

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

THE MESSENGER

*"Behold I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.
The voice of one crying in the wilderness; Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight." Mark 1:2-3*

Christ is Risen! **May 2016** Truly He is Risen!

Mission Statement:

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is dedicated to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.

Vision:

The church shall seek to fulfill its mission by:

1. Embracing the Spiritual Life of the Orthodox Church through regular prayer, worship, and frequent participation in the sacraments.
2. Supporting the Church through stewardship of time and talent and sacrificial giving.
3. Providing a welcoming, caring, loving environment.
4. Having its members exemplify Orthodox Christian character and morals.
5. Supporting ministries that facilitate the overall mission of the Church.
6. Exemplifying commitment to community service and charitable outreach.
7. Creating an environment which encourages members to grow in their faith.

Father Stavros' Message

Christ Is Risen! Truly He Is Risen!

Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ, let us worship the Holy Lord Jesus, the only sinless One. We venerate Your Cross Christ and Your Holy Resurrection we praise and glorify. For You are our God, we know no other than You and we call upon Your Holy Name. Come, all you faithful, let us worship Christ's Holy Resurrection, for behold through the Cross, JOY has come to all the world. Ever blessing the Lord, let us praise His Resurrection. For enduring the Cross for us, He has destroyed death by death. (Read at ever Orthros of the Paschal season, and each Sunday at the Orthros).

What do you think of when you hear the word "Joy"? You probably think more about Christmas than about Pascha. You probably think of "Joy to the World," more than "through the Cross, Joy has come to all the world." Yet the liturgical texts use the word JOY when telling us that only through the pain of the cross could joy come to the world.

The word "joy" and the word "hope" are closely related. The Resurrection of Christ gives us "hope" that we can have our own personal "resurrection," meaning that when we die, we can become an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. When one

has no hope, then he has no joy. If there is no heaven, then there is no hope. And if there is no hope for eternal life, then there really is no joy, because any happiness one would feel would be tempered by the thought that it is temporary and will come to an end. By the time you read this message, we will be celebrating the Resurrection. The journeys of Lent and Holy Week will be behind us. There will be many people around the world, and maybe even a few in our own parish, who will have celebrated their last Pascha on earth. If there is no heaven, this "Joy" of this feast would be tempered by the knowledge that this is the last "Easter" one will celebrate. But because the Resurrection gives us hope for even greater joy, one can celebrate his or her last Pascha with happiness that an even greater joy is coming.

Without the Cross, there is no Resurrection. Without the Resurrection, there is no hope. Because of the Resurrection, there is hope. And because there is hope, there is joy—joy that is temporary, and joy that looks for the eternal and greater joy.

There is another reason I am writing about joy today. I hope that the Lenten season helped you to find more balance in your life. And now with Lent ending, there is the temptation to regress to our Pre-Lenten habits. Many of you found a new start in the sacrament of confession. Many of you are participating

Χριστὸς ἀνέστη!

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

Ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη!

in the Daniel Plan. Many of you did the Lenten Covenant. So, here is a post-Lenten program to follow and I will call it **JOY - Jesus, Others, Yourself.**

Jesus - Keep Christ first in your life. Pray to Him every day. Pray from your heart. Prayer books are good and written prayers are familiar and I'm not discouraging either. But also lift up your thoughts and your needs in your own words. We had record crowds throughout Lent, so once Pascha is over, keep coming to church. If Lent was about austerity, the Paschal season is filled with joy—bright colors, the beautiful hymn "Christos Anesti"—come and partake in our joy. Many people were more disciplined about following the commandments, keeping our mouths and our thoughts clean, working on overcoming bad habits and establishing more healthy ones. Keep up the work that you started.

Others - The two great commandments that Christ gave us were to love God and love our neighbor. In John 13:35, Jesus tells His Disciples, "by this all men will know that you are My Disciples, if you have love for one another." So "others" is a big part of the faith equation. In fact, you can't really love God if you don't love other people. And you certainly can't serve God by not serving others. Love is expressed when we take something of ourselves and offer it freely and joyfully to someone else. Service is expressed when we put the needs of others ahead of our own. "Others" includes spouses, children, parents, friends, co-workers, neighbors, customers, clients, patients and society in general.

Yourself - After Jesus and others comes yourself. "Yourself" includes taking care of YOU—diet and exercise are part of this. A healthy amount of sleep is as well. Taking time off to relax and recharge is necessary. "Yourself" also includes your family—not only taking care of them but taking leisure with them. It means playing with your children, spending quality time with your spouse, not just working time. Many people are so busy that they neglect themselves, their health, their bodies. And then those bodies break down and they aren't good for anybody. Many others put their marriages on the back burner, putting all their energy into their children and into their careers. This has led to the breakdown of marriages, which leads to the breakdown of families which contributes to the breakdown of society. Yourself includes you, your marriage, your children, and having "good" time with them as well as work time.

Let's look at some aberrations of JOY:

The J - There is no one in this category because anyone who is serious about Jesus has at least a love for others.

The O - I don't think there is anyone in this category either. For someone to be an "O" would require service to others with no sense of God or sense of self. I would think it would be impossible to be an "O" without a "J" or a "Y" or both attached.

The Y - Yes, we all know at least one of these. This is the person who has little sense of Jesus or others. Their motto is "It's all about me."

The JO - The JO is well intentioned - they have strong faith and a strong sense of service towards others. But they forget

the home fires—sometimes they neglect their children or their marriages, and many times they neglect themselves—their health and well-being. The JO can only go so far because if their home-base implodes, the J and the O likely go with it.

The JY - this is the person who has the trappings of piety and ostensibly looks the part of the committed Christian. But the service aspect is missing. If you have Jesus, it can't be just about Him and you. The committed Christian has a good sense of others and a desire to serve others.

The OY - this is the person who takes care of himself and even joyfully takes care of others, but has no sense of Jesus in his life. If one has no relationship with the Lord, then ultimately the "O" becomes a "Y" because if we're not making it "all about Him (the Lord)" what is our motivation?

The only way to be the complete person is to have JOY - Jesus, Others, Yourself.

The Post-Pascha challenge - As I write this message, it is the Monday before Palm Sunday. I am excited for the Holy Week journey to begin. But even as I am excited, and even though I'm fatigued from the long Lenten journey, I admit to you that I'm a little concerned about where I'll be two weeks from now. It will be Pascha. I will have eaten a lot I'm sure. No worries there. On Pascha we should eat. If we've fasted, we should eat. I will be tired. Again, there is nothing wrong with being tired. If you came to every service of Holy Week and are tired, that will totally be understandable. I'm not worried about Pascha, or even Bright Monday (there is Liturgy that week, so it will be like an extension of Holy Week). But what about Bright Tuesday? What about the rest of Bright Week? What about the weeks after that? By the time we reach Ascension on June 9, will my Lenten journey and its spiritual achievements be just a memory, or will I still be going strong in my faith and in my recommitment to that faith that I always make during Lent and Holy Week and somehow lose once Pascha is over? Will this year be different? Can I make it be different? Will YOU help me make it different? Can we encourage one another to make it different?

The way to keep things going positively year round in a good spiritual place is to focus on JOY, and to focus on ALL THREE aspects of this word—on Jesus, on others and on yourself. Our life is just a blip in the span of eternity. So, the challenge in our life and what God expects from us is to do the best we can with our blip in time.

It begins and ends with the J - It's all about us preparing to stand before Him. Therefore life needs to be all about Him. It needs Him at the center. For those who made strides in your spiritual life this Lent, don't see Pascha as an ending but as a time to recommit to your goals. And for those who didn't get much out of Lent, maybe you came to church only a couple of times, use Pascha as a new beginning and start your program of growing in Christ TODAY!!!

The O is important - Because we honor Him by serving one another

The Y is critical - Because we're not good to God or anyone else if we are not healthy - meaning healthy bodies (diet, exer-

cise, rest), healthy minds (the right combination of focus at work and relaxation and leisure) and healthy souls (prayer, scripture reading, worship, confession).

You can't spell JOY without the J, the O and the Y. And you cannot have real joy unless you have all three in your life. "Through the Cross, JOY has come to all the world." Our journey to the cross has hopefully made each of us more aware of our need for JOY - To serve Jesus, to serve others and to take care of ourselves. As we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ, let us commit in our own way, to keep "JOY" front and center in our lives throughout the coming year. And let us encourage JOY in one another!

With love in the Risen Lord,
+Fr. Stavros

Some Additional From Fr. Stavros

The Prayer Team Continues

For over 14 months, many of you have been receiving the "Prayer Team" Messages which I write every day. For the Paschal Season, I will be writing on scriptures related to the Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost. This current set will end on June 26, on the feastday of All Saints. And another series will start after. If you'd like to be on the prayer team, and receive a reflection each morning, please email Charlie at charlie.hambos@gmail.com to be added to the list. Over 600 people are on it, so come and join in!

A Confession Testimony

If you did not receive the Sacrament of Confession during Lent, you can schedule an appointment at any time during the year. In fact, many people come right after Pascha because they feel inspired by the Holy Week journey. Confession isn't just a listing off of your sins. It is the permission to set aside guilt. It is an opportunity to recommit to Christ. And it is an opportunity to receive some encouragement, that no matter what you've done, that God still loves you. I recently received a letter from a parishioner who went for confession this past Lent. She has asked me to reprint it for our community, and to use her name. Her "testimony" is very compelling, and so I am acquiescing to her request (even though what is said in confession is strictly confidential), in the hopes that it will motivate and encourage those who have never done this sacrament for whatever reason, or those who haven't done it in a long time, to hear from someone who had such a positive experience, she wrote a letter and asked me to share it with you:

March 26, 2016

Dear Father Stavros,

I know you are super busy these days, but I must tell you that the time we spent during my recent confession was one of the highlights and most valuable of my life!

I always thought confession involved a lecture of sorts and that I would leave feeling guilty and perhaps, like a "bad" Christian—unworthy. Boy was I wrong! I left feeling as if a weight had been lifted from my shoulders and I actually felt like celebrating!

You allowed me to speak to God in my own words, and when I finished, we had a two-way conversation until we both knew I felt peaceful inside. I've told my friends it was like a great therapy session and better, because it was faith-based.

So, I've decided to confess at least once yearly—and avoid "high season" (Lent—ha-ha)—only to help minimize your stress during this busy time of year. I think around the time of my birthday would be most appropriate!

God bless you!

Angela Johnston

P.S. Feel free to share this letter church-wide with my name included (so that people know it's real) IF you wish.

Quoting of Non-Orthodox Authors

During Lent, I have tried to include listening to positive messages in my daily routine. Some of these have included reading and listening to inspirational messages related to the Daniel Plan (Rick Warren), listening to podcasts from Focus on the Family (Jim Daly), and sermons by Fr. Larry Richards. Yes, none of these people are Orthodox, but all have positive messages about improving spiritual health and families. Occasionally, I put articles by these people, and others, in the Messenger, or quote them in sermons because what they have to say is relevant for all Christians, not just Orthodox Christians.

Do you know of any good counselors?

People periodically approach Fr. Stavros asking for recommendations for counselors for various things—marriage counselors, grief counselors, therapists specializing in addictive behaviors like pornography, alcohol and drugs and many other needs. If you have had a good experience with a counselor that you can recommend, please send the contact information along with the counseling specialty to Fr. Stavros so that He may pass them on. Thank you.

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 Fr. Stavros at Frstav@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Liturgical Schedule for May 2016

Sunday, May 1 Pascha
Agape Vespers 11:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers: Gregory Tisdale, George Mitseas
Coffee Hour: Easter Egg Hunt



Monday, May 2 St. George
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday, May 6 Life-Giving Fountain - Zoodochos Peghe
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 8 Sunday of St. Thomas - Mother's Day
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew
Ushers: Gregory Tisdale, Brett Mourer, George Trimikliniotis
Welcome Committee: Greeters: Vanessa Aviles, Pablo Aviles; Ambassador: Kalliope Chagaris;
Caller: Peggy Bradshaw
Coffee Hour: Sponsored by Martha Kapetan and Kathy McLaury

Sunday, May 15 Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearers
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark
Ushers: John Christ, John Tsibris, Amin Hanhan
Welcome Committee: Greeters: Lisa Alsina, Genie Carter; Ambassador: Elaine Halkias; Caller: Martha Kapetan
Coffee Hour: Parish Picnic

Friday, May 20 Sts. Constantine and Helen (Evening Liturgy)
Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 22 Sunday of the Paralytic
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke
Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas
Welcome Committee: Greeters: Donna Hambos, Helen Cauthorn; Ambassador: Maria Karounos;
Caller: Julie Palios
Coffee Hour: Philoptochos

Wednesday, May 25 Mid-Pentecost
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 29 Sunday of the Samaritan Woman
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John
Ushers: Ron Myer, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis
Welcome Committee: Greeters: Dwight Forde, Ewana Forde; Ambassador: Carole Fotopoulos;
Caller: Betty Katsamakis
Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Liturgical Notes for May

No Kneeling until Pentecost

It is actually the Tradition in the Orthodox Church that we not kneel on Sundays in honor of the Resurrection of Christ (exceptions being if you are receiving the sacrament of confession on a Sunday, or are present at an ordination on a Sunday). Because we do not worship on a daily basis in our church communities, priests have encouraged people to kneel on Sundays, the thought being that if we do not kneel on Sundays, that we'll never kneel in church. It is a Tradition, that for 50 days after Pascha, we do not kneel in honor of the Resurrection. The next time we will kneel after May 1 is on the Feast of Pentecost (June 19 of this year), after the liturgy, at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says "Again and again on bended knees let us pray to the Lord." Until you hear that petition, do not kneel from May 1-June 19.

Fast Free the week after Pascha

Having kept a fast for almost 8 weeks, including the week before Lent, Lent and Holy Week, the church gives us a "week off" from fasting the week after Pascha. During Bright Week, or Renewal Week, as that week is called each day is like a Sunday. Hence, there is no fasting during this celebratory week. Who, then, may receive Communion? Whoever wishes to, providing that they abstain from food the morning they are receiving. So, the Sunday after Pascha, everyone in the congregation may receive, provided you abstain from food on Sunday morning. There is no fasting on Wednesday or Friday of renewal week, or any other day of that week either.

Monday, May 2 - Feast of St. George

St. George the "Trophy Bearer" is one of the most famous saints of our church. He lived in the third century. He was a soldier, famously memorialized in icons as slaying a dragon. Symbolically, he "slayed" the "dragons" that opposed Christianity and was martyred for his faith. His relics were placed in the altar of our church when it was consecrated in 1986. St. George's feast day is celebrated on April 23 (or the Monday after Pascha if Pascha falls on or after April 23). Thus, this year, we will celebrate his feastday on its correct liturgical date, which will be Monday, May 2.

Friday, May 6 - Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain

Commemorates the consecration of a Chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which was built over a spring in Constantinople, that emitted water with healing powers. Hundreds of miracles and healings have occurred at this spring. This feast day of "Zoodochos Peghe," the Feast of the life-giving Fountain, is always celebrated on the Friday of Bright (Renewal) week, the week after Pascha, May 6, this year.

Sunday, May 8 - Sunday of St. Thomas

Feast of St. John the Theologian and St. Arsenios—The Church brings to our mind the unbelief of Thomas followed by his belief after seeing the scars of Christ. Additionally on May 8, we celebrate the feast days of St. John the Theologian, the author of the fourth Gospel, as well as the Epistles of St. John and the book of Revelation, and also celebrate the feast of St. Arsenios, a monk of the 5th Century.

Sunday, May 15 - Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women

They came to anoint Jesus' body, but found an EMPTY tomb. We also commemorate Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. May 15 is also the anniversary of ordination for Fr. Stavros, and this year marks 18 years in the priesthood, 19 years overall as he served as a deacon for a year prior to being ordained a priest.

Friday, May 20 - Sts. Constantine and Helen

May 21 (we will have an Evening Liturgy on Friday, May 20) commemorates the feast of Sts. Constantine and Helen. St. Constantine was the emperor of the Roman Empire who decided to make Christianity the official religion of the empire. For the first time in history, the Christian church would not fall under persecution. St. Constantine also moved the capital of the Empire from Rome to Constantinople (present day Istanbul, Turkey), where he inaugurated the Byzantine Empire which flourished from 325 until 1453. He also convened the first Ecumenical Council in Nicea in the year 325, which inaugurated what is known as the "golden age of Orthodoxy," and resulted in the writing of the Nicene Creed (edited to its current version in the year 381). St. Helen, the mother of St. Constantine, is recognized as being the person who found the true cross of Christ in Jerusalem. She went on a pilgrimage to the Holy City and searched diligently for the Cross, finding it under a patch of Basil (Vasiliko) on the Mountain of Golgotha. Sts. Constantine and Helen have the title "Isapostolou," "Equal to the Apostles" because of the tremendous contributions they made to the Orthodox Christian Church.

Sunday, May 22 - Sunday of the Paralytic

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

Wednesday, May 25 - Feast of Mid-Pentecost

This feastday depicts Christ the teacher, foreshadows the teaching to the Samaritan Woman, celebrated the following Sunday, and it is the feastday of teachers. This feast is held mid-way between Pascha and Pentecost and this year falls on May 25.

Sunday, May 29 - Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

Christ talks about the water of eternal life which will never make us thirst again. The woman here is St. Photini.

Let's Not Waste Our Time with Jealousy

By Charlie Hambos

Jealousy is a wasted emotion. In the span of our life, we will experience many emotions. Here are a few: Affection, Anger, Anxiety, Confidence, Contentment, Courage, Depression, Disappointment, Envy, Gratitude, Happiness, Hatred, Hope, Jealousy, Loneliness, Love, Pleasure, Regret, Resentment, Sadness, Wonder and Worry. Those are just a few. God made us emotional for a reason. Sometimes we run away from our emotions. For example, soothing anxiety and depression by drinking alcohol. Sometimes we enjoy our emotions especially happiness, pleasure, love and wonder. Sometimes emotions consume us and hopefully they are the positive ones. The problem is when negative emotions like regret, jealousy, hatred and anger consume us and destroy us from the inside out.

We simply cannot deny the fact that we have emotions. Emotions are based on positive and negative experiences we have had in our life. Emotions are a good thing even the bad ones because they can push us to be a better person for ourselves and for those around us. One emotion that can really cause a problem in this realm is jealousy. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary jealousy is an unhappy or angry feeling of wanting to have what someone else has. Secondly, jealousy is an unhappy or angry feeling caused by the belief that someone you love (such as your husband or wife) likes or is liked by someone else.

Today, being jealous is almost unavoidable unless someone is completely emotionless or always has their emotions in check, especially with the ramped use of social media. Our thumbs and fingers are constantly swiping up and down on the news feeds and friends profiles in the countless Social Networks, seeking for that gut wrenching photo of someone we love being with someone else or your colleague documenting every moment of their European dream vacation. This phenomenon reworks the neural networks in our brain very similar to the way addiction does. In fact it is an addiction.

Jealousy is not foreign to our Salvation history, in fact, the Bible is littered with jealousy. It was jealousy that created the one who infuses jealousy in us, the devil, Satan, the evil one, whatever you want to call him. His original name was Lucifer, he was second in command of the heavenly realm. He was the most beautiful of all of the angels. God was in command. Lucifer wanted what God had and was jealous. Once he tried to make his move, God threw him down along with all of his followers.

Adam and Eve were jealous because they wanted something they could not have. They wanted to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thus gaining access to this knowledge, a knowledge that only God can understand. So, we, like Lucifer wanted to know what God knows but that isn't for us. Since the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve, showed us the progression of jealousy to anger and eventually to murder. Cain and Abel were to offer their first fruits to God, the best of which they could offer, the first of the harvest. Abel did as he was told, but

Cain offered to God the second fruits of the harvest. God blessed Abel but not Cain. Cain got very angry, picked up a rock and murdered Abel. We can see how this emotion of jealousy can lead to destruction.

Another example is that of Leah and Rachel, who were sisters. Jacob, with the help of his mother, deceived his dying father into giving him the blessing versus the actual first born brother, Esau. Naturally, Jacob had to flee and he went to work with his Uncle Laban who was a shepherd. Jacob met his cousin Rachel and it was love at first sight. Jacob asked for Rachel's hand in marriage and his Uncle said he could have her but he would have to work for 7 years without pay. So he did and when it came time to have Rachel, her father tricked Jacob and secretly married him to Leah, the older, less attractive sister, according to Jacob. Jacob was obviously angry but still wanted Leah, so he asked for her as well. Laban agreed but he would have to work for another 7 years without pay. Jacob agreed and he was married to both. The story ends with, "Jacob lay with Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years" (Gen. 29:30). So family life as full of jealousy. Leah knew that Jacob loved Rachel more and that must have been painful but she turned to God. God saw that Leah wasn't being loved by Jacob so God made Rachel barren and only Leah was able to bear children. So now, Rachel had Jacob's love but now she was jealous of Leah because she was producing children. What a mess! Our emotions will make us do anything.

The story continues. Jacob would have 12 sons, who became the 12 tribes of Israel. The youngest son and the pride of his father, Jacob, got all of the attention. Jacob gave Joseph a coat of many colors. The other brothers obviously were not happy about that so they sold him at a slave auction and went to Egypt where he would eventually gain favor in the government by his ability to interpret dreams. There was drought in the land. Jacob was in charge of rationing the grain. Unknowingly, a few of the brothers arrived to get some grain and who was there, Joseph. God has an amazing plan for our lives and for the lives of those we are jealous of or on the receiving end of that jealousy.

St. Cyprian of Carthage of the 3rd Century, made it a point to help his followers realize that jealousy is the root of many sins, which take us away from God. St. Cyprian describes jealousy as a gnawing worm of the soul that plagues our thoughts and rusts our hearts. We become tormented by the glory that others are receiving and we "apply a sort of executioner to one's own breast, to bring the tormentors to one's own thoughts and feelings, that they may tear us with intestine pangs, and may smite the secret recesses of the heart with the hoof of malevolence. To such, no food is joyous, no drink can be cheerful." That sounds like fun. Just Kidding! Nobody deserves this.

St. Cyprian also described the progression of the jealousy similar to what we saw in the characters of the Bible. "It is the root of all evils, the fountain of disasters, the nursery of crimes, the

material of transgressions. Thence arises hatred, thence proceeds animosity. Jealousy inflames avarice, in that one cannot be content with what is his own, while he sees another more wealthy. When jealousy darkens our perceptions, and reduces the secret agencies of the mind under its command, the fear of God is despised, the teaching of Christ is neglected, the day of judgment is not anticipated.” Jealousy darkens our perceptions and drives us away from Christ. This is why it is so bad.

What do we do? What do we do with this emotion called jealousy. First we must pray. We must pray that God takes it away and gives us patience. Then we must breath. No doubt some emotions cause psychosomatic feelings. Jealousy usually, creates negative psychosomatic feelings like nausea, racing heart, chest tension and the inability to sleep. Second, we must realize that jealousy does not come from God. In James 3:14-16, it says, “But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”

Third, we must breath. Practice deep breaths, holding them for a few seconds and then exhale. Breathing helps bring more oxygen in the body which will help. Fourth, we must stop and realize what we are feeling. Say something like, “I am jealous because...” This will give some clarity and help us with step 5 which is to see what is really going on. This could be a symptom of a bigger problem. St. Paul says, in Philippians 2:3, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.” This leads to step 6, be humble. Be thankful for something or someone. We do not want to say anything to the person, which you will regret. You

may need to separate ourself from the situation for a bit. Give yourself some space. Take control of our thoughts before they take control of us. In this 7th step we must make sure we don't let our feelings of jealousy affect the people around us. Just let them know that we are not feeling our best. Do not just rip their heads off with short snippy comments. If it is really causing lots of problems in our life, we may need to go see a therapist. Step 8 is to realize that we are way better than this and this is not what God wants for our life. Perhaps, we need to be less hard on ourselves. Again, we have to be thankful. Just think of something to be thankful for and thank God for if.

Are we really reflecting the love of Christ by being jealous? NO. Let us not forget, “Love is Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth (1 Corinthians 13:4 -7).” Jealousy ultimately hurts others. The one we are jealous of and everyone else. We don't want to hurt others. This is not love. Rather than letting the fear, control our life, which is created by jealousy, we must be compassionate to everyone and also to ourself.

Even worse, jealousy is completely self-centered. The world does not revolve around us. We have to remove ourselves from the center of everything. Once we do that we can open our heart, giving everyone access to the love of Christ through us.

Jealousy is a wasted emotion. It is especially wasted if we let it control our life and ruin everything around us. We can choose to not waste it and learn from it and make ourselves even better. Choose love and compassion. Work on it. Be patient and lets give ourselves some time to process the situation.

What Is - Ized and What We Should Be “I-zing”

“In today's society, materialism is idolized, immorality is glamorized, truth is minimized, sin is normalized, divorce is rationalized, and abortion is legalized. In TV and movies, crime is legitimized, drug use is minimized, comedy is vulgarized, and sex is trivialized. In movies, the Bible is fictionalized, churches are satirized, God is marginalized, and Christians are demonized. The elderly are dehumanized, the sick are euthanized, the poor are victimized, the mentally ill are ostracized, immigrants are stigmatized, and children are tranquilized. In families around the world, our manners are uncivilized, speech is vulgarized, faith is secularized, and everything is commercialized.

“Unfortunately, Christians, you and I, are often disorganized and demoralized, our faith is compartmentalized, and our witness is compromised. So what do we need? We need to revitalize our worship, minimize our differences, mobilize our members, and evangelize the lost, and we need to re-energize our families.”

Rick Warren, World Meeting of Families, September 2015

Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism - Conner (Constantine) Price, son of Bradley and Gerri (Kavouklis) Price, was baptized on Sunday, April 3. Nick Kavouklis and Andrea Kavouklis were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism - Nicholas Anton, son of Alexandros and Kristen Anton, was baptized on Sunday, April 10. John and Genie Carter, and Ellis and Melissa DeJesus were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Adult Baptism and Chrismation - Fred and Jillian Hawkins began attending our parish last fall. They completed the Orthodox 101 class and faithfully attend services. On Wednesday, April 13, prior to the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, Jillian was baptized, taking the Orthodox name Joanna. Eleftheria Roussos is her Godmother. Fred was Chrismated, taking the Orthodox name Peter, and Archie Roussos was his Godfather. Congratulations!

Baptism - Elias Spiro Taylor, son of Hugh and Theodora (Pavlidis) Taylor was baptized on Sunday, April 17. Maria Pavlidis was the Godmother. Na Sas Zisi!

Chrismation - Camille Curry was Chrismated on Sunday, March 13. Kalliope Chagaris was her sponsor. Congratulations!

Funeral - George Diniaco passed away on Sunday, March 20. Funeral Services were held at St. John on Saturday, March 26. May his memory be eternal!

Condolences to Ellen Skijus, on the passing away of her brother, George. May his memory be eternal!

Community Outreach

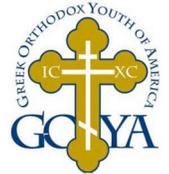
Saturday, May 21 from 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. St. John the Baptist's Community Outreach will be serving breakfast to the Homeless at the First Presbyterian Church in Downtown Tampa. The church is located at 412 Zack Street. The entrance is on Polk Street. Grab a cup of coffee and come help us! We love to see new and old faces!



GOYA

The **GOYA meeting** will be on Sunday, May 22, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center.

GOYA Lenten Retreat - Our TWELFTH Annual GOYA Lenten Retreat was held April 8-10. Ninety GOYAs and advisors from around the area spent the weekend learning and having fellowship. A special thank you to all of our parents who cooked, and advisors who chaperoned and to Elaine Halkias, our lead advisor, for working out a lot of the logistics.



Philoptochos End of the Year Luncheon

The ladies of Philoptochos will be having an end of the year luncheon on Sunday, June 26 at 1:00 p.m. at the Columbia Restaurant in Ybor City.



St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church will be celebrating its 60th anniversary this year and we need you! We are collecting historical information on our Parish...please share information you wish to be considered for presentation in the 60th festivities. Submit your historical information - photos, text or personal statements to sjgoc60th@gmail.com. We will be collecting until Tuesday, May 31. Should you have photos or text needing to be scanned please use the email above and you will be contacted to coordinate scanning your items.

We are very excited to collaborate with all the parishioners on the 60th anniversary celebration. Please stay tuned to the Messenger and Bulletin for further announcements as to the anniversary festivities.



Congratulations to our Graduates!

If you have a student who is graduating from high school or college or graduate school, please contact the church office by May 10 so we can include graduates in the June/July issue of the Messenger. Please provide the name of the graduate, the institution graduating from, any degree, in the case of a college graduate, and what college the person plans to attend, in the case of the high school graduate.

A decorative graphic featuring a purple and black Mardi Gras mask with white stars and dots, set against a background of colorful confetti in yellow, green, and purple. The mask is positioned on the left side of the graphic, and the confetti is scattered throughout the background.

Thank you to everyone who supported us at our Mardi Gras Dance this year by either a donation or attending what always is a fun event!

Thank you to all of the ladies for their ever strong diligence in working so tirelessly to raise money for the needs of our church. Your dedication to this cause sets an example for our faith and love of our church and one another. I am so proud and inspired by you all.

Reporting the results, we have \$4000 to show for our efforts! We have voted to use \$3500 to donate to the church this year (leaving a little seed money for next year's dance). With this we are buying several things that we need in the kitchen to make it a little easier for the helping hands of all the different ministries. It has been decided that we will purchase an icemaker (the one that we had has died), a full size microwave (that will make it easier to heat things in larger bowls) a small coffee maker (for the convenience of the staff when a large amount is not needed) and we are checking on also getting a stackable washer/dryer for the kitchen to launder the towels, mop heads etc.

We do this for all of us who labor together for our church and the fellowship that we share. We thank you for giving the forty dollars for the tickets to the dance and all that you drop in our little basket at our coffee hours. We are a small group (less than 20) but we like to think that we are MIGHTY and there is no doubt that we are full of love for our beautiful community. You are what we work for and we appreciate so much the support that you give back to us!

For the up coming year in which we will celebrate the 60th one of our beautiful church, all the money that we raise will be given toward the principle balance of the mortgage we carry. So, when you drop money into the basket or buy tickets to next year's dance we want you to remember what our cause is. Be as ever generous and share in our cause with a happy heart as you help us to honor what has been here for us for 60 years.

With love in our Lord, our church and each other,

Carole Fotopoulos & all the beautiful "girls" (a few guys too) of the " Young at Heart"

Thank You!

Greek Independence Day Luncheon

Thank You to the generous donation of the Kalojiannis Family, who again donated all the food for our Greek Independence Day Luncheon (April 3), we raised \$1,200 for our church, had some great food, and honored our ethnic holiday. Thank You!

Successful Lenten Retreat

20 Adults from our parish and surrounding communities attended the Adult Lenten Retreat on Saturday, April 2. The subject of the Retreat was "Let us Lift Up Our Hearts: Working Toward a Healthy Mind, Body and Spirit." Our guest presenters were Dr. Christina Stamoolis and Vanessa Aviles, in addition to Fr. Stavros. Our next adult retreat will be in the fall.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgies WELL ATTENDED - Thanks to our ministries!!!

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

Sunday School News

Christos Anesti! Christ is Risen!

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

On April 17, our children did a fantastic job singing our church hymns during our YOUTH SUNDAY under the direction of Maria Xenick. We would like to thank Sophia Krinos for Reading the Epistle and our Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd Graders for making the Prosphora this month under the guidance of Melissa Krinos. Truly we are raising such wonderful STEWARDS of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church.

It was fabulous to see our entire Sunday School participate in the PROCESSION OF THE PALMS on April 24. Each of the Sunday School classes conducted a lesson on Palm Sunday and Holy Week prior to and after the procession. Our other Sunday School topics for the month of April were the Holy Cross and the Light of Christ - Making Faith Personal.

We would like to thank the families who attended the Saturday of Lazarus Service on April 23. Our children and parents helped to make over 600 crosses for Palm Sunday.

Our Holy Friday Retreat on April 29 was the best ever. The day was filled with Pascha crafts, learning activities and worship. We must acknowledge Debbie Nicklow and Amy Kafantaris for coordinating this event, the many people who helped out, and of course the children for making this retreat a huge success. We would also like to thank our older students for assisting our younger ones with the crafts and stations. Our teens also wrapped over 700 red eggs for Pascha. We are truly blessed to have such amazing children.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

May 8: TOPIC: St. Thomas

May 15: TOPIC: Talents and Gifts

May 22: YOUTH SUNDAY

June 5: LAST DAY OF SUNDAY SCHOOL (Graduation)

END OF THE YEAR PARTY

Our last day of Sunday School and Graduation is on June 5th. We are already starting to plan for the next Sunday School year. Sunday School will start in AUGUST to compliments the earlier start to the public school calendar. We will let you know when these dates are finalized and when registration will take place. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A STAFF MEMBER and/or if you have any suggestions on how we can improve our Sunday School Program, please e-mail Vickie Peckham at vickiepeckham@gmail.com or call her at 813-406-5626.



St. John's PASCHA PICNIC

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

9th Annual Parish Picnic

When: Sunday, May 15, 2016
Following the Divine Liturgy

Where: Ballast Point Park*
5300 Interbay Boulevard
Tampa, Florida 33611

Admission is FREE!

We will have sports, relays, and activities on the field for all ages.
Face painting and balloons for the kids.
Plus hamburgers, cheeseburgers, and hot dogs for all!

*Please carpool since parking is limited.



Sunday of Orthodoxy

Photos by Olya Clifton



Greek Independence Day Celebration

Photos by Olya Clifton



St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival

On Sunday, March 27, we had the parish level competition for the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. In the Junior Division, we heard speeches from Dimitri Karounos, Angelina Krinos, Antonio Bavaro, Hannah Passalaris, Dominic Garcia and Sophia Krinos. In the Senior Division, we heard speeches from Christos Nenos, Karter Lenardos, Savvas Ferekides, Larissa Krinos, George Hambos, Alexis Linsinbigler and Nedi Ferekides. Hannah Passalaris and Sophia Krinos moved on and represented our church at the District Finals for the Junior Division, with George Hambos and Savvas Ferekides competing in the senior division at the District Finals in Sarasota on April 2. A **BIG THANK YOU** to Peggy Bradshaw, who is the chairperson of the Oratorical Festival for eight years now. Thank you also to our judges - Dr. John Chris, Dante Skourellos, Stavroula Crafa, Dr. Bill Manikas, Lisa Prodromitis, and Irene Hoffman. Brett Mourer served as our supervising head judge and Vickie Peckham was the timekeeper.

Congratulations to all of our Oratorical Participants!

Some of the speeches will appear in this issue of *The Messenger* and the rest will appear in the June/July issue.

Elementary Division

Christ the True Light By Dimitri Karounos

Christ, The true light that enlightens and sanctifies each person who comes into the world. Let the light of your countenance shine also upon me, that in it, I may behold the ineffable light. Amen.

This prayer is posted on the glass in the narthex where we light our candles.

This light on each candle is more than just a candle light. It is the light of Jesus in our hearts, it is also the light of The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit.

God sent Jesus down to earth to help people. He is the Son of God and we honor Him.

JOHN 5:23...so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Jesus had a hard life. He went through rejection all his life. It is kind of like today's modern-day bullying.

Jesus forgives sins. On the cross, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Luke 23:34

He forgave his disciples for arguing about being with him before the last supper. They all came with him. Jesus forgave Judas on the cross. Judas committed suicide. He hung himself on a tree. However, Peter also denied Christ 3 times and he didn't hang himself. Instead, he became the Rock of our church.

Everyone has a chance to live by Christ's example of love and forgiveness. It is OUR choice how we decide to live. Jesus loves everyone!

Demetri Karounos is the son of Maria Karounos and is in 6th Grade.

Junior Division

Houses of worship and congregations have always been thought of as a sanctuary of peace and serenity. Recently they have become targets of violent crimes. Discuss the attitude of Orthodox Christians toward this issue today.

By Hannah Passalaris

When you step into church you are welcomed by the sight of beautiful icons, the sweet smell of incense and the sounds of angelic hymns. The entire experience is supposed to make you feel blessed and transport you to a heavenly place. When you walk into church you should be excited to worship him with people you love. You should want to stay in God's house because the feeling of being safe and secure is overwhelming. Psalm 27:4 "One thing I ask from the Lord this only do I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple." This is why we go to church and why we do not stay home to worship. Churches bring us closer to God and bring us closer together.

When I step into church I feel full of God's Grace and on overwhelming feeling of peace. When we sing I don't want do anything else and I never wish I was somewhere else. Now that I sing in the choir I enjoy the services so much more than before. I can appreciate the services and I know I am helping to create an experience for the entire congregation. I enjoy coming to church because I have many friends at church that make worship more enjoyable. I know I can be myself and I won't be judged. I know that the problems I may have at school or with my family will be okay simply because I am in a safe and comforting place. Psalm 27: verse 5 "For in the day of trouble He will keep me safe in his dwelling, he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock." The troubles of the world even seem to melt away in the House of the Lord.

Unfortunately there have been times where this peaceful and serene feeling of safety has been destroyed by the outside world. Since the bombings of churches in the south during the Civil Rights movement to the recent senseless violent shooting in a Charleston church, this sense of safety has been shattered time and time again. In Charleston 2015, a mass shooting took place at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Nine people were killed including the pastor. The shooting happened during a Bible study when the emotionally disturbed gunman came into the church and joined with the study. He pulled out a gun after disagreeing with a scripture. Some may argue that this was not an attack on these people as Christians but rather as African Americans. While racism was clearly involved, this was an attack within a Christian Church. And those were people studying the Bible, the same Bible that we read.

According to St. Paul's Letters to the Galatians, "There is neither Jew nor Greek for you are all one in Christ." Therefore, regardless of denomination, we are all Christian. An attack on any Christian church is an attack on us all. We should pray for those in Charleston as we would pray for our Orthodox Christian brothers and sisters.

But is prayer alone enough? Many feel deep anger over these attacks and want to take action to prevent such events from happening again. Do we place armed guards at our church doors? Would that make us feel safer or simply remind us of the earthly dangers lurking nearby? Or do we take action directly against those responsible for these violent acts. When attacks like this happen anger is the first emotion you would think of. And that is okay, you should feel anger when someone attacks a church. But you should not take that anger to an extreme level. Instead of getting angry we all should help rebuild what has been broken and help those who have been hurt.

According to 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy and you are that temple." God will take care of punishing those responsible for these violent acts, what is important to remember is that We are god's temple and no gunman or bombing can destroy that within us. The Church is not just a building but a congregation. Supporting the people attacked through prayer and stewardship is what we as good Orthodox Christians should focus upon.

Hannah Passalaris is the daughter of Isidoros and Jolie Passalaris and is in the 7th Grade.

Junior Division

Houses of worship and congregations have always been thought of as a sanctuary of peace and serenity. Recently they have become the vulnerable targets of violent crimes. Discuss the attitude of Orthodox Christians toward this issue today. By Sophia Krinos

In recent news, as I'm sure you've heard, there has been a substantial amount of events occurring that include violence in some count, such as murder or massacre. These events have grown in frequency and magnitude lately, and have extended to target places of worship and sanctuary, like churches. How are we, as Orthodox Christians, supposed to react to these actions?

God knew that there would be trouble here when he created the Earth. It extends as far back as the case of Adam and Eve, where God instructed them to avoid doing one thing, yet it was

the only thing they wanted to do. He knew this, and He leaves us with guidance of ways to respond to trouble. As advised in Psalm 27, "Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident." We should not let these incidents detour our faith, but let it strengthen it. How else are we meant to cope with such unimaginable circumstances? Our lives will go nowhere without God in them.

Churches have responded to this violence in many ways, but the most frequent response is to come closer together. One example, I can personally attest to are things that I see at my very own church, St. John the Baptist. Our priest collaborated with the local Catholic parish, Christ the King, and on February 23, we held an interfaith prayer service for all the persecuted Christians in the Middle East. It was moving to see Orthodox and Catholic side-by-side, coming together to pray for a common purpose; peace and stability for our fellow brethren so many thousands of miles away.

During the Great Litany of the Divine Liturgy, we pray "For peace in the whole world, for the stability of the holy churches of God, and for the unity of all." And in the same Antiphons, we pray, "For our deliverance from affliction, wrath, danger and distress, Let us Pray to the Lord."

In addition, one of the greatest charities our Church has is the IOCC, the International Orthodox Christian Charities. They support one of the largest humanitarian aid efforts currently inside of Syria where more than 12.2 million people are in need of help. The IOCC is working in concert with the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch. Our local Philoptochos has had speakers from this group come into our community and we have raised money, but most importantly awareness of the atrocities and our ability to really serve and help and make a real difference in the midst of chaos and violence that occur everyday, especially to those who seek refuge in the Syrian Christian Churches abroad.

Once in Sunday school, we were shown a video recording of the husband of a woman who was tragically killed in the attacks on Paris. While we expected a kind of anger and retort towards the man who did this to his wife, we were instead, surprised by the man claiming that, while the man would take his wife's life, he would "not have his hatred." He discussed how, while this man could succumb to his own ignorance, he would not take part. He would be distraught over his wife's death, but not forever. He would be with her in heaven, where the man would never join him for his actions.

As the man supports in this video, we cannot allow the people who have done so wrongly to us to have what they want, to have our anger or our hopelessness. We must "insult them every day with our happiness." Through prayers and keeping our relationship with God and our love for life intact, we will never allow these people to interfere with our faith. We will stay strong, and we will prove beyond a shadow of the doubt that no act of violence could ever be strong enough to destroy our church, no matter how much physical damage any man could impose upon us.

When I walk into church, I am first greeted by the scent of in-

cense and the warmth of the candles at the entrance. Being inside of the church is supposed to be a feeling of sanction and peace with God and yourself. How would an act of violence in the church change this? You might walk in and immediately be reminded of this violence, you might be afraid, you might not even want to go into church at all because of the memories. Yet this is what the one who imposed the violence upon you wanted. They wanted to ruin that feeling of sanctuary and peace with God, they wanted you to associate God with the violent acts that they performed. Shall we let them have this pleasure, or shall we leave God to judge them, and instead look for peace within ourselves? As stated in Psalm 11:4, "The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne, He observes everyone on earth; his eyes examine them." Let us then chose peace and worship with the confidence that no act of violence or evil will shake us, or detour us from worship. Let's us remember the words from Isaiah 8:28-29, "And I give unto them Eternal Life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is Greater Than All; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's Hand."

Sophia Krinos is the daughter of Demetri and Meslissa Krinos and is in the 9th Grade.

Junior Division

In the Old Testament we read that there is "a time to keep silence and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:7). What is the value of silence and quiet in a time when we are always "plugged in"? By Antonio Bavaro

And God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other-gods before me." Exodus 20:1-2

Are we putting false gods before God today in 2016? After all, we don't worship Zeus or Apollo or any other gods. When this was written, Moses lead his people into the desert for many years. The people got so impatient that they created a golden calf to worship. Presently, we don't know many people who worship the ancient gods or a golden calf, but technology can definitely be viewed as a modern day god. But do we need to get rid of it or do we just need to take a break and "un plug"?

A recent poll of 249 students in public school revealed that only 6.29% of them viewed their religious affiliation as Christian. What is happening today? Are we neglecting God and Christianity because there is just too much out there to take our attention away from our all loving, benevolent Lord. After all, didn't God allow us to create technology anyway?

It is my personal belief that being plugged in can enslave us, in fact it can spiritually blind us. We can become spiritually dead and even become an enemy of God.

It has been proven over and over again that many of the people that have been committing murders, including mass murders at school were avid gamers and learned much about what they were going to do on the Internet. They also created mani-

festos that they posted on Facebook so the whole world could see and know they did it. Did technology make them do this? I am sure there is a lot more to this, but technology sure assisted them in these horrendous attacks.

Certainly, these kids are not doing the will of God and had neglected God or any Godly thinking in their actions. In fact they were doing the will of Evil.

But, I also think though that it may be unrealistic for us to think that we can do away with technology all together. As a matter of fact, maybe we can use technology to promote our Christianity. It says in 2 Timothy 3:17 "That the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." So yes, there is a lot of good that comes from technology. We can receive daily Bible readings and information on lives of the saints from our Archdiocese. My priest even offers a daily prayer team message to our parish that really makes a difference in people's lives. This is an email, therefore something you have to be "plugged in" to get his message.

I am grateful for the time that I attended a Christian school, where the first priority in the morning was to read a talk about the Bible. By doing this, I think it engaged us enough to not even think about gossiping or worrying about our friends and what they were doing. It just encouraged us to stay on a Christian path. This also kept us from being afraid to pray in front of others and we weren't afraid of being judged.

I think there is a real need for us to be silent and do away from all of the plugging in we do, even if it is just for 5 minutes a day! Maybe the next time we are on the computer, we can just take five minutes and say a prayer to our Lord that we use the computer for good. I think God would appreciate that, after all he sacrificed his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ's life for us. I think that is least we can do for him.

Antonio Bavaro is the son of Dan and Anna Maria Bavaro and is in the 7th Grade.

Junior Division

Jesus fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:13-21). Discuss what this miracle teaches about our ability to serve humanity.

By Angelina Krinos

How can each of us serve humanity? In Matthew 14:13-21 Jesus fed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish, and still had basketfuls left over. This shows us that even with our own small amount, our life, we can make a difference in the world. We may not be able to perform tangible miracles, but our lives can matter. A novelist named F. Scott Fitzgerald once said, "Our lives are defined by opportunities, even the ones we miss."

Firstly, it's important to ask- what does it mean to be a human? I believe most of being a human means you are capable of love. What separates us from empty containers, or robots? Our love for ourselves, our love for each other, our love for God. Being a human also means being capa-

ble of exercising your own sense of right and wrong- in other words, morality. Following God's will and rules is an important principle to live by, but also being able to listen to your own emotions and define your own "line." The Ten Commandments and other statements in the Bible should be the ground point for all Christians' morality, but beyond that is up to your own choices and internal compass. Lastly, being a human means being imperfect. We may sin hundreds or thousands of times a day, or more, but God still offers forgiveness afterwards, in confessionals. In 2 Chronicles 15:7, it says "But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded."

How can each of us serve humanity? This question is important to me, as it's one I find myself asking. "What will you be?" I could read all the books, see all the stories, experience all the tragedies and comedies- in my head- and laugh, cry, enjoy them, but recently, I'm always dissatisfied afterwards. It's become almost painfully clear that I won't be content unless I experience these adventures for myself. This leads to the question of...what that is. We all know we want to do something with our lives worthwhile, but the irony is, almost no one knows what. Those who do have it easy. Everyone- children, teenagers, adults, even senior citizens, are all searching for a greater purpose. A doctor, a police officer, a scientist...a hero. Everyone wants to be remembered, and everyone wants to pass on to heaven knowing they accomplished something on Earth. But what if there is no grand conclusion to your life? I think that we shouldn't focus on the big impossible tasks that we may do, but the things that we can do every day to change the world. Jesus fed the masses with little to no food, and we can serve humanity with our small objectives, day to day. A common phrase is, "not seeing the forest for the trees." We need to see the small acts of kindness, the minor victories, and the little successes- and we can't if we blind ourselves in favor of an assumed bigger goal.

Each of us every day can contribute with our kindness, our faith, and our tenacity. We can keep our personal goals in mind, but not be blind to the day in front of us. We can appreciate the life we're living right now, because God has a plan for us all. Putting a coin in an expired coin meter and studying medical fields to save lives both have the same meaning, and both are worthwhile in this age of apathy. You can choose your own way to serve humanity.

Angelina Krinos is the daughter of Demetri and Melissa Krinos and is in the 7th Grade

Senior Division

How do you respond to people who question your belief in God and participation in the life of the Church?

By Nedi Ferekides

I currently attend a public high school, where my Greek heritage is essentially public knowledge as soon as one hears my name. Being Greek appears to be a stereotype of my identity, as I am constantly met with shock when others witness me attending weekly lunch Bible studies. Typically their shock manifests itself in outbursts of "Wait... why are *you* going to Bible study? You're Greek! Don't you believe in Zeus or something?" Sadly, this response is common. In fact, for my mere 17 years of existence, I've been asked this more times than I can count. Their shock is usually met with an eye roll, before I begin to explain that most Greeks are Christians, Orthodox Christians. However, most already have lost interest, thus increasing my chance of being asked this again.

This is just one example of the many encounters I've received in regards to my faith. Considering that Orthodox Christians only make up .5% of the 70.6% of Americans that identify as Christian, it is quite understandable why the Orthodox faith appears so obscure (2014 Pew Research Center). Unfortunately, some have not always been kind in their questioning. Although I attend a public high school, my prior experiences were from a small, private Christian School, where everyone worshipped publically. My transition between the two schools in the beginning of my freshmen year was difficult. I was singled out for my faith. Now, I didn't walk around my new school campus preaching to everyone, but I suppose I did act differently compared to my fellow peers. My faith called me to witness to others through my actions, as stated in Matthew 5:16. "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Several of my classmates in particular found issue with this. One constantly took time out of her day to remind me that I was "that Christian girl," meaning I couldn't hang out with them. Others even asked why I bothered to believe in a Lord that you cannot see. Luckily their behavior wasn't shared by the majority of my peers. Nevertheless, their words left me with some doubts. Why was I being singled out for peacefully following the Lord and why was a faith that was second nature to me, a big disbelief to others?

From ancient times to the 21st century, millions of Orthodox have been persecuted and questioned for their beliefs. Some even pay the ultimate sacrifice, their life, and are venerated as martyrs. Through their actions, they are a witness of the Lord's mercy, forgiveness, and love. A prime example of this life is the life of Saint Stephen. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Saint Stephen provided for the community, worked hundreds of miracles, and spoke as a messenger from God. His popularity among the people, led to the hatred of those in charge and his actions were condemned as blasphemy, leading to his death. Saint Stephen was fearless as he faced his judges and during his stoning reminded the people of God's love with his final words asking for the forgiveness of their actions.

Although others may not understand our faith or question our beliefs, Saint Stephen's words and actions are an example to us. Like him, we should never feel weak. God's love is always our resistance. Whether it is a life or death situation or teasing at school, the harsh reality of the world we live in today means that we will all experience some form of questioning or persecution. Fortunately, we do have our church family and our relationship with God to protect us and strengthen us when we begin to doubt. Although we may sometimes fall off the correct path, the Lord will always welcome us back with open arms. I believe that when we face this persecution and doubt, it only serves to make us stronger in our faith. "Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint," Isaiah 40:30-31.

Nedi Ferekides is the daughter of Christos and Debbie Ferekides and is in the 12th Grade.

Senior Division

How does gathering as a community of Orthodox Christians to participate in the Divine Liturgy influence your daily life? By Christos Nenos

Hello, I am a member of St. John's Greek Orthodox Church. I enjoy doing the Oratorical Festival and sharing my knowledge about Jesus Christ. I don't care about winning or losing, all I care about is doing this for Jesus Christ. In Colossians 3:17, it says, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

As a member of my church, the idea of being the Body of Christ influences my life greatly. Serving in the Altar means

being touched by God himself to me. The altar is the table in our Christian church at which the bread and the wine are consecrated into the actual blood and body of Christ. In our Liturgy, before the actual consecration, our priest prays, "Once again, we offer to You, this spiritual worship without the shedding of blood, and we ask, pray and entreat You: send down your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here presented." I can feel His presence every time these words are spoken.

It is with extreme respect and reverence that I serve in God's altar. Again in Colossians Chapter 3, verses 23-24, it says, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Jesus Christ." But that is not my only reward. You see, when I am serving in the altar, I feel blessed for the life that God gave me each day beginning when I was born until the end of my life.

When I am in the altar, and as I make the sign of the cross and I look at the cross in the back of the altar, it renews my belief in Christ and my faith as a Greek Orthodox Christian. St. Paul said to the Thessalonians, "Pray continually." That is exactly what we all do when we make the sign of the cross. Again, we do this all together, as the body of Christ, as a community gathering to participate in the Divine Liturgy as one family, doing everything the same and at the same times during the Liturgy. I love seeing us all as one family as I feel very passionate in my Christian life. I know I am loving person and I do as much as I can for Christ my Lord. Seeing everyone else do this together is very touching to me, and I feel somehow that they can't help but to feel the same way I do.

Christos Nenos is the son of Byron and Jeanie Nenos and is in the 10th Grade.

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.

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.



83rd ANNUAL AHEPA FAMILY CONVENTION IN TAMPA

EVERYONE is cordially invited to attend our Friday Greek Night Dance (A NIGHT TO REMEMBER)



“AHEPA GOES GREEK”

On Friday evening, June 10, 2016 we will set sail to the Mediterranean and Aegean Islands of Greece, the mountains of Northern Greece and all of the beautiful areas of mainland Greece to celebrate our heritage.

THE NATIONALLY KNOWN AND AWARD WINNING DANCE GROUP “LEVENDIA” WILL PRESENT A SPECIAL SET OF DANCE NUMBERS FROM THROUGHOUT GREECE WITH SPECIAL COSTUMES AND NARRATION. A SHOW YOU DON’T WANT TO MISS.

You will also partake of Greek food for your culinary pleasure to make this a truly memorable evening. Smell chicken roasting in the oven like YiaYia used to make with lemon and oregano **“Lemon Chicken Rigamoto”** and taste the delicious oven baked potatoes buttery and with their distinctive lemon taste. Finish off the meal with a dessert from heaven Galatouriko, with its sweet creamy filling and crunchy filo.



The internationally known group ELLADA, will play and sing for your dancing pleasure. Leonidas on Bouzouki, Elias Poulos Singer, Dino Theofilos, Keyboards and Vocals. They will perform the traditional music of Greece, old and new Greek favorites. Bring your dancing shoes and let’s see how good a Greek dancer you really are!

Cost for Guests is \$65 in advance. Students may enter after dinner for \$25.

Floridan Palace Hotel 905 Florida Avenue Tampa, Fla.

Please call (813)254-6980 for tickets or information



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.

May Meeting Dates: May 9, 16, and 23

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

May Meeting Dates: May 9 and 16

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.

May Meeting Dates: May 4, 11, 18 and 25

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.

May Meeting Dates: May 10, 17 and 24

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)

May Meeting Dates: May 3, 10, 17, 24

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 by being a "Friend of St. John the Baptist". Your contribution as a "Friend" will help offset the cost of mailing *The Messenger*, among other things. *Being a "friend" does not make one a steward of St. John or afford membership rights and responsibilities, but gives one who is a member elsewhere, an opportunity to make a gesture of financial support to our parish.* If you are interested in being a "Friend of St. John the Baptist," please fill out and return the form below. Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA
William J Camarinos - Alexandria, VA
Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC
Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL
Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL
Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI
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Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI

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Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL
Bessie Bliziotes - Palm Cost, FL
Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL
Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL
William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL

Friend of St. John the Baptist

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

I wish to be a Friend of St. John the Baptist 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

The Original Terrorist

By Max Lucado

The images are startling: bodies strewn on Parisian streets, blood stains on restaurant floors, a pregnant woman dangling from a second-story window. Reminded, yet again, that we live in a violent world. Every news program asks the same question of terrorism experts: “What can be done?” “What is the source of such evil?” “How long before we see more attacks?” “Will it ever end?”

Experts trace the source of violence to a violent ideologue. They point their fingers at radicalized Muslims. While their answers have merit, we’d make a mistake not to go even further. Here is what the Bible says about terrorism.

“Our fight is not against people on earth but against the rulers and authorities and the powers of this world’s darkness, against the spiritual powers of evil in the heavenly world. That is why you need to put on God’s full armor. Then on the day of evil you will be able to stand strong. And when you have finished the whole fight, you will still be standing. So stand strong, with the belt of truth tied around your waist and the protection of right living on your chest. On your feet wear the Good News of peace to help you stand strong. And also use the shield of faith with which you can stop all the burning arrows of the Evil One.” (Eph. 6:12–16 NCV)

The Bible presents a real and present foe of our faith. His name is Satan. Some call him the devil. Others call him Beelzebub, Belial, the obstructor, the tempter, the evil one, the accuser, the prince of demons, the ruler of this world, or the prince of the power of the air. Whatever name you choose, he is the enemy, and he is real.

If I were the devil, I’d blame terrorism on a broken political system. A disenchanting people group. The Wicked Witch of the West. I’d want you to feel attacked by an indefinable, nebulous force. After all, if you can’t diagnose the source of your ills, how can you treat them? If I were the devil, I’d keep my name out of it.

But God doesn’t let the devil get away with this and tells us his name. The Greek word for devil is *diabolos*, which shares a root with the verb *diaballein*, which means “to split.” The devil is a splitter, a divider, a wedge driver. He divided Adam and Eve from God in the garden and has every intent of doing the same to you. Blame all unrest on him. Don’t fault the plunging economy or raging suicide bomber for this bloodshed.

They are simply tools in Satan’s tool kit.

He is not the cute and harmless character of the cartoons. He is not an imaginary, dark counterpart to the Easter Bunny. He is the invisible yet forceful fallen angel called Lucifer, who desired the high place only God could occupy. He rebelled and disobeyed and wants you and me to do the same. *“The devil, your enemy, goes around like a roaring lion looking for someone to eat” (1 Peter 5:8 NCV).*

Want to read his rap sheet?

“Satan . . . incited David” (1 Chron. 21:1 NIV).

“Satan has asked . . . to sift you [Simon] like wheat” (Luke 22:31 TLB).

“The devil . . . persuaded Judas Iscariot . . . to turn against Jesus” (John 13:2 NCV).

“This woman . . . Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years” (Luke 13:16 NIV).

He has *“blinded the minds of those who don’t believe. As a result, they don’t see the light of the Good News” (2 Cor. 4:4 GOD’S WORD).*

“He rules the world, and his spirit has power over everyone who doesn’t obey God” (Eph. 2:2 CEV).

Satan incites, sifts, persuades, binds, blinds, and rules.

He has one objective: *“to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10).* Satan has never, ever spoken a word of truth. He lied to Eve in the garden. He lies to unbelievers by blinding their minds (II Cor. 4:4). He is a big, fat liar. *“He has always hated the truth because there is no truth in him” (Jn. 8:44 NLT).*

Every battle, ultimately, is a spiritual battle. Every conflict is a contest with Satan and his forces. Paul urged us to stand *“against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11).* The Greek word he used for “wiles” is *methodia*, from which we get our English word “method”. Satan is not passive or fair. He is active and deceptive. He has designs and strategies. Consequently, we need a strategy as well. For that reason *“though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:3–4).*

Our world is in desperate need of a generation of Christians who will respond in faith to the fear of these days. If you have said “yes” to Christ, you have the presence of God within you. *“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (I Jn. 4:4)*

Pray. We cannot do battle with Satan on our own. He is a roaring lion, a fallen angel, an experienced fighter, and an equipped soldier. He is angry—angry because he knows that his time is short (Rev. 12:12) and that God’s victory is secure. He resents God’s goodness toward us and our worship of God. He is a skillful, powerful, ruthless foe who seeks to “work us woe. His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.” But there is wonderful news for the Christian: Christ reigns as our protector and provider. We are more than conquerors through him (Rom. 8:37).

Arm yourself with God’s Word. Load your pistol with Scriptures, and keep a finger on the trigger. And remember: *“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12).*

These are difficult, dark days. Yet, the throne of Christ is still occupied and the promise of Scripture still rings true. *“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (I Jn. 4:4)*

4 WIVES

Once upon a time there was a rich King who had four wives.

He loved the 4th wife the most and adorned her with rich robes and treated her to the finest of delicacies.
He gave her nothing but the best.

He also loved the 3rd wife very much and was always showing her off to neighboring kingdoms.
However, he feared that one day she would leave him for another.

He also loved his 2nd wife. She was his confidant and was always kind, considerate and patient with him.
Whenever the King faced a problem, he could confide in her, and she would help him get through the difficult times.
The King's 1st wife was a very loyal partner and had made great contributions in maintaining his wealth and kingdom.
However, he did not love the first wife. Although she loved him deeply, he hardly took notice of her!

One day, the King fell ill and he knew his time was short.

He thought of his luxurious life and wondered, I now have four wives with me, but when I die, I'll be all alone."

Thus, he asked the 4th wife, "I loved you the most, endowed you with the finest clothing and showered great care over you. Now that I'm dying, will you follow me and keep me company?"

"No way!", replied the 4th wife, and she walked away without another word.
Her answer cut like a sharp knife right into his heart.

The sad King then asked the 3rd wife, "I loved you all my life.
Now that I'm dying, will you follow me and keep me company?"

"No!", replied the 3rd wife. "Life is too good! When you die, I'm going to remarry!" His heart sank and turned cold.

He then asked the 2nd wife, "I have always turned to you for help and you've always been there for me.
When I die, will you follow me and keep me company?"

"I'm sorry, I can't help you out this time!", replied the 2nd wife. "At the very most, I can only walk with you to your grave." Her answer struck him like a bolt of lightning, and the King was devastated.

Then a voice called out: "I'll go with you. I'll follow you no matter where you go."

The King looked up, and there was his first wife. She was very skinny as she suffered from malnutrition and neglect.

Greatly grieved, the King said, "I should have taken much better care of you when I had the chance!"

In truth, we all have the 4 wives in our lives:

Our 4th wife is our body.

No matter how much time and effort we lavish in making it look good, it will leave us when we die.

Our 3rd wife is our possessions, status and wealth. When we die, it will all go to others.

Our 2nd wife is our family and friends.

No matter how much they have been there for us, the furthest they can stay by us is up to the grave.

And our 1st wife is our Soul. Often neglected in pursuit of wealth, power, ego and pleasures of the world. However, our Soul is the only thing that will follow us wherever we go and throughout Eternity.

Today's grace is to cultivate, strengthen and cherish it now.

Thought for the day:

Remember, when the world pushes you to your knees, you're in the perfect position to pray.

~ May 2016 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 PASCHA Agape Vespers 11:00 a.m.	2 St. George Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Office Closed	3 WBS 9:30 a.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	4 MBS 7:30 a.m.	5 Greek School 6:00 p.m. Young at Heart	6 Life-Giving Fountain Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	7
8 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	9 Bible Study 6:30 p.m. EBS 6:30 p.m.	10 WBS 9:30 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	11** MBS 7:30 a.m.	12 Greek School 6:00 p.m.	13**	14
15 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Parish Picnic National AHEPA Day	16 Bible Study 6:30 p.m. EBS 6:30 p.m.	17 WBS 9:30 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	18** MBS 7:30 a.m.	19 Greek School 6:00 p.m.	20** Sts. Constantine & Helen Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.	21 Community Outreach
22 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday GOYA 5:00 p.m. AHEPA Meeting	23 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	24 WBS 9:30 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	25** MBS 7:30 a.m. Mid-Pentecost Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	26 Greek School 6:00 p.m.	27**	28
29 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	30 Memorial Day Office Closed	31 Basketball 8:00 p.m.				**Fast Day

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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

officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com

www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

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St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Timetable of Services

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

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

Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-394-1038 (Cell)
firstav@gmail.com

Pastoral Assistant Charlie Hambos

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-843-8471 (Cell)
charlie.hambos@gmail.com

Parish Council

Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867
Mike Xenick, Vice President 813-340-8737
Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747
Ed Gerecke, Treasurer 813-229-4306
George Chagaris 727-420-1920
Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947
Skip Higdon 813-831-9021
Catherine Mitseas 813-571-0658
Byron Nenos 813-789-0729
Despina Sibley 813-758-0520
Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534

Office Staff

Monica Gjerde, Office Manager 813-876-8830
officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com
Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper
debstjohnpa@gmail.com fax: 813-443-4899

Adult Greek School

Magda Myer 813-909-2327

AHEPA

Gus Paras, President 813-254-6980

Altar Angels

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

Basketball

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

Bible Study

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Bookstore

Bill Manikas 813-960-3679

Chanter

Nick Andreadakis 813-516-6081

Choir

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

Community Outreach

Betty Katherine Katsamakias 813-468-1596

Dance Group

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

Daughters of Penelope

Edie Kavouklis, President 813-758-0305

Finance Committee

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

Food Pantry

Mick Scharbach 813-458-1620

Gasparilla Parking

John Kokkas 727-992-4615

GOYA

Elaine Halkias 813-629-1843

Hope/Joy

Amy Kafantaris 727-743-1297
Debbie Nicklow 813-690-0671

Junior Olympics

Bryon Nenos 813-789-0729

MOMS

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

OCF

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Oratorical Festival

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

Philoptochos

Lisa Alsina 813-728-1094

Small Group Bible Study

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

Stewardship

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

Sunday School

Vickie Peckham 813-406-5626

Usher

Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

Visitation Committee

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Welcome Committee

Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

Young at Heart

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947
Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

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

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