

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

Happy New Year

January 2016

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.

Visit of His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios

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

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

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

Father Stavros' Message

Make 2016 a Year of Joy!

"Create in me a clean heart, o God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."
Psalm 51:10-12

The story is told of a monk in a monastery who was responsible for cooking all the meals for the monks. Even though he wasn't a great cook, the monk obediently went about his work in the kitchen as best as he could. For years and years, he was cooking terrible meals, and for years and years, his fellow monks were muttering about him, how terrible his cooking was and how much they all "suffered"

for it. Finally one day, the monk died. The other monks quietly breathed a sigh of relief. Now, perhaps, they would get a better cook in the kitchen. At the monk's funeral, the abbot of the monastery gave the eulogy. He described the monk as one of the most holy men that could ever have lived. The other monks could not contain their contempt for their fallen brother and asked the abbot why he was eulogizing the man as such. "He was a TERRIBLE cook," they said, "and frankly, we are glad that he is dead. How can you say that he was a saint?" The abbot opened up the Bible and said "This man, our brother, was not particularly educated. He couldn't read, he couldn't sing, and so we put him in the kitchen. Even though he could not read the Bible, he understood one important passage and he based his life around it. That passage is Matthew 7:1-2,

where Jesus tells His followers:

'Judge not, that you not be judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.' In all these years, as you ridiculed and scorned him, he never said one bad thing about you or anyone. He never judged anyone, never said an unkind word about anyone. And having lived by this rule, now the Lord will not judge him either."

If you are seeking to follow after Christ, and live a committed Christian life, you don't have to memorize lengthy prayers or passages of scripture. Pick one or two passages and live strictly by them and you'll see what a difference that makes in your life. For growing in our faith is not about making MANY changes, but making even small changes but sticking to them.

Every year, people go through the exercise of making resolutions for the New Year. Many times, these resolutions revolve around losing weight and eating better. Unrealistic expectations are set and often-times resolutions fizzle out rather quickly. It is, however, interesting to note that if you make one resolution, depending on what that is, there will be a collateral effect on other areas of your life. Just like putting into practice even one passage of scripture will have a collateral effect on many areas of your Christian life.

As we enter 2016, the primary emotion in society is most certainly not joy. In most corners of society, that primary emotion is anger, even rage. In other corners it is frustration and stress. So, as you ponder on your resolutions for 2016, think about this one: JOY. Joy is a choice. One cannot be forced to have joy. Joy is a way that you look at the world. In Greek, the word for Joy is "Hara". And "Hara" is closely related to the "Haris", which means "grace." The Holy Spirit is the one who imparts "grace" to us, and "joy" is one of the "Fruits of the Spirit." (Galatians 5:22-23) Joy is also tied to gratitude. The joyful person looks at the world with optimism, sees the positives in people and in situations, thinks the best of people, sees the glass half-full, and is grateful for what is, rather than angry over what isn't. There is no doubt that we all have to deal with a good amount of stress in our lives. It is unavoidable. No one lives a stress-free life. But how we each choose to manage our stresses and disappointments strongly affects the type of life we live. And one of the great ways to reduce stress is to combat stress with joy.

STRESS

What do you think of when you hear the word "stress?"
What do you think about when you hear the word "anxiety?"
Are you more stressed about things in the past, in the present or in the future? Does anyone worry what they will be doing in ten years? How much do you worry about the far future?

The Bible tells us that stress is nothing new. In II Timothy 3:1-9, we read:

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slan-

derers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people. For among them are those who make their way into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses, who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth. As Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith; 9 but they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

Why are people stressed?

There are a multitude of answers here. I'll just list a few:

1. **Unrealistic expectations** - we put unrealistic expectations on ourselves, we overbook and overcommit. We put unrealistic expectations on others and are disappointed when they don't deliver for us. Sometimes we are disappointed because we put realistic expectations on others and they still don't deliver. And others put unrealistic expectations on us that we struggle to deliver on.
2. **There is pressure to "keep up with the Joneses"** - There is peer pressure to look a certain way, drive a certain car, carry a certain handbag, or use a certain kind of phone.
3. **There is unhappiness with our life status** - job, marriage, kids - we have angst that we thought we'd be farther along in some of these areas, and we become jealous of what other people have.
4. **Too many people just don't care about anyone but themselves** that's why driving is so stressful, as an example.
5. **We are ungrateful** so we want more and the pursuit of more causes stress
6. **We are not trusting in God's plan for our lives**
7. **Some of us can't seem to make peace with the past**—We have a hard time forgiving others, and sometimes a hard time forgiving ourselves.
8. **We do not trust one another** - there isn't a culture of trust and that causes stress.
9. **We don't know how to forgive the right way**, so we have angst around people who have wronged us.
10. **Emails cause stress** - Because instead of confronting problems with people, we hide behind computers which often-times makes the problems get worse. Anyone ever regret hitting "send" on an email?!
11. **We have guilt complexes** - We feel guilty about taking time off. We feel guilty about working. Why do many parents overindulge their children? Because they feel guilty about being away from them for work.
12. **We are overstimulated and many times we are not present.** Have you ever tried working and relaxing at the same time, like trying to watch a movie while working on your computer? What inevitably happens is that you neither enjoy the movie nor are you productive with your work. So at the end of the time, you have neither rested nor worked. And in constantly multi-tasking, our minds wander and then we have a hard time focusing on much of anything.

13. **We add stress upon stress** - Many of us eat in order to cope with stress. This causes health problems. So, our stress leads to additional stress.
14. **Time management** - We all struggle with finding the proper balance for everything - Work/family/rest/spiritual life. It's a delicate balancing act and we all struggle with this.
15. **Financial strain**
16. **Making sense of life** - this causes stress too.
17. **Stress in relationships**

And I'm sure you could add many other things here.

The Contrast of Mary and Martha

We are all familiar with the story of Mary and Martha. In Luke 10:38-42, we read:

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her."

In this passage, Martha is running around, anxious and concerned. She gets a "bad rap" for not taking time out for the Lord. Mary, on the other hand, takes time out for the Lord, but then people ridicule her for not working. I can't tell you how many people over the years have told me that they relate to Martha more than Mary. After all, they say "I can't just sit around and pray all day, someone has to put food on the table." (Of course, later on, Martha will confess Jesus as the Christ in front of the Jewish temple leadership, risking her own life to do so, [John 11] so Martha "redeems herself", if you will, in a big way, she gets it right when it counts.) The lesson of Mary and Martha is not that we shouldn't work, but we are reminded to keep things in perspective. We are reminded to remember "the needful things," the most needful of which is our relationship with the Lord. But there are other needful things that we neglect, like family, and important relationships.

We have all just "survived" the Christmas season (I hope not, I hope Christmas was a joyful season for you, not a stressful one), and for anyone who has been involved in preparing a holiday dinner, as you look back at the dinner, were you more concerned with the presentation of the food or with the enjoyment of the people? After all, what makes the holiday dinner a great event, the food or the people? We sometimes stress so much over the food that we forget the enjoyment of the people. After all, which do you remember more, what you ate for dinner on a holiday, or who you ate with?

What the Bible Says About Stress

Jesus gives the most prominent teaching on stress in Matthew 6:22-34, which is part of the "Sermon on the Mount."

The Eye is the Lamp of the Body

"22The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is

sound, your whole body will be full of light; 23but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"

The most beautiful part of the human body is the EYE. Because if the eye is sound, everything else follows. The eye doesn't lie. The eyes show who is at peace and who is not. You can be outwardly successful but the eye betrays sadness. You can look people in the eye and lie to them, but it is hard to look yourself in the eye and lie to yourself. So, if you want to work on one part of your body this year, work on your eyes—what they see, what they project. If you see the good in people, your mind will be optimistic, your heart will be positive. If you see the negative in everything, your mind and heart will follow.

Serving Two Masters

"24No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

Who is the master of your life? You? God? Many people call God their co-pilot. That is actually not a good thing. Because on the plane, the pilot can overrule the co-pilot. If God is merely the passenger, who is generally disregarded in the operation of a plane or a car, that is not good either. Make God the pilot, serve Him first. Later on in this reflection, I will talk about "Joy", and a great acronym for JOY is J-Jesus, O-Others, Y-Yourself. Meaning, serve Jesus, then others and then yourself. Make God the Master of your whole life, not just a compartment of it. When we pray the 23rd Psalm, and say "The Lord is my shepherd" we need to learn how to be good sheep, staying with the flock rather than trying to go our own way.

Do Not Worry

"25Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

Ideally, we should not be worried. But we are human, so we worry. We all tend to obsess about things like food, drink and clothing. When you were making Christmas dinner, did you stress about it being a little overcooked, or undercooked? When you think about it, how good (or not good) Christmas dinner tasted really does not change your life beyond that day, so why worry about things that really don't matter? When making a decision, or deciding to worry about something, ask yourself will this matter a day from now, a week from now, or a year from now? Many things won't matter tomorrow. Look at our phones, which we put so much value on. They will have no value in ten years. Our cars will have little value in ten years. For those of us who are middle-aged, can you remember back to your teenage stresses? Do they carry over to today? Some do probably, but most do not. Our souls have value and that value will carry over for eternity. If we want to worry about something, we should make it our souls.

"26Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

There are some people who rightly worry about necessities - food, water, shelter. But most of us are not in that category - we worry about things that many times are just not that important.

27 "And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life?"

To the contrary, worrying generally cuts down on our lifespan. Stress is the number one cause of most health related problems, and at the very least, exacerbates them.

28 "And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?"

Think about your beautiful grass and beautiful trees. We take lawnmower and chainsaw to them and ruthlessly prune and cut them. We chop them up into little pieces and discard them. Yet, they grow back. If the grass and trees that we chop into little pieces and discard are so beautiful, are we not more beautiful than that? Absolutely. Because only WE, the human beings, are created in the image and likeness of God. (Genesis 1:26)

31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."

As we make our yearly resolutions for 2016, we need to get our priorities in order. First God's Kingdom and His Righteousness, and then everything follows. Jesus, Others and Yourself is the path to joy. Make God the master of everything you have, including your time, your talent and your money—how you spend all of these things.

34 Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day."

Psalms 118:24 says **"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."** Today is all we have, for yesterday is gone and tomorrow is no guarantee, so make the most of today! Be present in whatever it is you are doing today.

BRINGING BACK JOY

Going back to the opening story about the monk in the monastery, you don't have to memorize every verse of the Bible. If you use the right one or two verses, they can become guideposts for a successful Christian journey. Below are many suggestions for bringing more JOY back into your life. You don't have to follow all of them, but pick one or two of them and stick to them faithfully, and you will see joy increased and stress decreased.

Take it to the Lord in Prayer - dedicated time

One of the wonderful things about God is that He reassures us. He invites us. In Matthew 11: 28-30, Jesus tells us:

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

What a great thought for those who are stressed out! Take some time each day, dedicated time, to pray, to talk to God, about your joys, your sorrows, your stresses. Take them to the Lord. If you are not in the habit of praying, try it for 30 days, and you'll see your life change.

Go to Confession - get rid of the "baggage"

And in Luke 15: 7, Jesus says *"There is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine who need to repentance."* What a comforting thought for the person who feels estranged from God because of his sins. You know how many people tell me that they feel far from God because of what they've done? And I tell them, come back to God, and when you do, the angels will be rejoicing in heaven. Just because your relationship with Christ isn't what it should be, there is no need to fear. There is great incentive to come back. Getting rid of past baggage is a great way to restore spiritual joy to your life.

Turn off the noise -

Listen/Read with messages of joy, hope and peace in the Bible and other books, speakers

In recent months, I have made an effort to turn off needless noise. Rather than listening to news talk or sports talk in the car when I'm driving, (when I'm not talking on the phone which is a lot of the time) I have been listening to motivational and motivation speakers. My speakers of choice are Fr. Larry Richards, a Catholic priest whose theology is very much in line with ours; Focus on the Family; and Rick Warren. You can find links to all of these on the Internet and on YouTube. Every day, I try to write a short inspirational reflection called the Prayer Team. Many of you are on it. Want to read something from your priest, from your church, every day that is positive? Join the prayer team! Writing for the prayer team actually helps me stay positive because I have to offer a positive message every day through this. (If you want to join, just email me at frstav@gmail.com).

Give compliments frequently -

Learn to see the glass half-full

Proverbs 12:25 says *"Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad."* We all like to hear compliments. Learn how to give compliments. See the good in people.

CHOOSE JOY!

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." Romans 15:14 Life is about choices. The choice to have joy helps lower stress and bring you closer to other people. It is a daily choice, and sometimes a multiple times a day

choice to choose joy. Learn how to choose it on a daily basis!

Be conciliatory

Some people thrive on causing chaos and confusion. We all know people who raise our blood pressure when they walk in the room or call on the phone. Strive to not be someone like this. Be a bridge-builder, not a bridge-breaker; be a peace-maker, not a peace-taker. Learn how to forgive. Real forgiveness means owning your mistakes when you've done wrong and not holding a grudge or keeping score when you forgive. Set rules and boundaries in relationships so that you have a path to reconciliation and forgiveness when a disappointment in your relationship inevitably occurs. Most people think "well, there aren't any real problems" until real problems arise and people don't know how to handle them. Anticipate that any meaningful relationship will have its challenges and create an environment that fosters forgiveness.

Let your yes be yes and your no be no! Make commitments and stick with them. Make commitments to yourself

"But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no be no, that you may not fall under condemnation."
James 5:12

Many people overcommit, they know when they make a commitment that they can't keep it. So make realistic commitments and stick to them. When you make a commitment, follow through and don't be flaky. Be honest when you know you can't do something and be honest and follow through with your commitment when you make one.

Pray for others, pray with others, ask others to pray for you and with you

The greatest give you can give to someone is the gift of prayer. After all, what could be more powerful than speaking to our Creator about someone else? Pray for other people. Ask others to pray for you. More importantly, take the chance and pray WITH someone else, in their presence. And ask them to do the same for you. While this may seem awkward at first, it totally ups a relationship when you do this. When two or three are gathered and He stands in the midst of them, it is truly a powerful moment.

Get a spiritual father and a spiritual "buddy"

"Is any one among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects."
James 5:13-16

Nowhere in the Bible does the Lord tell us to go it alone. He sent out the disciples two by two. He said for two or three to gather in His name (Matthew 18:20.) So, we are to form rela-

tionships with people who can help us in our journey to salvation. Most prominent in Orthodoxy is the tradition of the Spiritual Father, or Father Confessor, who hears our confessions and guides us in our Christian journey. This person can be your parish priest or another Orthodox priest. Also, you should have what I call a "spiritual buddy" who helps you stay accountable, someone who you can discuss scriptures with, who you can pray with and who can encourage you.

Surround yourself with positive people

When you hear consistently positive messages, you are more likely to think positively. If you hear consistently negative messages, you are more likely to think negatively. So, surround yourself with positive people, people who can encourage you in your life and in your faith.

Check in with God frequently, multiple times a day, become a better manager of your time.

"Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
Philippians 4:6-7

You don't need to pray for a long time in order to pray. Pray at frequent intervals throughout the day. Pray before you begin your different tasks, like driving, or when starting up a computer, or before you make a phone call. Bring God into the conversation and into your consciousness.

A time to work and a time to rest - The need for balance

Life for most people is a delicate balancing act between work, family and personal time. Like anything worthwhile, it takes work to find the right balance. So work, tinker, and retool how you are spending your time until you find the right balance that allows you to meet work and family responsibilities, leaving time for personal rest, as well as spiritual growth. Give God the first, however, not the leftovers. Give Him the first, ask Him to bless you in the rest.

Exercise

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" Ecclesiastes 3:1 We need a healthy soul, but also a healthy mind and a healthy body. Make time to exercise. Take walks, get outside a little more.

Continuing education

In almost every career, there is required continuing education. We continue to educate ourselves about technology and things that will help us function better at work. But we need to educate ourselves continually in how to be better Christians and better people. Try to make an effort to read at least one "spiritual" book each year. Read the Bible regularly, but try to read a motivational book on faith at least once a year. For those who are married, read at least one relationship book each year. Make sure you are taking time periodically to talk over how to make your relationship stronger. And if that is difficult to do, make an appointment to see your priest or a counselor and allow someone to help facilitate this discussion. Con-

tinuing education among married couples is sorely lacking and is the cause for marital challenges that would be mitigated with some counsel.

Child-like but not child-ish - learn how to laugh and have fun in a wholesome way

The Bible makes a distinction between child-ish and child-like. Jesus says in Matthew 18:3 *“Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”* Jesus encourages us to be child-like. St. Paul, on the other hand, warns us not to be child-ish, when he writes I Corinthians 13:11 *“What I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.”* Throwing a tantrum is child-ish. So is “taking your toys and going home” when you get mad. But playing a silly game, laughing, and forgiving easily are very child-like things that we should all do. Forgive easier. Laugh. And have fun in a wholesome way.

Stick with things that are honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious

Words like “honorable” and “pure” are quickly disappearing as we are being conditioned to stick with whatever is profitable and requires the least amount of work and sacrifice. St. Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians 4:8:

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

Learn to have joy in being honorable, doing honorable things and being around honorable people. Learn to love justice and fairness, it’s not always about winning. Strive to keep your thoughts pure. See the beauty in people. And be gracious to others—open doors, be a courteous driver.

Learn to be thankful for everything.

The first sin of the human being was ingratitude. God gave mankind dominion over everything but told him to stay away from one tree. This proved to be too much. Mankind wanted to claim the tree as well. The lesson here is to be thankful to God for what you have, and not angry or resentful for what you don’t have. Start every prayer off by giving thanks for something. Wake up with a thankful thought, thanks to God for another day.

Give God the glory

In the Epistle of St. James, we read *“For every good and perfect gift is from Above.”* (James 1:17) Everything that we have or that we do or that we accomplish that is GOOD, can be traced back to God. He is the one who provides the talents that provide the opportunities that provide the successes. Learn to be humble and thankful to God for what you have, and rather than pointing the spotlight on ourselves for our successes, let us give credit where credit is due. Give credit to God and at the same time, you are witnessing for God and keeping yourself humble.

Learn what it is to truly serve service is self-emptying, not self-serving

To truly serve means to empty yourself of something—time,

energy, effort, talent—and offer it for the benefit of someone else. To serve means to offer what is needed, not necessarily when you want to give, but what it needed to be given. It’s like if you show up to serve at the festival, and you are ready to spend the day with some friends working in one of the booths, and you are told, that someone is needed to wipe off tables and take out trash. The person who has come to “serve” says I will help wherever and however help is needed and runs to take the job no one else wants. The person who says that they only serve under certain circumstances or only in certain ways is not really serving. Because service is a self-emptying proposition. I want to share a quote with you from Mother Theresa. It reads: *The Fruit of Silence is Prayer
The Fruit of Prayer is Faith
The Fruit of Faith is Love
The Fruit of Love is Service
The Fruit of Service is Peace*

Indeed, peace is found through service.

It begins and ends with the CUP!!!

Psalm 116:3 offers: *“I will partake of the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord.”* The most important thing we can do in our earthly life is to commune with God. In the prayers of the Liturgy, we are reminded of six reasons to receive Communion. From the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom:

“So that they (the Holy Gifts) may be to those who receive them for vigilance of soul, forgiveness of sins, Communion of the Holy Spirit, inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven, confidence before You and neither in judgment or condemnation.”

Communion prepares us for eternal life. It also helps us to pass this life in a faithful and optimistic way. St. Basil wrote in his liturgy, regarding Holy Communion: *“Do this in remembrance of me, for as often as you eat this Bread and drink this Cup, you proclaim my death, and you confess My Resurrection.”* Again we go to REMEMBERING what the Lord did for us, so that we can live FOR Him in this life and live WITH Him for everlasting life.

The reason I write long articles is because you deserve the best effort from your priest, and God deserves the best effort from me, as He does from each of us. There are TWENTY ways to reduce stress this year. If you choose even ONE of them, your life will improve immensely. Going back to the story of the monk that I opened with, he was not educated, he didn’t know much, and he wasn’t even good at his job. But he made a decision to live by ONE commandment, a commandment not to judge, and that led Him to everlasting life. You don’t have to have command of a vast amount of knowledge in order to attain the Kingdom of God. What you do have to do is apply limited knowledge in a VAST WAY in your life. Manage your stress, help others to manage theirs, and let us work to grow in faith, both as individuals, and as a church community this year. By reducing stress, you can increase your JOY!

I wish you all a Happy, healthy, and JOYFUL New Year 2016!

With love in the Lord,
+Fr. Stavros

Important Dates for 2016

January 1	New Year's Day-Church services
January 6-7	Feast of St. John the Baptist - Visit of Metropolitan Alexios
January 10	Vasilopita Sunday
February 7	Philoptochos Missions Sunday
February 20	Retreat for Married Couples
February 20	GOYA Lock-in
February 27	Apokreatiko Dinner Dance
March 6	Meat Fare
March 12	Saturday of Souls Liturgy at Garden of Memories - Blessing of Graves
March 13	Forgiveness Sunday - Sunday School Pre-Lent Retreat
March 14	Beginning of Lent
March 20	Sunday of Orthodoxy-Procession of Icons
March 25	Annunciation
April 2	Adult Lenten Retreat
April 3	Greek Independence Day Luncheon/Program
April 8-10	GOYA Lenten Retreat
April 23	Saturday of Lazarus
April 24	Palm Sunday
April 24-May 1	Holy Week
April 29	Sunday School Good Friday Retreat
May 1	PASCHA
May 15	Parish Picnic
June 5	Last Day of Sunday School
June 9	Ascension
June 17-19	Junior Olympics
June 19	Pentecost
July	St. Stephen's Summer Camp
August 6	Transfiguration
August 7	Meeting of Ministry Heads
August 15	Dormition of the Theotokos
August 28	First Day of Sunday School Classes
September 8	Nativity of the Theotokos
September 14	Exaltation of the Holy Cross
November 11-13	Tampa Greek Festival
November 24	Thanksgiving
December 4	Stewardship Sunday
December 11	Sunday School Christmas Program
December 24	Christmas Service

Liturgical Schedule for January 2016

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

Sunday, January 3 **Sunday Before Epiphany**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St Mark

Ushers: Brett Mourer, Wayne Blankenship, Amin Hanhan

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Christy Pessemier, Tom Pessemier; Ambassador: Julie Palios; Caller: Christene Worley;
Get Acquainted: Maria Xenick, Mike Xenick

Coffee Hour: Greek Dance Groups

Tuesday, January 5 Royal Hours 8:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:15 a.m. Blessing of the Water 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday, January 6 **St. John the Baptist Great Vespers 6:30 p.m.**
His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios will preside.

Thursday, January 7 **The Feast of St. John the Baptist** His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios will preside.
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m.



Sunday, January 10 **Sunday After Epiphany**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and Luke

Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Lisa Alsina, Vanessa Aviles; Ambassador: Maria Xenick; Caller: Peggy Bradshaw

Coffee Hour: Philoptochos - Vasilopita Sunday

Sunday, January 17 **12th Sunday of Luke**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John

Ushers: Mike Trimis, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Skip Higdon, Donna Hambos; Ambassador: Jeanie Nenos; Caller: Martha Kapetan

Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Monday, January 18 **St. Athanasios and Cyril** Orthros: 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, January 24 **14th Sunday of Luke - St. Anthony**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew

Ushers: Florin Patrasciou, Mike Kavouklis, Tammy Christou

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Genie Carter, Carole Fotopoulos; Ambassador: Jenny Paloumpis; Caller: Sandra Pappas

Coffee Hour: The AHEPA Family

Monday, January 25 **St. Gregory the Theologian** Orthros: 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday, January 29 **Three Hierarchs – Evening Liturgy** Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 31 **15th Sunday of Luke**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark

Ushers: Ron Myer, Perry Katsamakis, Peter Theophanous

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Kalliope Chagaris, Elaine Halkias; Ambassador: Helen Cauthorn; Caller: Vickie Peckham

Coffee Hour: Small Group Bible Studies

Liturgical Notes for January

Friday, January 1 - Feast of the Circumcision of Christ, St. Basil-New Year's Day

Three things are commemorated on the first day of each year. First, the circumcision of Christ, which occurred historically 8 days after His Nativity. He was circumcised according to the rites of the Jewish law and given the name Jesus. Secondly, we commemorate the feast of St. Basil the Great, one of the Great Hierarchs of our church. St. Basil authored one of the Divine Liturgies used in our church, which is celebrated on his feastday. He also helped found monasticism. St. Basil was a friend to the poor, often baking bread with money in it and throwing it through the windows of widows and the poor. Hence the tradition of the Vasilopita, the bread with the coin baked inside, that we cut on New Year's Day. Finally, we are supposed to pray every day and commemorate all of life's milestones with prayer. So, we open a new year, 2016, with prayer and the Divine Liturgy on January 1.

Tuesday, January 5 - Royal Hours of Epiphany, Divine Liturgy, Blessing of the Waters

Like Christmas and Easter, there is a service of the Royal Hours which is celebrated in anticipation of Epiphany. This service consists of prayers, Psalms, hymns and Gospel readings which both foretell and recount this Great Feast of the church year. The Royal Hours will last from 8:00-9:15 a.m. on Tuesday, January 5. **Eve of Epiphany** - Also, like Christmas and Easter, the feast of Epiphany is commemorated with two celebrations of the Divine Liturgy, one of them on the forefeast (day before the feastday). Hymns of anticipation are sung at this service. Also, there is a service of Aghiasmos (blessing of the water) which is done at the conclusion of the Liturgy on January 5. On January 6, there is also a service of the "Blessings of the waters" at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy.

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

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

Wednesday, January 6 - Great Vespers of St. John the Baptist

Vespers of St. John the Baptist, to be celebrated on January 6 at 6:30 p.m.—The Vespers Service is the service that begins the liturgical day. In our church, the day begins at sundown. Thus the feast of St. John the Baptist, celebrated on January 7, begins with the sunset of January 6. Properly celebrated, all feastdays should begin with the celebration of Great Vespers, including every Sunday which should begin with Great Vespers on Saturday evenings. Because this is not practical in most parishes, Great Vespers is celebrated in most parishes on a limited basis. We will, of course, celebrate the complete cycle of services related to our feastday of St. John, which will begin with Great Vespers at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 6. His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios will preside at this service, assisted by Fr. Stavros and all the priests of the Tampa Bay area.

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

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

Sunday, January 17 - Feast of St. Anthony

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

Monday, January 18 - Feast of St. Athanasios

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

Monday, January 25 - Feast of St. Gregory the Theologian

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

Friday, January 29 - Feast of the Three Hierarchs

The Three Hierarchs are St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom. Each had his own feastday and all are honored together on January 30. Each of them lived in the 4th Century, each was an accomplished writer and speaker, each was a Bishop, each authored a Liturgy and each is remembered prominently in the history of our church to this day. The Three Hierarchs are Patron Saints of Teachers and Education. We will hold this Liturgy on Friday evening, January 29, at 6:00 p.m.

Our Gruesome Resurrection of The Soul and Body

By Charlie Hambos

Happy New Year! As we start a new year it seems appropriate to speak about something new. Let's talk about our new body. Not the one we have now, but the one we will receive at the resurrection of our soul and our BODY. It gives us something to look forward to, something to anticipate. Perhaps, our body as we have it now, is not what we want, not the best it could be. That is exactly right. At times, not only is it not what we want it to be, it is not what it is meant to be. I have heard some people say that they would want a redo. A redo of the body they have. The good news is that we will all have a redo. We will receive a new body. The body we were meant to have. The body that we received when we were created in the image of God.

At my recent Sunday School rounds with the liturgical vessels, I decided not to bring the vessels to the High School Sunday School class. Instead, I wanted to highlight a video that I saw, which spoke about our body. The video spoke about the body of a woman who was shot multiple times at the Bataclan Theater in Paris, France in the recent terrorist attack. This was the body of the wife of ENTER NAME HERE. This was the body of the mother of a 17 month old child. The video was of a man, simply staring into the camera, as the letter he wrote to ISIS was read. In the letter, he expressed that ISIS would not get the benefit of being hated by him or his 17 month old son. This was a rather bold statement but an even bolder statement was about the body of his now, dead wife. "If this God, for whom you kill blindly, made us in His image, every bullet in the body of my wife would have been one more wound in His heart."

The fact is that we are created in the image of God. This is my favorite aspects of Christian Theology. I really believe if more people knew that we are created in the image of God, our world would be a better place. Whatever we do to one another, we inadvertently do to God. Our body is holy. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We were created in the image of God. The greatest way to know God is to know one another.

We believe in the resurrection of the soul and the body. Now, how is it going to happen. Christianity is not the first to believe in the resurrection of the soul and the body. The Jews also believe the same. This main theological concept comes from the prophet Ezekiel. The great thing in this passage is the imagery. We are enthralled today by gruesome imagery. The more blood and guts the better. We have become desensitized by what we can now view. We can watch videos of all kinds of things at the click of the mouse. However, in Ezekiel (37:1-14), it gets a little vivid. Basically, God took Ezekiel by the hand in a vision, set him down in the middle of a valley. The valley was full of bones, very dry bones. God told Ezekiel to walk up and down and all around the bones. God asked Ezekiel, "Son of man, can these bones live?" Like any good human, whenever God asks a question, uhhhh, You are God, therefore you know. That was the answer of Ezekiel. God then told Ezekiel,

"Prophesy over these bones. Say, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. The Lord says to these bones: I am now going to make breath enter you, and you will live. I

shall put sinews on you, I shall make flesh grow on you, I shall cover you with skin and give your breath, and you will live; and you will know that I am the Lord."

So, like any good prophet, Ezekiel prophesied over to the dry bones. As he prophesied, what was supposed to happen, happened. There was a clattering sound, which was all the bones coming together. Then flesh began to grow on them. Whoa! Let's imagine this. Flesh, growing on bones. That is gruesome. It's something out of the latest, sci-fi, suspense, mystery, police drama Then God said to Ezekiel,

"Prophesy to the breath; prophesy son of man. Say to the breath, 'The Lord says this: Come from the four winds, breath; breathe on these dead, so they come to life!' I prophesied as he had ordered me, and the breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet, a great, an immense army."

So once again, God will breathe into us to give us life. This is the new life. The new life in the new body. What's the purpose of all of this? Here it is. "The Lord says this: I am now going to open your graves; I shall raise you from your graves, my people, and lead you back to the soil of Israel. And you will know that I am Yahweh, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people, and put my spirit in you, and you revive, and I resettle you on your own soil. Then you will know that I am the Lord." That's it. This is were the theology of the resurrection of our souls and bodies is derived.

Here is another instance that many people don't know about. This time, from the New Testament, when Christ resurrected from the dead, others were also raised from the dead and appeared among the people.

"And suddenly, the veil of the Sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, the rocks were split, the tombs were opened and the bodies of many holy people rose from the dead, and these, after his resurrection, came out of the tombs, entered the holy city and appeared to a number of people." Matthew 27: 51-53

So, almost immediately the results of Christ's death, burial and resurrection became apparent. Once Christ conquered death, for himself, he conquered death for everyone else.

So what is the resurrected body like? It is different. It is better. It is something we can't fathom until it happens. The point, though, is that our body as well as our soul will be resurrected. Some, think we will be like the angels at our resurrection. This idea comes from Christ, when he says, "For at the resurrection men and women do not marry; no, they are like the angels in heaven." (Matthew 22:30). Here he was talking about life after death. Those who are married will not be married in the resurrection. The union of man and woman is an attempt to attain who we were when we were created. It is a path towards salvation. Even gender will not be a factor in the resurrection. There will be no male or female, Greek or Jew, Slave or Master. Christ will be all in all.

How does this come about? The question of what our bodily resurrection will be like. Lucky for us, the Corinthians were concerned with the same thing. They however, were laughing at the idea of the bodily resurrection and really didn't believe in the resurrection at all. Obviously, Paul had to stop that hog-wash right in its path.

"Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you be saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ cannot have been raised either, and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is without substance, and so is your faith." 1 Corinthians 15: 12-14

Sounds like a pretty strong argument. Basically, if we don't believe in the resurrection, there is nothing to believe and we are wasting our time.

"For if the dead are not raised, neither is Christ; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is pointless and you have not, after all, been released from your sins. In addition, those who have fallen asleep in Christ are utterly lost. If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are of all people the most pitiable."

1 Corinthians 15:161-19

Without the resurrection, we would not be freed from death, freed from sin which is what causes us to die, and causes us to be separated from God. Not to mention, those who have died before for us are lost and without hope. Finally, if our hope in Christ has only been for this life, the life we live every day and not for life after we die, then it is pointless. The belief in the resurrection of our soul and body is dedicated to our eternal life, not just our life here on earth where we are merely visitors.

Of course, since we cannot comprehend what this is all about, curious minds want to know. How will this happen?

"Someone may ask: How are dead people raised, and what sort of body do they have when they come? How foolish! What you sow must die before it is given new life; and what you sow is not the body that is to be, but only to bare grain, of wheat I dare say or some other kind; it is God who gives it the sort of body that he has chose for it, and for each kind of seed it own kind of body."

1 Corinthians 15:34-38.

And here, the tradition of the Kolyva, the boiled wheat, is derived. In order for a seed to give life after it is planted in the ground, it must die. In order for us to be raised from the dead, we must die. In order for Christ to be raised from the dead to conquer death, he had to die.

We are made of two parts: soul and body. As Orthodox, we recognize that both are very important. The body is not just for this life. For this life, it must die in order to give new life. We must not destroy it. This is also why we do not agree with the cremation of the body. It is not the proper treatment, plus how are the bones supposed to reassemble, if they have been destroyed. This is a discussion for another day.

Back to the soul and the body. Adam caused the death and separation from God. Jesus Christ is the last Adam or second Adam and he brought everything back into order.

"If there is a natural body, there is a spiritual body too. So the first man, Adam, as scripture says, became a living soul; and the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But first came the natural body, not the spiritual one; that came only afterwards. The first man, being made of earth, is earthly by nature; the second man is from heaven. The earthly man is the pattern for earthly people, the heavenly for the heavenly ones. And as we have the likeness of the earthly man, so we shall bear the likeness of the heavenly one. What I am saying, brothers, is that mere human nature cannot inherit the kingdom of God: what is perishable cannot inherit what is imperishable."

1 Corinthians 15:45-50

Death is scary. Death is the unknown. Death was not originally intended for us. Whenever I hear that someone has died unexpectedly or become deathly ill, I think of Christ when he heard that his friend Lazarus was sick and died. He snorted like a horse because he was angry that death had taken his friend and he knew this was not what was supposed to happen. This is not to start the new year in a rather gruesome way, but to start the year with a new way of thinking. If you know someone who has died or you know someone who is going to die imminently, remember that Christ has conquered death and we must die in order to have new life.

Happy New Year's and Happy New Life!

Archangel Michael Winners from 2015 recognized!

We congratulate again Debbie Kavouklis and Nick Andreadakis, who were awarded the Archangel Michael Award from our parish in 2015. They were both recognized at a special ceremony at the Annunciation Cathedral in Atlanta on November 14-15. We thank you for your stellar stewardship to our community!



Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism - Robert Cortright Grigoropoulos (Haralambos), son of Donnel and Christina Cortright, was baptized on Sunday, November 15. Katerina Coumbos and Christina Allisandratos were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism - Samuel Alexander Herring, son of Jonathan and Muriel Herring, was baptized on Sunday, November 15. Elijah Pano and Diana Perez were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism - Evangeline Grace Carreon, daughter of Delfin and Danae Carreon, was baptized on Sunday, November 22. Alexander Maravegias was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

Registry Statistics for	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Weddings	8	12	8	8	11
Baptisms	22	18	25	25	17
Funerals	6	8	5	7	6

Parish Council Election Results

Congratulations to Alkis Crassas, Mike Xenick, Sandra Pappas, Ed Gerecke and Carole Fotopoulos, who were re-elected to the Parish Council. They join Despina Sibley, Byron Nenos, Catherine Mitseas, Skip Higdon, George Chagaris and Dante Skourellos to comprise this year's Parish Council. Thank you to our Election Committee of Martha Kapetan, John Mitchell, and Bill Manikas.

Get Acquainted Sunday, January 3



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



Vasilopita Sunday, January 10



On January 10, we will cut our annual Vasilopita for the community. Philoptochos will also be distributing Vasilopita after church. All proceeds from Vasilopita Sunday will go to benefit St. Basil's Academy in New York. If you would like to help the Philoptochos by making a Vasilopita, please contact Jeanie Nenos at 813 -451-9116 or Jeanie.Nenos@moffitt.org. Thank You!



Community Outreach

Thank you to everyone who continues to support our Community Outreach ministry to serve the homeless and those in need. We will be volunteering at the Saturday homeless breakfast on **Saturday, January 16** from 8:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m. at First Presbyterian Church in Downtown Tampa located at 412 Zach Street (entrance on Polk Street).



GOYA - January 10, Mother/Daughter and January 31, Father/Son

There will be two meetings in January, January 10 and on January 31. At the January 10 meeting, Fr. Stavros will be meeting with Mothers and Daughters (no Dads). So, all moms are asked to come to the meeting on January 10 with their daughters. Charlie will be meeting with all the boys. The meeting on January 31, Fr. Stavros will be meeting with Fathers and Sons (no Moms). So, all dads are asked to come to the meeting on January 31 with their sons. Charlie will be meeting with the girls on that date. Both meetings will be from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. All GOYAnS are invited to both meetings.

HOPE & JOY NEWS

Thank you to all the children who attended the Sunday School / Hope & Joy Christmas party and to all the parents that helped us make it such a success! It was a wonderful afternoon filled with crafts, games and fellowship with all our church friends! Also, a special thank you to Bavaro's Pizza Napoletana & Pastaria Restaurant for donating the delicious baked ziti and to Emily's Restaurant for donating the Greek salad / pita bread for lunch.

Thank you for all the books donated during the month of December! We will continue to take gently used books throughout the year to be donated by Pi Beta Phi's Christina Gerecke to Champions Are Readers. "One book donated can be one life changed."

Save the dates for Hope & Joy's 2016 events:

Friday January, 22 Movie and Pizza night

Sunday, February 7 Souper Bowl of Caring

Date TBA for March Fellowship dinner after Liturgy of Pre-Sanctified Gifts

Friday April, 29 Holy Friday Retreat

HOPE & JOY wishes our community a Happy, Healthy and Blessed 2016!

Thank you for supporting our children's youth ministry!

Amy Kafantaris and Debbie Nicklow

Prayer for Teachers on Sunday, January 31

On January 30, we celebrate the feast of the Three Hierarchs, who are also the patron saints of teachers. On January 31, immediately prior to Holy Communion, we will offer a prayer for all teachers and anyone who works in education in our community.

SAVE THE DATE

RETREAT FOR MARRIED COUPLES on Saturday, February 20.

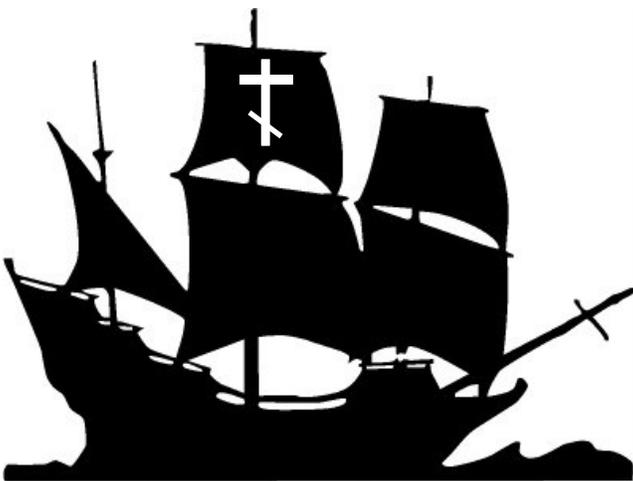
Interested in strengthening and renewing your marriage? Come to a retreat on Saturday, February 20.



Ye Holy Krewe of Tampa

Gasparilla Parking Fundraiser

On Saturday, January 23 and Saturday, January 30, we will be renting out the church parking lot for Gasparilla parking, for the children's parade on January 23, and for the main event on January 30. If you are interested in volunteering a few hours to help the church make some easy \$\$\$, and also have a good time socializing for a few hours while directing traffic, please contact John Kokkas, the captain of Ye Holy Krewe at 727-992-4165 or johnkokkas@verizon.net. The primary hours needed are approximately 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. each Saturday. This is a very easy and fun way to generate income for our parish.

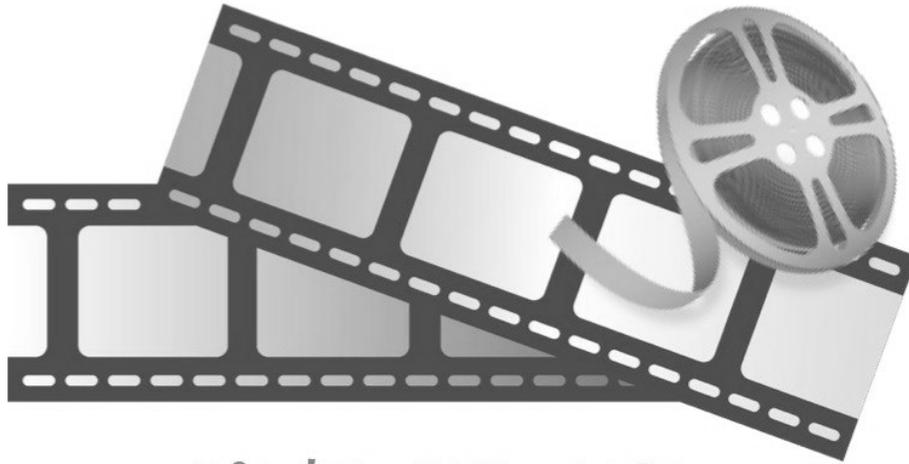


Young at Heart



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!



HOPE AND JOY
PRESENTS

Movie and Pizza Night

Friday, January 22, 2016
at 6:00 – 9:00 pm

**St. John Greek Orthodox Church
Kourmolis Hall**

Admission:

Donation for the **Hope Children's Home**

Choose one of Home's most needed items:

409 cleaner, laundry detergent,
Plastic forks/spoons/knives or Publix gift card

**R.s.v.p. to Debbie by: January 17th
Debbienicklow@hotmail.com 813-690-0671**

****Bring your favorite blanket and enjoy a night
of fun, food & fellowship with your friends!**

Sunday School News

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

This year's Christmas Pageant was the biggest and best ever. There were 41 speaking parts and our Middle and High School Students contributed at the end of the pageant by singing a number of beautiful Christmas songs. We would like to thank all of our Sunday School students, teachers, and parents for helping to make this pageant a success. Maria Xenick has been producing this pageant for a number of years and we can not thank her enough for her commitment to our children, our music program, and our church.

We would also like to thank Debbie Nicklow and Amy Kafantaris for planning the Christmas Party on Saturday, December 12. The crafts were adorable and a fun time was had by the largest group ever. A big thank you also goes out to the Bavaro Family and Emily Lares (Debbie's mom) for donating most of the food for the lunch. We also collected books and toys for needy boys and girls.

Speaking of helping others, many of our Sunday School students worked at the Metropolitan Ministries Holiday Tent this season and also went caroling with the choir at a few local nursing homes.

The Sunday School hosted Coffee Hour on Sunday, December 13 and we would like to thank our families for donating food for the enjoyment of our parishioners.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

Saturday, January 9: Teacher's Retreat 9: 00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 10: TOPIC - Vasilopita/St. Basil
- Charlie Hambos - 5th Grade - Church Vessel Presentation

Sunday January 17: TOPIC: The Ten Commandments
- Charlie Hambos - Pre-K - Church Vessel Presentation

Sunday, January 24: YOUTH SUNDAY
- Charlie Hambos - Presentation for the 2nd Grade

Sunday, January 31: TOPIC: Making Moral Choices
- Charlie Hambos - Presentation for the Middle School

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 813-406-5626 or e-mail her at vickiepeckham@gmail.com.

St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!



Sermons on Youtube Channel Each Sunday

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



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





AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – January 2016



THE AHEPA FAMILY OF TAMPA HOPES THAT EVERYONE HAD A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND WISHES EVERYONE A HAPPY NEW YEAR WITH HEALTH, HAPPINESS, PEACE AND PROSPERITY FOR ALL.

ANNUAL AHEPA FAMILY OF TAMPA SAINT JOHN DAY DINNER

The AHEPA FAMILY of Tampa is having our Annual Saint John 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. Guests include Metropolitan Alexios of the Metropolis 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; and Greek Consul General in Tampa, Florida, Adamantia Klotsa. In attendance will also be District Lodge members from the AHEPA and Daughters of Penelope Citrus District 2 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 FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP DINNER AND CHRISTMAS SOCIAL



On December 19, 2015 the AHEPA FAMILY hosted the annual SCHOLARSHIP AND CHRISTMAS SOCIAL DINNER at the Floridan Hotel, once again awarding scholarships to the young members of our community including high school seniors, college and graduate school students. Scholarship recipients included Nedi Ferekides, Vasilios Nenos, Christopher Scarfogliero, and Eleni Pessemier.

The AHEPA Family Scholarship Program began in 2010 and this is the sixth year that we have awarded scholarships to worthy students of our community. To date the AHEPA Family has awarded over 26 scholarships worth over \$25,000.

EPIPHANY EVENTS

Epiphany is a holiday which is celebrated throughout the Tampa Bay Area with many visitors joining us for the festivities. The following are some of the events that are scheduled.

Sunday, January 3 - AHEPA Citrus District 2 Epiphany Golf Tournament - Starts 12:00 p.m. Lansbrook Golf Club - 4605 Village Center Drive, Palm Harbor, FL Includes: Green Fees, Cart, Trophies, Prizes & Buffet Dinner. Call Gus Pantelides (727)639-3000 or Michael Pantel (727)461-6220 for reservations.

Tuesday, January 5 - AHEPA Annual Epiphany Banquet - Cocktails 6:00 p.m. Dinner Follows, Dancing Tarpon Springs Yacht Club - 350 N. Spring Blvd, Tarpon Springs, FL Call Jim Miller (727)243-4546 or Tim Keffalas (727) 510-3934 for reservations.

Wednesday, January 6 - Church Services & Epiphany Procession - Orthros 8:00 a.m. Blessing of Waters 12:00 p.m. St. Nicholas Cathedral - 36 N. Pinellas Avenue, Tarpon Springs, FL Everyone is Invited to Attend & Participate in the Church Services & Epiphany Celebration.

Wednesday, January 6 - Epiphany Glendi - 12:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. St. Nicholas Community Center - 348 N. Pinellas Avenue, Tarpon Springs, FL Food, Drink, Live Music & Dancing - Free Admission Everyone is Invited to Celebrate Epiphany

AHEPA FLORIDA LEGISLATIVE DAY

AHEPA Legislative Day is scheduled again this year on February 26, 2016. A block of rooms has been secured at a Tallahassee hotel and reservations have been made for the dinner on Friday night. AHEPA Legislative Day will provide an opportunity for AHEPA family members including AHEPAns, Daughters, Sons and Maids to go to Tallahassee for education about how our legislature works and for face to face meetings with legislators. The event is being organized by Lycurgus Chapter 12 for the District Lodge and will involve all AHEPAns

Stewardship 2016

Stewardship Sunday, December 6, 2015, was a day to offer our faith, love and gifts to God as a community. We are humbled and grateful for the 188 families that turned in Pledge Forms including 18 new families! Many Stewards increased their pledges, some significantly, which is also great news. To date we have \$397,913 pledged for 2016! We have all felt the growth in our community and see many new faces each Sunday. We hear the inspiring messages from Fr. Stavros and the positive interactions amongst our parishioners. **We are answering the calling with a Blessed start to our New Year!**

For those who turned in a Pledge form, we thank you. And for those who did not, please mail your form to the church office or bring to church on Sunday. We would like to get ALL forms in as soon as possible to get the year started with a solid foundation of faith in our church and God's work. If you need another form, you can pick one up in the Church Narthex or call the office and we will be happy to send you one.

We are also keeping a close track of Time and Talents noted on the Pledge Forms in our new software - Parish Data Systems. Many helping hands and talents are needed throughout the year, for many church needs, and we will be calling from time to time to ask for support!

~On behalf of the Stewardship Committee we wish everyone a Blessed New Year and thank you
for your support of God's Church in Tampa~

What Stewardship means to me...

Please Note: Longtime Loyal Stewards of St. John the Baptist, Brett and Ana Mourer, have provided a comprehensive Parishioner perspective of 'What Stewardship Means to Me'. We have included Part 1 of this ongoing series below and sincerely thank Brett and Ana for their dedication to our church and their time to prepare this thoughtful message. The full article is also posted under Stewardship on the Church Website.

Orthodoxy has produced many saints. A book titled, Beyond Wealth—Orthodoxy, Capitalism, and the Gospel of Wealth, on page 79, states: "It produced people who climbed to the highest level in human existence—to theosis: 'God became man so that man could become God (St. Athanasios the Great).' There is no greater goal." God is love; therefore, everything we do should advance us towards love—yes, even stewardship.

The priestly invitation at the Divine Liturgy for the receiving of Holy Communion is "with the fear of God, faith and love draw near." Every aspect of our life (our actions; our words; our thoughts; our morality; our prayers; our relationships with our families; our dealings with others, including our enemies; our performance at work; etc.) should follow the same upward progression. Yes, this includes stewardship and the giving away of our possessions such as money.

When we first learn about God, we don't lie, steal, cheat, etc., because of the fear of God. We are fearful of God's wrath if we do those things. As we progress, we gain more faith. We soon strive to avoid negative choices because of the faith we are developing in Christ. We know that when we sin we separate ourselves from Christ. We also experience the pain that alienation from God causes us. Finally, we achieve the highest state of existence, pure love. 1 John 4:18 states, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." At this stage, we love God and all His creation so we wouldn't think of lying, stealing or cheating. It's not part of our make-up because love rules in our heart.

The same is true of stewardship. We initially give out of fear; it's an obligation, a duty and a responsibility, but eventually as we gain more faith we can ultimately give out of love, and not worry if we are going to have enough for ourselves. Matthew

6:25-33 states, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you."

It is not easy to achieve the "love" stage, but (hopefully and prayerfully) we are all progressing up the ladder of faith. We are striving to evolve from giving out of a duty or obligation to giving because of a Godly love within us that provokes us to share with others. If we truly had love, we would be able to truly give. The Scriptures say, "Perfect love casts out fear." Therefore, if we keep striving towards love, and give out of love and truly practice almsgiving, we will not be focused on the accumulation of wealth, greed and covetousness. We will worry less about ourselves, such as whether we have enough, and be willing to give because God, as He Himself stated to us in Matthew 6:25-33, is able to provide for ALL of our needs. How is this possible? Matthew 19:26 states, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

For Weddings, Divorces, Baptisms, Funerals and Memorials

*The Greek Orthodox Church is not a church of rules. But without some guidelines to go by, there would be chaos. The following guidelines are rooted in Orthodox Tradition and Canon Law. These guidelines are printed in **The Messenger** in the beginning of each calendar year, and it is a good idea from time to time for people to review them. These guidelines have been copied from the 2015 Yearbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Please review them, and keep them in mind when planning for your important life events. If you have any questions, please contact Fr. Stavros. (Special requirements specific to sacraments at St. John the Baptist appear in italics.)*

Weddings

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

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

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

In cases involving the marriage of Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians, the latter must have been baptized in water, in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Church cannot bless the marriage of an Orthodox Christian to a non-Christian. The couple should be willing to baptize their children in the Orthodox Church and raise and nurture them in accordance with the Orthodox Faith. *There is a list with religious groups that Orthodox are prohibited from marrying, i.e. Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, and others. Fr. Stavros can provide you with this list. This is IMPORTANT to consider when you begin to date someone. Make sure your chil-*

dren are aware of this! Because circumstances exist where a couple is dating where one of the two is not eligible to be married in the Orthodox Church, and this causes heartache in the relationship and often leads to someone leaving the church.

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

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

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

Days when marriage is not permitted

Marriages are not performed on fast days or during fasting seasons or on the feasts of the church as indicated: September 14 (Holy Cross Day), December 13-25 (Christmas), January 5 and 6 (Epiphany), Great Lent and Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, August 1-15 (Dormition Fast) and August 29. Any exceptions can only be made with the permission of the Metropolitan.

Prohibited Marriages

The following types of relationships constitute impediments to marriage:

Parents with their own children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren or Godchildren of the same Godparents; Brothers-in law and sisters-in law; Uncles and aunts with nieces and nephews; First cousins with each other; Foster parents with foster children or foster children with the children of foster parents.

Godparents with Godchildren or Godparents with the parents of their Godchildren. (In the Chrismation of an adult, one has to be careful that the choice of sponsor does not create a potential marriage impediment. For any questions regarding, please see Fr. Stavros)

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

Baptisms

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

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

Funerals

Funeral services are permitted on any day of the year, except for Sunday and Holy Friday, unless permission is granted by the Metropolitan. If you wish to have a service outside of the church, it will not be a funeral service. It will either be a Memorial Service or a Trisagion. A funeral service must be in an Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church does not allow for

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

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

Memorials

Memorial services may not be chanted from the Saturday or Lazarus through the Sunday of Thomas, or on any Feastday of the Lord or any Feastday of the Theotokos. We customarily do not offer memorial services on the 1st Sunday of Lent (Sunday of Orthodoxy) or the 3rd Sunday of Lent (Sunday of the Holy Cross), or the Sunday after September 14. In 2016, the Sundays when NO memorial services will be offered include: March 20 (Sunday of Orthodoxy), April 3 (Sunday of the Holy Cross); April 24 (Palm Sunday); May 1 (Pascha); May 8 (Sunday of St. Thomas); June 19 (Pentecost) and September 18 (Sunday after Holy Cross Day).

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

Organ Donation

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

Forty-Day Blessings

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

Some Guidelines Unique to our Parish

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

PROCEDURES FOR THE OFFICE:

- The deadline for submitting information for the weekly bulletin is Wednesday at 12:00 p.m. All submissions must be sent electronically to officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com.
- The deadline for the Messenger shall be the 10th of the month. As a cost cutting measure we reduced the size of the Messenger, so no full page flyers will be put in. All submissions must be sent electronically via email. Simply send in your event information to officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com.
- Events may be advertised a maximum of two months prior to the event date for the Messenger and four weeks prior for the bulletin.
- **If you wish to see Fr. Stavros or the office staff, you must make an appointment.** Also, when meeting with the office staff, or when meeting with Father Stavros on a non-pastoral matter, please be efficient with your time. There is lots of work that goes on in the office and constant interruptions make for little progress. Planned appointments are fine, they are not interruptions.

FUNDRAISERS/HALL USAGE:

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

COFFEE HOURS/FUNDRAISERS:

- Our time after Sunday Liturgy provides fellowship that we all look forward to and appreciate. This time is often a mix of simple to more elaborate coffee time and also includes fund raisers and more formal luncheons. As we begin a new year we would like to reiterate some procedures and polices. We have a calendar meeting the second Sunday in August to establish the schedule and luncheons that will be considered fund raisers during the year. Each Ministry is asked to give input before this schedule is finalized.
- The Parish Council discussed that each Ministry should determine what they bring to Coffee Hour without strict guidelines. With the end goal that our parishioners should not be pressured or asked to give additional money just to receive a cup of coffee and cookie. Luncheons/Fundraisers fall into a different category and will be published in the monthly calendar.
- Additionally, when a Ministry needs to setup a table for a special purpose - Information/Sales - **The ministry must call the church office to reserve a table during coffee hour.**
- Lastly any Ministry that wants to charge for a lunch (not on the original schedule) will need to get approval from the Parish Council by sending written notice prior to the monthly Parish Council Meeting.

Small Group Bible Study

We have **Five 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)

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.

January Meeting Dates: January 11, 18, 25

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)

January Meeting Dates: January 12, 19, 26

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

frstav@gmail.com, 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.

January Meeting Dates: January 13, 20, 27

South Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults)

Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient for those who live in South Tampa

Location: 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.

January Meeting Dates: January 12, 19, 26

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.

January Meeting Dates: January 12, 19, 26

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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PURCHASE LIGHTNING TICKETS AND SUPPORT OUR CHURCH

One of our parishioners is donating a number of their Tampa Bay Lightning Hockey Tickets to our CHURCH. They are great seats in the lower corner valued at \$125 each (Section 104, Row P, Seats 15-18). They are:

- **Tuesday, January 19 @ 7:30** - Lightning VS. Edmonton- (Up to 4 tickets) \$50 each
- **Thursday, January 21 @ 7:30** - Lightning VS. Chicago - (Up to 4 tickets) \$75 each
- **Wednesday, January 27 @ 7:00** - Lightning VS. Toronto - (Up to 4 tickets) \$75 each
- **Wednesday, February 3 @ 8:00** - Lightning VS. Detroit - (Up to 4 tickets) \$75 each
- **Friday, February 12 @ 7:30** - Lightning VS. Nashville - (Up to 4 tickets) \$75 each
- **Sunday, February 14 @ 6:00** - Lightning VS. St. Louis - (Up to 4 tickets) \$75 each
- **Tuesday, February 16 @ 7:30** - Lightning VS. San Jose - (Up to 4 tickets) \$50 each
- **Thursday, February 18 @ 7:30** - Lightning VS. Winnipeg - (Up to 4 tickets) \$50 each
- **Tuesday, February 23rd @ 7:30** - Lightning VS. Arizona - (Up to 4 tickets) \$50 each
- **Saturday March 6 @ 7:00** - Lightning VS. Carolina - (Up to 4 tickets) \$75 each

+++Checks can be made Payable to St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church. If you are interested in any of these tickets please call the office 813-876-8830.



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

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

- | | |
|--|---|
| Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA | Perry & Fay Stamatiades - Asheville, NC |
| William J Camarinos - Alexandria, VA | Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI |
| Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC | Wesley & Melissa Thompson - Clearwater, FL |
| Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL | Demitrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH |
| Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL | Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL |
| Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI | Bessie Bliziotes—Palm Cost, FL |

Friend of St. John the Baptist

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

I wish to be a "Friend of St. John". I am enclosing a contribution in the amount of:
_____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$200 _____ Other

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

~ January 2016 ~

~ January 2016 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
**Fast Day	Women's Bible Study - WBS Men's Bible Study - MBS South Bible Study—SBS East Bible Study—EBS				1 St. Basil Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Office Closed	2
3 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Get Acquainted Sunday	4	5** Royal Hours 8:00 a.m. Liturgy 9:15 a.m. Blessing of the Waters 10:30 a.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	6 Vespers 6:30 p.m. Reception in Hall	7 St. John the Baptist Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Luncheon in Hall AHEPA Dinner	8**	9 Sunday School Mid-Year seminar
10 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Vasilopita Sunday GOYA 5:00 p.m.	11 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	12 WBS 9:30 a.m. EBS 6:30 p.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	13** MBS 7:30 a.m.	14 Young at Heart Greek School 6:00 p.m.	15**	16 Community Outreach
17 St. Anthony Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. AHEPA mtg.	18 St. Athanasios Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	19 WBS 9:30 a.m. EBS 6:30 p.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	20** MBS 7:30 a.m.	21 Greek School 6:00 p.m.	22** Clearwater Winter Event HOPE & JOY movie and pizza night 6:00-9:00 p.m.	23 Gasparilla Children's Parade Parking Fundraiser Clearwater Winter Event
24 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Clearwater Winter Event	25 St. Gregory Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	26 WBS 9:30 a.m. EBS 6:30 p.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	27** MBS 7:30 a.m.	28 Greek School 6:00 p.m.	29** Three Hierarchs Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.	30 Gasparilla Adult Parade Parking Fundraiser
31 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m. DOP Gift Baskets Philoptochos Tea						

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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

officestjohnngoctampa@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.

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Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747
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Sia Blankenship 813-968-8855

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

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Chanter

Nick Andreadakis 813-516-6081

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Ruth Losovitz, Organist 727-688-2782

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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

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Edie Kavouklis, President 813-758-0305

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Lindsey Skourellos 813-503-7845

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Men, Fr. Stavros 813-394-1038
South, Bessie Palios 813-523-0347
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“May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father and the Communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.” From the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.