

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*

Christ is Born! December 2015 Glorify Him!

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 exemplify Orthodox Christian character and morals.
5. Supporting ministries that facilitate the overall mission of the Church.
6. Exemplifying commitment to community service and charitable outreach.
7. Creating an environment which encourages members to grow in their faith.



Father Stavros' Message

Which of the Two Gifts Will You Bring?

"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."

II Corinthians 9:7

There are two kinds of gifts that are given each Christmas—the ones given out of necessity and the ones given out of joy. The ones given out of necessity are the ones where we sit down and grudgingly make a list, muttering under our breath "now who must I get a gift for? My boss, co-workers I don't like?" or "maybe I buy something I like and when we all 'pick gifts at random' at the office party I pick my own gift" or "why did they put the suggested gift value at \$20 and not \$10?" You get the idea. We've all bought gifts like these. Gifts that were purchased begrudgingly. Gifts we would rather not have had to give, or in some cases, be forced to give.

The second kind of gift is the one with joy. This is the gift we are excited to buy. This is the gift that requires some thought, planning, shopping, and many times spending a lot of money. A lot of energy is spent in trying to choose the perfect gift. At many moments along the way, we think of the person who will receive the gift, what their reaction will be like when they open it, how they will use it, how much they will like it. This is the gift that gives us the greatest joy to GIVE AWAY.

A "gift" by definition is something that is offered without expectation of anything being received in return. If there is expectation of return, then the gift is a trade. If there is a requirement of a return, then what is given is a payment for a good or service provided. A true gift is offered without expectation of return.

On December 6, we will kick-off our stewardship drive for 2016.

Stewardship is your gift to CHRIST.

Stewardship is not a fee in order to receive the services of the church. Any human being can come to the Divine Liturgy, or Bible study, or confession, or ask for a prayer for no cost at all.

Stewardship is not a trade either—many people "give" to the church according to how much the church "gives" to them.

Stewardship is a GIFT, one that should be offered with joy, with gratitude. It shouldn't be given under compulsion, or guilt. It shouldn't be given in order to meet an average or even to meet a goal. It should be given, simply, as a thanks to God and in support of the work of the Body of Christ

Stewardship is being done differently this year

By the time you receive this issue of *The Messenger*, you

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>



should have received the stewardship materials for this year. They have been done very succinctly, so they are easy to understand and digest. I hope that you will take some time to read through the materials, and then read through them a second time, so that you can absorb what you are reading. I hope that you will read them with an open mind and an open heart. Every time I read the Scriptures with an open heart, even ones I have read dozens of times, there is always something new that I am struck by. And so even though you've undoubtedly read over the stewardship materials in years past, spend some time reading these materials again, with an open mind and an open heart.

There is no Stewardship goal for 2016!

There is no set goal for stewardship for 2016. There won't be a thermometer in the hall telling us how far we have to go. Why is that? Because you are not pledging towards a goal, but offering stewardship as a gift to God. We're not trying to hit an average either. If the average pledge was \$1,000 per family, we shouldn't evaluate whether we are average, above average or below average compared to other parishioners. In the eyes of God, there is no above average, below average, or average. God loves everyone infinitely. God has created everyone with infinite value.

Ideally Stewardship will meet all the expenses of the church

At our October 25 Parish Assembly meeting, the congregation passed a budget of \$684,564 for 2016. This is the cost to operate our church. If we met our budget on stewardship, then we wouldn't have to pass a tray, or charge for candles, or rely on a festival to make ends meet. Ideally, the stewardship goal for our parish should be \$684,564, the amount of the operating budget.

How much does the Bible say I should give?

In the Old Testament, we are taught the concept of the tithe. The tithe is not a suggestion, it is a commandment. We are familiar with the 10 Commandments. There are 603 other commandments which the Lord gave to Moses. And one of those commandments is the tithe. In Leviticus 27:31-34, we read:

All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord. If a man wishes to redeem any of his tithe, he shall add a fifth to it. And all the tithe of herds and flocks, every tenth animal of all that pass under the herdsman's staff, shall be holy to the Lord. . . These are the COMMANDMENTS which the Lord commanded Moses for the people of Israel on Mount Sinai.

Imagine the beautiful image (and it is a beautiful image) of all of God's people passing under the staff of Moses, coming once a year to be blessed, and offering one tenth of everything they had for the service of the temple. And this tithe allowed not only the temple to survive, but to thrive. And if anyone was poor or without food, the tithe took care of those in need. The widows, the orphans, the infirm, who could not work in the field, were fed from the tithe that came to the temple.

Ok, Ok, but that's the Old Testament. Surely Jesus must have changed stuff in the New Testament. We don't even follow the Old Testament, right?

The simple answer is "wrong." The Old Testament is the foundation of the New Testament. We are told in the New Testament that Christ did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 5: 17) If anything, Christ "upped" the game so to speak. He didn't give 1/10 of Himself but His entire self for us. We pray in our services, "Let us commit ourselves and one another and our WHOLE life to Christ our God." In James 1:17, we read that "every good and perfect gift is from Above," meaning that EVERYTHING we have that is good is from God. Ideally, we should be offering EVERYTHING back to God, our whole life.

So, comparing the New Testament standard of 100% to the Old Testament Law of 10%, 10% looks to be the more doable.

Imagine if every day, I gave you \$100, just because I wanted to. I gave you \$100 EVERY day. Would you be put out to give \$10 of it back to me? That still makes for a \$90 GIFT to you each day. Every day that God gives us—of life, of health, of family, of talent that earns income that buys the things we enjoy—all of that is a gift. He doesn't HAVE to give anything to us. So, our stewardship is our means of THANKING God for what He has blessed us with. It is not only how we support our church, it's how we thank our Creator!

What went wrong? - Why do the Orthodox not give 10% when Christian churches do?

We know that in Orthodox countries like Greece, where the church is a state-sponsored church, people pay for the church with their taxes, so they are basically assessed a church fee. When the church came to America with this background, the church started charging dues, a fee to belong. Then in the 1970s, fair share pledging was introduced. Everyone was supposed to do their fair share. But "fair" according to who? Stewardship came along in the 1980s and has still been a hard sell, after generations of doing it wrong. And so the situation that we, and just about every other Orthodox church finds itself in is stewardship supplemented by a Greek festival, endless fundraisers, a tray present everywhere we look, and endless worry about whether we can pay our bills. It's hard to get ahead of the curve, so to speak, when we are struggling just not to fall behind.

Our Protestant counterparts, meanwhile, have churches with not only pastors, but counselors, youth workers, radio ministries, massive church campuses, soup kitchens, colleges and hospitals. How is that possible? They TITHE!

Based on some demographic information from Hillsborough County, I estimate that our average pledge comes out to 2% per family. Now that isn't exactly correct because there are a few high end pledges that bring the average up. The mean pledge is probably below 2%.

If every parishioner offered 3% of their income to the church, we'd come close to meeting our operating budget of \$684,564.

If we met our budget on stewardship, the festival could be used for other things, like paying down our mortgage. There would also be less stress at the festival, no trays, no other fundraisers, etc.

If every parishioner offered 5% of their income to the church, we'd far exceed our budget. And then we could pay off our loan, and expand our ministries.

If every parishioner offered 10% of their income to the church, think about how much community outreach we could do. Think about how much good we could do as a parish for ourselves and for others with that kind of income! Think what kind of witness we could offer to Christ—major support of local charities, overseas missions, spreading the Gospel through more major media.

Let's start off at 3%

Yes, I did get a bit ahead there. Let me start off by suggesting a donation of 3% of your income to the church as your stewardship pledge. And then every year or two, you move up a percentage point until you've reached the tithe. When Lisa and I were first married, twenty years ago, our first pledge was for \$5 a week. It's all we could afford. The second year we were married, we didn't have much more in the way of income but decided we could find another \$5 a week and so our pledge was \$10 a week. And every year since, we've moved up our pledge at least \$5 a week, reasoning that we can find at least \$5 a week laying around. Time has flown by—we're 20 years married and have been increasing our pledge weekly each year, so that what was once a little, has actually become quite a lot. I'm not saying this to brag, please believe me in that. I'm saying that we started with a small number and we've move it up a little each year and now that small number is a pretty big number, but it doesn't even feel like that. Because we add to it in small increments each year. We're also not quite to 10% yet but that is the destination we hope to reach.

Start off at 3% this year, then go for 3.5% or 4% next year and soon enough you'll be at 10%. Imagine if we all did this!

It's not just about the money—time and talent are a big part of this.

Up to this point, I've written only about the financial component of stewardship. There are two other components—time and talent. Without time and talent, in addition to treasure, we have no church ministries. **In fact the most important stewardship is not stewardship of treasure but stewardship of time, specifically time to worship.** Giving time to pray and worship is how we develop our relationship with God. Giving time to bring our children to Sunday school is how we help develop their relationship with God. So time is crucial. I'll never understand how people who worship only on Christmas and Pascha believe that two hours a YEAR is a good amount of time to give to the Lord in worship. Giving Him two hours out of 168 each week seems like a very small amount if you think about it. Add ten minutes a day of prayer and scripture reading and now we are giving God still less than 2% of our time. Weekly worship and daily prayer should be "automatic" when it comes to our stewardship.

The talent portion is also important. God gave each of us a

talent to be used to grow our church and spread the faith. Some people can sing, so they lead worship by singing in the choir. Some people can teach, and they teach Sunday school. We need people to make Prosfora (Holy Bread used for Liturgy) and Kolyva (boiled wheat for memorial service). We need people to serve on the Parish Council and the various committees. We need people to lead and be involved in our various ministries. We also need people who can sew, do electrical work, have background in graphic design, and who are good with social media. We need all kinds of diverse talents. Thankfully, we have a diverse group of people to offer them.

Stewardship is an act of faith - taking money and giving it to the church, or taking time and giving that to the church, requires faith. If I were to give \$5,000 to the church, I have faith that in parting with that money, I'm not going to go hungry. Perhaps I will not have as many luxuries, but I will never lack for necessities.

Stewardship is a gesture of love - I love God. I am thankful to God for all that He has given me. He has given me time—I'm still alive as we close 2016, so I will give a portion of the time back to Him. He has given me talent, so I will give a portion of that talent back to Him. The talents I have allow me to hold a job, which brings in an income, which I use to provide for myself and my family, but whatever income I derive, comes from a job that comes from a talent that ultimately come from God. So, in giving money to the church, I am really giving back a portion not of what I have, but of what He has given me.

In I John 4:19, we read "We love, because He (God) first loved us."

In our stewardship, we give, because He first gave us.

Let's do this differently this year—Let's start off with 3%, and work our way to 10%. Let's make a statement of faith here. It's not "what does the church need my money for?" Or "What is the church going to do with my money?" Giving with expectations or demands, as I wrote at the outset, isn't really giving at all. Give without strings. Give without expectations. Give with faith and trust that if we all give, we are not only all going to receive God's grace, but we can continue to move our church forward by His grace.

Stewardship Sunday is December 6. Please review the stewardship materials and prayerfully consider what you will give back to God on December 6. Please bring your form that day and let us all make our gift together, as one community.

Back to where I started—What kind of stewardship gift will offer Christ this year? One out of necessity? Or one out of joy? Think of who you are giving this gift to. Think of Christ's reaction when He opens your gift! Give some thought and planning to your stewardship gift this year, and give the best gift you can, with joy!

Now for a few other notes:

Successful Festival

We still haven't counted all the final money results of the Festival for this year, as of press time. There is still money coming

in, and still some bills to be paid. This festival will probably end up as one of our top three festivals from a financial standpoint. So that is great news! Even better though, is the spirit of fellowship that permeated the festival. As I walked around the Kourmolis Center the night before the festival, and saw people scurrying around setting up and making last minute preparations, I didn't see stress, I saw joy. I didn't hear yelling, I heard laughing. I didn't feel nervousness, I felt confidence. And this is a credit to the leadership of the festival and the maturity of our community. I would like to thank Alkis Crassas, Mike Xenick, Sandra Pappas, Catherine Mitseas, Florin Patrasciou, Theo Panopoulos, Theo Camene and Dan Bavaro for being our FC (Festival Committee) Tampa. I would like to thank all those who worked with them in making this weekend not only successful but fun. Alkis coined OPA as an acronym for "Orthodox Powered Army." Lisa and I were talking about this one night at home when she said "It could also stand for Orthodox 'Positive Attitude.'" Indeed we were an Orthodox Powered Army with an Orthodox Positive Attitude. And I am so thankful for EVERYONE's effort in making this event awesome!

Services of Christmas - Later on in *The Messenger*, you'll read about the services of Christmas that will be offered in our church. There are three services that I want to bring to your attention—**The Candle-Light Service in Preparation for Christmas** that will be held on Thursday, December 17. This season is not only filled with joy but also with stress. And for some, especially those who have lost loved ones, it can be filled with sadness. This beautiful service, which we celebrated for the first time last year, offers a time for quiet reflection. At the end we had a beautiful prayer circle on the solea. If you want a moving experience during this holiday season, I highly recommend this service. **The Royal Hours of Christmas**, which will be offered on Wednesday, December 23, is a service for those who love scripture. There are 24 scripture readings in this service, between Psalms, Prophecies, Epistles and Gospels. This service will be held with no lights on in the church, just the natural morning light of the day. It also is very reflective. There is not a lot of "action" in this service, so it reminds me of

the shepherds in the Bethlehem countryside, quietly passing the night, and then experiencing the Glory of God. **The Christmas Liturgy** on Christmas Eve is always a highlight. The Nativity occurred at night, so being in the church, offering the Liturgy with windows darkened by the night sky seems appropriate. The choir will sing the Hallelujah Chorus at the conclusion of the Liturgy as well as other Christmas carols. **I'm always surprised how many people DON'T come to church for a Christmas service.** If worshipping isn't part of your Christmas celebration, please make it a point to come this year. As that old saying goes, Christ is the reason for the season. And worshipping at the manger needs to be the centerpiece of our Christmas feast.

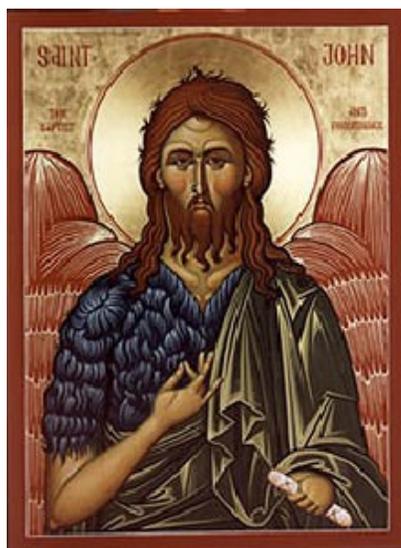
One more choir note - The choir will sing the **Liturgy of Peace** on Sunday, December 20. Because it is a little bit of a longer arrangement of the Liturgy, they will begin the Doxology at 9:30 a.m. with the Liturgy following at 9:45 a.m.

400 people are now on the Prayer Team - Wow, what began as a short term idea, hoping to get 30 people to participate, has grown to beyond anything I can imagine. During Advent, I'm writing on the scriptures of Christmas each day. It's never too late to sign up. Just send an email to frstav@gmail.com and ask to join the team. You'll get a reflection each morning!

And with that, I will conclude my monthly message. Thank you for the time you take in reading the things I write. Thank you for the many messages of support and encouragement I receive. Thank you for filling the church each Sunday. Thank you for your prayers. Thank you for your stewardship of God's Church in Tampa. This will be Christmas number 12 for us in Tampa. Hard to believe. Our son will turn 9 in December—he's halfway to adulthood. Time flies doesn't it?! We are so thankful to call St. John our spiritual home, and to call Tampa our home. May God bless each one of you and your families as we mark another holiday season together. Merry Christmas and best wishes for a Happy and Healthy New Year 2016!

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

With love in the Incarnate Lord,



Services of the Feast of St. John the Baptist

Our Parish celebrates the Feast Day of our Patron Saint, St. John the Baptist, each year on January 7.

Wednesday, January 6 Great Vespers 6:30 p.m.

His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios will preside, assisted by the priests of the Tampa Bay Area. A reception will follow the Vespers, hosted by Philoptochos Society of our Parish.

Thursday, January 7 Orthros 8:30 a.m. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m.

His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios will officiate, assisted by the priests of the Tampa Bay Area. A luncheon will follow the Liturgy, hosted by the Parish Council.



Liturgical Schedule for December 2015

Friday, December 4 St. Barbara Orthros: 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, December 6 **10th Sunday of Luke – St. Nicholas**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St Luke (Nicholas Alsina, Andrew Mellon-Lynn, Demetri Karounos, Jonah Blankenbaker, Yanni Trimikliniotis, Andrew Thatcher, Alexander Findlay, Demetri Passalaris, Chris Cojita)

Ushers: Mike Trimis, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Skip Higdon, Donna Trakas; Ambassador: Ewana Forde; Caller: Martha Kapetan

Get Acquainted: Christy Pessemier Tom Pessemier

Coffee Hour: Philoptochos Shoe Drive Luncheon

Wednesday, December 9 St. Anna Orthros: 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, December 12 St. Sypridon Orthros: 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, December 13 **11th Sunday of Luke**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (Dean Mitseas, Chrstos Nenos, Antonio Bavaro, Nicholas Yotis, Peter Chandler, Zach Chandler, Niko Bavaro, Anthony Catrone)

Ushers: Florin Patrasciou, Mike Kavouklis, Tammy Christou

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Sandra Pappas, Julie Palios; Ambassador: Helen Cauthorn; Caller: Vickie Peckham

Coffee Hour: Sunday School

Tuesday, December 15 St. Elefterios Orthros: 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, December 17 **Candle - Light Payer Service in Preparation for Christmas** 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 20 **Sunday Before Nativity**
Orthros 8:15 a.m. Doxology 9:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 am
Choir will be singing the Liturgy of Peace, so the service will begin earlier than normal.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew (George Hambos, Nicholas Katzaras, James Katzaras, John Palios, Andrew Patrasciou, Genaro Scarfogliero, Makis Crassas, Jonathan Brannan, John Nicholas Krinos)

Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, Perry Katsamakias, Peter Theophanous

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Maria Karounos, Kalliope Chagaris; Ambassador: Edie Kavouklis; Caller: Elaine Halkias

Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Wednesday, December 23 **Royal Hours of the Nativity** 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Thursday, December 24 **Eve of the Nativity of Christ—Vespers and Liturgy of St. Basil**
Vespers 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m.

Nativity Liturgy

Orthros 5:30 p.m. Doxology 6:45 p.m. Divine Liturgy 7:00 p.m.

After Liturgy, the choir will sing Christmas Carols, including the Hallelujah Chorus.



Sunday, December 27 **Sunday After Nativity**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Anyone Attending May Serve

Ushers: Gregory Tisdale, John Christ, George Trimikliniotis

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Donna Trakas, Skip Higdon, Ambassador: Vickie Peckham; Caller: Katherine Sakkis

Coffee Hour: The AHEPA Family

Wednesday, December 30 St. Anysia Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday, January 1 St. Basil Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Liturgical Notes for December

Friday, December 4 - Feast of St. Barbara and St. John of Damascus

We celebrate the feastday of St. Barbara, a martyr for Christ who was martyred by her own father. On the same day, we celebrate the feastday of St. John of Damascus, a hymnographer of the church who also was a strong defender of iconography.

Sunday, December 6 - Feast of St. Nicholas

We celebrate the feast of St. Nicholas, the patron saint of travelers. The tradition of Santa Claus is derived from St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, who was giving gifts to those less fortunate.

Wednesday, December 9 - Feast of St. Anna

This feastday commemorates the mother of the Theotokos, and also the conception of the Theotokos, as it falls 9 months before the feast of her Nativity (September 8).

Saturday, December 12 - Feast of St. Spyridon

St. Spyridon was Bishop of Trimythous. Tradition is that each year, the remains of St. Spyridon are opened to reveal that his shoes have been worn out. They are changed each year. St. Spyridon continues to intercede for the souls of the faithful, wandering over the earth to do so.

Tuesday, December 15 - Feast of St. Eleftherios

St. Eleftherios was a priest-martyr in the 2nd century of the church.

SERVICES OF CHRISTMAS

Thursday, December 17 - Candle-Light Prayer Service in Preparation for Christmas

Last year we added something new to our celebration of Christmas at St. John with the candle-light prayer service in preparation for Christmas. Many people attended and were really moved by this service. There is a “canon” (a set of hymns) in preparation for Christmas. It is very similar in design to the Paraklesis Service that we celebrate in August, except that the hymns are dedicated to the Feast of the Nativity and not to the Virgin Mary, though she is still mentioned prominently in many of them. The service also includes the opportunity to pray for people by name. Also, included in this service will be an opportunity to pray for those who have passed away this year. I know that this affects many families in our community. At the end of the service, a Trisagion service will be chanted for all those who have passed away this year. This service will be held on Thursday, December 17, from 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Wednesday, December 23 - Royal Hours of Christmas

The service of the Royal Hours consists of Prayers, Hymns, Psalms and Old Testament prophecies that foretell the coming of Christ on Christmas. Also read are the Gospel passages of the feast of Christmas. There is no Communion at this service. Rather, it is a service of quiet meditation in anticipation of the Nativity. We will hold this service at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, December 23. We will celebrate the entire service by candlelight. This will be a wonderful and peaceful way to usher in the Feast of the Nativity.

Thursday, December 24 - Christmas

There are traditionally two Divine Liturgies celebrated in connection with the feasts of Christmas, Epiphany and Pascha. On December 24, in the morning, we will celebrate the Great Vespers of Christmas followed by the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. The Vespers of Christmas includes Old Testament Prophecy Readings. It is hoped that those with young children and those who do not drive at night will take advantage of this morning Liturgy, which will be celebrated on December 24 with Vespers at 8:45 a.m. and Divine Liturgy from 9:30-11:00 a.m. On the evening of the 24th, the Church will be open for a time of silent prayer beginning at 5:00 p.m. Orthros will be celebrated at 5:30 p.m., followed by the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom at 7:00 p.m. From 5:00-6:45 p.m., the church will be illumined only by candlelight. Many of you have made a tradition of coming to church for this vigil of prayer and the Orthros and Liturgy and many people who have done so have commented how powerful the celebration of Christmas was for them. Liturgy on Christmas Eve will be followed by a reception sponsored by the Parish Council in the Kourmolis Center, so that we can all break bread as a community on the feast of the Nativity of our Lord.

Wednesday, December 30 - Feast of St. Anysia

St. Anysia was martyred in Thessaloniki in the year 304. Her relics are interred in the altar table of our church. We have not celebrated her feastday in the past, but as our community is growing in its spirituality, it would seem appropriate that on the day we remember the life of St. Anysia, we should commemorate the day with a liturgy, since her relics are present in our church.

The Church is One: The Body of Christ

By Charlie Hambos

Author's Note: This is Part 3 of a three part series in The Messenger, exploring some different metaphors of the church. In this issue, we understand how although we are many individuals, we make up one body and that body is the Body of Christ. In the November issue, we checked ourselves in to the Church, as a hospital for sinners and found the healing we need through Christ. In the October issue, we embarked on a journey across the stormy seas of life and saw how the church is the boat, which we need to climb aboard for safety. Thanks for reading this three part series.

We are the Body of Christ. The greatest metaphor for the Church is, that it is, the Body of Christ. If you are reading this and do not feel like you are a part of the Body of Christ, it is ok. This is a normal feeling and a part of our human condition. However, our ultimate goal in life, is to become a part of the Body of Christ and the Church is how we can attain that goal. Saint Paul in several instances throughout his letters was the one who made this metaphor a reality. Let's look at these instances.

The first is found in Romans 12:4-6a, *"For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them."* In our body, we have many members. We have heads, arms, legs, feet, hands, ears, eyes and noses. All of these things make up our one body. So, the Body of Christ has different members. Each member of the Body of Christ has a different role, based on the grace that is given to us. Further on in Romans 12:6b-8, Paul says, *"if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."* Each member of the Body of Christ has a spiritual gift. Some have the knowledge of the faith. Some can teach the knowledge of the faith. Some give something of themselves. Some help people. Some do acts of mercy. These are the roles of each member of the Body of Christ. Some can hear the Word of God and understand it. Some can teach the word of God from their mouth. Some offer help to people with their hands. Some can use their feet to move people who can teach, preach and offer a helping hand. They all work together to form the Body of Christ.

The second is found in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. Here St. Paul really brings the humanity or the reality of what it is like to be a part of the Body of Christ, while still on earth. Remember, on earth it is still a struggle to be a united Body of Christ because of a disease called sin. Regardless, we are to strive to be a united Body.

Starting with verse 12 and 13, *"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body*

does not consist of one member but of many." Our unifying factor is not our ethnicity or not what we do or don't do in our life. It is the Spirit of God, which was breathed into us by God when we were created and now especially after the fall, when we were baptized. Now, Paul narrates an argument between the parts of the body, just like we argue with one another, in verses 14-17. *"If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?"* Clearly, in the Corinthian Church to whom Paul was writing, there were definitely factions being formed and forgot they couldn't be a body if they didn't work together. The eye can not be the whole body. Like Paul asks, *"If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing?"* He does the same with the ear and the sense of smell. The bottom line is in verses 18 and 19, *"But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be?"* God has a unique plan for His Body. He chose the desired function of each organ of the body to do its job. Above, it is the grace of God which gives us all the gifts. Another argument ensues within the body in verses 20 and 21, *"As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'" This for sure means that in the community of believers in Corinth, they easily disposed parts of the body, people that is, because they thought they could exist without it. Paul kills this attitude in the remainder of the section in verses 22-26, "On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together."* We think that the weaker parts of the body are the best ones to remove because they are no use to us. This is the wrong attitude. God abides more in the weaker parts of the body because there is more room for Him. The stronger parts do not need Him as much. All parts of the body must treat each other equally. Why? Simple. If one member suffers, then because we are a part of one body, then we all suffer. The strong must lift up the weak.

The next place that Paul compares the Church to the Body of Christ is in Ephesians 5. In the Orthodox Church, it is this scripture passage that is read during the Sacrament of Marriage. It is here also where Paul establishes Christ as the head of the Body. In verse 21, Paul says, *"Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ."* We must be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ because we are all created in His image.

Whatever we do to one another, we inadvertently do to one another. I am convinced that if we kept this idea at the forefront of our minds, we would not do the things we do to Jesus Christ. In verses 22 and 23, Paul compares the role of the husband and the wife. *“Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.”* Here, usually the husband rejoices but that is only because he didn’t quite understand what Paul is saying. Yes, wives should be subject to their husbands, only if the husband is willing to die for her like Christ died for the church. If that doesn’t establish Christ as the Head of the Church, I don’t know what does.

Finally in Colossians 1:18-20, Paul brings the idea of Christ as the head of the Church, His Body to a full status. *“He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”* Christ is the head of the Church because He was before all things. He beat death in order to rescue us from it. It was Christ, who was the first born Son of God. It was in Christ both heaven and earth are reconciled. It was His death burial and resurrection which gives us the opportunity to be a part of His Body and reunite it with all of creation, to the Father.

In order to be a part of the Body of Christ, we must unite ourselves to Christ. It is through His grace and partaking of his Body that we become closer and closer to a fuller more united Body of Christ, the Church. St. John Maximovich, a contemporary American saint, lying uncorrupt in San Francisco, CA said

it like this, “Uniting ourselves with Christ, we receive divine grace which gives human nature strength for victory over sin and death, and the Lord Jesus Christ has shown people the way to victory over sin by His teaching, and he grants them eternal life, making them partakers of His eternal kingdom by His Resurrection. In order to receive that divine grace from Him the closest possible contact with Him is necessary. Drawing all to Himself by His divine love, and uniting them unto Himself, the Lord has united to each other those who love Him and come unto Him, uniting them into one Church.”

St. John Maximovich says, “The closest possible contact with Him is necessary.” Christ himself said, in the Gospel of John 6:56, “He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.” It is through Holy Communion, that we become more and more the Body of Christ, not only because we become Him but because we all partake of the same Body of Christ. This takes lots of preparation and because we are diseased with sin, we often must repent and re-start, but we must remain close to Him in this real encounter with the Body and Blood of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, how the Body of Christ, operates in the world, according to St. John Maximovich, “Christ, invisible to the bodily eye, manifests Himself on earth clearly through His Church just as the unseen human spirit manifests itself through its body. The Church is the Body of Christ both because its parts are united to Christ through His divine mysteries and because through her Christ works in the world.” We have a big responsibility. Are we up for the challenge?

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.

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SAVE THE DATE!
Parish Council Elections are
Sunday, December 13.



Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism - Emilia Lazarides, daughter of Nick and Angela Lazarides, was baptized on Sunday, October 18. Chris Lazarides and Gina Marco were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism - Miles Nicholas Madill, son of Chad and Stephanie Madill, was baptized on Sunday, October 18. Petar and Alicia Dimitrijeric were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism - Dimitri George Ameres, son of George and Zackie Ameres, was baptized on Sunday, October 25. Andy and Kalliope Ameres were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism - Lauren (Constantina) Mason, daughter of Rex and Maria Mason, was baptized on Sunday, November 1. Godparent was Robert Papadakis. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism - Nikolas Massey, son of Michael Massey and Vera Rusyn, was baptized on Sunday, November 1. Godparents were Larry and Mary Galin. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism - Anna Galin, daughter of Larry and Mary Galin, was baptized on Sunday, November 1. Godparents were Vera Massey and Jack Bartlett. Na Sas Zisi!

Chrismation - Angel Alsina was Chrismated on Sunday, October 25. Elaine Halkias, Katherine and Tommy Karanzia were the Godparents. Congratulations! Welcome Home!

Wedding - Corey DeLeon Brown and Evdokia Anderson were married on Saturday, October 24. Carol Enterkin was the Koumbara. Congratulations!

Condolences to Pablo and Vanessa Aviles, on the passing away of Pablo's father, Pablo, on October 22. May his memory be eternal!

Condolences to Tony and Sophie Karras and Pauline Spencer, on the passing away of Johnny Karras, on October 26. May his memory be eternal!

New Memorial Policy

Effective immediately, we are going to ask for a two week notice to schedule a memorial service. The reason is that it is difficult to find people to make the kolyva and also to get the ingredients when last minute requests are made. If you wish to schedule a memorial service, please contact the office with your date, the names you wish to have commemorated, how many pews you wish to have reserved, and whether you wish for the Philoptochos to make kolyva. The cost for kolyva is \$75 (made payable to Philoptochos). **Thank you for your cooperation on this.**

Get Acquainted Sunday, December 6



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.



Community Outreach

We will be volunteering at the Saturday homeless breakfast on **Saturday, December 19** from 8:00am-10:30am at First Presbyterian Church in Downtown Tampa located at 412 Zach Street (entrance on Polk Street).

Please also **SAVE THE DATE** to volunteer in the Metropolitan Ministries Holiday Tent for Christmas on December 20 from 2:00pm- 4:30pm. We will need 50 volunteers on the 20th (which will be right after church). You won't want to miss this fun church-wide opportunity to give back and get in the Holiday spirit! **Look out for the Community Outreach Constant Contact Email to sign up!**



GOYA

Our GOYA meeting for November will be Sunday, December 13, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be served. GOYA is sponsoring their annual Christmas Card. They will be having this fundraiser on December 6, and December 13. Deadline is on December 13.

HOPE & JOY DECEMBER OUTREACH

"One book donated can be one life changed"

Hello Families,

As parents we can all agree that reading and the power of literacy is very important to the future of children. Thankfully, our St. John the Baptist community is blessed and fortunate to be able to provide the best education for our children. Unfortunately, that is not the case everywhere across the nation. Hope & Joy has teamed up with our very own Christina Gerecke and her sorority Pi Beta Phi at Stetson University to collect gently used books to be donated to Starke Elementary. This is what Pi Beta Phi and Christina have committed to:

"At Pi Beta Phi, we believe in the power of reading. For more than a century, we've committed ourselves to creating a more literate and productive society. We've changed with the times, but never shifted our vision. Through our programs, such as Arrow in the Arctic, First Book, and Champions are Readers (CAR), we strive to make a difference in the lives of children across the nation. Specifically, at Stetson University, we have raised over \$3,000 alone in the past two months to contribute to our philanthropy, and we donated over 500 books to local elementary schools last semester. Volusia County is actually home to Starke Elementary, which has the third lowest reading scores in the entire country. We work with Starke Elementary as well as the local Montessori school to teach children how to read. One book donated can be one life changed."

Over the next few weeks Hope & Joy will be collecting gently used children's books. Please take a few minutes to go through your children's books -- books they have out grown, books they no longer read-- or have your children pick a couple they think another child would love to read and bring them to church to be donated to Starke Elementary. There will be a donation bin in the hall by the Sunday School bulletin board.

Thank you for all your support! In Christ,

Amy Kafantaris and Debbie Nicklow
Hope & Joy Ministry

Christina Gerecke
Stetson University Class of 2017
FL Alpha- Pi Beta Phi
FOCUS Leader



Philoptochos Christmas Brunch

Sunday, December 13 at 1:00 p.m.
Palma Ceia Golf And Country Club
Cost \$27.00 per person

Please RSVP to Lisa Alsina by December 10
(813) 871-1094 or lisaalsina@gmail.com



Young at Heart

The Young at Heart Meeting will be Thursday, December 3, 2015 in the Zaharias Room.

The Young At Heart is taking reservations for the annual Christmas Dinner show that we attend. It is at the Showboat Dinner Theater in Hudson on Saturday, December 19 at 11:00 a.m. We will meet at the church and carpool to Hudson. They serve a buffet meal and there is a show. This year is a "Christmas Revue" with a "Living Nativity." The cost is under \$43. Please contact one of the Young at Heart members. We would love to have a big group to share in the fun. Everyone is welcome to join!



It is time to start thinking of what costume you are going to wear to the upcoming dance (Mardi Gras Ball) the Young at Heart will be hosting on Saturday, February 27. There will be cash prizes for best costumes and a raffle. Live music by John Demas and The Omega Project. Catering will be by Big Star Catering. Tickets will go on sale in December and January.

Adult \$40.00 Ages 10-18 \$25.00 Kids Under 10 are free!

Your Time, Talents and Treasure needed in 2016!

As the year comes to a close we thank our 2015 loyal Stewards for your pledges, essential to keep 'Our House of God' operational, and your Time and Talents that keep our community vibrant & thriving!

This past year we have seen many positive changes:

Our Welcome Committee provided smiling faces every Sunday to greet our parishioners and connect visitors to our church. Our coffee hour is filled with people of all ages (and many, many children) enjoying fellowship after our Divine Liturgy. You can see the future of our church in these children!

Over 25 new families joined our community, making St. John their new spiritual home.

We introduced the 'Council of Ministries' to keep our Ministry Leaders and our community connected to one another. The leaders of our Ministries come together quarterly to share ideas and keep the Mission and Vision of their ministries focused on the overarching mission of our Church. Our Ministries are growing and offer everyone an opportunity to get involved!

We introduced Parish Data Systems (PDS) an internal software 'customized for our Orthodox Faith' that enables us to better track Family details, Communications, Stewardship details, Ministry interests, Talents and much more!

We learned a lot about our community, connecting to one another and keeping our eyes turned to God and the reasons we give of our Time, Talents and Treasure!

~ Stewardship Housekeeping ~

Please complete your 2015 pledge by year-end as we prepare for a new Stewardship Year! Tax Letters will be compiled in January 2016 to reflect donations received in the 2015 calendar year. We can address any questions you may have regarding your remaining commitment.

We will accept online credit card payments through PayPal in 2016. This option is provided for convenience. Consistent donations are a tremendous help for our church operations and easy to set up with Internet Banking or Electronic Funds Transfer. Please visit our website for more detail.

YES - Stewardship Pledge Forms really are required and can now be completed on-line. They help us determine how much income the Church can expect to support our ministries and expenses, provide family information and help us to see your areas of interest and talents. **Pledge forms and current contributions are required to meet the Uniform Parish Regulations (UPR) of our Archdiocese as well as our local by-laws, which enable participation at Parish General Assembly Meetings, Nominations and Voting for Parish Council in December.**

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

	2015*
<i>Stewardship Goal</i>	<i>\$470,000</i>
Pledged	\$406,746
Average Pledge	\$1,210
Median Pledge**	\$600
# of Parishioners (Families) Pledged with a completed form	322
# of Parishioners (Families) that have given a Stewardship Check without a form+	29

*Dollars received - Based on YTD as of 11/12/15

** Pledge amount in the Middle - 1/2 of Stewards pledge higher & 1/2 lower +Per our Bylaws, to be considered a Voting Member of St. John you must have a completed Pledge Form.



Thank You to ALL of Our Volunteers!

35th Annual Tampa Greek Festival





SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Our Greek Festival was a huge success. It was beautiful to see our students involved in helping our church. What a perfect example of Stewardship!!! Giving of their TIME; washing trays, serving food, cleaning tables, etc. And of course of their TALENTS...Greek Dancing! To see our children dressed in costume and dancing with pride, was pure joy and always a highlight of our Festival.

Many of our students made Veteran's Day Cards for our deserving VETERANS. Debbie Ferekides, our 4th Grade teacher, works at the Veteran's Hospital and delivered these cards to a very appreciative group of veterans. Here is an example of one message from one of our 5th graders: "Dear Veteran, Thank you for everything you have done to serve our country. You are my hero and most likely a lot of other peoples heroes, too. I am sure that you made our GOD much more happier than other people down on earth. All and all, I think and know that you sacrificed your life for our Country. From, Alex Findlay"

It was also wonderful to see our children participate in our BOXES OF HOPE project on November 22. Helping others is such an important part of our Faith. Our children will have other opportunities to do more this Holiday Season at Metropolitan Ministries.

Our Sunday School BULLETIN BOARD is up with our new class pictures. We would sincerely like to thank Olya Clifton for taking these beautiful pictures and also donating all the prints. Please don't forget to stop by and take a look at this bulletin board on Sunday.

We have begun our HALL OF FAITH Program. There is a poster on OUR Bulletin Board entitled Hall of Faith: THE LORD'S PRAYER and THE CREED. Our Pre-K through 3rd grade students who memorize The Lord's Prayer will have their name added to this HALL OF FAITH. Students in 4th-High School are already expected to know the Lord's Prayer and their challenge is to memorized The Creed. Testing of these prayers will take place during our music program for 1st-5th graders and in the classrooms for the other grade levels. We will only test your student when they think they are ready. Of course we will also explain the meaning of these prayers and each student will have as many attempts as needed to be in THE HALL OF FAITH. We would like to congratulate KRIS CHRISTOPHER for standing up in his kindergarten classroom and proudly reciting The Lord's Prayer correctly. That is fabulous for a Kindergartener. Our four students who have mastered The Creed are Benny Hidremichael, Brigham Sibley, Artemis Xenick, and Elizabeth Xenick.

We are very excited about our Weekly Topics that each classroom will include into their curriculum/program this year. The topics for the past month were SAINTS COSMAS AND DAMIAN, SERVING WITH LOVE and CHARITY-THANKFULNESS.

Our children sang beautifully on November 14th for our YOUTH SUNDAY SERVICE. We would like to thank Gregory Koutroumanis doing such a great job reading the Epistle. The parishioners of St. John's are truly blessed to have such wonderful children.

GET TO KNOW OUR TEACHERS: (We will feature more teachers in the next Messenger.)

Peggy Bradshaw - High School Co-Teacher

"I have been teaching Sunday School at St. John's for 7 years now. I spent 3 years with Middle School Students and 4 now in the High School. Together, with my co-teacher, Dory Passalaris, we try to cover subjects that include Orthodox Theology, Biblical and Scriptural Readings and mini bible studies, and contemporary events and issues that the teens are interested in discussing and learning more about. In addition, I chair and coach our St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival; that is my favorite and to me, my most important endeavor. I have always been interested in learning our Orthodox Faith from a child. I never forgot my Sunday School teachers who made such an impact on me, and I want to impart the same positive influence on our teens. As an adult, I am still learning and growing as an Orthodox and as a Christian. Much of my learning comes with studying with the children in class or at home preparing for a lesson. It is my joy and pleasure to work with these children as my son is grown; he is 22 and in his last year of college. I am married and I also have two stepchildren who I have raised since they were 7 and 9 years old. They are now 18 and 16, ! It is an honor for me to be with the children of our Sunday School. Last year's graduating seniors were students I taught from 6th grade all the way until they graduated from High School. I care for them and many of the others that preceeded them, some as if they were my own children! My sincere hope is that they will graduate and go into the world knowing as much as possible about their faith and preserving what they learned by continuing to grow in the church throughout the rest of their lives."

PAM IRWIN - Music Assistant

"I have helped Maria Xenick in the Music Program by playing piano for her class for a number of years. I enjoy seeing the students grow in their knowledge of music and Orthodox hymns. I am married to Jon Irwin and have no children, but many harp students. I teach harp for Hillsborough County Public Schools and also teach music privately. I also play flute and piano and enjoys helping the Sunday School program grow and expand."

DATES TO REMEMBER:

Dec. 6: Youth Sunday- Charlie Hambos - Pre-K - Church Vessel Presentation

Dec. 12: Saturday - 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Christmas Program Rehearsal/Christmas Party

Dec. 13: Sunday School Pageant- Sunday School is sponsoring the COFFEE HOUR.

Dec. 20th and Dec. 27th: No Sunday School

Jan. 3, 2016: Sunday School Resumes - TOPIC: Epiphany/St. John the Baptist

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



Join us for
St. John the Baptist's
Annual
Sunday School
Christmas Party

Saturday, December 12th

(Divine Liturgy for St. Spyridon 10:00 a.m.)

11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Kourmolis Center

****Christmas program rehearsal from 2:00-3:00 p.m. in the church****

**All children welcome for an afternoon filled with
Christmas crafts, games, lunch and fun!**

Kindly r.s.v.p. so all can be plentiful!

Debbie 813-690-0671 or debbienicklow@hotmail.com

**Please bring gently used children's books to be donated
To "Champions are Readers"**





AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – DECEMBER 2015



Scholarship Opportunities

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is pleased to announce the AHEPA and Daughters of Penelope Scholarship Committee are now accepting applications. The scholarship's purpose is to promote, encourage, and advance education at the college, university and graduate school levels. Please contact Edie Kavouklis at 813.758.0305 or Marina Paras at 813.966.9527 for additional information.

The deadline for submission is December 12, 2015!



AHEPA FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP DINNER AND CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

On December 19, 2015 the AHEPA FAMILY will host the annual SCHOLARSHIP AND CHRISTMAS SOCIAL DINNER at the Floridan Hotel. We will be once again awarding scholarships to the young members of our community including high school seniors, college and graduate school students. To date AHEPA has awarded over 20 scholarships worth over \$20,000 to worthy

students. Help us by making a contribution to our scholarship fund today!

We invite everyone, including AHEPAns, Daughters Sons and Maids, friends, family and members of the community to attend this fun event filled with holiday cheer to support the deserving young members of our community. Please make your reservations by calling (813)254-6980 or (813)758-0305

SAINT JOHN'S DAY DINNER

The AHEPA FAMILY is having our Annual Saint John's Day Dinner again this year on Thursday, January 7, 2016 in the evening, at the Floridan Hotel, beginning at 6:30 p.m. with dinner at 7:00 P.M. Invited guests include Metropolitan Alexios of the Diocese of Atlanta, the Supreme President of AHEPA, John Galanis; the Grand President of the Daughters of Penelope, Connie Pilallis. The Supreme President of the Sons of Pericles, Andreas Christou; Grand President of the Maids of Athena, Deanna Socaris and Greek Consul General in Tampa, Florida, Adamantia Klotsa. In Attendance will also be District Lodge members from the AHEPA and Daughters of Penelope Lodges; past district governors of Citrus District 2 and other Districts and past supreme lodge members and other dignitaries.

We invite everyone, to attend this elegant, inspirational and motivating evening with the leaders of our Hellenic-American community throughout the United States. Please make your reservations by calling (813)254-6980 or (813) 758-0305.



AHEPA GOLF TOURNAMENT

On Saturday October 17, 2015 AHEPA Lycurgus Chapter 12 held their Annual Golf Tournament to benefit their Scholarship program. It was held at Westchase Golf Club in Tampa, Florida. It was a beautiful day on a beautiful golf course and everyone had a great time while raising money for our 2015 Scholarship Awards program. Thanks to everyone that participated and to our sponsors that helped us raise money for our 2015 scholarship program.

WALK TO END ALZHEIMERS

On Saturday, October 31, 2015 the AHEPA and Daughters of Penelope participated in the "WALK TO END ALZHEIMERS". The event was led by Maria Zabetakis and the Daughters of Penelope. A great time was had by everyone and they raised over \$2,000 for the cause to end Alzheimer's as part of the Hillsborough WALK which raised over \$200,000. BRAVO TO ALL!



Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

By Father John Abdalah

As Orthodox Christians, we greet one another with this confident exclamation during the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord. With this seasonal greeting we affirm that Jesus, who took on flesh and was born into our world, is indeed the Christ, and worthy of glorification.

This greeting is unlike other seasonal greetings about being merry (Christmas), glad (tidings), or happy (holidays). Not that I have any trouble with being merry, glad or even happy. I enjoy a spiked eggnog or a traditional Christmas shot of whiskey or arak as much as the next guy. But there is more to the preparation and celebration of Christmas than that. In this feast we celebrate our salvation through the good news of our Savior's advent. When we greet each other with the news of Christ's birth, we seize the opportunity to glorify the new born Savior. This greeting carries within it the promise of salvation, and the very meaning of life.

We will not escape the secularization of this feast. We will not change the marketing of goods, the office parties and the exchange of gifts. We will not avoid the need to spend money we may not have, eat too much or party ourselves silly. But with a little work to understand God's revealed truth, we can transcend and baptize the now secular images to bring us deeper meaning. I offer the following examples of what I mean:

Let every twinkling light on every bush and window remind us that Christ is the Light that brings us from darkness into light. Every light can bring us to him who is Light, just like the star that guided the Magi. Every light can remind us of the Christ child who enlightens us with Divine truth. This is the truth that sets us free. He is our light and our resurrection, the light of truth that will guide us from the manger to the empty tomb. This season of Christ's birth is ultimately the season of salvation.

Let every sale in every department store remind us of how God loves us more than the world can understand. The retailers draw us in with sales so that we will come and shop with them. How much more does Christ draw us close? Christ took on flesh to call us home to Him. He suffered at the hands of his own creation, humiliated and murdered. This is the epitome of love. Every retailer, every jingle, every commercial can remind us of God's own love for us.

Let every seasonal party remind us of the Joy of Salvation. To save us Jesus voluntarily came to take on flesh and suffer in his body. His sacrifice and his gift are reasons to celebrate. When we celebrate, we can remember all that God accomplished for us. We can remember His

nature of love and mercy.

Let every Santa on the street collecting money, or posing for photos with children, remind us of the gifts God has given us and the opportunities God gives us to share with others. Think too of the example of St. Nicholas who taught us to fast, share our resources and love God with fervor.

Let every gift we present to one another remind us of the gift of life that Christ is for us. Christ gives us life as we are born anew into Him. Remember also that the Eucharist is life-giving and is given in his name.

Let every snowman, made of ice or styrofoam, remind us of how cold the world can be and how we need the warmth of our Savior. The world needs your example, your love and your witness in order for it to be warmed by God's love.

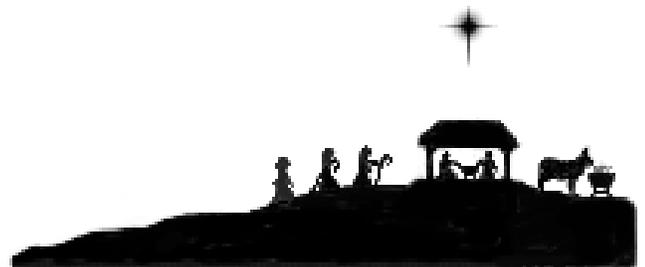
Let every ribbon and bow on every package remind us how Christ has put Satan in bonds and freed us to love him and stay with Him. He who was born in a manger is He who could not die and defeated Satan in Hades.

Let every Christmas carol and seasonal song, remind us that we are called to praise God from the depths of our beings. Our soul wants to call out to Him who created us and who comes to us in this feast as a baby. Sing out, and let God hear your voice. Sing out and let others hear your testimony God has taken on flesh and dwelt with us as the prophets foretold. This is a time to sing out!

Perhaps you could add to my list and share your illustrations with our readers. Take a few moments to write down some secular images that you think can be given new meaning and send them to The WORD. By reading them next year, others may find practical ways to use secular images to be less distracted, and to focus more on the real meaning of this Holy Season.

Christmas comes at the end of the secular calendar. It is for us more than the end of one year and the beginning of a new year. It is for us a call to rededicate ourselves as we make God our Lord, and call him our Savior. Rededicated to Christ, let us charge boldly into the next century. Let us not be ashamed to proclaim that Christ is Born! Glorify Him! He is our God and we are His people.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!



Small Group Bible Study

We have **Six Small Groups** that meet once a week. If you haven't joined a group yet, you may do so at any time!

Monday Night Bible Study (for everyone)

We are be studying the book of I Corinthians.

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

Group Leader: Charlie Hambos

Charlie.hambos@gmail.com, 813-843-8471

Meeting time: Monday evenings from 6:30– 8:00 p.m.

December Meeting Dates: December 7, 14, 21

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

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

Group Leader: Debbie Kavouklis

dkavouklis1@verizon.net, (813) 690-0155.

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

December Meeting Dates: December 1, 8, 15-Liturgy

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

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

Group Leader: Father Stavros for the first one but we are going to rotate this among group members. Please email Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com or contact him at 813-394-1038.

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.

December Meeting Dates: December 2, 9, 16

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: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in the Library

Group Leader: Bessie Palios

bmp1126@yahoo.com, 813-523-0347.

Meeting time: Tuesday evenings from 7:00-8:30 p.m.

December Meeting Dates: December 1, 8, 15

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

2604 Herndon Street, Valrico, FL 33596

Group Leader: Donna Hambos

dhambos@msn.com, 813-843-8412

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

December Meeting Dates: December 1, 8, 15

Young Adult Group (for adults ages 18-40)

Location: TBA

Group Leader: Mary Ann Konstas

mapkonstas@gmail.com, 813-215-9862

Meeting Time: Sundays following the Divine Liturgy

December Meeting Dates: December 6, 20

The Christmas Tree and Orthodox Tradition (Met. Hierotheos Vlachos)

by Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos of Nafpaktos

(excerpt from the book titled *The Feasts of the Lord: An Introduction to the 12 Feasts and Orthodox Christology*, 1993.)

I suspect that the custom of decorating a tree at Christmas time is not simply a custom which came to us from the West and which we should replace with other more Orthodox customs. To be sure, I have not gone into the history of the Christmas tree and where it originated, but I think that it is connected with the Christmas feast and its true meaning.

First, it is not unrelated to the prophecy of the Prophet Isaiah:

“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (Is. 11:1)

St. Cosmas the Poet had this prophecy in mind when he wrote of Christ as the blossom which rose up out of the Virgin stem from the stump of Jesse. The root is Jesse, David's father, the rod is King David, the flower which came from the root and the rod is the Theotokos. And the fruit which came forth from the flower of the Panagia is Christ. Holy Scripture presents this wonderfully. Thus the Christmas tree can remind us of the genealogical tree of Christ as Man, the love of God, but also the successive purifications of the Forefathers of Christ. At the top is the star which is the God-Man (*Theanthropos*) Christ.

Then, the Christmas tree reminds us of the tree of knowledge as well as the tree of life, but especially the latter. It underlines clearly the truth that Christ is the tree of life and that we cannot live or fulfill the purpose of our existence unless we taste of this tree, “the producer of life”. Christmas cannot be conceived without Holy Communion. And of course as for Holy Communion it is not possible to partake of deification in Christ without having conquered the devil when we found ourselves faced with temptation relative to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, where our freedom is tried. We rejoice and celebrate, because “the Tree of Life blossomed from the Virgin in the cave”.

The 12 Days of Christmas

By Fr. Christos Mars

We are surrounded by the sights, sounds and smells of Christmas. We see Christmas trees everywhere, we hear songs about Santa Claus, and Frosty the Snowman; and we smell all the gingerbread, candy canes, and foods that are made once a year all during this time.

We work, wait, and anticipate the magical date on the calendar of December 25th, and look forward to all the time that we spend together with friends and family.

After the great holiday of Christmas comes and goes, we think little of what is to come, except that the New Year is around the corner. We think about promises and resolutions that we will make for the upcoming year, and we think about all the things we would like to accomplish and do in the upcoming year.

And after the New Year, and all the celebrations that have taken place, we once again move onto our daily lives and routines, and forget about the holiday of Christmas until the next year.

Many of us have fallen into this trap of forgetting about what the real meaning of Christmas is all about. We have forgotten that this time of year is not about giving presents, or receiving presents, or thinking about Santa Claus, the reindeer, Frosty, and all the other novelty items that are associated with Christmas. This time of year, we should all be focused on one very important thing, and that is the birth of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ.

Without Christ's birth, all the things that have transpired to lead us out of darkness and sin would never have happened! St. John Chrysostom says that the feast of the Nativity of Christ is the capital of feasts. All other feasts of the Lord, Epiphany, the Transfiguration, the Passion the Cross, the Resurrection and the Ascension of Christ, follow from the Nativity. Without the Nativity there would have been no Resurrection, but also without the Resurrection the purpose of the divine incarnation would not have been fulfilled.

All these feasts of the Lord are unified. We separate them in order to celebrate them and to look more closely into their content. But in every Divine Liturgy we live through all the events of the divine incarnation, which is according to the Fathers, always Christmas, always Easter, always Pentecost.

Each of these feasts are experienced in the Divine Liturgy. For Christmas the imagery contained within the icon of the Nativity, can easily be seen in the context of the Divine Liturgy.

The cave in which Christ was born is the Church, the manger is seen as the Altar, Joseph is the server, the magi are the clergy, the shepherds are the deacons, the angels are the priests, the Lord is the bishop, the Theotokos is the throne, the gifts of the magi are the chalices, and the incarnation is the vestments, the cherubim are the fans, the Holy Spirit is the paten, the Father who overshadows all things with His power is the veil

covering the paten.

We experience at every single Divine Liturgy the whole life of Christ, from His birth, to His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and ascension into heaven. Maybe that is why in the Liturgical hymns, the feast of Christmas is called the Winter Pascha.

Christmas has many characteristics of the feast of Pascha. We begin by looking at the fast period of the Church. We see the similarities between Christmas and Easter. The Church in her infinite wisdom has given us a forty day fast period to prepare us for the upcoming feast of Christmas, similar to the one for Easter.

Among other similarities between the feast of Christmas and Easter, are pre-feast preparations, such as services on Christmas Eve that prepare us for the coming of Christ. There are special Royal Hours with their prophecies, epistles, gospels, and hymns on the eve of the fast, followed by the Vespereal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. There are canons, and countless hymns that continue to prepare us for the birth of Christ, and finally on the day of Christmas itself, we celebrate Divine Liturgy once again and fully embrace that Christ has come in human form for the salvation of the world.

The liturgical verses and hymns for Christmas and Epiphany, the Pascha of Christ's incarnation and manifestation in the flesh, repeat those of Easter, the Pascha of Christ's death and resurrection. The Lord's birth and baptism are directly connected to His dying and rising. He was born in order to die. He was baptized in order to be raised. The harmony between these events is overwhelming, and the beauty of it is almost more than we can bear.

Jesus laying as an infant in the cave in the reign of Caesar Augustus that He might lie in the tomb under Pontius Pilate. He was hounded by Herod that He might be caught by Caiaphas. He was buried in baptism that he might descend into death through the cross. He was worshipped by wise men that the whole of creation might adore Him in His triumph over death. The Pascha of His Cross was prepared by the Pascha of His Coming. The Pascha of His resurrection was begun by the Pascha of His Incarnation. The Pascha of His Glorification was foretold by the Pascha of His Baptism. This is what Christians celebrate each year in the Winter Pascha.

And this is what we need to keep in mind during this time of the Christmas season. We need to remember that Christ came into the world for our salvation, to redeem us from the sins and the transgressions that have befallen us from the time of Adam and Eve.

That is why Christ is called the new Adam, because Christ took the sins of humanity and cleansed them with his own blood. From the Gospel readings we know that the place where Christ was crucified was called Golgotha, meaning the place of the skull, and many times in the icon of the crucifixion we even see a skull at the base of Christ's cross, but does anyone know whose skull that is? It is the skull of Adam, and through Christ's crucifixion, and his blood, has cleaned the sin of Adam and Eve, and given us a new chance at life.

But if Christ is the new Adam, who is the new Eve? The Theotokos is the new Eve—by accepting Christ and saying to the archangel Gabriel, *“let it be done to me according to your word.”* (Luke 1:38) She has given herself over to Christ, to His ways, and His teachings. She has committed her whole life to Christ, and will never, ever stray away from that commitment. It is not by chance that in the Divine Liturgy when we pray the petition to the Theotokos that we ask for each of us to *“committee ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.”* We pray that we too may have the same commitment as the Theotokos did, to accept Christ, and to follow him.

We can now begin to understand how important the feast of the Nativity really is. Christ, who is the new Adam, came into the world to save humanity from its sins, and through the Theotokos, the new Eve, we accept Christ, with our whole heart, our whole mind, and our whole soul.

The magi, who came to visit Christ, and brought him gifts, did so because they believed that Christ was the one that the Prophets had spoken of. Christ was the one that the world was waiting for. Christ was our Lord, who came in human form to save us from ourselves. The wise men knew this of Christ, and therefore brought Him gifts that reflected Christ’s divinity. They brought him Gold, because Christ is called the King of Kings, and the gold shows his royalty. Frankincense was given because He is the God of Gods. Frankincense is burned in the censer before the image of God. And the final gift that was given to Him was myrrh; because they knew that Christ was going to suffer for our salvation, and thus, even from the time of His birth, He is brought gifts that prepare Him for His death and burial.

The wise men, who we incorrectly dub as the three wise men, came and were among the first to worship Christ along with all the shepherds. We incorrectly say the three wise men, because they brought with them three gifts, and thus assume that there are only three, however in the biblical tradition that we read in the Gospel of St. Matthew, we will clearly see that the Gospel tells us only that *“wise men from the east came.”* (Matt. 2:1) It does not tell us that there were three. Nonetheless, whether there were three or thirty-three, the wise men came and worshipped Christ as God made into flesh.

With all this in mind, Christmas can now become something more than just Santa Claus, Frosty, gingerbread, and candy canes. Christmas can become our understanding, of how Christ, came into the world as a young child, to save us from our fallen nature, all because He loves us!

A great disappointment, for me, in this time of year is the day after Christmas, and the reason for that is because most people forget about Christmas, until next year. All they look forward to is New Years, and nothing else. As Orthodox Christians we should not forget about Christmas the day after, and look forward to just the New Year, because we celebrate Christmas for twelve full days after Christmas, ending with another joyous event, the feast of Epiphany.

Many of us have heard the song The Twelve Days of Christmas. Did you know that the song is actually a religious song?

This song is probably the most misunderstood part of the Church year, because it is NOT the twelve days before Christmas, but the twelve days after Christmas.

The twelfth night is January 5th, the last day of the Christmas season before Epiphany which is on January 6th. The song is usually seen as simply a nonsense song for children. However, some have suggested that it is a song of Christian instruction, with hidden references to the basic teachings of the faith. The “true love” mentioned in the song is not an earthly suitor, but refers to God Himself. The “me” who receives the presents refers to every baptized person who is part of the Christian Faith. Each of the “days” represents some aspect of the Christian Faith that was important for children to learn. Let us look at the twelve days of Christmas, and see if we too can see the Christian meaning to the song.

“On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me, a partridge in a Pear Tree.”—The Partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrated on December 25th, the first day of Christmas. In the song, Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge that feigns injury to decoy predators from her helpless nestlings, recalling the expression of Christ’s sadness over the fate of Jerusalem as told to us in the gospel of St. Luke *“Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often would I have sheltered you under my wings, as a hen does her chicks...”* (Luke 13:34)

“On the second day of Christmas my true love gave to me, two turtle doves.”—These two turtle doves represent the Old and New Testaments, which together bear witness to God’s self-revelation in history and the creation of humanity.

“On the third day of Christmas my true love gave to me, three French Hens.”—The three French Hens are in reference to three theological virtues that come from 1st Corinthians, Faith, Hope and Love.

“On the fourth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, four calling birds.”—The four calling birds are in reference to the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, who proclaim the Good News of God’s reconciliation of the world to Himself in Jesus Christ.

“On the fifth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, five golden rings.”—The five golden rings are in reference to the first five books of the Old Testament known as the Torah or the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, which gives the history of humanity’s sinful failure and God’s response of grace in the creation of humanity to be a light to the world.

“On the sixth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, six geese a-laying.”—are in reference to Genesis where we read about the six days of creation, and the confession of God as creator and sustainer of the world.

“On the seventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me, seven swans a-swimming.”—refer to both Romans and 1st Corinthians where we learn about the Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and compassion.

“On the eighth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, eight maids a-milking.”—are the eight beatitudes that can be

found in the gospel of St. Matthew 5:3-11 blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted for righteousness sake.

“On the ninth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, nine ladies dancing.”—The nine ladies dancing are the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit, which can be found in Galatians. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

“On the tenth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, ten lords a-leaping.”—The ten lords a-leaping are the Ten Commandments which can be found in Exodus. You shall have no other gods before me, do not make an idol, do not take the Lord’s name in vain, remember the Sabbath and keep it Holy, Honor your father and mother, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not covet.

“On the eleventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me, eleven pipers piping.”—The eleven pipers piping are in reference to the eleven faithful Disciples of Christ, which can be found in the gospel of St. Luke: Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas the son of James. The list does not include the twelfth disciple, Judas Iscariot who betrayed Christ to the religious leaders, (that is why I said the faithful Disciples.)

“On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, twelve drummers drumming.”—The twelve drummers drum-

ming are in reference to the twelve points of the doctrine in the Creed.

After all of this, we can truly see how one of our favorite, Holiday songs is actually a song with much hidden meaning and Christian teaching. Society is the same way, there is much hidden in the saying “Happy Holidays” that society has adopted. However the word “holiday” actually means holy day, another hidden meaning that refers back to one of the most holy days in our calendar, and that day is Christmas.

Therefore during this holiday season remember a few important things: first, Christ is the reason that we celebrate these days, do not be fooled into thinking that we celebrate Christmas as a day that Santa Claus will bring us material gifts. Christ is the one who brings us gifts, and the gifts that He brings are gifts that last forever. Second, when people say to you Happy Holidays, remember the hidden meaning to the word, and that it refers to the Holy Day of Christ’s Birth.

Finally, do not fall into the temptation to use these holy days as days to fall into sin. Use these days to come closer to Christ, to speak with Him and make Him apart of your life. Put Christ in the center of your life, so that when our souls are asked of us He may say, “well done you good and faithful servant, enter into eternal life.”

May the Birth of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, guide us and give us inspiration, fulfillment, and peace in the coming year.

Fr. Christos Mars is the Assistant Priest at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Annunciation in Atlanta, GA.



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!

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I wish to be a “Friend of St. John”. I am enclosing a contribution in the amount of:
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Please mail this form and check to: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church 2418 Swann Avenue, Tampa, FL 33609

Make this Your Best Advent Ever

by Joining the Advent Prayer Team

Many of you, 400 and counting, are part of the Prayer Team. You get a daily message from me. I am grateful for your prayers. Normally for the Prayer Team, I'm writing a message on different topics during the week and on the weekends I write about Praying the Liturgy. From November 14-January 8, I will be writing on the scriptures of Christmas and Epiphany. Advent for the Orthodox Church began on November 15. This is a period where we are supposed to fast and prepare ourselves for the Feast of the Nativity. In America, Advent is marked by decorations, parties and shopping. The scriptures of Christmas are read on Christmas, after the entire season of preparation has passed. For the period of Advent, every day there will be a piece of scripture of the Nativity story in the Bible, with reflections and prayers each day to help focus our thoughts on this most important feast.

If you are not part of the prayer team, please email me at frstav@gmail.com or email Charlie at charlie.hambos@gmail.com and we'll be happy to add you to the list.



DID YOU KNOW...?

Books Available for Weddings, Baptisms, and Funerals

Weddings, baptisms and funerals in our church are not only occasions that mark important milestones in life, they are also opportunities to pray and worship, as well as learn more about our faith. Each service is rich with theology, packed with meaning, filled with hope (yes, even the funeral service is filled with hope). But because we haven't had a text in the pews for these services, people have missed out on the opportunity to offer the responses, pray the prayers, and understand the meaning of what is being said. This problem is no more. Thanks to the work of a small committee and a generous donation by Pres. Loretta Karpelenia in memory of her husband, Fr. Basil, we now have a "sacraments" book, which includes the texts of wedding, baptism and funeral. At each one of these services, books will be placed in the narthex for you to use. Please return them either to the narthex or to the front of the church after each sacrament. Please treat these books well and we will be able to enjoy them for years to come. If you wish to have a text of any of these services for use at home, please email Father Stavros or Charlie and they will be happy to email you the text.

St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!

YouTube 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](https://www.facebook.com/StJohnGOCTampa).

Live Streaming - All of our services are being video recorded and are available on our Livestream page.

To access this page

1. Go to our Church's website: greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com,
2. Scroll the mouse over the "Multimedia" tab on the menu bar,
3. Click "View Liturgy,"
4. Then click on the link where it says, "Check out our live stream of the Divine Liturgy here <http://new.livestream.com/accounts/2454446>.

All of the services are available to watch at anytime.



~ December 2015 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1** WBS 9:30 a.m. EBS 6:30 p.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	2** MBS 7:30 a.m.	3** Young at Heart 11:30 a.m. Greek School 6:00 p.m.	4** St. Barbara Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	5**
6** St. Nicholas Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Get Acquainted Sunday YABS GOYA Christmas Cards Stewardship Sunday	7** Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	8** WBS 9:30 a.m. EBS 6:30 p.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	9** MBS 7:30 a.m. St. Anna Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	10** Greek School 6:00 p.m.	11**	12** St. Spyridon Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Hope & Joy Christmas program Practice & Party
13** Orthros 8:45a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Sunday school Christmas program PC Elections GOYA 5:00 p.m.	14** Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	15** St. Eleferios Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. (WBS will attend) . EBS 6:30 p.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	16** MBS 7:30 a.m.	17** Service for the Preparation of the Nativity 7:00 p.m.	18**	19** Community Outreach Christmas Carols
20** Orthros 8:15 a.m. Doxology 9:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. AHEPA mtg. YABS Metropolitan Ministries Holiday Tent	21** Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	22** Basketball 8:00 p.m.	23** Royal Hours 9:30–11:00 a.m.	24** Christmas Eve Vespers 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Orthros 5:30 a.m. Doxology 6:45 p.m Liturgy 7:00 p.m.	25 Christmas Day No Services	26
27 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	28 No Fasting until 1/5/16	29 Basketball 8:00 p.m.	30 St. Anysia Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	31		**Fast Day

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

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St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Timetable of Services

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

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

Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-394-1038 (Cell)
firstav@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 Mitseas 813-571-0658
Byron 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
debstjohnpa@gmail.com fax: 813-443-4899

Adult Greek School

Magda Myer 813-909-2327

AHEPA

Gus Paras, President 813-254-6980

Altar Angels

Engie Halkias 813-932-5859
Sia Blankenship 813-968-8855

Basketball

Perry Katsamakias 516-403-3118
Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352

Bible Study

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Bookstore

Bill Manikas 813-960-3679

Chanter

Nick Andreadakis 813-516-6081

Choir

Artie Palios, Director 813-831-1294
Ruth Losovitz, Organist 727-688-2782

Community Outreach

Betty Katherine Katsamakias 813-468-1596

Dance Group

H XAPA ΜΑΣ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668
Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963
Kefi, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
Anna Maria Bavaro 732-239-9085
Panigyri, Vanessa Aviles 813-221-2194

Daughters of Penelope

Edie Kavouklis, President 813-758-0305

Finance Committee

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

Food Pantry

Mick Scharbach 813-458-1620

Gasparilla Parking

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GOYA

Elane Halkias 813-629-1843

Hope/Joy

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Junior Olympics

Bryon Nenos 813-789-0729

MOMS

Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862
Lindsey Skourellos 813-503-7845

Oratorical Festival

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

Philoptochos

Lisa Alsina 813-728-1094

REAL

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Small Group Bible Study

East, Donna Hambos 813-843-8412
Men, Fr. Stavros 813-394-1038
South, Bessie Palios 813-523-0347
Women, Debbie Kavouklis 813-258-5571
Young Adult, Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862

Stewardship

Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747
Pete Trakas 813-505-2193

Sunday School

Vickie Peckham 813-406-5626

Usher

Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

Visitation Committee

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Welcome 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 a monthly basis. Publication 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.

“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.