Ministry Heads
August 23	First Day of Sunday School Classes
November 6-8	Greek Festival
December 6	Stewardship Sunday
December 13	Sunday School Christmas Program
December 24	Christmas Services

RUSSELL A. SIBLEY, JR.

----- LAWYER -----

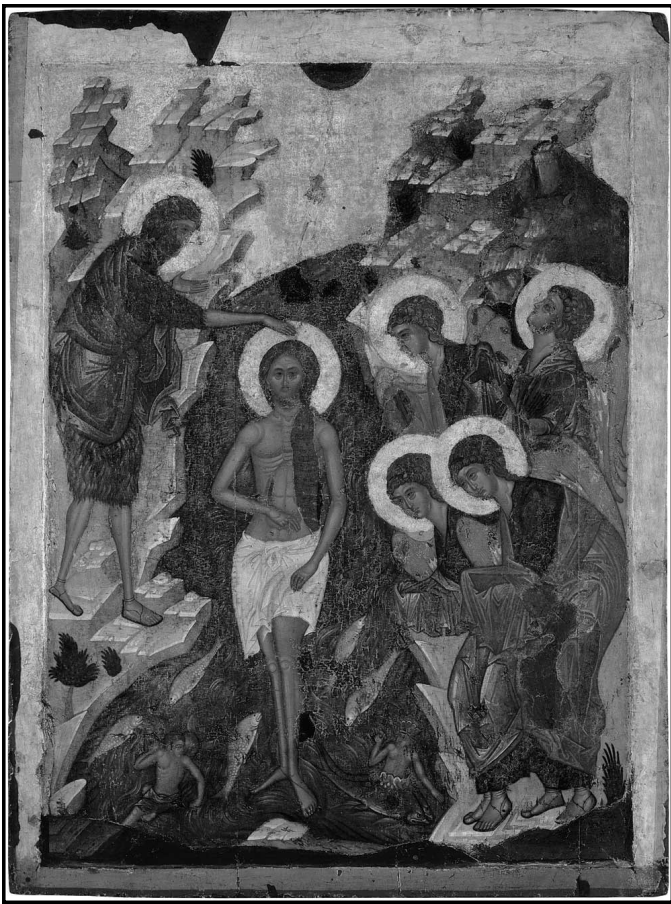
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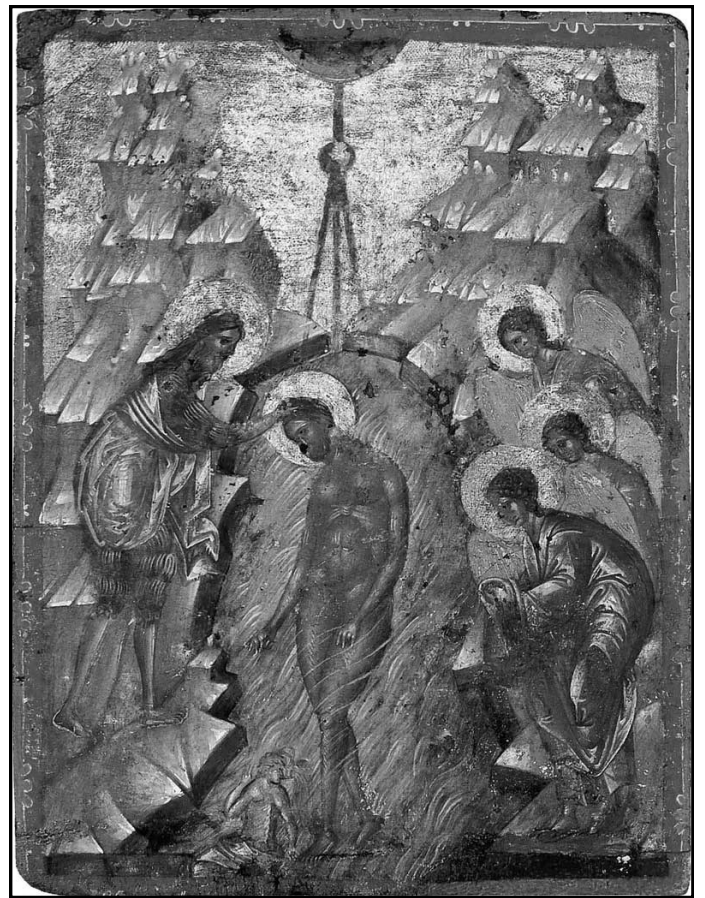
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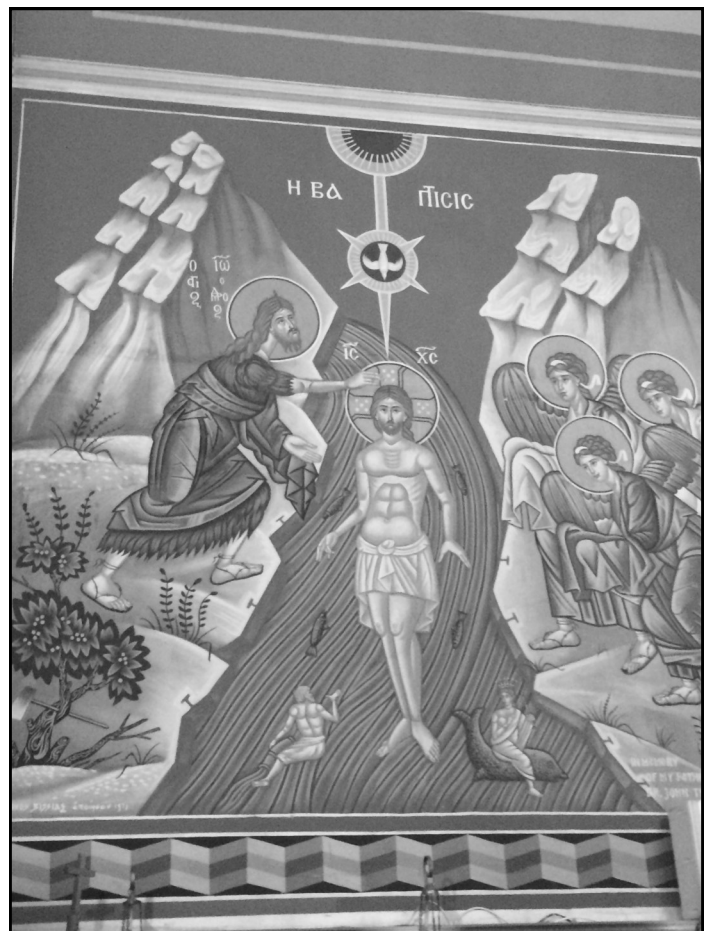
The Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia (1408 AD)



Sergiev-Posad Museum, Russia (1425-1450 AD)



20th Century Byzantine Greek Style (goarch.org)



St. John the Baptist GOC Tampa, FL (1971 AD)

Reflecting on “Our” Baptism of Christ

by Charlie Hambos

In every icon, we can read a story. We ask people to write icons and not to paint them. Let’s transport ourselves back to the shores of the Jordan River in Galilee. John the Baptist is waste deep in the water baptizing one person after another. He is preparing the way for One who is greater than him. In other words, he is cleaning the slate so a new story can be told. It is the story of our salvation. An unassuming man walks up and asks to be baptized. However, John responds, “I need to be baptized by You, and you are coming to me?” But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” There must have been much more dialogue than that, but this is what we know. So John, baptizes Jesus and upon His coming out of the water the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and rested on Him. Then a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” There we have it. Jesus is baptized and through His baptism, all creation is baptized and the Holy Trinity is revealed. It is called Theophany because the word means, ‘the revelation of God.’ We just witnessed the Son getting baptized, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove and the voice from heaven, God the Father. Now, let us reflect on the icon of the Baptism of Christ. On the page to our left, there are four different icons of the Baptism of Christ. Two are Russian from the early 15th Century, another is a 20th Century Greek one and the final one can be found in our church directly over the baptistry. Icons are meant to be windows into heaven. Basically, it’s the meeting point of the fixed time in which we live and eternity. Let us meditate on the icon of the Baptism of Christ, piece by piece.

Jesus Christ. He is the dominant figure in the icon standing in the Jordan River being baptized. With His right hand He is blessing the waters as well as us, meditating on the icon. He seems to be as large as the river itself. Through Christ’s baptism, all of creation is baptized. The waters aren’t cleansing Him. He is cleansing the waters. In early icons He was depicted naked and later on a small loincloth appeared. Christ was naked because Adam and Eve were created naked and God saw it was good. When the fall occurred, they were ashamed of their nakedness and they used the creation to cover themselves. St. Paul calls Christ the Second Adam in 1 Corinthians 15. As Adam and Eve hid themselves in shame. Christ comes as both God and man. He is not ashamed of His nakedness since He is representative of the ultimate human being. Through Him, we can now become the ultimate human being.

John the Baptist. On the left side of the icon, he conducts the Baptism of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ from the bank of the river. He is actually not in the water as I had us envisioning. He is dressed in camel’s hair and looks kind of raggedy like someone who has been living in the middle of nowhere (i.e. the wilderness). He is looking up or looking at Christ. His right arm is stretched over Christ, conducting the baptism. (I had the opportunity to venerate the right index finger of St. John the Baptist in a monastery in Greece. It was a blessing to be in the presence of this relic.) The depiction is also weird in a sense. Jesus Christ, fully-God and fully-man submitted himself to a mere man, John the Baptist. He is either depicted bowing towards Christ or looking up but usually always above Christ in the icon. In any sense, in relativity to Christ he is much smaller. This is because John the

Baptist must “decrease so that Christ may increase.” This is very applicable to our lives. We must get over our “self” and let Christ be greater than our “self.” Another analogy that can be seen in this icon is a baton pass. John the Baptist is representative of the Old Testament and everything before, is now passing the baton to Jesus Christ, the New Testament and all the saints.

Angels On the right side of the Jordan River, angels of the Lord are gathered ready to praise, receive and clothe Christ as He comes out of the water. They are depicted as bowing out of respect for Christ.

Heaven opens and dove descends At the very top of the icon, there is a blue semicircle. This represents the heavens opening, the voice of God the Father being heard and the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. In some of the icons, the semicircle has three rays or spears coming from it, representing the Holy Trinity. The middle ray usually extends to Christ with the dove. Why a dove? Doves are a recurring symbol in the Bible. It was a dove that was sent out by Noah, which brought back an olive branch, signifying a new beginning. Two doves were sacrificed by Mary and Joseph when they brought Christ to the temple. The hovering of a dove was also likened to the hovering of God, according to the early Jews.

Tree with axe On the bottom left, in some of the icons, there is an axe intertwined in a tree. This is in reference to a passage in Matthew 3:10, “And now also the ax is laid to the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” (Matt 3:10). This is a warning for us. We must bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit or we will be chopped down.

Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea In the water, on the bottom left, there is a man with a jar who represents the Jordan River. He is usually depicted as older, like “old man river.” It is well noted that at the time of Christ’s baptism, the flow of the Jordan River reversed. The figure on the right side in the water, sometimes a crowned woman on a fish represents the sea. Both of these figures represent the Messianic fulfillment of Psalm 114:3, “the sea saw and fled and the Jordan turned back.” Basically, both appear to be fleeing because something came in contact that was much bigger and greater than them. As for the figure of the Jordan River. Icons can depict him running away or reverencing Christ. The figure himself could be someone related to Poseidon. The figure could represent death and chaos, thus requiring him to flee. Or the figure could be there holding a jug and bearing witness to the great event. The Mediterranean Sea is depicted as a crowned woman because she could be representative of Amphitrite, queen of the sea and was the wife of Poseidon. She could also be representative of the Thalassa, another female Greek mythological creature. Either way, she flees because the Son of God is much greater than her.

We are celebrating more than the Baptism of Christ. We are also celebrating the baptism of the entire world, both physical and metaphysical by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in whom we must be very pleased.

Liturgical Schedule for January 2015

Thursday, January 1

Feast Day of St. Basil

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, January 4

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, Peter Chandler)

Ushers: Florin Patrasciou, Kevin Fentress, Tammy Christou

Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Welcoming Committee: Greeters - Genie Carter, Katherine Sakkis; Ambassador - Lisa Alsina;
Caller - Martha Kapetan; Get Acquainted - Mike Xenick, Maria Xenick

Monday, January 5

Royal Hours

Orthros 8:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m.

Blessing of the Waters 10:30 a.m.

Tuesday, January 6

Great Vespers for Feast of St John the Baptist

6:30 p.m.

His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios will preside.

Wednesday, January 7

Feast of St. John the Baptist

Orthros 8:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m.

His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios will officiate.

Sunday, January 11

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captians and St. Luke (Christos Nenos, Dean Mitseas, Nicholas Katzaras, James Katzaras, Nicholas Yotis, Genaro Scarfogliero, Andrew Thatcher)

Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, Perry Katsamakis, Peter Theophanous

Coffee Hour: Philoptochos

Welcoming Committee: Greeters - Skip Higdon, Kalliope Chagaris; Ambassador - Betty Katherine Katsamakis;
Caller - Peggy Bradshaw

Saturday, January 17

Feast of St. Anthony

Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, January 18

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (Thomas Shearer, Nicholas Alsina, Antonio Bavaro, Jonah Blankenbaker, Yianni Trimikliniotis, Nicholas Oliver, Athanasios Oliver)

Ushers: Gregory Tisdale, John Christ, George Trimikliniotis

Coffee Hour: Small Group Bible Studies

Welcoming Committee: Greeters - Donna Hambos, Irene Kostaris; Ambassador - Christene Worley; Caller - Vickie Peckham

Sunday, January 25

Feast of St. Gregory the Theologian

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew (Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, John Palios, Brigham Sibley, Benny Hiermichel, James Kavouklis, Andrew Patrasciou)

Ushers: Brett Mourer, Wayne Blankenship, Amin Hanhan

Coffee Hour: AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope

Welcoming Committee: Greeters - Donna Trakas, Helen Cauthorn; Ambassador - Vanessa Aviles; Caller - Marina Karounas

Friday, January 30

Feast of The Three Hierarchs

Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, February 1

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, Peter Chandler)

Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas

Coffee Hour: Choir

Welcoming Committee: Greeters - Jenny Paloumpis, Jamie Broderick; Ambassador - Carole Fotopoulos
Caller - Tammy Christou; Get Acquainted - Megan Rindone, Jeanie Nenos

Monday, February 2

Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

FEAST DAYS IN JANUARY

January 1-Feast of the Circumcision of Christ-St. Basil-New Year's Day-Three things are commemorated on the first day of each year. First, the circumcision of Christ, which occurred historically 8 days after His Nativity. He was circumcised according to the rites of the Jewish law and given the name Jesus. Secondly, we commemorate the feast of St. Basil the Great, one of the Great Hierarchs of our church. St. Basil authored one of the Divine Liturgies used in our church, which is celebrated on his feastday. He also helped found monasticism. St. Basil was a friend to the poor, often baking bread with money in it and throwing it through the windows of widows and the poor. Hence the tradition of the Vasilopita, the bread with the coin baked inside, that we cut on New Year's Day. Finally, we are supposed to pray every day and commemorate all of life's milestones with prayer. So, we open a new year, 2015, with prayer and the Divine Liturgy on January 1.

January 5-Royal Hours of Epiphany-Like Christmas and Easter, there is a service of the Royal Hours which is celebrated in anticipation of Epiphany. This service consists of prayers, Psalms, hymns and Gospel readings which both foretell and recount this Great Feast of the church year. The Royal Hours will last from 8:00-9:30 a.m. on Monday, January 5.

January 5-Eve of Epiphany-Also, like Christmas and Easter, the feast of Epiphany is commemorated with two celebrations of the Divine Liturgy, one of them on the forefeast (day before the feastday). Hymns of anticipation are sung at this service. Also, there is a service of Aghiasmos (blessing of the water) which is done at the conclusion of the Liturgy on January 5. On January 6, there is also a service of the "Blessings of the waters" at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy.

On Tuesday, January 6, we will NOT hold the Divine Liturgy at St. John the Baptist.

Rather, we will all gather at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Tarpon Springs for liturgy beginning at 9:30 a.m., followed by the yearly diving for the cross following around 12:30 p.m.

Vespers of St. John the Baptist, to be celebrated on January 6 at 6:00 p.m.—The Vespers Service is the service that begins the liturgical day. In our church, the day begins at sundown. Thus the feast of St. John the Baptist, celebrated on January 7, begins with the sunset of January 6. Properly celebrated, all feastdays should begin with the celebration of Great Vespers, including every Sunday which should begin with Great Vespers on Saturday evenings. Because this is not practical in most parishes, Great Vespers is celebrated in most parishes on a limited basis. We will, of course, celebrate the complete cycle of services related to our feastday of St. John, which will begin with Great Vespers at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 6. His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios will preside at this service, assisted by Fr. Stavros and all the priests of the Tampa Bay area.

January 7-Feast of St. John the Baptist-The day after a major feastday often commemorates the secondary figure of the Feast. On January 6, we celebrate the Baptism/Epiphany of Christ, who is obviously the major figure. The secondary figure of that feast is St. John the Baptist, whose feastday we commemorate the next day, January 7. St. John is the LAST of the Prophets before Christ and the first of the Saints, those who believed in Christ. Righteous figures who came before Christ are called either "Righteous" or "Prophet". Holy People who came after Christ are called Saints. St. John the Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist, as both titles. His life and his important work as the forerunner of the Lord is commemorated January 7. As this is the feastday of our church, His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios will be here with us to mark the occasion, together with all the clergy of the Tampa Bay area who will celebrate the liturgy together with His Eminence.

January 17-Feast of St. Anthony-St. Anthony is recognized as one of the fathers of monasticism. He lived in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. He founded a monastery in Egypt which still exists to this day. He authored many of the monastic rules that are still in practice today. He also was a major contributor to the First Ecumenical Council in Nicea in 325, where the Nicene Creed was first authored. He was one of the leaders against the heresies of Arianism.

January 18-Feast of St. Athanasios-St. Athanasios was born in 297 and was ordained a priest in 319. At the tender age of 28, he was one of the leaders of the First Ecumenical Council in 325 in Nicea, and defended the Faith against the heresies of Arius. He contributed to the development of the Nicene Creed which was authored in 325 and edited in 381 at the second Ecumenical Council. St. Athanasios became a bishop and later Patriarch of Alexandria.

January 25-Feast of St. Gregory the Theologian-One of the Three Hierarchs, also lived in the fourth Century. Was a friend and contemporary of St. Basil and St. John the Theologian. He was an accomplished speaker and writer, was the Bishop of Nazianzos and was one of the Bishops who presided at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381, which finalized the Nicene Creed that we recite to this day.

January 30-Feast of the Three Hierarchs-The Three Hierarchs are St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom. Each had his own feastday and all are honored together on January 30. Each of them lived in the 4th Century, each was an accomplished writer and speaker, each was a Bishop, each authored a Liturgy and each is remembered prominently in the history of our church to this day. The Three Hierarchs are Patron Saints of Teachers and Education.

Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism-Naomi Rose (Sofia) Dahdal, daughter of David Dahdal and Dena Johnson, was baptized on Saturday, December 13. Mary Dahdal was the Godmother. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Penelope Anne Kladis, daughter of Theodore and Amy Kladis, was baptized on Sunday, December 14. Theodore and Susan Stavracos were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Wedding-Markos Elias Mangarides and Ekaterini Petrunelli were married on Saturday, November 15. Helen Vachicouras was the sponsor. Congratulations!

Condolences to Debbie Gavalas and her family on the passing of her father, Chris Zervos, who passed away on November 26. May his memory be eternal!

Parish Registry Totals for 2014

Registry Statistics for	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Weddings	12	8	8	11	12
Baptisms	18	25	25	17	29
Funerals	8	5	7	6	5
Chrismations	8	5	6	4	5

Get Acquainted Sunday - Sunday, January 4

In an effort to get to know one another better, we are going to continue our "Get Acquainted Sundays" the first 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.

Monday Night Bible Study



We are studying the book of Isaiah lead by Charlie Hambos. We meet from 6:30 p.m.- 8:00 p.m. January Meetings are scheduled for Monday, January 12, 19, 26 in the administration building. Bring your Bible and come join Charlie for Bible Study. **Everyone is welcome!**

Committee for Visitation of the Sick

After several attempts to have a committee for visitation of the sick, we finally have the people in place to make this committee active and consistent. Nancy Manikas, along with Charlie Hambos, are going to chair this committee. Nancy will coordinate who needs visits and who is able to make the visits. We will have a brief meeting on Sunday, January 18, after the liturgy in the Zaharias Room, to go over this ministry. If you are interested please plan to attend. If you are not able to attend, please contact Nancy or Charlie.

Community Outreach

Thank you to everyone who continues to support our Community Outreach ministry to serve the homeless and those in need. In addition to supporting First Presbyterian Church's breakfast for the homeless on the 3rd Saturday of each month from 8:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, January 17 and Saturday, February 21.

Ye Holy Krewe of Tampa-Gasparilla Parking Fundraiser

On Saturday, January 24 and Saturday, January 31, we will be renting out the church parking lot for Gasparilla parking, for the children's parade on January 24, and for the main event on January 31. If you are interested in volunteering a few hours to help the church make some easy \$\$\$, and also have a good time socializing for a few hours while directing traffic, please contact John Kokkas, the captain of Ye Holy Krewe at 727-992-4165 or johnkokkas@verizon.net. The primary hours needed are approximately 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. each Saturday. This is a very easy and fun way to generate income for our parish.

GOYA

Our next GOYA meeting will be Sunday, January 11 from 5:00 p.m. –7:30 p.m.in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner will be provided. The GOYA Clearwater Winter Event will be Friday, January 23 - Sunday, January 25.

Greek School

The Adult Greek School program will start at 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 15, 2015. The teacher Mrs. Magda Myer will use the same text book for beginners. Those interested in learning Greek, please contact Mrs. Myer at (813) 909-2327, aspis69@aol.com or contact the church office at (813) 876-8830.

Hope/Joy

Sunday, February 1 - SOUPER Bowl of Caring! Join us in support of this nationwide youth initiative to stop hunger in this country. We encourage the entire community to please bring a non-perishable food item or monetary donation to church on Super Bowl Sunday, February 1.

Boxes of Hope Project

For many years, our JOY/HOPE has done the Boxes of Hope service project sponsored by Metropolitan Ministries. Each box of hope feeds a family of 4 and costs \$25 in either gift certificate or in food items. This year our JOY/HOPE assembled 49 Boxes of Hope and collected donations for another 68 in gift cards and checks. So the total was 117 meals, feeding 468 people—WOW! Our kids did a great job!!!

Hope and Joy wishes everyone a very happy and blessed 2015!

Office News

If your ministry needs a special set up on a Sunday, you must request it through the office to ensure that the proper arrangements are made. Email the office at officetjohngoctampa@gmail.com or call 813-876-8830.

The office will be closed on Thursday, January 1 for New Year's Day and on Monday, January 19 for Martin Luther King Day.

Deadlines for the Messenger and Bulletin

The Deadline for submitting something for the Messenger is the 10th of each month for the following month. The deadline for submitting something for the weekly bulletin is Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. for the following Sunday. All information for the Messenger or Bulletin must be sent electronically. Full page flyers will not be placed in the Messenger unless space permits. This will be at the discretion of the staff. It is your responsibility to send in information that you would like printed in the parish periodicals.

Parish Council

The next Parish Council meeting will be Tuesday, January 13 at 7:00 p.m. in the Administration Building.

Vasilopita Sunday — Sunday, January 11

A Vasilopita will be blessed and cut for the ministries of our parish. Our parish will be sending a check for \$500 to St. Basil's Academy in New York, a school for orphaned or disadvantaged children run by our Archdiocese. Our Philoptochos will also sponsor the coffee hour with all proceeds going to St. Basil's as well.

Young at Heart

The next Young at Heart meeting will be Thursday, January 8 at 11:30 a.m. in the Kourmolis Center.

Save the Date

Masquerade Dance

Sponsored by Young at Heart

Valentine's Day

Saturday, February 14

7:00 pm - 11:00 pm

At St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Adults \$35 Children 12 & Under Free

Cash Prizes for Best Costumes

Raffle, Food, Fun, Dancing & Live Music

Philoptochos 2015 Membership Drive!

We are on the MOVE for a Great New Year!

We Invite all women ages 18 to ??? To join the St. John the Baptist Philoptochos Annunciation Chapter!

Membership Drive: January Thru April, Suggested Stewardship is \$30.00. However, we accept whatever you have in your heart to give.

Your donation makes you a member of the National, The Metropolis and our Local Chapters of Philoptchos...

THANK YOU SO MUCH AND HAVE A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR 2015!

Name_____Date_____

Street Address_____

City_____State_____Zip_____

Home Phone_____Cell_____Work_____

E-mail address_____

Please return form to: Melissa Krinos, 8728 Hickorywood Lane, Tampa FL 33615
or the Philoptochos mailbox in the church office.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS:

We would like to wish everyone in our parish a blessed New Year and hope that you had a wonderful Christmas with your family. The first half of our Sunday School year has been extremely busy and successful thanks to all the teachers, Fr. Stavros, Charlie Hambos, the parents, and especially the students of St. John's.

WOW, wasn't this year's Christmas Pageant the best ever? We would like to thank these children for helping to make this pageant a success. Of course we would also like to thank Maria Xenick for producing this pageant and Debbie Nicklow and Amy Kafantaris for planning the Christmas Party. The crafts were adorable and a fun time was had by all. A big thank you goes out to the many parents and teachers who helped with the pageant on the 14th and our Sunday School Christmas Party and Rehearsal on the 13th. We also gave back, by collecting toys for needy boys and girls.

Our children sang beautifully on December 7th for our YOUTH SUNDAY SERVICE. We would like to thank Nedi Ferekides for reading the Epistle. The parishioners of St. John's are truly blessed to have such wonderful and talented children.

Sunday School Perfect Attendance for the Month of November 2014:

Pre-K: Santino Bavaro

Kindergarten: Zachary Carter, Aiden Clifton, Teddy Kafantaris

1st Grade: Gianni Bavaro, Michael Meadows, Maria Nicklow, Katerina Sotiropoulos

2nd Grade: Nicholas Akrotirianakis, Nicholas Carter, Ariana Choundas-Thatcher, Ariana Clifton, Calliope Kafantaris, Emily Nicklow, Maria Palios, George Xenick, Panos Zelatis

3rd Grade: Niko Bavaro, Eleni Kazaras, Toulia Trakas, Kaitlin Zelatis

4th Grade: Lola Bavaro, Andrew Choundas-Thatcher, John Palios, Andrew Patrascioiu, Vasili Sotiropoulos, Yanni Trimikliniotis

5th & 6th Grades: Elizabeth Xenick, Antonio Bavaro, Andrea Stingulescu

Middle School: Sophia Crassas, Artemis Xenick, Nicholas Yotis, Nicholas Kazaras, Sophia Krinos

High School: Nedi Ferekides, Arianna Krinos

DATES TO REMEMBER:

Jan. 4th, 2015: Sunday School Resumes - TOPIC: Epiphany/St. John the Baptist

Jan. 10th: SATURDAY - Teacher's Retreat 9:00 - 12:00

Jan. 11th: TOPIC - Vasilopita/St. Basil

- Charlie Hambos - 4th Grade - Church Vessel Presentation

Jan. 18th: TOPIC: The Ten Commandments

Jan. 24th: YOUTH SUNDAY

- Charlie Hambos - Presentation for the High School

- 4th Grade making PROSPHORA

Please feel free to contact us with any questions, suggestions, or comments regarding St. John's Sunday School Program. Parents, If you do not receive our weekly e-mails about our Sunday School Program, please contact Vickie Peckham at 406-5626 or e-mail her at vickiepeckham@gmail.com.

Prayer for Teachers Sunday, January 25

The Patron Saints of teachers are the Three Hierarchs. St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom. Their combined feastday is celebrated in January 30. We will honor teachers and educators on Sunday, January 25 (which is the feastday of St. Gregory the Theologian) with a special prayer that will be offered immediately prior to Holy Communion (since we will include our Sunday school teachers who all leave to teach their classes after Communion). So, if you are a teacher or school administrator, please plan to be at church on January 25 to receive a special blessing and prayer.



St. John has a Facebook page! Please "like" our page and suggest it to your friends. Announcements are put on their frequently and we will also be posting photos in the near future.



Scan to like St. John on Facebook
[facebook.com/StJohnGOCTampa](https://www.facebook.com/StJohnGOCTampa)

JUST SAY YES!

We will continue with part six of a monthly series to the Messenger to encourage and inspire you to continue to Just Say Yes! The following is an excerpt from the book Having a Mary Spirit: Allowing God to Change us from the Inside Out, by Joanna Weaver. The monthly excerpts will come from a chapter of the book titled *A Willing Spirit*. It is a beautiful study on both the Virgin Mary and the concept of saying Yes to God.

Gladys Aylward

Gladys Aylward was born in London in 1904. When she was a young woman, she dedicated her life to Jesus Christ and became convinced that she was called to preach in China. Unfortunately, she failed her mission-board exam. But Gladys wasn't the kind of person to give up. When she heard of an elderly missionary looking for someone to carry on her work. Gladys wrote and received word that she could get to China, she would have a place to serve the Lord.

Just a poor parlor maid, Gladys didn't have enough money for ship fare, but she was able to scrape together enough for a train ticket. So in October of 1930, with only her passport, her Bible and two pounds, nine pence to her name, Gladys Aylward left England and made her way to China by the Trans-Siberian Railway. And so began ministry that would make her one of the most famous missionaries of the twentieth century. All because she was willing.

All because she said yes to God. It's amazing what God can do with a heart surrendered to Him. A heart that says yes in spite of the cost.

For I believe God is still looking for willing people through whom He can work His purposes and perform His plans. People who say yes instead of asking how. People willing to sell all they possess in order to buy an ordinary field that just might hold the pearl of a great price (Matthew 13:45-46).

The young woman missionary had no idea what lay before her when she said yes to the call of God to go to China. She had no way of knowing that, because of her willingness to be spent for the Lord, China's heart would be turned to God. So marvelous was the story of Gladys Aylward's life that it eventually was made into a movie. And though she dined with kings and queens, the most notable thing about Gladys was her simple willingness to say yes, to be available to God.

Gladys once said. "I wasn't God's first choice for what I've done in China...I don't know who it was....It must have been a man....a well-educated man. I don't know what happened. Perhaps he wasn't willing....And God looked down....and saw Gladys Aylward...And God said—"Well, She's willing."

I wonder, what God could do through you and me if we stopped questioning His plan, stopped trying to understand, and simply said yes.

Stewardship 2015

Will You Help Put us over our goal of \$470,000

December 15, 2014

December 15, 2013

Number of Steward Families

135

117

Amount Pledged

\$ 246,076.00

\$223,742.00

For those who have pledged for 2015, thank you for your generous support of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church. For those who have not pledged, please send in your pledge form today. Extra forms are available in the Narthex and the Church Office. **As you can see, we are halfway to our goal! So, if you haven't pledged for 2015, please do so today. If you are new in the community, it is important to pledge for the remainder of 2015.** Remember, the church relies on your generosity to not only keep it's door open, but to offer it's many ministries. We all benefit from the church. We all must do our part in support of our church!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH IN TAMPA

Did you know? -The Serenity Prayer

By Fr. Stavros

The “Serenity Prayer” is one of my favorite prayers. Many of us are familiar with this prayer, at least the first part of it—“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.” But did you know this-

~The Serenity Prayer was written by Reinhold Niebuhr in the 1940s. I always assumed it was much older than 70 years, but it is actually not that old.

~The Serenity Prayer is longer than the one line that most of us know that I quoted above. The prayer is actually much more substantial than this.

The prayer, in its entirety, appears below. Consider making it part of your daily prayers in the New Year. Alcoholics’ Anonymous uses the serenity prayer as part of the 12 step program for people who are trying to overcome alcoholism. Whether one has a substance issue or not, we all try to overcome life issues—be they the basic stresses to more complex struggles. This is a prayer that one can truly say fits all people. Here it is, in its entirety:

The Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time; Enjoying one moment at a time; Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;

Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;

Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His Will;

That I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him Forever in the next.

Amen.

--Reinhold Niebuhr

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.

Live Streaming of Divine Liturgy-We are now live-streaming the Divine Services of the Church. If you go to our website, www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com and find on the menu bar the live streaming option, you can easily tune into the Liturgy if you are unable to attend. Please bear in mind that watching a service on your computer is not a substitute for coming to church. You should attend church in person. However, for shut-ins, people who have a hard time getting to night services, parents with babies, if you are at home on a week-day and want to hear a week-day service, if you are sick, or can’t make the service for some reason, or if you are out of town, please feel free to tune in. The services are live-streamed only and will not be archived.

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.**



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PASTORAL GUIDELINES

For Weddings, Divorces, Baptisms, Funerals and Memorials

The Greek Orthodox Church is not a church of rules. But without some guidelines to go by, there would be chaos. The following guidelines are rooted in Orthodox Tradition and Canon Law. These guidelines are printed in The Messenger near the beginning of each calendar year, and it is a good idea from time to time for people to review them. These guidelines have been copied from the 2014 Yearbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Please review them, and keep them in mind when planning for your important life events. If you have any questions, please contact Fr. Stavros. (Special requirements specific to sacraments at St. John appear in italics.)

Weddings

For the union of a man and woman to be recognized as sacramentally valid by the Orthodox Church, the following conditions must be met: The Sacrament of Matrimony must be celebrated by an Orthodox Priest of a canonical Orthodox jurisdiction, according to the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church, in a canonical Orthodox Church, and with the authorization of the Metropolitan.

Before requesting permission from the Metropolitan to perform the marriage, a Priest must verify that:

1. Neither of the parties in question are already married to other persons, either in this country or elsewhere (if a person comes to the United States after age 18, they need to provide a letter from their country of origin that they are indeed free to marry);
2. The parties in question are not related to each other to a degree that would constitute an impediment;
3. If either or both parties are widowed, they have presented the death certificate(s) of the deceased spouse(s);
4. If either or both of the parties have been previously married in the Orthodox Church, they have obtained an ecclesiastical as well as civil divorce. (The Ecclesiastical Divorce process is done after the civil divorce becomes final, and involves counseling with the parish priest, forms that are filled out, a review by the Metropolitan, a divorce hearing which in the Tampa Bay area is held in Clearwater, and this process usually takes several months to complete. Fr. Stavros will not set a wedding date for anyone until an ecclesiastical divorce has been secured, so please plan accordingly, the ecclesiastical divorce process often takes several months.)
5. The party or parties who are members of a parish other than the one in which the marriage is to be performed have provided a certificate declaring them to be members in good standing with that parish for the current year; and
6. A civil marriage license has been obtained from civil authorities.

No person may marry more than three times in the church, with permission for a third marriage granted only with extreme oikonomia.

In cases involving the marriage of Orthodox and non – Orthodox Christians, the latter must have been baptized in water, in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Church cannot bless the marriage of an Orthodox Christian to a non-Christian. The couple should be willing to baptize their children in the Orthodox Church and raise and nurture them in accordance with the Orthodox Faith. *There is a list with religious groups that Orthodox are prohibited from marrying, i.e. Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, and others. Fr. Stavros can provide you with this list. **This is IMPORTANT to consider when you begin to date someone. Make sure your children are aware of this!** Because circumstances exist where a couple is dating where one of the two is not eligible to be married in the Orthodox Church, and this causes heartache in the relationship and often leads to someone leaving the church.*

A baptized Orthodox Christian whose wedding has not been blessed by the Orthodox Church is no longer in good standing with the Church, and may not receive the Sacraments of the Church, including Holy Communion, or become a sponsor of an Orthodox Marriage, Baptism, or Chrismation. A non-Orthodox Christian who marries an Orthodox Christian does not thereby become a member of the Orthodox Church, and may not receive the Sacraments, including Holy Communion, serve on the Parish Council or vote in parish assemblies or elections. To participate in the Church's life, one must be received into the Church by the Sacrament of Baptism, or in the case of persons baptized with water in the Holy Trinity, following a period of instruction, by Chrismation.

Canonical and theological reasons preclude the Orthodox Church from performing the Sacrament of Marriage for couples where one partner is Orthodox and the other partner is a non-Christian. As such, Orthodox Christians choosing to enter such marriages fall out of good standing with their Church and are unable to actively participate in the sacramental life of the church. While this stance may seem confusing and rigid, it is guided by the Orthodox Church's love and concern for its member's religious and spiritual well-being.

The Sponsor (koumbaros or koumbara) must provide a current certificate of membership proving him or her to be an Orthodox Christian in good standing with the church. A person who does not belong to a parish, or who belongs to a parish under the jurisdiction of a bishop who is not in communion with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, or who, if married, has not had his or her marriage blessed by the Orthodox Church, or, if divorced, has not received an ecclesiastical divorce, cannot be a sponsor. Non-Orthodox persons may be members of the wedding party, but may not exchange the rings or crowns.

Days when marriage is not permitted

Marriages are not performed on fast days or during fasting seasons or on the feasts of the church as indicated: September 14 (Holy Cross Day), December 13-25 (Christmas), January 5 and 6 (Epiphany), Great Lent and Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost,

August 1-15 (Dormition Fast) and August 29. Any exceptions can only be made with the permission of the Metropolitan.

Prohibited Marriages

The following types of relationships constitute impediments to marriage:

1. Parents with their own children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren or Godchildren of the same Godparents; Brothers-in law and sisters-in law; Uncles and aunts with nieces and nephews; First cousins with each other; Foster parents with foster children or foster children with the children of foster parents.
2. Godparents with Godchildren or Godparents with the parents of their Godchildren. (In the Chrismation of an adult, one has to be careful that the choice of sponsor does not create a potential marriage impediment. For any questions regarding, please see Fr. Stavros)

A date cannot be set for marriage unless one of the parties getting married, NOT THE PARENTS, contact Fr. Stavros, who sets all the dates for weddings. In order for the date to be locked in, one person in the couple has to come and meet with Fr. Stavros to go over the wedding procedures. Pre-Marital Counseling is also required for weddings at St. John. Beginning in 2015, in addition to the pre-marital counseling done by Fr. Stavros, each couple will be required to participate in a Saturday regional premarital counseling seminar which is now being required by the Metropolis of Atlanta. For people who wish to be married at St. John who are not members anywhere, a substantial fee is imposed for use of the church, thereby encouraging all those who wish to have the sacraments of the church to be members in good standing. Also, the Koumbaro/Koumbara for a wedding must be in good sacramental standing. If they are not members of St. John, they must bring a letter from their parish priest saying that they are in good sacramental standing. Otherwise, there will be a fee imposed as well.

Baptisms

A person who wishes to sponsor a candidate for Baptism or Chrismation must be an Orthodox Christian in good standing and a supporting member of an Orthodox parish. A person may not serve as a Godparent if the Church has not blessed his or her marriage or, if civilly divorced, he or she has not been granted an ecclesiastical divorce, or for any other reason he or she is not in communion with the Orthodox Church. Baptisms may not be performed from during Holy Week, or on any of the Great Feastdays of the Lord.

For people who wish to have a child baptized at St. John who are not members anywhere, a fee is imposed for use of the church, thereby encouraging all those who wish to have the sacraments of the church to be members in good standing. Also, the Godparent must be in good sacramental standing. If they are not members of St. John, they must bring a letter from their parish priest saying that they are in good sacramental standing. Otherwise, there will be a fee imposed as well

Funerals

Funeral services are permitted on any day of the year, except for Sunday and Holy Friday, unless permission is granted by

the Metropolitan. *The Orthodox Church does not allow for cremation.* This is based on Ezekiel's vision of a valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37) and St. Paul's writing that the Body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19) and thus must be treated with dignity even in death and allowed to return to its elements naturally. *The Orthodox Church will not allow a funeral service for someone who has been cremated. Many people have mentioned in their will their desire to be cremated. Please discuss this with Fr. Stavros if there are any questions regarding this, and make the appropriate changes, because Fr. Stavros cannot grant oikonomia (dispensation) and do a funeral service if someone has been cremated.*

Additionally, eulogies offered in the church at a funeral service may only be offered by an ordained Orthodox clergyman. If members of the family wish to offer testimonials, these may be done at the funeral home the night before the funeral or at the makaria luncheon.

Memorials

Memorial services may not be chanted from the Saturday or Lazarus through the Sunday of Thomas, or on any Feastday of the Lord or any Feastday of the Theotokos. *We customarily do not offer memorial services on the 1st Sunday of Lent (Sunday of Orthodoxy) or the 3rd Sunday of Lent (Sunday of the Holy Cross), or the Sunday after September 14. In 2015, the Sundays when NO memorial services will be offered include: March 1 (Sunday of Orthodoxy), March 15 (Sunday of the Holy Cross); April 5 (Palm Sunday); April 12 (Pascha); April 19 (Sunday of St. Thomas); May 31 (Pentecost) and September 20 (Sunday after Holy Cross Day).*

Memorial Services may be scheduled through the church office. Please contact the church at least two weeks in advance of when you want the service. Please let the office know when you call whether you will be providing your own kolyva or whether you wish for the Philoptochos to provide. If the Philoptochos does the kolyva, there is a \$75 charge for this service-checks may be made payable to "St. John Philoptochos". Also, please send the church office all of the names you wish to have commemorated at the memorial service.

Organ Donation

The Orthodox Church allows the faithful to donate organs after death if they wish.

Forty-Day Blessings for babies may be done on any day. The prayers of this service connect the 40 day churching of the baby with the mother of the child (if she is Orthodox) receiving Communion. Thus, if this service is offered on a Sunday, Father Stavros schedules them at 9:30 a.m., prior to the Divine Liturgy, so that the new mother can receive Holy Communion in the context of the Divine Liturgy.

Some Guidelines Unique to our Parish

In line with the guidelines from the Archdiocese provided above, we also have some guidelines for things in our parish that it is helpful to review as we start the new year. The Parish Council has adopted what is below with the approval of Fr. Stavros. Most of these guidelines are old, though a few of them are new. For the “Good of the Order” at our church, we ask that everyone cooperate in following these guidelines. Please read these over carefully and if you have any questions, please address them to the Parish Council or Father Stavros.

PROCEDURES FOR THE OFFICE:

1. The deadline for submitting information for the weekly bulletin is Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m. All submissions must be sent electronically to officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com.
2. The deadline for the Messenger shall be the 10th of the month. As a cost cutting measure we reduced the size of the Messenger, so no full page flyers will be put in. All submissions must be electronically; via email. Simply send in your event information and the office will format it for the publication. officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com
3. Events may be advertised a maximum of two months prior to the event date for the Messenger and four weeks prior for the bulletin.
4. If you wish to see Fr. Stavros or the office staff, you must make an appointment. Also, when meeting with the office staff, or when meeting with Father Stavros on a non-pastoral matter, please be efficient with your time. There is lots of work that goes on in the office and constant interruptions make for little progress. Planned appointments are fine, they are not interruptions.

FUNDRAISERS/HALL USAGE:

1. All fundraisers and events by ministries or church affiliated groups should be scheduled at the August calendar meeting. For those, not scheduled at this meeting; please submit your event request to the Parish Council; via the office email. officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com
2. Please make every effort to clean up the kitchen after your event. No food, trays, utensils, etc., should be left on the counters. Please throw away all trash and at least rinse all dirty dishes, trays, etc. We don't want to attract critters!
3. All sales of tickets and other fundraising items, shall take place at designated tables immediately outside of the foyer and center of the hall. These tables will be preset for your use. Our foyer has become increasingly crowded and we need to maintain clearance per fire code.
4. All contracts for caterers, bands, etc., made in the church name that obligate the church for payment shall be submitted and signed by the Parish Council.

COFFEE HOURS/FUNDRAISERS:

Our time after Sunday Liturgy provides fellowship that we all look forward to and appreciate. This time is often a mix of simple to more elaborate coffee time and also includes fund raisers and more formal luncheons. As we begin a new year we would like to reiterate some procedures and policies. We have a calendar meeting the second Sunday in August to establish the schedule and luncheons that will be considered fund raisers during the year. Each Ministry is asked to give input before this schedule is finalized.

As a Parish Council we discussed that each Ministry should discuss and determine what they bring to Coffee Hour without strict guidelines. With the end goal that our parishioners should not be pressured or asked to give additional money just to receive a cup of coffee and cookie. Luncheons/Fundraisers fall into a different category and will be published in the monthly calendar. If a ministry would like to schedule a luncheon after the calendar has been finalized at the August meeting, they need to contact the Parish Council to have that approved.

Leave the Church in Your Will

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

Small Group Bible Studies

We have FIVE Small Groups that are meeting each week. If you haven't joined a group yet, you may do so at any time.

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.

November Meeting Dates: January 13, 20, 27

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

Location: St. John Greek Orthodox Church in the Administration Building in the meeting room

Group Leader: Father Stavros for the first one but we are going to rotate this among group members. Please email Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com or contact him at 813-394-1038. **We are watching and discussing the video series: The Truth Project.**

One week we watch on chapter and the next week discuss it.

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

For this early morning group, bring your own coffee or breakfast food if you wish—we will not be providing these things.

November Meeting Dates: January 14, 21, 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.

Meeting time: Tuesday evenings from 7:00-8:00 p.m.

November Meeting Dates: January 13, 20, 27

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. (9:30 a.m. for coffee and refreshments)

November Meeting Dates: January 13, 20, 27


Young Adult Group (for adults ages 18-40)

Location: At the home of Betty Katherine and Perry Katsamakis 4301 Tacon St, Tampa, FL 33629

Group Leader: Mary Ann Konstas. Please contact Mary Ann at 813-215-9862 or at mapkonstas@gmail.com.

Meeting Time: Thursday Evenings at 7:30 p.m.

November Meeting Dates: January 8, 15, 22, 28



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Many Are Called, Few are Chosen

by Fr. Stavros

The Parable of the Great Banquet

The Lord said “A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; ¹⁷ and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for all is now ready.’ ¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.’ ¹⁹ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.’ ²⁰ And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ ²¹ So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.’ ²² And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ ²³ And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I tell you, ^[b] none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. For many are called, few are chosen’” Luke 14:16-24

Every year, the passage from Luke 14:16-24 is read two Sundays before Christmas. This day always happens to be the Sunday of our Sunday School Christmas Program, so I rarely preach on this Gospel. This Gospel is very rich with meaning and I wanted to write a few words on it as we enter into the New Year. There is the obvious—we are all invited to the banquet—the banquet of Holy Communion, the banquet of the church, the banquet of the Christian life, ultimately the banquet of eternal life. Everyone is invited. But the people of Israel, they were the chosen, they got the first invitation. In modern context, WE are the chosen, we the Christians, specifically the Orthodox Christians, who have the purest expression of the Christian faith, the richest theology. And then we find excuses, why we cannot attend church, why we cannot express our Christian faith appropriately in our families, in our jobs, etc. The excuses become exceedingly lame, if you will, as we marginalize what is important to go after what is trivial.

A wise theologian once told me that when we stand before God at the Last Judgment, He is not going to ask what we didn’t do, but what we DID do. Every day, we are invited to a banquet—on Sunday, the banquet is the Eucharist. On Monday, the banquet is the opportunity for positive interaction at work, or school, or on the athletic field. What excuses are we using to stay away from the banquet? Every day we are invited to the banquet of prayer and scripture. We are also invited to a banquet of forgiveness, where we forgive and are in turn forgiven. We are invited to the banquet of repentance, where we are continually encouraged to orient our lives toward God. How often are we answering the invitation? How often are we turning down the invitation? How often are we ignoring the invitation? How often are we not opening up the invitation?

Specifically regarding the opportunity to receive Communion at the Eucharistic banquet, this is a banquet that is held every time the Divine Liturgy is held. Every time the priest comes forth from the altar to invite people to Communion, the priest holds chalice in front of his face, so that the people can hear the words “With the fear of God, with faith and with love draw near” as coming from God Himself, merely through the mouth of the priest. This invitation, again, is not an invitation from the priest, but an invitation from the Lord. And this invitation should not be heard in a collective way, but in a PERSONAL way. This is a personal call from God to you.

In the parable, the master of the house was wanting everyone at the banquet—he sent his servant to invite chosen guests. And when the chosen guests turned him down, he told the servants to invite the downtrodden—blind, lame, maimed, poor. When he found out this had already been done, he told the servant to go and COMPEL (not merely ask, but to insist, to beg) people to come in from all over the cities. That is how much he wanted his house filled.

So, come to the banquet of church. Come on time. Come each Sunday. Come planning to commune with God. Hear that invitation to draw near in a personal way. And then go and compel others to come, there is room for everyone at this banquet.

We are chosen by God to be His people. It is not only on our end, that we have chosen God. God has given us the choice to choose Him, He has invited us, He has chosen us. We have to choose to respond. That’s why this scripture passage is sometimes interpreted as “Many are called, few CHOOSE.” Indeed, all are called, but not everyone chooses to answer the invitation. As we begin a new year, resolve to answer the invitation to the Eucharistic banquet at the Divine Liturgy as often as possible. If you are not answering “yes” to this invitation on a regular basis, ask yourself “Why?” The answer to this question and answering the invitation to the banquet are the two most important questions you have to answer in your life. Because to taste the banquet in this life is what is required to taste of it in eternal life. MANY are called. Indeed ALL are called. Not everyone chooses. Not everyone will be chosen for eternal life. If you choose wisely and accept the invitation, to the banquet of the Eucharistic, the banquet of prayer, the banquet of morality, the banquet of service and the other banquets that our Lord is eagerly inviting us to partake in, then we will get the invitation to the ultimate banquet, the banquet of eternal life.

January 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
**Fast Day				1 St. Basil Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Office Closed	2	3
4 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Sunday School Resumes Get Acquainted Sunday	5** Royal Hours 8:00a.m. Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Blessing of Waters 10:30 am	6 Great Vespers for Feast of St. John 6:30 p.m.	7** St. John the Baptist Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:30 a.m. REAL 6:30 p.m.	8 Young at Heart 11:30 am Young Adult Bible Study 7:30 p.m.	9**	10 Sunday School Teachers' Retreat
11 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Vasilopita Sunday GOYA 5:00 p.m.	12 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	13 WBS 9:30 a.m. BSE 6:30 p.m. BSS 7:00 p.m. Parish Council 7:00 p.m.	14** Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. REAL 6:30 p.m.	15 Young Adult Bible Study 7:30 p.m.	16**	17 St. Anthony Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Community Outreach HDF
18 St. Athanasios Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. AHEPA/DOP Mtg.	19 Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Office Closed	20 WBS 9:30 a.m. BSE 6:30 p.m. BSS 7:00 p.m.	21** Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. REAL 6:30 p.m.	22 Young Adult Bible Study 7:30 p.m.	23** GOYA Clearwater Event	24 Gasparilla Children's Parade Fundraiser GOYA Clearwater Event
25 St. Gregory Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday	26 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	27 WBS 9:30 a.m. BSE 6:30 p.m. BSS 7:00 p.m.	28** Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. REAL 6:30 p.m.	29 Young Adult Bible Study 7:30 p.m.	30** Three Hierarchs Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	31 Gasparilla Adult Parade Fundraiser

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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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) 813-394-1038 (Cell)

frstav@gmail.com

Pastoral Assistant: Charlie Hambos

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-843-8471 (Cell)

charlie.hambos@gmail.com

Parish Council:

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Carole Fotopoulos, Vice President 813-982-0947

Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747

Dante Skourellos, Treasurer 813-765-9534

Catherine Mistseas 813-571-0658

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AHEPA:

Gus Paras 813-254-6980

Altar Angels:

Engie Halkias 813-932-5859

Sia Blankenship

Bible Study:

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Bookstore:

Bill Manilkas 813-716-8185

Chanter: Nick Andreadakis 813-516-6081

Choir: Artie Palios, Director 813-831-1294

Jim Leone, Organist 813-254-7844

Community Outreach:

Betty Katherine Katsamakis 813-468-1596

Dance Groups:

H XAPA ΜΑΣ Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

Marina Coundas 813-877-6136

Glendi Jenna Mingledorff 813-610-7365

Panigyri Vanessa Anviles 813-221-2194

Daughter of Penelope:

Edie Kavouklis 813-758-0305

Finance Committee:

George Chagaris 727-420-1920

Food Pantry:

Mick Scharbach 813-458-1620

Gasparilla Parking:

John Kokkas 727-992-4165

GOYA:

Elaine Halkias 813-629-1843

Hope/Joy:

Amy Kafantaris 727-743-1297

Debbie Nicklow 813-690-0671

Jr. Olympics:

Byron Nenos 813-789-0729

Oratorical Festival:

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

Philoptochos:

JoAnn Hartung 727-432-0228

REAL:

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Small Groups:

East Donna Hambos 813-843-8412

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South, Bessie Palios 813-523-0347

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