

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 2015

Mission Statement:

St. John the Baptist 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.

CHRISTOS ANESTI! ALITHOS ANESTI! CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY HE IS RISEN!

Father Stavros' Paschal Sermon

“For every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from You the Father of Lights.” James 1:17

This verse of scripture, James 1:17, is also found in a prayer that is offered at the end of every Divine Liturgy. In Genesis 1:1-5, we read “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of God was moving over the waters, and God said ‘Let there be Light,’ and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.”

From this gift of Light, the first thing God created, came all the other gifts. In the ensuing days of creation, God made the water and the land, the plants and the trees, the sun, moon and stars, the birds and the fish, the animals, and lastly He created us. We are the crowning jewel in His creation because we are created to be like God. How is that? Because God put the Light, the first thing He created, in each of us. We will hear in the Gospel a little later, that this Light is in every person who

comes into the world, that this Light shines in the darkness and no darkness can overtake it.

If there is any darkness in your life, it can be overtaken by the Light of Christ. Sometimes we get so busy with things that we forget, as someone told me recently, that the whole point of the operation is sanctification. We are each on a journey, and God’s intention for our journey is to end up with Him. Each of us makes our respective journey differently—different life experiences, different talents, as unique as each of us.

The blessings that God has so richly poured over us present us with the opportunity for the greatest blessing of all—the ability to repent and change into a more Christ-like person. Life’s struggles hopefully point us toward a need for more of Christ and less of us. Even on the worst day, the Light of Christ can inspire us to press on towards the prize set before us.

I pray that tonight, the Light of Christ will fill you with hope and joy and lighten the heavy burdens we all carry. I pray that the Light of Christ will allow us to see with new eyes—whether it be seeing the faith with new eyes, or life in general, whether it be seeing a relationship, a goal or a challenge, or

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

even our successes. The Light of Christ is what puts gratitude in our hearts, peace in our souls, wisdom in our minds, and kindness in our mouths.

So much of life is spent looking for the perfect gift—just look at what we've made out of Christmas and birthdays. We spend so much effort to find the perfect home, the perfect car, the perfect job, the perfect spouse, the perfect college, and we always end up disappointed, because we find that no home, no car, no job, no spouse, no college and nothing else is perfect. The perfect gifts are the ones you can't put a price on—love, joy, peace, sincerity, patience—these are the perfect gifts. And these gifts cannot be bought or attained on our own. They are made possible through the Light of Christ. And when we falter in any of them, the Light of Christ is what helps us find our way back.

Jesus tells us in the Gospel of Matthew, (18:20) For where two or three gather in His name, there He stands in the midst of them. When two people gather and pray together, they experience a moment of perfection. When many people unite their thoughts, their prayers and their actions, in something that is noble and pure, they experience perfection.

In a moment, you will again receive the Light of Christ. The calendar will flip to a new day—we will leave Lent and enter again the joy of the Resurrection. We will leave today and enter tomorrow, the first day of a new week. And we will celebrate the first day of a new creation, by receiving the first gift that God gave His creation at its beginning—the gift of Light. The challenge for us is, will we see this Light merely as a ritual we Orthodox do each year, or will we receive it as a good and perfect gift? Will the second and third and fourth days of the week be like the second day of creation—an addition to the Light—or will they be as if this first day didn't happen.

We will hear shortly again the verse from Psalm 118:24—This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice in and be glad in it. We are invited to rejoice, reaffirm, renew, and restart. Let us come and receive the Light that no darkness can overtake with gratitude, with conviction and faith in what this Light represents, with commitment to making a new start, with joy in our Lord, and with hope in our eternal future. Come and receive the good and perfect Gift that comes from Above, the unwaning Light of the Resurrected Christ. I pray that it will shine brightly in your life today, tomorrow and throughout this coming year. Come receive the Light from the everlasting Light, and glorify Christ who is risen from the dead.

A Beautiful Holy Week

Christos Anesti! Christ is Risen!

Writing this letter late on the evening of Pascha, I am overwhelmed with joy for the beautiful Holy Week we have just concluded. I hope that you are taking away a sense of spiritual renewal, having relived and reaffirmed what it is we believe as Orthodox Christians. As I reflect on this past week, there were some significant events that merit remarks:

Palm Sunday Crowd - There were between 500-600 people in attendance for the Liturgy on Palm Sunday. This is the largest crowd for Palm Sunday in my 11 Holy Weeks, and many people commented that this was the largest congregation for a Sunday Liturgy in our community's history! The Parish Council decided to bring Fr. Dean Mendrinis in to assist for the Palm Sunday Liturgy and that was a good decision, as it took nearly half hour to distribute Holy Communion with two priests serving. The long Communion lines as well as the time it took to anoint with Holy Unction point to the need for two priests to be at the altar on a regular basis.

Live-Streaming of Services - For the first time ever, all the Holy Week services were live-streamed. We had a larger than ever presence on social media including Facebook and a YouTube channel which captured many of the Holy Week sermons and service highlights. People from around the world tune in to our services. We've had comments from people as far away as China who follow our services. If you are unable to make it to church, you can watch the service live streamed or archived later. You can also catch most of the sermons on YouTube. Thanks to Charlie Hambos and to Tom Pessmier for keeping up with these posts, and to the many photographers who took photos and videos of Holy Week. There were about

100 people who watched the livestream broadcast from the Kourmolis Center on Palm Sunday, as they were unable to get into the church. And another 50+ on Good Friday evening who watched the service from the Kourmolis Center. We set up the Kourmolis like a small church, with a portable icon screen included. On Good Friday evening, for the first time ever, I had to sprinkle the rose water all over the church AND the hall.

Visit of Metropolitan Alexios for Holy Tuesday - His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios presided at the Holy Tuesday evening Bridegroom Service. We had a large number of people come to church that evening to greet our Spiritual Father. The young girls who played the role of the maidens and the altar boys did a beautiful job. The choir sang the very moving Hymn of Kassiane. And the Parish Council hosted a small reception for His Eminence.

Holy Wednesday we filled the church twice - The church filled for both Holy Unction services, with about 600 people attending between the two services. I mention the attendance because there are people who still think we are a "small church." Most definitely, we are not. When EVERYONE comes, we have twice as many people as can fit in our church. We are a growing parish. That is exciting but also challenges us to begin to think in broader terms when it comes to our facilities and our infrastructure.

Holy Thursday Vigil - The church was filled again for Holy Thursday service, which, as it always is, was the most moving service of Holy Week. For the third straight year, we had a Vigil after the service of the 12 Gospels on Holy Thursday

night. From 6:30 p.m. on Holy Thursday until 11:00 a.m. on Good Friday, there were 16.5 hours of continuous prayers and Psalms offered in our church. A big thank you to Charlie Hambos, our pastoral assistant, for organizing this again.

Sunday School Retreat - Our annual Sunday School retreat had over 50 participants. In addition, 25 GOYAns had a mini retreat with Fr. Stavros and helped prepare the eggs, candles, and bay leaves for Good Friday and Holy Saturday. A special thanks to Debbie Nicklow and Amy Kafantaris for organizing the retreat this year, and to the many parents and teachers who lent a hand.

Good Friday and the air conditioning - We had a full church on Good Friday night. And yes, it was hot. We're still trying to figure out what happened. We do know that our air conditioners are old. And the congregation has grown to a point where perhaps the units we have are not adequate to cool the building. By the time you get this issue of the Messenger, hopefully these issues will be identified. This goes back to the comment above, that we are a growing church, and have grown tremendously. But there are some infrastructure issues that are struggling to catch up. This is where STEWARDSHIP is so vital. We need your financial support in order to make needed upgrades and improvements on several fronts, including some things with our physical plant.

The Resurrection Service, in a word, "BEAUTIFUL" - The climax of Holy Week is the Resurrection Service. What a powerful way to complete our Holy Week journey. The church was packed, there were many people outside, the weather was beautiful and allowed us to gather outside again. Our new speaker system (thank you John Demas for your work in identifying our needs, as well as the person to install them, and thank you Young at Heart for your donation of the speakers) allowed our service on Pascha and throughout Holy Week to be heard as never before. Thanks to the Parish Council for hosting a beautiful reception.

Many words of thanks to those who made our Holy Week journey possible:

Charlie Hambos, our pastoral assistant, for his assistance in the services, troubleshooting the livestreaming, the Holy Thursday vigil.

Monica Gjerde, our office manager, for logistical support throughout the week and coordinating everything from ordering candles to supervising the cleaning schedule and SO MUCH more...

Nick Andreadakis and Archie Roussos, our chanter, for their assistance in the many services. As always, their dedication and reverence brought such a beauty and depth to the many complex services. 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. 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. This year was the third year of the "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.

Tom Georgas and all the ushers who assist him, who keep what we are so used to, a great sense of order, which helps contribute immensely to the solemnity of the divine services.

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.

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—even 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.

One Final Note—Holy Week reflects, in my opinion, the church at its best. The greatest church attendance by the most number of people occurs during Holy Week. Imagine the kind of community we could have if this many people were stewards, if this many people attended on a regular basis. Imagine the kind of witness we could give for our faith. Imagine how many people we could help. Imagine the difference we could make. Let's move from imagining to DOING. Let's strive to be that community that we are during Holy Week all year round.

Thank you again for a beautiful and memorable Holy Week!

With love in the Risen Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

St. John the Baptist's Holy Week Photos!





The Party in the Middle of the Party

By Charlie Hambos

There were about 20 wood folding chairs and just a handful were taken. The iconostasis only had the four required icons. The priest had to walk sideways to exit and enter the Royal Doors. The church was over 400 years old and named after the First Martyr Stephen. A little bit after the Liturgy started, 20 preschoolers and their teachers walked in and sat down on the floor. The feast was Mid-Pentecost in the city of Thessaloniki. Celebrating the feast would never be the same.

The Feast of Mid-Pentecost is the mid-point between Pascha and Pentecost. This year (2015), it is celebrated on May 6. The period in the church calendar is called the Pentecostarion. It is the 50-day period, beginning with the Resurrection of Christ at Pascha and ending with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This time of year may be more commonly known as the time of the year when no longer kneel at the consecration of the gifts during the Divine Liturgy. It is a special time during the year, where we are continually encouraged to kindle the Light of the Resurrection in our heart, mind and especially, our soul. Although we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ every Sunday, this is a time where we celebrate it every single day. "Christ is Risen" is sung at every service. Our Church in her wisdom, has a feast in the middle of a festal period in order to remind us why we are still feasting.

At the Feast of Mid-Pentecost, we read in the Gospel Passage of the day "in the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the Temple, and taught (John 7:14)." The feast spoken about is the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. This feast commemorates the Israelites wandering in the desert for forty years. During those forty years, they lived in tents and worshipped in the temporary tabernacle. The feast itself is the mid-point between the Jewish Passover, which commemorates God's deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptian pharaoh, and the Jewish Pentecost, which celebrates the Israelites arrival into the Promised Land. The Church thus celebrates the New Passover at Pascha (which is Greek for Passover). Since Christ was crucified, buried and rose again He is the main ingredient and only ingredient in this New Passover. It is this New Passover where we celebrate humanity's deliverance from the bonds of death.

The feast of mid-Pentecost is situated between the Sunday of the Paralytic and the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman. The hymn of the feast is the following: "In the midst of this Feast, O Savior, give Thou my thirsty soul to drink of the waters of true worship; for Thou didst call out to all, saying: Whosoever is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Wherefore, O Christ our God, Fountain of life, glory to Thee." On the Sunday of the Paralytic, we remember Christ healing the paralytic. The problem however was that Christ performed the miracle on the Sabbath, which was a day of no work and we must assume that no life-changing miracles were allowed to be performed either. They weren't supposed to work because the day was dedicated to the Lord and they were to focus on worshipping God. Not only were they mad at Christ because of what he did, they were

also mad at the healed man because he was carrying the mattress which he had been laying on paralyzed for 38 years.

When Christ was in the Temple, he said this, speaking about the healing of the Paralytic, "One work I did, and you are all amazed at it. Moses ordered you to practice circumcision—not that it began with him, it goes back to the patriarchs—and you circumcise on the Sabbath. Now if someone can be circumcised on the Sabbath, so that the Law of Moses is not broken, why are you angry with me for making someone completely healthy on a Sabbath? Do not keep judging according to appearances; let your judgment be according to what is right." Ouch! That hurts. That must have hurt the crowd too. Did he just say, "Do not keep judging according to appearances; let your judgment be according to what is right."? Let's all repeat that on a daily basis.

In the hymn of Mid-Pentecost we hear, "In the midst of this Feast, O Savior, give Thou my thirsty soul to drink of the waters of true worship." True worship, is the worship of Christ. Let us not bury Christ in the worship of other things. Especially, when it comes to worship in our faith. The Orthodox Christian faith is filled with so many tools of worship and traditions. These are not meant to be stumbling blocks to the worship of Christ, they are supposed to enlighten and enhance the worship of Christ.

The reason the hymn mentions water is because, on the following Sunday, the church celebrates the Sunday of the Samaritan woman. Jesus Christ met with the Samaritan woman, at the well. He asked her for a drink of water. Jesus once again pushed the boundaries of his Jewish faith because the Samaritans were not allowed to be associated with Jews. After she questions why Christ is asking her for a drink, Jesus responds, "If you only knew what God is offering and who is offering and who it is that is saying this to you, 'Give me something to drink,' you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water." She responds, "You have no bucket, how will you get this living water?" Jesus replies, "Whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again; but no one who drinks the water that I shall give him will ever be thirsty again: the water I shall give him will become of him a spring of water up for eternal life."

Christ is the living water. Mid-Pentecost reveals to all of us and the entire world that Christ is the physician of our souls and bodies. The following excerpt is from St. Theophan the Recluse, speaking about the Feast of Mid-Pentecost. May we all worship Christ in a way that is true and right and may we all together, drink of the spring of life.

"On Mid-Pentecost we hear the call of the Lord: "Whosoever thirsteth, let him come to Me and drink" (John 7:37). If this is so, then let us all run to Him. Whatever you thirst for - so long as it is not contrary to the spirit of the Lord - you will find relief in Him. If you thirst for knowledge, run to the Lord, for He

is the one and only light, enlightening every man. If you thirst for cleansing from sin and quenching of the flames of your conscience, run to the Lord, for He tore asunder the handwriting of our sins upon the Cross. If you thirst for peace in your heart, run to the Lord, for He is the treasury of all good, Whose abundance will teach you to forget all deprivations and despise all earthly good, so as to be filled with Him alone. If you need strength, He is almighty. If you need glory, His glory surpasses the world. If you desire freedom, He gives true freedom. He will resolve all of our doubts, loose the bonds of our passions, dispel all our troubles and difficulties, will enable us to over-

come all obstacles, temptations and intrigues of the enemy, and will make smooth the path of our spiritual life. Let us all run to the Lord!"

The image of the children sitting on the floor in that tiny church on the feast of Mid-Pentecost in Thessaloniki will never be forgotten. May we continue to be enamored by our Creator, like children in the midst of something new and beyond our comprehension.

Will you join our Prayer Team?

This Lent, we tried something new in our parish. We established a prayer team. While we hoped to get 40 people to join the prayer team, the number presently stands at 135. It was originally thought that this program would end at the end of Lent. However, so many people want the program to continue that I've decided to continue the prayer team on a permanent basis going forward. And thus, I'm inviting anyone who wishes to join the team to do so.

What does a Prayer Team do? Our prayer team will commit to praying for our church, our church leadership and our congregation every day. Father Stavros and Charlie will pray for the members of the prayer team on a daily basis. Father Stavros will also send a spiritual reflection each day to the prayer team.

How do I join our Prayer Team? Just email me at frstav@gmail.com saying "Dear Father Stavros, I'd like to join the Prayer Team" and sign your name. I'll send you a short email back confirming that I've gotten your email and have added you to my prayer list. It's that easy!

Is the Prayer Team going to be published anywhere? NO. I will keep a list of our prayer team so that I can pray for you. If you like, you can tell people that you are part of our prayer team and encourage others to join as well. The list of names will be known only to Fr. Stavros and Charlie.

What should I pray for? Pray for our church. Pray for Fr. Stavros, our priest, and his family. Pray for Charlie, our pastoral assistant, and his family. Pray for each of our ministries and our parish leadership. Pray for guidance, for healing, and for forgiveness, for yourself and our parishioners. Say thank you to God. Whatever you are moved to pray for on any given day, do so, just include our church each day.

I hope you will consider joining our team!

+Fr. Stavros

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.

RUSSELL A. SIBLEY, JR.

Business Disputes & Litigation
Commercial Real Estate & Capital Transactions
Business Entity Formation & Maintenance
Exceptional Student Education

----- LAWYER -----

SIBLEY, PL
LAW FIRM

620 E Twigg Street - Suite 204
Tampa, FL 33602
Tel. 813-223-7808 Fax. 813-936-4996

Liturgical Schedule for May 2015

Sunday, May 3

Sunday of the Paralytic

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

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (Nicholas Alsina, Antonio Bavaro, Jonah Blankenbaker, Yianni Trimikliniotis, Gabriel Fallon)

Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas

Coffee Hour: Sunday School

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Katherine Sakkis & Donna Hambos; Ambassador: Donna Trakas; Caller: Martha Kapetan;

Get Acquainted: Christy Pessemier and Tom Pessemier

Tuesday, May 5

St. Irene

Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, May 7

St. John the Theologian & St. Arsenios (Evening Liturgy)

Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 10

Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

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: Mike Trimis, George Mistseas, Chris Kavouklis

Coffee Hour: AHEPA and Daughters of the Penelope

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Marisa Panopoulos and Theo Panopoulos; Ambassador: Debbie Kavouklis; Caller: Helen Cauthorn

Friday, May 15

Father Stavros' Anniversary of Ordination

Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 17

Sunday of the Blind Man

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

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark (John Karamitsanis, Lukas Karamitsanis, Andrew Mellon-Lynn, Dominic Garcia, Demetri Karounos, Grayson Borgeas, Peter Chandler)

Ushers: Florin Patrasciou, Kevin Fentress, Tammy Christou

Coffee Hour: Philoptochos

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Skip Higdon and Toula Courialis; Ambassador: Vanessa Aviles; Caller: Bessie Palios

Tuesday, May 19

Leave-Taking of Pascha (Evening Liturgy)

Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 21

Ascension/Sts. Constantine and Helen

Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 24

Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

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

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve

Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, Perry Katsamakis, Peter Theophanous

Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Christy Pessemier and Tom Pessemier; Ambassador: Genie Carter; Caller: Carole Fotopoulos

Saturday, May 30

Saturday of the Souls

Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 31

Holy Pentecost

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Kneeling Vespers 11:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke

Ushers: Gregory Tisdale, John Christ, George Trimikliniotis

Coffee Hour: Visitation Committee

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Helen Cauthorn and Kalliope Chagaris; Ambassador: Julie Palios; Caller: Vickie Peckham

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. 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 12 is on the Feast of Pentecost (this year May 31), 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 12-May 31.**

Sunday, May 3 - Sunday of the Paralytic - 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.

Tuesday, May 5 - Feast of St. Irene - St. Irene was a martyr of the 4th century. Many miracles have been attributed to her. She is the patron saint of law enforcement officers.

Thursday, May 7 - Feast of St. John the Theologian/St. Arsenios - Evening Liturgy to be celebrated. The feast of St. John the Theologian and St. Arsenios is celebrated May 8—we will have a Divine Liturgy on Thursday, May 7, at 6:00 p.m. St. John the Theologian is the author of the fourth Gospel, as well as the Epistles of St. John and the book of Revelation. St. Arsenios is was a monk in the 5th Century.

Sunday, May 10 - Sunday of the Samaritan Woman - Christ talks about the water of eternal life which will never make us thirst again. The woman here is St. Photini.

Friday, May 15 - 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 17th 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 Wednesday, May 15, in thanksgiving for 17 years of priestly ministry. Please come and join him in prayer that day.

Sunday, May 17 - Sunday of the Blind Man - 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.

Tuesday, May 19 - 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 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).

Thursday, May 21 - 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.

Thursday, May 21 - Ascension marks the feast where Christ ascended to heaven, 40 days after the Resurrection, thus completing His earthly ministry.

Sunday, May 24 - Sunday of the Holy Fathers - Of the 1st Ecumenical Council. We pay homage to the collective triumph of the Church over false doctrine.

Saturday, May 30- Saturday of the Souls - There are four Saturdays set aside during the year for us to honor our loved ones who have fallen asleep. One of them is the Saturday before Pentecost, this year, May 30. We will have Liturgy and a memorial service that day. Please bring Kolyva (boiled wheat) along with a list of names of those whom you would like to have commemorated (separate sheet provided).

Sunday, May 31 - Pentecost commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles fifty days after Pascha, 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!!!. A special Vespers Service will be held after Liturgy on Pentecost (May 31), where three prayers will be offered, asking for the Holy Spirit to descend upon us as we mark this feastday. As a reminder, we do NOT kneel in church until AFTER the Liturgy on Pentecost (we do not kneel at the Liturgy on Pentecost) 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."

Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism - Klairé Aspasia Pediredla, daughter of Pavan Pediredla and Elana Filoqi, was baptized on Sunday, March 29. Godparents were Peter and Angie Quintas. Na Sas Zisi!

Chrismation - Dwight (Arsenios) Forde was chrismated on Saturday, April 4. Godfather is Perry Katsamakis. Welcome to the faith!

Junior Olympics - Volunteers Needed

St. John the Baptist will be hosting our annual Sunshine State Junior Olympics on June 19-21. This event brings over 200 GOYAns (teenagers) from all over Florida to our parish for a weekend of athletics and spirituality. Byron Nenos 813-789-0729, 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!

Graduates - Class of 2015

If you have a student who is graduating from high school or college or graduate school, please contact the church office by Sunday, May 10 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.

DID YOU KNOW...

St. John the Baptist celebrates our 60th Anniversary next year? Soon we will be forming a planning committee to memorialize the rich history of our beloved church!

Anyone interested in learning how to chant?

We are looking for people who are interested in learning how to chant, helping to chant at the liturgy this summer, learning how to chant at the sacraments and learning the other services of the church. There will be a short meeting after church on May 3 (Sunday) after liturgy to determine what interest there is in learning how to chant and then to set a few dates for some instruction based on who is interested and when they are available. Please see Fr. Stavros or Charlie Hambos if you are interested.

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, May 16 and Saturday, June 20.

Get Acquainted Sunday, May 3



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 3.



GOYA

Meeting - The GOYA Meeting for May will be Sunday, May 17 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

Ministry of Mothers Sharing (MOMS) - will meet in the Nursery at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, May 4 and Monday 18. This is a ministry for mothers to gather together to form a network of mutual spiritual support. Is it for mothers with wisdom to share and mothers who are searching for answers and meaning in the vocation of motherhood. Our mission is to provide Biblical encouragement and support to women as they begin their journey of motherhood. Please contact Lindsey Skourellos (813) 503-7845 and Mary Ann Konstas (813) 215-9862 with questions.

Men's Basketball - On Tuesday nights at 8:00 p.m. the Kourmolis Center is open for men's basketball pick up games. If you are interesting in joining the games, please contact Perry Katsamakias at perrykatsamakias@gmail.com or Jimmy Konstas at dkonstas@gmail.com or just come to the gym and join a team!
No skills necessary.

~Philoptochos News~

The **PHILOPTOCHOS ANNUAL SPIRITUAL RETREAT** was held on March 20-22 at the Diakonia Retreat Center in Salem South Carolina. Seven ladies from St. John the Baptist journeyed to South Carolina to take part in the Retreat with the theme "Growing Spiritually in America Today; what it means to be spiritual versus secular." Fr. Panayiotis Papageorgiou, Prot-priest, Holy Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church in Marietta, Georgia and the newly designated Priest Advisor for the Atlanta Metropolis Philoptochos was the Retreat leader. Fr. Panayiotis spoke of his spiritual journey to Theosis and Priesthood and the relevance of knowing Our Lord and hearing His plan for us; a topic that sparked lively discussion among the sixty women from the Metropolis Churches with several guests from other denominations attending; we even had some exercises classes presented by our very own Vanessa Aviles. The Diakonia Center was the perfect spot for a beautiful weekend to Praise the Lord, give thanksgiving for His wonderful mercies and gifts to us and especially to grow in our Journey to Theosis!

Philoptochos End of the Year Brunch

When: Sunday, June 7, 2015

Time: 12:30 p.m.

Where: At the Palma Ceia Golf and Country Club
1601 S. MacDill Avenue

Cost: \$25 Includes all Food, Drinks, and Gratuity

All Members and Non Members are invited as well as your Husbands and or Friends!

Please Join us as we celebrate "The Year of Philoptochos on the Move" and reflect on all our beautiful events and projects. Fulfilling our Mission: "To Help the Less fortunate and follow Christ's commandment: Love One Another as I have Loved You"

*RSVP by June 1, 2015 To Cindy Xenick 813-985-2636 or Email: gatormomx@aol.com

Philoptochos 2015 Membership Drive! We are on the MOVE!

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

Membership Drive: January Thru May, 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 Philoptochos...

Name _____ Date _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Cell _____ E-mail address _____

April Thank You Notes

Greek Independence Day Luncheon - Thanks to the generous donation of the Kalojiannis Family, who again donated all the proceeds from our Greek Independence Day Luncheon (March 15), we raised \$1,000 for our church, had some great food, and honored our ethnic holiday. Thank You!

Successful Lenten Retreat - 40 Adults from our parish and surrounding communities attended the Adult Lenten Retreat on Saturday, March 21. The subject of the Retreat was "Philippians 4:13: I Can Do All Things Through Christ Who Strengthens Me." 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.

Hope/Joy - Christos Anesti! Alithos! Anesti!

Amy and I would like to thank all who attended the Great and Holy Friday Youth Retreat. It was a wonderful day spent with our church family preparing for the Triumphant Resurrection!

A big thank you goes out to all the children who attended the Great and Holy Friday Retreat. The attendance was amazing and the children were all well behaved, respectful and eager to participate! Their day was filled with crafts, fellowship, worship and reflection on the Holy Week events with 5 short lessons. The children also participated in decorating the kouvouklion by placing a flower on it.

Father Stavros, thank you for leading us in prayer at the foot of the Cross during the Service of Royal Hours and for your continual support throughout the retreat. Seeing the children and their parents gathered together in prayer and venerating the Body of Christ on the Cross was truly an inspiring way to begin the Great and Holy Friday retreat.

Charlie, thank you for teaching a lesson on the meaning of the Epitaphios.

Thank you to the teachers of the mini lessons -- Vickie, Donna, Maria K., Bessie, Peggy and Maria X-- and their Goya assistants. They each taught a short lesson on the meaning of Holy Week and of the Passion of Christ. The children took home a small treasure from each of the lessons.

Thank you to all the volunteers -- Arty, Donna, Bessie, Genie, Vickie, Kara, Maria X. -- and to Angelina Krinos who helped the children with the crafts.

Thank you Tammy and to all the parents who helped set out lunch and helped with the set up and clean up of the retreat!

Finally, thank you to all the parents for bringing your children to the Great and Holy Friday Retreat. Our children are our future...together let's continue to guide and teach them our Orthodox Faith! Thank you for helping us make the Great and Holy Friday Youth Retreat a success!

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!,

Debbie and Amy,
Hope & Joy



Computer Repair
Paul Assimiadis
WILL COME TO YOU!
Good Work
Great Price
813.220-8609
passimia@gmail.com

Katherine Sakkis, CRS
Fine Homes Specialist

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



Tel. 813-309-1073
E-mail: KSakkis@gmail.com
www.BestTampaRealEstate.com

AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – May 2015



AHEPA Florida Legislative Day

On March 27 the Ahepans and Daughters from throughout the state went to Tallahassee to participate in the FIRST ANNUAL AHEPA DAY AT THE FLORIDA CAPITOL. This event was created and organized by our Tampa Ahepa Chapter. The group of 20 Ahepans and Daughters included a group from Tampa. The Tampa members attending were Gus Paras, Marina Paras, Gerry Galovic, Debbie Galovic, Ron Myer, Jenny Paloumpis and Tula Quinn. We returned from Tallahassee tired but pleased and happy. Everything went very well. It was a great day with a lot of HAPPY Ahepans and Daughters at the end of the day. Our reception by the legislature was amazing. We were welcomed at 8:45 a.m. by Rep. Dana Young, House Majority Leader, who spoke to the entire group in a special conference room reserved for us to use the entire day(see photo). Rep Young, from Tampa, was our sponsor and recognized us from the House Floor later in the day saying nice words about AHEPA. This recognition was captured on the official video of the House and we have a 30 second clip of the event which is posted on

YouTube. We then broke up in groups and visited various legislators. We saw over 20 legislators/aides and of course the entire House Chamber knew we were there because of our introduction from the House floor by House Majority Leader Young. Our last visit of the day was to the Senate President's office. Our day was completed at approximately 4:00 p.m.. We have received National recognition for this first ever visit to the Florida Capitol. But most importantly, many of our members are looking forward to next year. South Florida is looking to get a bus and include younger members as well, next year. I believe that we have started a new effort by AHEPA and the Daughters to make our work known and hopefully it will grow and make AHEPA visible to the wider community. As a consequence of this I look forward to projects, funded by state cultural organizations.

AHEPA SCHOLARS

The AHEPA FAMILY including AHEPA Lycurgus Chapter 12 and Daughters of Penelope Alcmaeon Chapter 167 have awarded scholarships to deserving students since 2010. The students who have received scholarships are designated as Ahepa Scholars.

AHEPA SCHOLAR UPDATE – BREAKING NEWS UPDATE!

The first Ahepa Scholar Update was from **Imad Hanhan** and just as I was preparing this issue of AHEPA news, I received word that not only had Imad been accepted at Purdue University and agreed to go there for his graduate studies in aeronautics and astronautics but he has received a National Science Foundation Fellowship. The fellowships are highly competitive and recognize outstanding graduate students and their demonstrated potential "for significant achievements in science and engineering." More than 16,000 students nationwide applied for the fellowships. Only 2,000 students were selected. Winners get three years of financial support within a five-year fellowship period in the amount of \$34,000 each year.

The following is a quote from Imad who was a recipient of the Ahepa Family Scholarship in 2011.

"I feel so honored to have received this National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship. I've worked so hard in my research assistantship, and have been working towards this fellowship for so long. I can't believe it's now become a reality, I am an NSF Fellow!!!!"

Congratulations to Imad from the Ahepa family. We and the entire Tampa community are proud of his accomplishments.

CITRUS DISTRICT 2 CONVENTION –

The District Convention of Ahepa/DOP Citrus District 2 will be held in Pasco County June 11-13, 2015 at The Marriott Residence Inn Lutz, FL. As part of the convention, the following events are open to the public.

June 12th - The "Greek Night" Dinner Dance will be held at St. George Greek Orthodox Church New Port Richey, FL.

June 13th - The "Grand Banquet" Dinner Dance will be held at The Spartan Manor New Port Richey, FL.

Contact Patty Didik at (727)862-7505 or didigolf2@Verizon.net for information and tickets.

AHEPA FAMILY TRADITIONAL EASTER PICNIC

AHEPA Family members including AHEPANS, Daughters of Penelope, Maids of Athena, Sons of Pericles and their family and friends, Forever Young of Tampa members and guests including Saint John Greek Orthodox Church members attended the AHEPA FAMILY TRADITIONAL EASTER PICNIC at Lopez Park in Tampa on Easter Sunday. Over 90 members and guests, young and old, were present to enjoy the festivities and delicious Greek food. Before the meal, Nick Andreadakis led us all in the singing of Christos Anesti (Christ Is Risen) and The Lord's Prayer. The meal included roasted whole Greek Lamb, Greek lemon potatoes, Greek Salad and appetizers including Greek sausages and Greek desserts and much more. Red Easter Eggs were enjoyed, as well as, the Greek custom of cracking the eggs. The Preparation crew included Gerry Galovic, Ron Myer, Peter Ketchum and Gus and Nicholas Paras. The cooking crew included the Prep crew plus Pete Ketchum, Charles Myer, Michael Galovic and Chris Limberopoulos. The ladies prep group included Marina Paras and Elena Paras. Almost everyone that attended contributed something to the event. Thank you all for making this such a memorable event and pitching in to help. The festivities ended with traditional singing of folk songs and Magda Myer doing Greek Dancing lessons and everyone joining in to the dancing. All in all it was a day that transported us to a small Greek village and the traditions that existed. Many tears bore witness to our remembering our families long past and the good times we all had.

JUST SAY YES!

We will continue with part ten of a monthly article 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.

One Yes at a Time

Donna Otto writes: As far as I can tell, once Mary had said yes to the angel, she kept on saying yes to whatever God was doing in her life and her home. She said, "Yes, I'll go to Bethlehem with my husband even though I'm very pregnant." She said, "Yes, I'll settle for a stable." And "Yes I'll agree to let all those grungy shepherds see my newborn." Much later she said, "Yes, I'll let my Son leave home to be an itinerant preacher." And "Yes, I'll be with Him no matter what – even at the foot of a cross."

The life of Mary shows that great things, important things, always begin with someone saying yes to God, and then moving along one yes at a time. When you keep in mind that your whole life is a holy ground, you keep yourself open to the wonderful opportunities He has planned for you....

There will be sacrifices as well as surprises when you choose to say yes to God – sacrifices of your time, of your plans, and sometimes of your dearly held dreams...

But...God's intention overall is to bless you – in your life as a woman and in your life at home. He has already blessed you. He has promised to dwell in you just as you dwell in Him. And He has indeed favored you among women by giving you a vital part in the process of bringing about His kingdom on earth.

Once you say yes to the Lord, you won't know exactly where you end up, but you can know you'll always find your way home.

A Mom's Version of I Corinthians 13 - in honor of Mothers' Day

"Grace and mercy is not your friend today!"

Those are the words I shouted this morning as the hustle and bustle started. Then I remembered that in everything I do, even in being a mother, I have to do it in love.

And now these three remain; faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." I Corinthians 13:13

If I live in a house of spotless beauty with everything in its place, but have not love, I am a housekeeper, not a homemaker.

If I have time for waxing, polishing, and decorative achievements, but have not love, my children learn cleanliness, not godliness.

If I scream at my children for every infraction, and fault them for every mess they make, but have not love, my children become people-pleasers, not obedient children.

Love leaves the dust in search of a child's laugh. Love smiles at the tiny fingerprints on a newly cleaned window. Love wipes away the tears before it wipes up the spilled milk. Love picks up the child before it picks up the toys.

Love accepts the fact that I am the ever-present "mommy", the taxi-driver to every childhood event, the counselor when my children fail or are hurt.

Love crawls with the baby, walks with the toddler, and runs with the child, then stands aside to let the youth walk into adulthood.

Before I became a mother I took glory in my house of perfection. Now I glory in God's perfection of my children.

All the projections I had for my house and my children have faded away into insignificance, And what remain are the memories of my kids.

Now there abides in my home scratches on most of the furniture, dishes with missing place settings, and bedroom walls full of stickers, posters and markings, But the greatest of all is the Love that permeates my relationships with my children.

-By: Jim Fowler

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival

Congratulations to our young people! We are so proud of you!

On Sunday, March 22, we held our Parish Level St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. The Junior Division Speech participants included Sophia Crassas, Nicholas Katzaras, Artemis Xenick and Natalia Pessemier. The Senior Division Speech Participants included Katina Smith, Nedi Ferekides, Arianna Krinos, Larissa Krinos and Eleni Pessemier. John Brigham Sibley and Sophia Krinos participated in the Junior Essay portion of the Festival. The Senior Essay participants were Katherine Chase Sibley and Mihail Kaburis. Artemis Xenick, Natalia Pessemier, Katina Smith and Nedi Ferekides were the speech finalists. Sophia Krinos and Mihail Kaburis were the essay finalists. They participated at the District Competition at St. Stefanos Greek Orthodox Church in St. Petersburg on Saturday, March 28. A special thank you to our judges—Irene Sakelson Hoffman, Gary Ward, Chris Poulos, Brett Mourer, Dr. John Christ and Sandy Pappas 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 on May 3.

St. Paul writes, “An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules” (2 Timothy 2:5). Discuss the virtue of honesty in a time when cheating in school, sports, and other activities is reported more and more.

By Nicholas Katzaras

Have you ever wondered why people cheat or lie when it seems they really shouldn't have to? Let's say a child has a test coming up and the teacher gives him some homework to prepare him for the test. He goes home and instead of trying to figure out the answers he turns on his phone and asks Google or Siri. He fills in all the correct answers and turns in the homework. Do you think that when the test is placed in front of him, he will be able to figure out the answers when he didn't figure out the answers to his homework himself? I don't. I think he will probably do very bad on the test, because he did not put in a little time to study. These kind of actions are becoming the common theme especially in the recent years with all the technology around us. However in Proverbs 13:4; it says - “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and [hath] nothing : but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat”. So basically this verse is saying that those who desire to do nothing or be lazy have nothing and the people who are diligent will be made wealthy or joyful. Before people cheat on homework or any other academics, I think they should think about how that it can affect their future. Cheating trains one to be lazy and to rely on someone else. If people would put some time into their task's they would eventually be rewarded with a college degree and hopefully, have a life that is a joy to wake up to every day.

One person that I have noticed that seems to never cheat is Father Stavros, our priest. He does pretty much the same service every Sunday. I think of him as an athlete for Christ. Does he ever take shortcuts during a church service or “cheat”? Although I don't know the Liturgy well enough to judge how a priest conducts it properly, I notice that Father always adds extra prayers during Lent and the services seem much longer. I am sure this can be fatiguing both physically and mentally. Imagine if he didn't feel like spending time with people during the sacrament of confession and just hurried them along as they were baring their souls to him. Or if he decided to race through Communion and not bother to ask their names as the servants of God? I can't even imagine that.

In the secular world of athletics, I'm sure most of you have heard about the Patriots and how they may have deflated footballs in order to beat the Colts for the AFC championship.

Now, it's not yet proven that someone on the team deflated the footballs, but just the intent seems very deceitful. In Mark 4:19 it says; And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. In the Patriots case, they may have won the game untruthfully. There have been many other circumstances where people have cheated in football but, the most famous sport for cheating and lying is baseball. Major league baseball players have been taking sports enhancing drugs for many years now. Some famous players that lied and were caught taking drugs were Sammy Sosa, Barry Bonds and most recently Alex Rodriguez. These iconic players were looked up to by many children, including myself. Unfortunately, what did they do? They enhanced their playing abilities by taking drugs. I think it's sad that they took drugs to help them achieve the fame that they wanted, but when they were caught, they let millions of people down. This is what it says in 2 Corinthians 4:2 “But have you renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God”. Basically, this verse is telling you not to be sneaky or dishonest, but to be open and truthful. I think before we, as Christians try to do something sneaky or dishonest, we should try to remember that God is always watching us. In these athlete's circumstances, the whole world is a too.

Personally, I have played almost every sport there is. I've played baseball, basketball, tennis, golf and soccer. I have only witnessed minimal cheating in golf, but that's about it. However, I have not cheated before in any sport that I've played, but I have peeked in a test book before. There are many verses in the Bible that explain cheating and how it can consume the human heart. I am only human, but I know that still that is no real excuse. It's hard to never in your life cheat in academics, but I guess its possible. In the end of this speech, I hope you grasped the significance of cheating and lying, because nowadays us Orthodox Christians, along with many other people, have to fight harder than ever.

Nicholas Katzaras is the son of Stefan and Kara Katzaras and is in 8th grade.

St. Paul writes, “An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules” (2 Timothy 2:5). Discuss the virtue of honesty in a time when cheating in school, sports, and other activities is reported more and more.

By Natalia Pessemier

A wise man once said, “One lie can tarnish a thousand truths.” Cheating is a choice some people make through their desire to be more than what think they can be. In society today, dishonesty has almost become the standard. What many don’t realize is that cheating comes with consequences that could change the way people see you permanently.

The recent New England Patriot deflate-gate is a good example of this deceptive practice. Although the Patriots players and coach deny cheating, it’s been proven that someone on the Patriot’s staff deflated 11 out of the 12 footballs in order to make the balls easier to catch and throw. Shortcuts were definitely taken to win the game that would lead them to the Super Bowl forty nine. Where did it get them? Yes, they did win the Super Bowl, but will anyone be fully proud of them for it? Will they be proud of themselves? Often times the person being dishonest feels so bad later they end up giving up all they worked hard for because of the guilt from their actions. Proverbs 11:1 plainly tells us, “The LORD detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him.”

I know that I myself have been tempted to cheat in school where I have to work hard and earn good grades. On a test, on homework, sometimes even tempted to help a friend cheat because I know how frustrating it feels to not know the answer to a difficult question. What always stops me is thinking about a time I was dishonest before and where it got me. I think of how disappointed I would make my family and teachers. I think of how I would feel and how terrible that queasy gut feeling is when you know you did something wrong. But most of all, I think of how heartbroken God would feel when he saw my choice not to be honest and do the right thing. Statistics show that cheating among high school students has risen dramatically during the past 50 years. Modern society has encouraged such behavior with all the inappropriate shows on T.V. and

famous people who aren’t the best role models today. What the world doesn’t realize, is we preserve the chaos of cheating popularized on TV and the Internet by letting children and teens watch and listen to the shows people now call “entertainment”.

Honesty is such an important trait to have in life. The three main characteristics a happy family must have are love, faithfulness, and spirituality. What would a family be if there was no honesty? In James 5:12, it is written, “But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.” What this verse means to me is that what you say needs to be the truth, and if it is the truth, you do not need to swear by heaven, by the earth, or by oath because God knows if it is honest. Honesty in families creates bonds and trust that lies could never create. □

Many of the martyrs chose to be faithful to God even though they were tempted not to be. We hear countless stories from our church history about rulers and tyrants telling the martyrs to renounce God, but the martyrs did not turn their back on Him. My own patron saint is Saint Natalia who was martyred along with her husband Saint Adrian. The two had many chances to give up God and worship false idols, but both saints refused fearlessly, knowing and understanding God would soon reward them for their complete faith in Him.

They model for us how faithfulness can fulfill us, even when being tortured. Honesty is such a pure and beautiful thing, and it is important never to demolish it with the evil of cheating. In this day and age, it gets overlooked as an important character trait too often. We must strive to go against the statistics and change them along with the world’s influences in the media. Proverbs 28:20 tells us, “Honest people will live a full, happy life.”

Natalia Pessemier is the daughter of Tom and Christy Pessemier and is in 8th grade.

Malala Yousafzai is an inspirational example of fighting fearlessly for a noble cause in spite of threats against her life. Discuss a young saint or person from the bible who illustrates such courage. By Sophia Crassas

Malala is not just a name. Malala is a symbol of fearlessness. Malala is a sister to humanity. But more amazing than her unwavering commitment to quality education for all children of the world, is her Christ like sacrifice and she isn’t even Christian.

On October 9, 2012, a Taliban gunman boarded the bus Malala was on with her classmates. He demanded “who is Malala?” She boldly shouted: “I AM MALALA!” Malala was then shot in the head by the gunman. She, like Christ who willingly went to the cross to die, willingly took the shot. She fearlessly accepted her fate. Malala was more concerned about her fellow students who were on the bus than herself. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “For I know the plans I have for you, declared the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

The Taliban thought that by shooting this young protesting women everyone would be silenced. Instead, Malala miraculously lived through her injuries, proving the words of St. Matthew 19:26, “With God all things are possible.” And in another scripture from Psalms 149:4 it says, “For the Lord takes delight in his people, he crowns the humble with salvation.” The fruition of this passage is truly evident when you consider Malala was the youngest person ever to receive the Noble Peace Prize at six years of age.

How many of us could endure what Malala endured with the love and forgiveness she has shown the world? Christ said on the cross, “Forgive them for they know not what they do.” Luke 23:34. Malala lives this implausible forgiveness every day of her life. How did Malala learn the love that Christ

taught if she is by birth a Muslim? I believe this stems from her first passion; education.

Born into an ordinary family in 1997 in Mingora, Pakistan, Malala thrived best in school. Education opened her mind and allowed her to not be brought down by ignorance. Her father, an educator, is her biggest inspiration. In her book, Malala states, "My father ran a school. It was a humble place with nothing more than blackboards and chalk and it was next to a smelly river. But to me it was paradise."

As a thirteen year old, I am amazed by this. Personally I think of how much I dread hearing the alarm go off and then having to get ready for school – it feels like such a chore! I have to admit, after reading her biography I almost feel guilty because I attend a beautiful air conditioned school with desks, a library

full of books and even a computer lab. Malala inspires me to remember this and feel more grateful.

In a culture that glorifies rock stars, actors, and athletes, it seems timely that a young woman of such small stature and mighty spirit has captured the attention of the world. But now that we know Malala's story, her passion, her struggle, we too can be Malala and practice gratitude each day for free public education. This last quote is by Mother Teresa. She said, "The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service and the fruit of service is peace."

Sophia Crassas is the daughter of Alkis and Aime Crassas and is in 7th grade.

Essay Title: Honesty, Why It Matters In the Modern World
Topic #2: The virtue of honesty when cheating is reported more and more.
By Brigham Sibley

Despite what years of television, movies, and the internet tell the youth of today, cheating is one of the worst mistakes a young person can make in his or her life. Just because the media shows cheating as popular, that does not make it ethical or right. If anything, cheating is completely disapproved in the eyes of God. There are many reasons for Christians not to cheat on sports, school or anything else in life. The verse of 2 Timothy 2:5 states "An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules" still matters in today's world.

The reason cheating is disapproved in the eyes of God is because it breaks all 10 Commandments. Specifically:

1. The first commandment is broken as it takes God away from the center of the cheater's life.
2. The second commandment is broken by making "winning", an idol. Cheaters do not give God their honor or respect.
3. The third commandment is broken when one uses vulgarity and misuses God's name.
4. The fourth commandment is broken by not setting aside time for God or using time to cheat instead of pray.
5. The fifth commandment is ruined when you disappoint your parents.

6. The sixth commandment is broken as cheating kills your reputation and integrity, along with other's self-esteem.
7. The seventh commandment is violated by taking something that doesn't belong to you.
8. The eighth commandment's law is broken as cheating steals an athlete's potential and robs talent.
9. The ninth commandment tells us cheating prevents us from being honest and playing fairly.
10. The tenth commandment is broken when you covet someone else's athletic talent and victory.

According to Proverbs 28:6 "Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways". I continually experience the temptation to participate in each sin during school, taking tests, playing soccer, running track, and competing as a black belt in Tae Kwon Do. There is always the opportunity to cheat, lie, let my ego rule, act cocky, and mistreat others. To overcome these temptations and maintain my integrity I pray for God's strength and wisdom, and I receive Holy Communion as often as possible. Knowing that Christ is within me strengthens me and keeps me from being victim to this horrible multitude of sins.

Brigham Sibley is the son of Rusty and Despina Sibley and is in 8th grade.

The theme of the 2014 Clergy-Laity Congress was "The Orthodox Christian family: A dwelling of Christ and a witness of His Gospel." Discuss how today's Orthodox Christian families can strive to live according to this ideal.

By Artemis Xenick

"Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it." Proverbs 22:6

I believe that if you are brought up in a Christ centered family and are raised that way, then it will be something that will always stay with you. And there are many things we can do to practice this proverb.

One of the most significant ways to keep Christ in the center of your life is simply praying, both by yourself and with other people. Praying by yourself can strengthen your relationship with Jesus Christ. It gives me confidence to know that I can share with God my needs and give him my thanks. The power

of prayer will strengthen your bond with your family and guide you closer to God. Praying out loud with my family has helped me to be more comfortable praying around others. At first praying in front of other people might feel awkward or unnatural but once you do it a couple of times, it will become easier. For instance, at the end of our Goya meetings, we all pray together. Each person lights a candle and says a prayer out loud and everyone answers with "Lord Have Mercy." The first time we did this, I was not very comfortable doing it. Now that we've done it a few times, it has become something I really look forward to. This is something that I value a lot and it has helped me to become better about praying in front of others.

Another thing you can do both with others and alone is read the bible. Reading the bible with your family and discussing the readings afterwards can help you have a better understanding about our faith. Reading God's word on a regular basis can bring you closer to becoming a witness of His Gospel. And with today's technology, reading the bible can be as simple as downloading an app on your phone. It is a great way to take your bible everywhere you go.

Another tool that we have as Orthodox Christians is the use of icons to help bring us closer to God. They are in our beautiful churches for us to learn from. It is also important to have icons in our homes to serve as a reminder as well. We can hang an icon in almost every room in the house, each specific to that room. For example in your kitchen, you can place an icon of the Last Supper as a reminder of the prayers that Christ offered at meals and that we should do the same. Above your bed, you can hang an icon of a guardian angel to watch over you while you sleep. I love seeing icons in my home, and I know I will always want to have them hanging in my own home someday.

Lastly, it is essential to attend the Divine Liturgy with your

family often to serve as a renewal for the week. If you lose your way during the week, worshiping on Sunday is a great way to be reminded of how important Jesus Christ is in your life. The most important part of the Divine Liturgy is receiving Holy Communion. When your whole family does this regularly, it allows us to share an intimate relationship with Christ through a great Sacrament of our faith.

Obviously there are many challenges to being a Christ centered person in a world that is not always Christ centered. In our schools and in the media, Christians and Christian values are not always upheld. By holding on to your family's faith and our Orthodox traditions, these challenges will be easier for you to overcome.

Joshua 24:15 says, "But as for me and my house we will serve the Lord." I believe that as long as you stay true to your Orthodox traditions such as praying as a family, reading the bible together and attending church and receiving communion, then it doesn't matter what society is doing because you and your family will always serve God and God will always be on your side.

Artemis Xenick is the daughter of Mike and Maria Xenick and is in 7th grade.

Essay Title: The Significance of Women in Christianity

Topic: Roles and Examples of the Significance of Women in Christianity (Topic #3)

By Chace Sibley

Long ago in a very uncultured, unsophisticated, naive, and chauvinistic society, one may mistakenly have been under the belief that a woman's role in the church was to cook, clean, and serve. This could not be further from the truth. The importance of women in the Church can best be described as a way to complete the absolute greatness of God. If one were to google important women of the Bible, hundreds of names come up. Each woman played a significant role and set the example for today's society. Some women were heroes, martyrs, and sufferers, while others were used as an example of the extreme compassion, forgiveness, and mercy of our loving God.

First and foremost, the greatest and most important woman of the Church is and will always be the Virgin Mary. The Virgin Mary represents purity, devotion, and love. The Virgin Mary served to reverse mankind's original sin. It took almost 4,000 years for God to choose the most perfect person to be worthy enough to give birth to the third element of the Holy Trinity. The Virgin Mary lived a sinless and pure life in mankind's world. She not only gave birth to The Son of God, but was present for the crucifixion and the humiliation of Christ on the cross. Without the Virgin Mary's absolutely critical role, there would be no Christianity today, and no reversal of Eve's original sin in the Garden of Eden.

Mary, Martha and Mary Magdalene were just some of the important women in the New Testament. Not only were these women and others close friends and hosts to Jesus and the disciples, but they never denied, betrayed, or left Christ's side. During Christ's ministry, one of the ultimate acts of humility was done by a woman when she washed the feet of Christ with her tears and then dried them with her hair.

Throughout the great trials, the beatings, the mocking, and the grueling journey to Golgotha, it was the women who stayed alongside Christ offering the only things left- love and compassion. Once Christ died, while most of the disciples were still in hiding, the women prepared the body for burial and sat guard in front of the tomb for as long as they could. Providing a perfect example of Christ's compassion, forgiveness, and acceptance, Mary Magdalene, a repentant sinner who had been cast out and rejected by society, was the one chosen to announce the great news of the resurrection. In John 20:18, we learn that Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!"

My personal experience in understanding the importance of Christian women is by studying the lives of martyred Orthodox women saints and all the trials that they suffered. Saint Paraskevi and Saint Katherine who were the most brutally tortured saints have encouraged me to stand firmly in my faith and to explore ways that I can represent Christ. I also enjoy learning about the life of Mother Teresa, someone from our century who dedicated her life to the teachings of Christ. The example set by Mother Teresa is to have compassion towards everyone. I now spend more time volunteering to feed the homeless, teaching underprivileged kids to swim and play sports, and mentoring/assisting kids with learning and physical disabilities. I am proud to be an Orthodox Christian and very blessed to have the opportunity to represent Christ in today's world.

Chace Sibley is the daughter of Rusty and Despina Sibley and is in 10th grade.

Discuss the Orthodox Christian practice of fasting from certain foods and the spiritual discipline it teaches, especially in light of the Lord's directive in Matthew 6:16-18.

What Fasting Means to Me By Sophia Krinos

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Matthew 6:16-18.

Every year when Lent begins, my Christian friends and I discuss "what we are giving up for Lent". The things that they "fast" from include everything from Twitter to candy bars. In the Orthodox church, I have been taught to fast from meat during Lent. This year was the first year that I have really tried to follow that fast, and my friends panicked when I told them.

"You really need your protein", they said. "You will get weak". Of course after the first week they totally forgot about it, and of course I am doing fine. It isn't easy to explain to

them that rather than weakening me, my personal fast will make me stronger. I don't think that they are "wrong" to pick physical items for their fast. However I believe that fasting from certain foods generally takes more determination and is a stronger reminder of my faith. By making a daily change to my diet for 40 days, I am forced to think about God and my relationship with him EVERY day. I also remember the true meaning of Pascha and the much bigger sacrifice that Jesus made for us so that we could have a better life and death. My fast is a small price to pay to honor God and increase my spiritual well-being.

When Lent is over, I have decided to also try to fast from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays. But I will also encourage all of my friends to "fast" sometimes all year round and reflect on their personal relationships with Christ more often. We all need reminders to keep our faith on track, fasting is a personal way to forge our way.

Sophia Krinos is the daughter of Dimitri and Melissa Krinos and is in 7th Grade.

The St. Nicholas Church at Ground Zero, which was destroyed on September 11, 2001, is soon to be rebuilt. Discuss the ways in which this tiny church building will now become a symbol of the universal themes of victory over evil; healing and hope; and being a beacon of Orthodox Christianity.

The Skyscrapers of Spirits By Mihail Kaburis

New York City, the symbol of the American Dream, has opened its arms to all since its inception in 1614. What was once a small Dutch trading post, quickly grew into a living, breathing city of many cultures and religions. The boom and bust cycles of commerce facilitated bold ideas. When there was no space to construct buildings on the crowded island of Manhattan, city planners decided to build upwards, towards the heavens. Starting in the late 19th century, a competition ensued to see which corporation could build the largest skyscraper. The Flat Iron Building, Park Row, the Woolworth Building, and even the Empire State Building, were landmarks that immigrants saw as they entered the United States for the first time. In 1971, New York City, once again, proved its strength to build to the heavens and its involvement in global economics upon completion of two of the tallest buildings in the world at that time: The Twin Towers. These buildings formed the heart of the World Trade Center Complex. On the fateful morning of September 11, 2001, the city's rhythmic beat came to a screeching halt. Terrorists flew two commercial planes, with civilians onboard, into the Twin Towers. Within less than two hours, nearly three thousand people would be dead. On this day, the world stopped.

On September 11, St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church acted as a guardian angel after the towers were hit. Only after the South Tower collapsed and emergency services were en-route, was the church destroyed. Within the darkness of destruction God's light shines the brightest. According to Psalm 34:7, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them." He ensured that the civilians killed, regardless of their nationality, race, and religion, would rise to

Heaven. The spirits of individuals are skyscrapers. Even after its destruction, the church lived on. A common misinterpretation is that a church is simply an edifice. However, a church is its parishioners. While in Jerusalem, Jesus only needed an audience to deliver his sermons, not a church nor a pulpit. In 1916, it was the followers of orthodoxy including Greek sailors and factory workers that created a place of worship where the word of God could be spoken freely. The church provided refuge from the stresses of the bustling city life outside of its walls. The building, itself, gave parishioners and visitors a place to pray. Annually, the parishioners continue to celebrate the Feast Day of St. Nicholas where the church once stood.

God has not forsaken the rubble where the church once laid. As in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." When people gather in the name of God, the welcoming spirit of the Greek Orthodox Church can rise from the rubble once again. Just as Jesus rose on the third day according to the scriptures, a new church will rise again between the skyscrapers reaching towards the heavens. Father Evagoras Constantinides describes the new church to be built as a "resurrection." The new St. Nicholas National Shrine will characterize Eastern Orthodoxy in the modern world. The doors of the shrine will be open to all, regardless of religion. The white exterior and interior of the church depict purity and safety; the characteristics on an angel. Before Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, he told Peter "on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18). In my opinion, this rock can never be broken.

Mihail Kaburis is the son of George and Kathy Kaburis and is in 11th grade.

~Stewardship Updates~

Check out our Stewardship Bulletin Board in the Church Hall! We now have a permanent spot for updates to include YTD 'Treasure' Information as well as 'Time & Talent' Ministry information and needs. We will continue to improve as we move forward and your feedback is welcome.

The Stewardship Committee (along with Fr. Stavros, Charlie Hambos, Pete Trakas & Sandra Pappas) took on a project this past quarter making calls to 'our lost sheep'. Including Parishioners we haven't seen for some time, encouraging them to come back to our Faith & Beautiful Church, get involved and become Stewards of our Church.

~Thank-you ~ Genie Carter, Kalliope Chagaris, Ewana Forde, Betty Katherine Katsamakis, Martha Kapetan, Victoria Melton, Byron Nenos, Vickie Peckham, Julie Palios, Donna Trakas, Theo & Marissa Panopoulos & Maria Xenick for taking time to make calls and being a part of the Stewardship Committee~

The Stewardship Welcoming Committee is visible every Sunday providing a warm welcome to all who enter our doors. We received over 16 Connection Cards in 2015 and have 6 of New (Pledged Stewards) Members to our Church this year!

We are now up and running with Parish Data Systems (PDS) in our church office. This comprehensive software gives us the capability to improve our Stewardship tracking and reporting. In addition to capturing YOUR Ministry interests and connecting you to volunteer opportunities.

Lastly, we THANK all of our loyal Stewards and encourage anyone that has not completed a pledge form, to please to do today! As you can see we have 53 fewer families pledged in 2015 YTD versus 2014 – yet we have a full church nearly every Sunday! Your Support is Welcome and Needed

Please feel free to share your thoughts to the office email - officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com or speak directly with Fr. Stavros, Pete Trakas or Sandra Pappas -Stewardship Co-Chairs. We are here for YOU!

	2015*	2014 Y/E
Stewardship Goal	\$470,000	\$400,000
Pledged	\$347,922	\$387,981
Received	\$142,158	\$370,000
Shortfall/Gain from Goal	-\$122,078	-\$30,000
Average Pledge	\$1,375	\$1,251
Median Pledge**	\$700	\$600
# of Parishioners/Families Pledged	257	310

*Based on YTD as of 4/8/15

**Pledge amount in the Middle

– ½ of Stewards pledge higher & ½ lower

Thank You to all of our Pledged Stewards!

Abramis, John & Nicky M.
Akrotirianakis, Fr. Stavros & Pres. Lisa
Alikakos, Maria
Alsina, Alexa
Alsina, Angel & Lisa
Ambrozy, Edward
Ameres, George & Zackie
Andreadakis, Nicholas & Doris
Apockotos, James & Maria
Apostoleres, Nicholas & Rosalie

Armstrong, Jim & Myra
Artzibushev, Dimitri & Sonya
Aviles, Pablo J. & Vanessa
Avros, Chris & Jennifer
Axelrod, Scott & Christine
Badrane, Denise
Bakirdgi, Joan
Balasis, Matthew & Suzy
Barrett, Sara

Bedran, Rita
Blackburn, Robert & Kathryn
Blankenship, Wayne & Athanasia
Bougas, Constantine & Angela
Bradshaw, Harold & Peggy
Brown, Chrysanthi
Burchill, Fr. George
Bush, Dorothy
Calpakis, Marcus

Camene, Theo & Eleni
Cantonis, Michael & Rebecca
Capitano, Frank & Christina
Caramalis, Nick
Carter, John & Genie
Cauthorn, Ken & Helen
Chagaris, George & Kalliope
Chakonias, Ethel Athena
Cherpelis, Basil & Alyssa

Christ, John E.	Hampers, Dean & Valerie	Melton, Stephanie	Sakaris, Thomas & Barbara
Christodoulou, Louis & Mary Ann	Hanhhan, Amin & Gloria	Melton, Greg & Victoria	Sakellaris, Anne
Christopher, Louis & Plakas, Penny	Hartung, Mark & JoAnn	Milaios, Katherine	Sakkis, John & Katherine
Christou, Tammy	Higdon, Skip	Milligan, Fr. David & Mary J.	Sanchez, Alina
Colado, David & Alexandria	Hoppenstand, Anna Evelyn	Milonas, Taso & Thay	Santos, Alex & Kontos, Constance
Conner, Michael & Artemis	Horack, Scott & Rena	Mitchell, John & Edith	Sarantos, Pete & Ann
Copulos, Vasiliki	Iraklianos, Mike	Mitseas, George & Catherine	Scarfogliero, Gennaro & Alexis
Costello, Patricia	Irwin, Jon & Pam	Molitor, David & Diane	Scharbach, Michael
Courialis, Terry & Toulas	Jacobsen, Anne	Moran, Andrew & Stefanie	Scourtes, Christine
Crafa, Paul & Stavroula	James, Arthur & Abby	Morgan, Theodora	Sengsouvana, Say & Sarah
Crassas, Alkis & Aime	Jernigan, Bobby & Andrea	Moshos, Doukissa	Serbanos, Michael & Patricia
Cunavelis, Frances	Johnson, Aphroditi	Mourer, Brett & Ana	Sermier, Eustace & Bennette
Cunavelis, John	Kaburis, George & Kathy	Moutsatsos, Spero	Sibley, Rusty & Despina
Dalaklis, Joanne	Kafantaris, Michael & Amy	Mueller, Jeffery & Melina	Skourellos, Dante & Lindsey
De Maio, Alexandra & Michos, Sylvia	Kane, Lance & Lalitois, Georgia	Myer, Ronald & Magdalini	Skourellos, Michael & Shirley
DeJesus, Roy & Anna	Kanos, Maria	Nakis, Emmanuel J. & Betty Ann	Sorolis, Eftihia
Demas, Anna K.	Kapetan, Martha	Nenos, Byron & Jeanie	Sotiropoulos, Bill & Jenny
Demas, John, Mr.	Karagounis, Demetrios & Paula	Nenos, John	Spirides, Harry G.
Diamantakes, Georgia, Ms.	Karaku, Ellen	Nenos, Mary	Steele, Elliot & Dianne
Diamantides, Melpo, Mrs.	Karamitsanis, Peter & Jan	Nenos, Peter	Stephanides, Mario & Ouriana
Dimas, Gregory & Patsavos, Evelyn	Karekos, Stephen C. & Doris	Nenos, Vasilios	Stilian, Douglas & Bridget
Diniaco, Peter & Rebecca	Karounos, Maria	Neyland, Bill	Stratigakos, Helen
Edquid, Marc & Marquet	Karpelenia, Pres. Loretta	Nicklow, Tom & Demetra	Stratigakos, Louis & Georgia
Ekonomides, Anthony C.	Katsadourous, Konstantin & Katherine	Nicolaou, Christos & Dee	Thatcher, Greg & Choundas, Marina
Evdemon, Stanley & Mary Ellen	Katsamakias, Perry & Betty Katherine	Nolas, Dr. George S. & Cheryl	Theofilos, John & Elizabeth
Fallieras, George	Katzaras, George & Angelina	Oliver, Ronnie & Elefteria	Theophanous, Peter
Fallieras, Lauren	Katzaras, Nick & Helen	Olsen, Scott & Elphida	Tingiris, Mary
Fallieras, Nicholas & Susan	Katzaras, Stefan & Kara	Orfanakis, Michael & Michelle	Tisdale, Greg
Fellios, George & Zeina	Kavakos, Estelle	Palios, Artemis	Touliatos, Markissa
Fentress, Kevin & Maria	Kavouklis, Chris & Debbie	Palios, George & Julie	Trakas, Andrew & Adrienne
Ferarolis, Alexandra	Kavouklis, Michael & Irene	Palios, Michael & Bessie	Trakas, Peter & Donna
Ferekides, Christos Dr. & Debbie	Kavouklis, Nicholas & Edie	Paloumpis, Tom & Jenny	Trimis, Michael & Diane
Findlay, Andrew & Karina	Kladis, George & Charlene	Panopoulos, Theodoros & Marissa	Tsibris, John
Forde, Dwight & Ewana	Kladis, Theodore & Amy	Panos, Euripides & Denise	Valaes, Demetrios & Lynn
Fotopoulos, Anthony & Carole	Koch, John & Cathie	Pantelis, Aristotle	Vallianatos, Bob & Nancy
Frazier, Chris	Konstas, Demetrios & Mary Ann	Papadakis, Alec & Lauren	Voisey, Richard & Katherine
Frimenko, Pres. Mary	Korakis, Alexandros	Papadopoulou, John & Irene	Voykin, David & Amy
Gallos, Peter & Vasiliki	Kostaris, Irene	Pappas, Paul & Georgia	Voykin, Mary
Garcia, Mark & Anastasia	Koudouna, Anthony	Paras, Gus & Marina	Walling, Jacklyn
Garcia, Rick & Stamie	Koudouna, Dora	Passavanti, Robert & Debbra	Ward, Gary & Pappas, Sandra
Georgas, Thomas & Janet	Krinos, Dimitri & Melissa	Patellis, Theophilos, Dr.	Williams, Jason & Djiovonis, Alexandra
Georgiou, Speros & Eleanor	Lambrou, Peter & Sandra	Patrascoiu, Florin & Marenca	Worley, Christine
Gerecke, Alexandra	Laskey, Fred & Coleen	Peckham, Richard & Victoria	Xenick, Mike & Maria
Gerecke, Christina	Lenardos, Steven & Melissa	Perdicas, Ernest & Nancy	Xenick, George & Cindy
Gerecke, Ed & Terri	Letobarong, Domenic & Melanie	Perry, Christian & Athnia	Xeroteris, Evangeline
Giallourakis, Michael & Arty	Liakos, Nick & Demetra	Pessemier, Tom & Christy	Yohai, Eleni
Gombos, Jack & Harriet	Lucas, Velina	Peters, Alexandra	Yotis, William & Eleonora
Gorter, Maria	Maas, Mary	Pileggi, Suzanne	Zabetakis, Maria
Gregory, Daniel & Stefero, Alicia	MacLaury, Kathryn	Plakas, Theodore & Kyriakoula	Zaharis, Constantine & Rachel
Halikoytakias, Alex	Mangarides, Markos & Ekaterini	Poulos, Chris & Karey	Zeban, Peter
Halikoytakias, Michael & Margaret	Manikas, Bill & Nancy	Rindone, Ryan & Megan	Zelatis, John & Denise
Halkias, Evangline	Manolakos, Tina	Ritchie, Robert & Gavalas, Debra	Zoumberos, Stavros & Kathy
Halkias, George & Elaine	Martin, Tyson & Marissa	Rose, Maryann	
Halkias, Thanasi	Matassini, Nicholas G. & Christina	Roussos, Archie & Eleftheria	
Hambos, Charlie	Mellon, Andria & Lynn, Keith	Roy, Perry & Alysa	
Hambos, George & Donna	Melton, Jaime	Royack, Florian & Jeannie	

*This is the list of all Pledged Stewards at St. John the Baptist. In order to be a Pledge Steward you must have filled out a 2015 Stewardship Form. If have sent in stewardship checks and are not on the list, please contact the office so we can forward you a 2015 Stewardship Pledge Form. According to the St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Tampa FL By-Laws, one must have a pledge form on file to vote at the General Assembly Meetings. If you have not sent in a contribution or a form, please contact the church office and we will send you a form. It is hoped that EVERYONE on our mailing list will be a steward (if they live in Tampa) or a Friend of St. John the Baptist (for those who do not live in Tampa).

Floors, Ceilings and Pipedreams

by Alkis Crassas, Parish Council President

Being in the second quarter of 2015, I was reflecting at some of the goals the Parish Council set out to accomplish and our progress so far.

It's useful to have goals. When we describe our goals they're usually for specific monetary amounts, times, or numbers, in other words, measurable metrics. A good example is our stewardship goal of \$470,000. Subtly, we may be introducing an additional factor into our goals. We may be seeing the goals as things to "shoot for." We may be unconsciously setting the goal as a ceiling. This can be a by-product of the traditional way goal-setting has been taught -- "*Aim for the Stars! If you fall short, you'll still hit the Moon.*" [A bizarre idea in itself. Why would you aim for something other than what you intend to hit? But, never mind.]

The effect of the goal-as-ceiling model is that we set ourselves up to relax as we near the goal and may then find ourselves falling short of the goal. Let's try this instead. Let's set our goals as the minimum we are willing to accept. This is setting our goals as floors rather than ceilings. Granted, the floor of a new goal may be above where we are now, but our intent is to surpass the goal, never allowing ourselves to fall below the floor we've set.

Let's envision ourselves looking down at a goal we've exceeded rather than up at a goal that appears out of reach. Goals-as-floors can be much more motivating and successful than goals-as-ceilings. But goals are not enough. We also need a plan. A good plan starts with our desires and adds real data, execution steps, responsibilities, incremental checkpoints, and defined deliverables and outcomes. An effective plan is flexible, clear, and frequently checked.

A pipedream is similar to a plan. The only thing lacking is reality! If we don't include reality -- either when designing the original plan or when, during execution, we refuse to compare the plan to what's really happening -- we are living in a pipedream. Staying with the stewardship example, you probably have noticed all the data being available on how we are coming along towards our goal. There are articles in the Messenger and the Bulletin, a new Stewardship board in the Hall, and information on our website.

We may get lucky and our pipedream will happen. But our odds of success are much greater with goals-as-floors, a plan, and reality checks along the way. Thank you all for everything that you do and contribute!

May God bless us and our parish!

Friends of St. John the Baptist - 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 the Baptist". 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 the Baptist", please fill out and return the form below. Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA
William J Camarinos - Alexandria, VA
Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC
Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL

Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL
James & Sarah Jolly - Tampa, FL
Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI
Perry & Fay Stamatiades - Asheville, NC

Friend of St. John the Baptist

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

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

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

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

St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!



Sermons on Youtube Channel Each Sunday

Father's sermons each Sunday are available on our youtube channel. Just go to youtube and type in "St John GOC Tampa" and you'll find them. If you miss a sermon or wish to hear a sermon again, you'll find it there!



Do you Like our Facebook page? Like our page and suggest it to your friends. Announcements are posted frequently so you are up to date with everything going on at St. John the Baptist. You can find our page at StJohnGOCTampa.

Constant Contact Emails - Our parish utilizes Constant Contact as a way of staying in touch with parishioners, particularly on subjects that are time sensitive. This is an effort not to clog your inbox but to keep you informed of the goings on in our parish. If you are not receiving our Constant Contact emails, please let the office know so we can make sure we have your correct e-mail address.

Live Streaming - If you go to our website, www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com and click on the multimedia tab, then click on View Liturgy, 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. If you have any issues with the live-streaming, please contact Charlie so we can fix the problem.

Sunday School News

Christos Anesti! Christ is Risen!

We hope your Holy Week and Pascha experience reaffirmed and will continue to strengthen your faith in Christianity. Approximately 40 students participated in the many services of Holy Week and Pascha, which made the week even more special. As always our Altar Boys did a fabulous job throughout the many services of Holy Week. Our Maidens for the Bridegroom Services on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday Evening were adorable. And our beautiful Myrhh Bearers for the Good Friday Lamentation Service were honored to serve our Lord.

On March 29th our children did a fantastic job singing our church hymns during our YOUTH SUNDAY under the direction of Maria Xenick. We would like to thank Carter Lenardos for Reading the Epistle and our young ones for making the Prospora. We are raising such wonderful STEWARDS of St. John's.

It was fabulous to see our entire Sunday School participate in the PROCESSION OF THE PALMS on April 5th. Each of the Sunday School classes conducted a lesson on Palm Sunday and Holy Week prior to and after the procession. We would like to thank the families who attended the Saturday of Lazarus Service and also helped to make 700 crosses for Sunday.

Our Holy Friday Retreat on April 10th was the best ever. The day was filled with Pascha crafts, learning activities and worship. We must acknowledge Debbie Nicklow and Amy Kafantaris for coordinating this event, the many people who helped out, and of course the children for making this retreat a huge success. We would also like to thank our older students for assisting our younger ones with the crafts and stations. Our teens also wrapped over 700 red eggs for Pascha. We are truly blessed to have such amazing children.

Sunday School Perfect Attendance for the Month of March 2015:

Pre-K: Santino Bavaro and Maggie Trakas

1st Grade: Gianni Bavaro

2nd Grade: Nicholas Akrotirianakis, Ariana Choundas-Thatcher, Maria Palios, and George Xenick

3rd Grade: Niko Bavaro and Toula Trakas

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

5th & 6th Grades: Antonio Bavaro, Hannah Passalaris, and Elizabeth Xenick

Middle School: Sophia Crassas and Artemis Xenick

DATES TO REMEMBER:

- ◆ **May 3rd: TOPIC:** Pentecost and the Ascension - Charlie - Presentation - 1st Grade.
- ◆ **May 10th: TOPIC:** Sacramental Life of the Orthodox Church - Charlie Hambos will conduct a presentation for our Pre-K and Kindergarten Students.
- ◆ **May 17th: YOUTH SUNDAY - LAST DAY OF SUNDAY SCHOOL (Graduation)GOYA MEETING - 5:00**
- ◆ **May 31st: END OF THE YEAR PARTY**

Our last day of Sunday School and Graduation is on MAY 17th. We are already starting to plan for next year. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A STAFF MEMBER and/or if you have any suggestions on how we can improve our Sunday School Program, please e-mail Vickie Peckham at vickiepeckham@gmail.com or call her at 406-5626

BOUNCING BACK FROM DEFEAT

By Father Paul Kaplanis,
Dean of the Cathedral of the Annunciation in Atlanta, GA.

Perhaps one of the most difficult things to experience in life is defeat. Losing at anything is never a good feeling, even if someone explains the benefits of building character. When we think of defeat, we must widen our scope to include all the times when we may have suffered because of some type of failure. It seems to be much easier to look back at our past disappointments and reflect on our complex challenges. Usually as time passes, we feel a sense of understanding and peace, whereas in the middle of our struggle, there was complete turmoil and our entire life was turned upside down.

This must have been the feeling that the disciples of Jesus experienced in the final days of His ministry on earth. The Disciples were confused; they felt that everything they worked for had fallen apart. Moreover, they were the inner circle; those chosen by the Lord as His closest followers. During the course of His ministry, the disciples had come to believe, one by one, that he was the Messiah, the Anointed One of God, the Savior. They witnessed Him heal the sick, perform amazing miracles and raise people from the dead. They were certain that He would soon establish God's Kingdom on earth, a Kingdom that would have no end that also would compete with and defeat the Roman Empire.

Since we know the outcome and we can look back, we are reminded how things really unfolded. Things did not go as the disciples had planned or perceived. As things began to unravel, two astonishing events took place. First, Judas Iscariot betrayed Christ and made all the arrangements for His arrest. Secondly, Jesus was put on trial for treason, found guilty and sentenced to death. The victory they had anticipated had been snatched away in a few moments. All but one of the disciples deserted Jesus. The rest were either extremely afraid for their own life or they felt that His plan to save the world had failed and their anticipated joy was now turned into dark despair.

Thankfully, this is not how the story ends. We exist as a Church and Faith, there was a completely different outcome. Our Savior's Death and Resurrection transformed what appears to be bitter defeat into an amazing victory. This is the joy of our Easter Pascha celebration!

St. Paul makes it clear that it is our Lord's Resurrection, which distinguishes our Christian Faith from all other religions. We do not come to the church to worship our dead founder; we gather in communion to celebrate the one who died and has the power to destroy eternal death. We celebrate the fact that God has provided the way and is the *Way* for us to be reunited with Him in eternity. What was broken through Adam and Eve's disobedience is transformed through the New Adam, Christ and the New Eve, the Virgin Mary, Theotokos with her obedience to God's will. What this also means for us is that the life, death and resurrection of our Lord teaches us that there is no defeat that anyone can experience in life that God cannot turn into victory; no failure that God cannot turn into success; no life that God cannot turn into a life that gives Him glory.

Our life on earth gives us the opportunity to give God glo-

ry, and yet there are many things in life that can prevent us from doing so.

Most of these obstacles to glorifying God involve some type of personal defeat. It may be a failed marriage, a destroyed relationship between parents and children, or being overtaken and enslaved by drugs, alcohol, sex, or some other passion that we cannot control. Perhaps the largest defeat comes if we give up or give in to the one passion that controls us the most. The message of our Lord's Resurrection is that He can turn our worse defeat into victory. God's promise to us is that He can renew, restore and rebuild us up regardless of any failure.

In order to help us with a biblical reference of people rising up from defeat with God's help, we can examine the promises that God made to the Israelites through the Prophet Jeremiah. The Israelites had a history of following God, falling away, then following again and then falling away. And yet, when they repented, God always received them.

In chapter 31 of the Book of Jeremiah, God promised the opportunity to bounce back from the defeat they had suffered as a nation. Presented below are four promises from God that reveal how He can help us bounce back from any personal defeat in life.

God has promised his everlasting love.

In our human understanding, we cannot comprehend the depth of God's love for us. His love is so extraordinary and unconditional that no matter how hard we try, we cannot get beyond our own limits. One way to contemplate this is to think of the person that you love the most. Perhaps it is your husband or wife, your best friend or your children. It would be a person to whom you would give your undying love and no matter what they did, you would continue to love them, support them and believe in them. If we know someone like that, then we see a reason why we love that person. Through experience, we have seen certain qualities in them that make them lovable; like goodness or kindness or a great sense of humor or loyalty. If it is our child, then we may perceive in them a reflection of our own self or of our spouse. This is the type of potential, great, love that we humans possess within us. We are able to love those who are the most lovable to us. God's love is different. He is LOVE! Regardless of anything we do or anything that happens to us, His love never changes. He cannot love us more and He will not love us less, for He said in Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness."

Several years ago, the IRS auctioned off the diary of Madelyn Murray O'Hare, the founder of American Atheists, in an attempt to raise money to pay back taxes and creditors. Repeatedly, in her diary she had written, "*Somebody, somewhere, love me.*" Throughout her life, as she was seeking to be loved, she fought against the God she believed did not exist. Ironically, she never realized that He continued to love her with an everlasting love.

The second promise God makes in Jeremiah is...

God promises to rebuild our life.

In verse 4, God says to the prophet, "I will build you up again,

and your will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel.” This second promise gives us so much hope and comfort. Our defeats may be large or small. In some cases, our defeats may threaten our career, our marriage, our family, our finances or our soul, but God can turn any defeat into victory. With the freedom that God has given us from the very beginning of time, we must choose to place our faith in Him. In return, God will rebuild us and restore us.

The third promise we see in Jeremiah chapter 31 is...

God promises to fill our life with joy.

When we experience defeat, it sometimes seems that we will never be able to laugh again, that this dark cloud of defeat will haunt us forever.

Going back to our childhood days, we may be able to relate to the following scenario. A man shares the following regarding his youth, “I remember when I was about ten years old, I misbehaved and got into trouble over it. *I will spare you the details, he said, but it involved a baseball, a sliding glass door and a wild pitch. My parents were really mad at me; this wasn't my first offense. In addition to having bad aim, I had defied their rule against bouncing a baseball against the back of the house. Plus, it was after dark, my homework was not finished and I had not cleaned my room. So, I wasn't exactly having a good day. Dad grounded me, but first I had to endure “the lecture.” Dad excelled in this area and his lectures usually took the form of a question and answer session: He said, Do you think I am made of money? Do you see a money tree growing in the back yard? Did you not realize that glass breaks when you throw a ball against it? What in the world was going through your mind as you threw the baseball against the house in the dark? Did you think you could get away with it? The session ended with the reminder that when he was my age he was working at a drug store for 10 cents an hour. He always seemed to mention that detail. Finally, I was sent to my room.*

As I sat there, feeling sorry for myself for being such a wretched creature, I thought back to a time just a few days earlier when I had made a joke that dad had laughed at. I remember thinking, ‘Those days are gone forever, we will never be able to laugh together again.’

In spite of the dad's tendency to give long lectures, he had not done anything to encourage this degree of self-pity in his son. He had punished him, not disowned him and the son over reacted. Moreover, he was convinced at that moment that all the happy times in life were now behind him. This story cautions us to not blow our mistakes out of proportion and turn them into a huge obstacle. We should not make the darkness of failure, darker than it really is and give it more credit than it deserves.

When we review in our minds the Fall of Man, we are reminded that it was disobedience that caused Adam and Eve to be expelled from Paradise. Obviously, the consequences have been great; however, the very first thing God did was offer an opportunity for reconciliation. Actually, He continued on many occasions to extend forgiveness and covenants to heal what have been damaged in man. Remember, God loves us and so He gives us the freedom to love Him. His forgiveness and mer-

cy is beyond our comprehension. He can take any defeat and turn it into victory. God turns sorrow into joy. He explicitly told His disciples in His final moments with them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy” (John 16:20).

The final promise given in chapter 31 of Jeremiah is...

God promises to make us effective in this life as we journey towards eternity.

Jeremiah says in verse 5, “And you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit.”

The good news in this passage continues, reassuring us that when we think we are defeated, God quietly and surely leads us to find victory. That victory may come as a surprise to us, not in the form we anticipated. We may have prayed for another method of deliverance, but God knows what we need even before we ask.

When we look at examples for failure and success in the Holy Scripture, Moses comes to mind. When Moses was a young man, he wanted to be the leader of the Hebrew people, but the first time he tried, he failed. He ended up committing murder and he had to flee Egypt so that Pharaoh would not kill him. Years later, when he was tending a flock of sheep in the land of Midian, God came to him and said, “I am sending you to bring my people out of Egypt.” Moses response was essentially, Who am I? What if they do not listen? Please send someone else (Exodus 3-4). We know that Moses came back to Egypt, lead the Hebrew people out of slavery and piloted them to the promise land. God made Moses, forgave Moses and blessed him so that he could bounce back from defeat to victory.

There is a promise that God has not made to us. He never promised that living a Godly life would be easy. In fact, the great Fathers of our Holy Church speak frequently about the struggle of never accepting defeat over the many things that can pull us away from God. When we heard the word struggle, we may think that it is a negative thing, when in reality and in spite of what the world teaches us, it is a positive and good thing. St. Basil the Great and other Fathers of the Church, speak about this struggle as being spiritual warfare comparing the easy way, which is the wide one with the rough and steep narrow way. He says that “the downward slope has a deceptive guide, a wicked demon who drags his followers through pleasure to destruction, but the rough and steep way has a good angel, who leads his followers through the toils of virtue to a blessed end.” Another key element here is to remember that we are not alone in this struggle. This is why Christ and His Church are here to struggle with us. We should struggle as a family, not as individuals. Above all, we should never surrender to the things that take us away from God.

So, if we feel defeated, come and celebrate the greatest victory of all time, our Lord's victory over death. Christ is victorious, restoring our opportunity for eternal life. Christ shatters the gates of Hades and makes it possible to transform our defeats into victory. Christ binds the Evil One and offers to rebuild our lives and restore our joy and give us hope. □

Small Group Bible Studies

At present we have FIVE Small Groups that are meeting each week, in addition to the Monday night Bible Study.
If you haven't joined a group yet, you may do so at any time.

Monday Night Bible Study (for all parishioners)

Location: Meets in the Parish Council Meeting room in the Administration Building of the church.

Group Leader: Charlie Hambos, our pastoral assistant, 813-876-8830 or email him at Charlie.hambos@gmail.com

Study Topic: The Book of Isaiah

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

May Meeting Dates: May 4, 11 and 18

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 5, 12 and 19

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

Location: Meets in the Parish Council Meeting room in the Administration Building of the church.

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.

May Meeting Dates: May 6, 13, 20 and 27

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.

May Meeting Dates: May 5, 12 and 19

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)

May Meeting Dates: May 5 (women's group will attend Divine Liturgy), May 12, May 19

Young Adult Group (for adults ages 18-40)

Location: At the home of Betty Katherine and Perry Katsamakias 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.

May Meeting Dates: May 7 (Young Adult Bible Study will attend evening Liturgy), May 14, 21, and 28



Do you have the Messengers from the last year and not know what to do with them? Do you read the Messenger and just throw it away? Do you know you can be emailed the Messenger? Do you want to Go Paperless?

You can read it on your computer, tablet, phone everywhere you go! All you have to do is email the office at officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com and let us know you want to be emailed the Messenger!

In the Subject Line just type: **Please Email Me the Messenger** and you will be emailed and not mailed the June/July Messenger!

May 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	**Fast Day	BSE-Bible Study East Tampa BSS-Bible Study South Tampa	WBS-Women's Bible Study		1 **	2
3 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Get Acquainted Sunday Philoptochos Meeting Chanter's Meeting	4 Bible Study 6:30 p.m. MOMS 11:00 a.m.	5 St. Irene Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. WBS at Church BSE 6:30 p.m. BSS 6:30 p.m. Open Gym 8:00 p.m.	6** Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Choir Practice 7:00 p.m.	7 Evening Liturgy for St. John the Theologian St. Arsenios Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Young at Heart 11:30 a.m. Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. Young Adults-attend liturgy	8 **	9
10 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	11 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	12 WBS 9:30 a.m. BSE 6:30 p.m. BSS 6:30 p.m. Open Gym 8:00 p.m.	13** Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Choir Practice 7:00 p.m.	14 Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	15 ** Fr. Stavros Anniversary/ Ordination Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	16 Community Outreach
17 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Parish Assembly after Liturgy AHEPA/DOP Mtg. GOYA 5:00 p.m.	18 Bible Study 6:30 p.m. MOMS 11:00 a.m.	19 WBS 9:30 a.m. Leave-taking of Pascha Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Open Gym 8:00 p.m.	20 Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Choir Practice 7:00 p.m.	21 Ascension/Sts. Constantine & Helen Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	22 **	23
24 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	25 Memorial Day Office Closed	26 Open Gym 8:00 p.m.	27**Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Choir Practice 7:00 p.m.	28 Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	29 **	30 Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
31 Pentecost Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Kneeling Vespers 11:00 a.m.						

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

Office: (813) 876-8830 Fax: (813) 443-4899

officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com

www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

NONPROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

TAMPA, FL

PERMIT NO. 461

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Timetable of Services

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

Weekdays: Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

Parish Priest: Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

813-876-8830 (Office) 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:

Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867

Mike Xenick, Vice President 813-340-8737

Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747

Ed Gerecke, Treasurer 813-229-4306

George Chagaris 727-420-1920

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947

Skip Higdon 813-831-9021

Catherine Mistseas 813-571-0658

Bryon Nenos 813-789-0729

Despina Sibley 813-758-0520

Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534

Office Staff:

Monica Gjerde, Office Manager 813-876-8830

officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com

Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper

debstjohntpa@gmail.com fax 813-443-4899

Adult Greek School:

Magda Myer 813-909-2327

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

Chantor: 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:

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

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

Men, Fr. Stavros 813-394-1038

South, Bessie Palios 813-523-0347

Womens, Debbie Kavouklis 813-258-5571

Young Adult, Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862

Stewardship:

Pete Trakas 813-505-2193

Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747

Sunday School:

Vickie Peckham 813-406-5626

Tammy Christou 813-957-0835

Ushers:

Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

Welcoming Committee:

Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

Young at Heart:

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947

Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

The Messenger of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is published on monthly basis. Publican is the first of each month. Deadline for notices and announcements for The Messenger is the 10th of each month. You may send announcements to the church office through email at officestjohngoctampa@gmail.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.