

# THE MESSENGER

## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

# May 2017

### VISION:

Love God, Love your neighbor and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ as an Orthodox Christian community.

### MISSION:

The mission of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is to welcome and serve people with love, truth, joy and peace, and to create an environment that encourages all to seek salvation through Orthodox Christianity.

### CORE VALUES:

Love, Worship, Community, Learning, Service

### Father Stavros' Message

## Christ is Risen! Χριστὸς Ανέστη!

I want to first express my thanks to everyone for a beautiful and memorable Holy Week journey in 2017:

The choir did a fantastic job throughout Lent and Holy Week. I am thankful for their many hours of practice which made for a flawless celebration of the liturgical services. Thank you to Artie Palios and to our entire choir.

Our chanters, Nick Andreadakis and Charlie Hambos, do a great job at ALL of the divine services of the church year. What a beautiful journey through the services of the Great Compline, the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, the Salutations Services, the Sunday services and all of the Holy Week services. Thank you also to the many people who served as readers at the services.

Our Light-Bearers, Debbie Kavouklis, Catherine Mitseas, and Maria Koutroumanis, who played the role of the women who came to the empty tomb on Pascha and spread the Light of the Risen Christ.

Our young people played a big role in the Holy Week services:

~Many of them are now singing in the choir

~Many of our young girls served as Bridegroom Maidens at the Bridegroom Services of Palm Sunday night, Holy Monday night and Holy Tuesday night.

~Seven of our 5th, 6th and 7th grade girls took on the role of the myrrh-bearers at the Lamentations service. A special thanks to Vickie Peckham who organized both the maidens and myrrh-bearers this year

~ An "army" of altar boys served during the week and it was especially moving to see them standing guard at the foot of the Cross and at the tomb.

For the fifth year in a row, we kept "vigil" at the Cross of Christ. For many people, this was THE highlight of the week, reading Psalms at the Cross in the early morning hours. We began our Holy Thursday service of the Passion of Christ at 6:30 p.m., immediately followed by the Vigil from 10:45 p.m. until 9:00 a.m. on Good Friday, followed by the Royal Hours from 9:00-11:00 a.m. This means that there was a continuous service in our church for over 16 hours. Thank you to Charlie for organizing this again and for the many people who came at intervals throughout the night to keep vigil at the Cross. If you missed this this year, plan from now to come next year!

Thank you Lisa Alsina for leading the effort to decorate the eggs. Thank you to Dee Liakos for donating all of them. And on Pascha, thanks to Genie Carter for organizing the Easter egg hunt.

Thank you Engie Halkias and all of her helpers for decorating the church, for cleaning it between all the services, and for decorating the Kouvouklion. Thank you to all those who donated flowers during Lent and Holy Week as well.

Thank you to Tom Georgas and the ushers for having everything in good "order." Thanks to the men who carried the Epitaphios on Good Friday evening.

The Palm Sunday luncheon, sponsored by our Philoptochos

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Truly He is Risen!

Ἀληθῶς Ανέστη!

Society, was well attended, enabling our Philoptochos to raise funds for its various charities and ministries, and I am thankful to all who attended.

Our annual Sunday School retreat had over 50 participants. In addition, 20 GOYAns helped prepare the eggs, candles, and bay leaves for Good Friday and Holy Saturday. A special thanks to Debbie Nicklow and Amy Kafantaris for organizing the retreat this year, and to the many parents and teachers who lent a hand.

Thank you to all those who took photographs and for taking so many great shots! If you haven't looked at our website lately, there are many flickr albums from Holy Week. Go to [www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoctampa](http://www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoctampa) to see all of them.

If you want to re-live any of Holy Week, all the services are uploaded on our Livestream page as well. Go to the Multimedia tab and click to view the liturgy.

Thank you to the Parish Council for hosting the dinner after the Anastasi. Thank you to the GOYAns for hosting the Good Friday reception.

Thank you to Charlie Hambos and Monica Gjerde for all of their behind the scenes work getting us ready for Holy Week.

And thank you most of all to YOU, the faithful, who came to the services. Your presence and your prayers are what make us a church. You can have beautiful music and beautiful flowers but the most important ingredient in Holy Week is beautiful people who come to pray, to worship, to relive, to remember and to renew themselves in the Light of the Resurrected Christ.

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

## Father Stavros' Paschal Sermon

In II Corinthians 6:16-7:1, St. Paul writes:

*"For we are the temple of the living God, as God said, 'I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.' Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God."*

The message of St. Paul to the Corinthians of the first century is just as appropriate for all of us in 2017. Saint Paul affirms the message of Christ, calling us to be Holy, set apart for Christ. Our bodies are to be set apart. They are not just bodies to be tanned, or gratified with food and fun. They are bodies that are supposed to be temples of the living God. Our hearts

were created to feel love. Our minds were meant to meditate on love. Our mouths were created to express love and encouragement. Our eyes were made to see love. Our hands were made to offer love.

On the way home last night, as I drove up Howard Avenue in gridlock traffic at midnight, I didn't see love. I certainly didn't see holiness. It was not a feast for the senses, but rather a nightmare for the eyes to behold, hundreds of drunken revelers who made their Friday anything but a Holy, set apart Friday.

And then there was yesterday afternoon in church, a retired priest and his presbytera, now in their 90s came to worship. I saw love there, how they held each other with every step, cautious to take care of each other, to make sure no one took a misstep. After church we enjoyed a few laughs together. That was a moment of holiness. Holiness doesn't mean that you can't laugh or have fun—it means that you live your life in a wholesome and Godly way, taking care of your body—your mind, your heart, your hands, your mouth, your eyes, your soul. Living a holy life also means that you take care of others. To understand holiness is to understand that there is a higher purpose in life, that life on this earth is preparation for the life that comes after this life is over. As I said last night, there can be no everlasting life in God's kingdom if we can't figure out how to live a holy life on earth. For only a holy life can lead one to eternal life. A careless life can't do that. Only a holy life can do that. Each Holy Week journey is designed to bring us to a greater sense of holiness and purpose. As the years add up, and we make this journey more times, it is the hope that with each passing year, we add more depth to our faith, and more resolve to live a holy and Godly life.

I have enjoyed the Holy Week journey. I'm actually kind of sad that it's over. It's easier to strive for holiness when there are services on the calendar for you, when you gather every day with Christian people who are also striving for it. It's much more challenging to be holy when you are on your own—sometimes it is hard to remember to pray, or read Scripture, or act in a Christ-like way when others around you are not.

In my weaker moments, sometimes I wonder, does it even matter, this concept of holiness? And that's when I need encouragement from others that it does matter, that the pursuit of holiness is the only pursuit that in the end will really matter.

Our bodies are really empty vessels, waiting to be filled with Christ. When they are filled with Christ, when they are filled with love, then they become the temple that St. Paul talks about.

In Isaiah 6:1-7, the Prophet has a vision of the Lord in the temple, sitting on a throne, surrounded by angels. And rather than rejoice, Isaiah laments *"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"* Many times I feel like Isaiah, lost, unclean, unworthy. It certainly feels like we live in the midst of a world of unclean lips.

One of the angels takes a burning coal from the altar and touches it to Isaiah's mouth, and says *"Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven."* This is what Christ does for us, each time we receive Communion. We, the unclean, become clean by touching the living God. Centering our life around a pursuit of holiness does not bring ease, or fame, or fortune. It's not necessarily going to cure ill-

ness. It's not going to change our financial situation. But it takes away the feeling of being lost, unclean and unworthy.

Holiness is a choice we have to make many times a day. If you make an unholy choice today, that makes you human, we all make them. But don't get stuck in them, change them, seek to make choices that are holy, that promote love, unity, reconciliation, forgiveness, encouragement, peace, joy hope. Make choices that bring these things into your life and into the lives of those around you.

Saint Peter in his Epistle, tells us, *"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"* (I Peter 1:15-16)

And during every Divine Liturgy, we are invited to partake of the Holy Gifts reserved for the holy people of God. If holiness is something we can't achieve in this life, then what do these two uses of holiness mean? If holiness means "set apart" then "You shall be holy, for I am holy" means "You shall be set apart, because I am set apart." And the Holy Gifts, gifts set apart from all other gifts, are for those who are striving to set themselves apart for God, even though they haven't achieved holiness. Heaven, holiness, salvation, this is the destination. A desire for holiness, this is the journey.

In a moment we will receive in our hands the Light of the Resurrected Christ. The darkness of our church will be illumined by the light of hundreds of candles. Their glow will provide

beauty and warmth. Indeed the Light of Christ always provides beauty and warmth. Will we let our lights shine before men, as Jesus tells us in Matthew 5? Will we seek to bring the beauty and warmth of Christ to those around us this year? It all starts with a choice to be holy, which starts with a choice to understand who Christ is, which starts with a desire to know who Christ is on a deeper level, which starts with Christ dying for us, rising from the dead, and opening the gateway to eternal life. So, let His Light that you'll receive not just be a ritual that marks the Resurrection of our Lord, receive it and offer a prayer that through it you will have a greater desire to know who Christ is, and through that you'll come to a greater understanding of who Christ is, and through that you'll seek to take steps in your journey to holiness in this coming year. I will close our Lenten journey with a prayer:

*Lord, compassionate, merciful, longsuffering, abounding in mercy and truth give ear to our prayer and attend to the voice of our supplication. Give us a token of Your favor. Lead us along Your way and we will walk in Your truth. Gladden our hearts, that we may be in awe of Your Holy Name; for You are great and a worker of wonders . You are the one great God; of all the gods there is none like You; mighty in mercy, gracious in strength, ready to help, comfort and save those who trust in Your Holy Name. For to You belongs all glory, honor and worship, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.*



### Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 800 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 2 years! Over half of our parish receives it daily, as well as many people outside of our parish. Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email Charlie at [charlie.hambos@gmail.com](mailto:charlie.hambos@gmail.com) and ask to add you.

Father Stavros is having surgery related to a cleft nose and sinuses, and will be out of the office from May 1-May 12. Please be patient during this period, as Father will be resting and recovering. There will also be several days over the coming weeks where there are follow up treatments that will have Father out of the office. There WILL be Divine Liturgy on May 7. A substitute priest will be here.



### 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.

# May We See Him Ascended in Glory Forever and Ever

By Charlie Hambos

**D**uring this past Feast of the Nativity of Christ, which fell on a Sunday, many Protestant, non-denominational churches decided not to have services. Some even decided not to have services a week later because New Year's Day also fell on a Sunday. We, however, in the Orthodox church have several divine services which lead up to the Nativity of Christ and definitely had church on Christmas Day, especially since it was a Sunday. Most years, if Christmas falls on a weekday, we do not have services on the Christmas day. The point is that it was a Sunday in 2016. We also definitely had church on New Year's Day because there is no better way to start the new year than by receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and being grateful for giving us another year.

The recent Journey of Holy Week and celebration of Pascha, the Feast of Feasts, the feeling was the same. At St. John the Baptist, here in Tampa, from the Saturday of Lazarus to Agape Vespers on Pascha Sunday, we had a total of 19 to 20 services depending on how we look at it. For the whole entire feast, the most important event of our salvation history, the day when Christ defeated death by death and rose on the third day, some other churches had maybe multiple 1-hour services on Pascha Sunday.

These above observations made me come to 2 conclusions. First, that I am very thankful to be an Orthodox Christian because we take these feasts of Christ and the church and take them seriously. Whether we all understand them and the meaning for our lives, is another story, but we dedicate time to remember, to relive and celebrate them. We don't just dismiss them because they are not of this millennium. The second conclusion, came definitely after this past Holy Week and Pascha Journey, is that, I actually feel kind of sorry for Christians who are not Orthodox Christians or maybe even Roman Catholic Christians, but especially Orthodox Christians. The reason is the 19 services vs. the maybe 3 services celebrating Holy Week. We dedicate lots of time to worship during Holy Week with many themes during each day to help us understand the importance of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Yes, we have many things to learn from other churches and maybe they have lots to learn from us, but in the meantime, don't take advantage of Orthodox Christian Faith. Learn more and live it today.

This brings us to 40 days after the Resurrection. Jesus had been appearing and reappearing to the Disciples. The Disciples were still very confused. Yet, they knew something was incredible about this Christ, who had been beaten, crucified and died, yet come back from the dead. Christ was also very frustrated with Disciples, even after witnessing all of it they refused to believe. Jesus then responded to their unbelief, "Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they sat at table; and He upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw Him after He had risen." (Mark 16:14)

Finally, He ascended into glory.

We read about it in Acts 1:4-11:

*And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."*

So there are three main purposes to the 40-days between the Resurrection and the Ascension of Christ. The first was to prove to the Disciples that Christ did in indeed rise from the dead in soul and especially physical body. The second purpose was to command the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come upon them. He had been encouraging them by promising the Holy Spirit because He knew He would ascend into glory and didn't want the faith of the disciples to be completely lost. Christ was also focusing on the Kingdom of God when he was speaking to the disciples during this time. A third purpose was to clarify some misunderstanding about things. When they asked Him questions about the Kingdom of God, He established, God's time, when he said, *"It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority."*

Finally, Christ ascended into glory. He had dedicated a lot of time to clarify and to teach post-resurrection, yet the disciples looked upward, bewildered as to where Christ was going and what they were going to do now. This prompted the two angels present to ask them why they were staring into heaven because in the same way He was taken up, would be the same way He will come again. Thus, we have been living in the end times ever since Christ ascended into glory.

So, do not be confused, for Christ is Risen from the dead, has ascended into glory and 10 days later, the Holy Spirit was sent upon the disciples and the whole world. Things would never be the same. That is only if we have eyes to see and ears to hear. Don't look into heaven bewildered but seek Him through the power of the Holy Spirit. These events were very real and I am again, thankful that the Orthodox Church takes the time to celebrate and relive them.

# Liturgical Schedule for May

**Sunday, May 7      Sunday of the Paralytic**  
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 Ministry:** Greeters: Nancy Manikas, Bessie Palios; Ambassador: Maria Koutroumanis;  
Caller: Jenny Paloumpis; Get Acquainted: Sandra Pappas, Julie Palios  
**Coffee Hour:** Altar Angels

**Sunday, May 14      Sunday of the Samaritan Women**  
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 Ministry:** Greeters: Marenca Patrasciou, Skip Higdon; Ambassador: Katherine Sakkis; Caller: Vickie Peckham  
**Coffee Hour:** Young at Heart

**Monday, May 15      Fr. Stavros' Anniversary of Ordination**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.    Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Sunday, May 21      Sunday of the Blind Man - Sts. Constantine and Helen**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.    Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Mark  
**Ushers:** Nick Kavouklis, Marcus Calpakis, Peter Theophanous  
**Welcome Ministry:** Greeters: Cindy Xenick, Lisa Alsina; Ambassador: Genie Carter; Caller: Peggy Bradshaw  
**Coffee Hour:** Philoptochos

**Tuesday, May 23      Leave-Taking of Pascha**  
Orthros 5:00 p.m.    Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

**Thursday, May 25      Ascension**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.    Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Sunday, May 28      Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.    Divine Liturgy 9:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Anyone Attending May Serve  
**Ushers:** John Alexander, John Christ, George Trimikliniotis  
**Welcome Ministry:** Greeters: Helen Cauthorn, Kalliope Chagaris; Ambassador: Carole Fotopoulos;  
Caller: Christene Worley  
**Coffee Hour:** The AHEPA Family

**Saturday, June 3      Saturday of the Souls**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.    Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Sunday, June 4      Holy Pentecost**  
Orthros 8:30 a.m.    Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m.    Kneeling Vespers 11:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Luke  
**Ushers:** Brett Mourer, John Alexander, Amin Hanhan  
**Welcome Ministry:** Greeters: Donna Trakas, Elaine Halkias; Ambassador: Donna Hambos;  
Caller: Maria Karounas; Get Acquainted: Mike Xenick, Maria Xenick  
**Coffee Hour:** Food Pantry/Community Outreach

# Liturgical Notes for May

## **The Pentecostarion - The 50 Days After Pascha**

The period of 50 days between Pascha & Pentecost is referred to as the “Pentecostarion.” The period of forty days between Pascha Sunday and the day of the Ascension is known as the period of Pascha (or Easter). It is a period set aside by the Church for the specific celebration of Christ’s glorious resurrection. It is a celebration of “rebirth”. . . .The rebirth of God’s creation which surrounds us, and the rebirth of the spirit within each and every one of us! This period is not merely a ritualistic celebration but a celebration which can be seen, felt, heard and talked about. It is a very REAL celebration which CAN make our entire being jump with JOY. It is a celebration which offers us HOPE. It is a celebration which offers us the TRUE FREEDOM found only in Jesus Christ! During the 40 days of Pascha, we are to greet each other with the greeting “Christ is Risen” or “Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!,” to which the response is “Truly He is Risen” or “Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!”

**Some of the remaining feasts of the Pentecostarion include:**

## **Sunday, May 7 - 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.

## **Sunday, May 14 - 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.

## **Monday, May 15 - Father Stavros’ Anniversary of Ordination**

Fr. Stavros was ordained to the Holy Priesthood of the Greek Orthodox Church on May 15, 1998. This will mark his 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. (The 20th Anniversary of his ordained ministry is also in May, May 28, the Sunday of the Holy Fathers). Every year, Fr. Stavros marks this anniversary by celebrating Divine Liturgy in thanksgiving for the gift of priestly ministry. This year, Fr. Stavros will celebrate Liturgy for his anniversary on Monday, May 15, in thanksgiving for 19 years of priestly ministry. Please come and join him in prayer that day.

## **Sunday, May 21 - Sunday of the Blind Man**

The theme of LIGHT! Commemoration of the healing of the blind man which leads us to the reality of the healing of our own spiritual blindness.

## **Sunday, May 21 - Sts. Constantine and Helen**

May 21 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.

## **Tuesday, May 23 - Apodosis (Leavetaking) of Pascha**

This marks the end of the Paschal Season. It is a repeat of the Resurrection Service and Liturgy of Pascha and is the last time of the Liturgical year that we sing Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη. We will celebrate this feast on Tuesday, May 23, with an evening Liturgy at 6:00 p.m. (Orthros will begin at 5:00 p.m. and is a replication of the Resurrection Service from Pascha).

## **Thursday, May 25 - Ascension**

This marks the feast where Christ ascended to heaven, 40 days after the Resurrection, thus completing His earthly ministry.

## **Sunday, May 28 - Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council**

We pay homage to the collective triumph of the Church over false doctrine. The first Ecumenical Council authored the Creed. It took place in Nicea in the year 325. This is why we call the Creed “The Nicene Creed.” This Council also established the date of Pascha and decided on which books would comprise the Bible.



# Community News

## Parish Registry

**Baptism** - Morgan (Fotini) Chabra, daughter of Steven Chabra and Freda Manuel, was baptized on Saturday, March 25. Dean Manuel was the Godfather. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism** - Elliott James (Elias) Howard, son of Keith and Katina Howard, was baptized on Sunday, March 26. Jon and Amanda Karagiannakis were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

**Chrismation** - Helen Clifton was received into our church through the sacrament of Chrismation on April 10. Her Godmother is Maria Karounos. Congratulations and welcome!

**Funeral** - Constantin Artzibushev passed away on Sunday, March 26. The Funeral was held on Thursday, March 30. May his memory be eternal!

**Condolences** to Andrew Massouras and family, on the passing of his father, Father George Massouras, who passed away on March 25. Father George Massouras, in addition to being the father of one of our parishioners, is the priest who baptized Fr. Stavros at St. John Greek Orthodox Church in Anaheim, CA in 1972. May his memory be eternal!

## Get Acquainted Sunday, May 7



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



## Community Outreach - Saturday, May 20

St. John the Baptist's Community Outreach will be serving breakfast to the Homeless at the First Presbyterian Church in Downtown Tampa from 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. 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 21, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center.

## GOYA Lenten Retreat

Our THIRTEENTH Annual GOYA Lenten Retreat was held March 31-April 2. Over one hundred GOYAnS 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 Maria Koutroumanis and Kara Katzaras, our lead advisors, for working out a lot of the logistics.

## 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 (March 26), we raised over \$1,000 for our church, had some great food, and honored our ethnic holiday. Thank You!

## 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 Pascha is on the Feast of Pentecost (June 4 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 April 16-June 4.



**Do you read the Messenger and just throw it away? Did you know you can be emailed the Messenger? Do you want to Go Paperless?**

You can read it on your computer, tablet, phone everywhere you go! All you have to do is email the office at [officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com](mailto:officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com) and let us know you want to be emailed the Messenger! In the Subject Line just type: **Please Email Me the Messenger** and you will be emailed and not mailed.

# ~Sunday School News~

## Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

We hope your Holy Week and Pascha experience reaffirmed and will continue to strengthen your faith in Christianity. Approximately 40 students participated in the many services of Holy Week and Pascha, which made the week even more special. As always our Altar Boys did a fabulous job throughout the many services of Holy Week. Our 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. We are so proud of these children's devotion to our Lord.

We would like to thank the families who attended the Saturday of Lazarus Service on April 8. Our children and parents helped to make over 800 crosses for Palm Sunday.

It was fabulous to see our Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Sunday School Students participate in the PROCESSION OF THE PALMS on April 9. The Sunday School had lessons on Palm Sunday and Holy Week using The Resurrections Eggs and The Holy Week Treasure Map. Our other Sunday School topic on Sunday, April 23 was St. Thomas.

Our Holy Friday Retreat on April 14 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 800 red eggs for Pascha. Truly we are raising such wonderful STEWARDS of St. Johnthe Baptist Greek Orthodox Church.

On Sunday, April 30 our children did a fantastic job singing our church hymns during our YOUTH SUNDAY under the direction of Maria Xenick. We would also like to thank our Pre-K Students for making the Prospora on April 30, under the guidance of Melissa Krinos.

May 14 will be a special day in our Church. Our Sunday School will PRESENT A SACRAMENT PROGRAM. This presentation will be written, directed, and narrated by our Middle School Students and performed by our students in Kindergarten through 5th Grade. This is one Sunday you do not want to miss.

## **DATES TO REMEMBER:**

**Sunday May 7:** TOPIC: Talents and Gifts

**Sunday May 14:** Youth Sunday and Sacrament Presentation

**Sunday, May 21:** Last Day of Sunday School (Graduation) - End of the Year Party

Our last day of Sunday School, Graduation, and end of the year party is on May 21. We are already starting to plan for the next Sunday School year. Sunday School will start in AUGUST to compliment 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 BE A TEACHER OR ASSIST IN OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM 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](mailto:vickiepeckham@gmail.com) or call her at 813-406-5626.

## **Congratulations to our Graduates!**

If you have a student who is graduating from high school or college or graduate school, please email all information to the church office by May 10 so we can include graduates in the June/July issue of the Messenger!

### **Please provide:**

Name and Picture 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.





# HOPE & JOY

## Χριστὸς Ανέστη! Ἀληθῶς Ανέστη!

On Holy Friday our St. John the Baptist's youth, Pre-K through 6<sup>th</sup> grade, came together to spend the day with their church family preparing for the Triumphant Resurrection. A big thank you goes out to all the children who attended the Holy Friday Retreat.

The attendance was amazing and the children were all respectful and eager to participate. Their day was filled with crafts, fellowship, worship and reflection on the Passion of Christ. The children also attended the Service of Royal Hours, the Service of Apokathelosis and participated in decorating the Kouvouklion.

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

Charlie, thank you for teaching the children the meaning of the Epitaphios and for your continual support with Sunday School and Hope & Joy.


Thank you to the teachers of the mini lessons – Vickie Peckham, Donna Trakas, Bessie Palios, Alexis Scarfogliero, Eleni Pessemier and their GOYAn assistants. They each taught a short lesson on the meaning of Holy Week and of the Passion of Christ.

Thank you Amy Kafantaris and to the many parent volunteers who came together to help with crafts, lunch set up and clean up. We could not have done it without you.

Finally, thank you to all the parents for bringing your children to the retreat. Our children are our future...together let's continue to guide and teach them our Orthodox faith! Thank you all for making the 2017 Great and Holy Friday Retreat a success!

## Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!





*"...but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."  
-Luke 10:42*

**Are you a mother who needs to recharge? Mothers of ALL ages and phases, join us for the**

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST  
**MOTHER'S  
RETREAT**

*A morning of prayer, fellowship & reflection*

**SATURDAY MAY 13TH  
9AM-1PM**

EMAIL MARY ANN KONSTAS AT  
[MAPKONSTAS@GMAIL.COM](mailto:MAPKONSTAS@GMAIL.COM) TO REGISTER  
\$15 FEE (INCLUDES LUNCH)  
CHILDCARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST



# Spring Parish Assembly Meeting on Sunday, June 4.

One of the topics to be discussed is our strategic plan. A small committee has been working for the past six months to develop a strategic plan. While the plan is not fully completed, we hope to present a substantial amount of what has been discussed with the community. Please plan on attending the Parish Assembly Meeting on Sunday, June 4, following the Divine Liturgy. Agenda Forthcoming.



*And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. -2 Corinthians 8:5*

The Archangel Michael Feast was prayerfully conceived by His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios upon arriving in Atlanta, as the annual double feast of the Metropolis family. Since 1998, the Metropolis family comes together in Atlanta on the weekend of, prior to or following the November 8 Feastday of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel.

It is to honor and celebrate our Patron Saint and the lives of two people from each parish, who are living examples of the Orthodox Christian life and journey to Theosis. By extension, this special Metropolis feast also serves as the annual Metropolis celebration and thanksgiving for all devout stewards of the faith, giving their time and talent.

**This year's award winners are Brett Mourer and Elaine Halkias.  
Congratulations Brett and Elaine!**





# Christ is Risen!





# Truly He is Risen!



View all pictures at [www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoctampa](http://www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoctampa)



# ~ What Stewardship Means to Me ~

As my wife and I enter into the “September of our years” we look back on the wonderful times we have had as members of past churches in Massachusetts, Ft. Lauderdale, Palm Harbor and now at St. John the Baptist in Tampa. We all have memories of the wonderful Clergy, parishioners and people we have come in contact with, BUT, St. John the Baptist is different. When we left our previous Church we were kind of lost. We (my wife and two of our friends) visited all of the Greek Orthodox Churches in the greater Tampa area. Once when we were at St. George church in New Port Richey, we spoke with Fr. Vasilios and told him we were looking. He said that’s fine, but you need to have a home. All of those churches were nice, but they were not “Home.”

The first time we attended the Liturgy at St John the Baptist, as we got out of the car, a member of the church welcomed us. Are you new? Welcome! It continued from there! We walked into the front door and were greeted in the Narthex by Tom Georgas (as we are every week).

We spoke with Fr. Stavros because we live in Palm Harbor, a long distance from the church. We asked him if we were sick or had an emergency, would he come to see us? His answer was “Of Course”. That was the beginning of a wonderful three years at St. John the Baptist.

We have met wonderful people that we now call friends, both young and the old. The sincerity of all is like no other place we have been. The church is a beautiful house of God. The choir sings like angels. The acolytes are a pleasure to see each week.

Now we come to Fr. Stavros. What he has created at St. John the Baptist is truly amazing. The spiritual knowledge that he teaches us each week along with all of our traditions going back 2000 years is something we have never seen in all of our years as Greek Orthodox Christians. Fr. Stavros is truly our shepherd, leading us on the road to Jesus Christ. The sermons and the stories of his past experiences, the twins that were not expected to survive and the Sunday morning Fr. Stavros walked down the isle of the church with one in each arm, as the entire church prayed, still brings tears to our eyes. Each week is so enlightening.

Stewardship is not just donating money. As it’s described, you donate some of your Time, some of your Talent and lastly Treasure, as we are called to do. When you are a Steward at St. John the Baptist, you are not just a member of any church, but you are truly a Steward of one of the most wonderful Orthodox churches you will ever attend.



Jim and Myra Armstrong

## ~ Stewardship Update ~

### Christ is Risen!

The stewardship committee hopes that your Lenten journey was peaceful and enjoyable. We truly are blessed to have been able to participate together as a community and to grow together in our faith.

Every part of the journey from the beautiful church we are able to worship in to the wonderful fellowship we shared was made possible by the love of God and supported by each of member of this communities’ Stewardship support.

The work of Christ truly depends on all of us and your pledge is a sign of a growing commitment to Christ. If you have already completed a pledge form and committed to St. John the Baptist for 2017, we thank you very much for your faithful support of our community.

If you have not completed a form, we encourage you to do so today! It is through the commitment of stewardship that allows our church to continue doing the good work of Christ.

Pledge Forms can be easily completed online by visiting <http://greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com/2017-stewardship/> and are also available in the Church Narthex or Bookstore.

New this year is the ability to make Stewardship Donations and General Donations online. This can be done either by setting up bill pay through your bank (please contact the church office for the church’s routing info), or via PayPal as a one time or recurring commitment. It’s quick, easy and allows the church to receive funds directly into our account.

Please visit our website to complete your Stewardship Pledge Form and make your gift today. For any questions, please speak directly with Fr. Stavros, Sandra Pappas or Pete Trakas, Stewardship Co-Chairs. We are here for YOU!

\*As of 4/18/2017

~ A Little Comparison ~	2017*	2016
Pledged Year to Date	\$376,586. <sup>00</sup>	\$409,017. <sup>00</sup>
Received Year to Date	\$184,739. <sup>83</sup>	\$168,624. <sup>48</sup>
# of Individual/Families Pledged	278	310



# Thank You To All of Our Pledged Stewards!

This is a list of all Pledged Stewards at St. John the Baptist that have filled out at a 2017 Stewardship Form. Names on this list do not indicate a Parishioner is 'Current' in pledge payments. Please call our church office with any questions on the status of your pledge commitments.

According to the St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Tampa, FL By-Laws, one must have completed a form AND be 'current' in their pledge (for this year and last year) to participate and vote at the General Assembly Meeting (Scheduled for June 4) including the fall General Assembly and Parish Council Elections – Dates TBD. If you have sent in a Stewardship Check and are not on the list, please contact the office so we can forward you a 2017 Stewardship Pledge Form.

If you are not currently a Steward of St. John the Baptist, please contact the church office and we will forward you a pledge package or you may also complete online. It is hope that EVERYONE that attends our beautiful church will be a Steward or a Friend of St. John the Baptist, for those who do not live in Tampa.

Akrotirianakis, Stavros & Lisa, Fr. & Pres.  
Alastanos, Jennifer, Ms.  
Alexander, John & Anetta, Mr. & Mrs.  
Alsina, Alexa, Ms.  
Alsina, Angel & Lisa, Dr. & Mrs.  
Ambrozy, Edward, Mr.  
Anagnost, Constantine, Mr.  
Andreadakis, Nicholas & Doris, Dr. & Mrs.  
Anton, Alex & Kristen, Dr. & Mrs.  
Apockotos, James & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.  
Armstrong, Jim & Myra, Mr. & Mrs.  
Assimiadis, Paul, Mr.  
Axelrod, Scott & Christine, Mr. & Mrs.  
Badrane, Denise, Ms.  
Bakirdgi, Joan, Mrs.  
Balasis, Mathew & Suzy, Mr. & Mrs.  
Balntas, Emmanuel & Meian, Mr. & Mrs.  
Beach, Kevin & Heidi Borgeas, Dr. & Ms.  
Berar, Eyob & Rezan Araya, Mr. & Mrs.  
Berdos, Frank & Isabel, Mr. & Mrs.  
Blackburn, Robert T. & Kathryn, Mr. & Dr.  
Blankenbaker, James & Michelle, Mr. & Mrs.  
Blankenship, Wayne & Athanasia, Mr. & Mrs.  
Bougas, Constantine & Angela, Mr. & Mrs.  
Bradshaw, Harold & Pelagia, Mr. & Mrs.  
Brannan, Meisha, Ms.  
Brown, Chrysanthi, Ms.  
Burchill, George, Fr.  
Bush, Dorothy, Mrs.  
Capitano, Frank & Christina, Mr. & Mrs.  
Caramalis, Nick & Lea, Mr. & Mrs.  
Carter, John & Genie, Mr. & Mrs.  
Catrone, Jeremy & Oliviana, Mr. & Mrs.  
Cauthorn, Ken & Helen, Mr. & Mrs.  
Chabra, Steven & Ms. Freda Manuel, Mr.  
Chagaris, George & Kalliope, Mr. & Mrs.  
Chakonas, Ethel Athena, Mrs.  
Chandler, Robert & Viviana, Mr. & Mrs.  
Charalabakis, Terry G., Mr.  
Cherpelis, Basil & Alyssa, Dr. & Dr.  
Choundas, Marina & Greg Thatcher, Ms. & Mr.  
Christ, John E., Dr.  
Christodoulou, Louis & Mary Ann, Mr. & Mrs.  
Christopher, Louis & Penny Plakas, Mr. & Dr.  
Christou, Tammy, Ms.  
Circello, Vincent & Tamera, Mr. & Mrs.  
Clifton, Helen M., Mrs.  
Clifton, Keven & Olya, Mr. & Mrs.  
Colado, David & Alexandria, Mr. & Mrs.  
Conner, Michael & Artemis, Mr. & Mrs.  
Costas, Maria, Ms.  
Costello, Patricia, Ms.  
Cotterman, Sandy, Ms.  
Crafa, Paul & Stavroula, Mr. & Mrs.

Crassas, Alkis & Aime, Mr. & Mrs.  
Cunavelis, Frances, Ms.  
Cunavelis, John, Mr.  
Dalaklis, Joanne, Ms.  
Damian, Gabriela & Mihnea Anghelescu, Ms.  
De Maio, Alexandra, Ms.  
Demas, Anna K., Ms.  
Demas, John, Mr.  
Demetrides, Spero & Theano, Mr. & Mrs.  
Demetriou, Nektarios & Peggy, Dr. & Mrs.  
Diamantakes, Georgia, Ms.  
Diamantides, Melpo, Mrs.  
Dimas, Gregory & Ms. Evelyn Patsavos, Mr.  
Dimitrijevič-Jones, Stephen & Alina Morros, Mr. & Ms.  
Diniaco, Peter & Rebecca, Mr. & Mrs.  
Doucas, Deborah, Ms.  
Dowell, Angie, Ms.  
Edquid, Marc & Maraquet, Mr. & Mrs.  
Edwards, Jeffery & Christina, Dr. & Mrs.  
Evdemon, Stanley & Mary Ellen, Mr. & Mrs.  
Fallieras, George, Dr.  
Fallieras, Lauren, Ms.  
Fallieras, Nicholas & Susan, Dr. & Mrs.  
Fellios, George & Zeina, Mr. & Mrs.  
Fentress, Kevin & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.  
Ferekides, Christos & Debbie, Dr. & Mrs.  
Filoqi, Gjergji & Jennifer, Mr. & Mrs.  
Findlay, Andrew & Karina, Mr. & Dr.  
Forde, Dwight & Ewana, Mr. & Mrs.  
Fotopoulos, Anthony & Carole, Mr. & Mrs.  
Frazier, Chris, Ms.  
Frimenko, Mary Z, Pres.  
Gallo, Vasiliki, Mrs.  
Garcia, Rick & Staimie, Mr. & Mrs.  
Genever, Robert & Stavroula Tsimpede, Mr. & Ms.  
Georgas, Thomas & Janet, Mr. & Mrs.  
George, Michael & Peggy, Mr. & Mrs.  
Georgiou, Speros & Eleanor, Mr. & Mrs.  
Gerecke, Alexandra, Ms.  
Gerecke, Christina, Ms.  
Gerecke, Ed & Terri, Mr. & Mrs.  
Giallourakis, Michael & Artemise, Mr. & Mrs.  
Gombos, Harriet, Mrs.  
Gorter, Maria, Ms.  
Greenbaum, Christina, Ms.  
Gregory, Daniel & Alicia, Mr. & Mrs.  
Guarino, Paul & Harriet, Mr. & Mrs.  
Halikoytakīs, Michael & Edith, Mr. & Mrs.  
Halkias, Athanasios, Mr.  
Halkias, Chris, Mr.  
Halkias, Demetrios & Camille, Mr. & Mrs.  
Halkias, Evangline, Mrs.

Halkias, George & Elaine, Mr. & Mrs.  
Hambos, Charlie, Mr.  
Hambos, George & Donna, Mr. & Mrs.  
Hampers, Dean & Valerie, Mr. & Mrs.  
Hampton, Wade & Sasha Artizbushev, Mr. & Ms.  
Hanhan, Amin & Gloria, Mr. & Mrs.  
Hartsfield-Molina, Christie & David Molina, Dr. & Mr.  
Hawkins III, Fred & Jillian, Mr. & Mrs.  
Henderson, Kenny & Nickollet, Mr. & Mrs.  
Higdon, Skip, Mrs.  
Hoppenstand, Anna Evelyn, Ms.  
Horack, Scott & Rena, Mr. & Mrs.  
Iraklianos, Mike, Mr.  
Irwin, Jon & Pam, Mr. & Mrs.  
Jacobsen, Paul, Mr.  
James, Arthur M & Abby, Mr. & Mrs.  
Jennewein, Robert & Georgia, Mr. & Mrs.  
Jernigan, Bobby & Andrea, Mr. & Mrs.  
Johnson, Aphroditī, Mrs.  
Johnston, Angela, Ms.  
Jolly, Jim & Jean, Mr. & Mrs.  
Kabougeris, Pete & Voula, Mr. & Mrs.  
Kaburis, George & Kathy, Mr. & Mrs.  
Kafantaris, Michael & Amy, Mr. & Mrs.  
Kapetan, Martha, Ms.  
Kaplan, Elias, Mr.  
Kappiris, Stanley & Erin, Mr. & Mrs.  
Karaku, Ellen, Ms.  
Karpelenia, Loretta, Pres.  
Kartsonis, George & Kathryn, Mr. & Mrs.  
Kastis, Deano, Mr.  
Katsadourous, Konstantin & Katherine, Mr. & Mrs.  
Katsaros, Andreas & Stacey, Mr. & Mrs.  
Katsouli, Paulina, Ms.  
Katzaras, George & Angelina, Mr. & Mrs.  
Katzaras, Nick & Helen, Mr. & Mrs.  
Kavouklis, Chris & Debbie, Mr. & Mrs.  
Kavouklis, Michael & Irene, Mr. & Mrs.  
Kavouklis, Nicholas & Edie, Dr. & Mrs.  
Kelly, Brian & Amanda Cotterman, Mr. & Mrs.  
Kiser, Georgeanna, Ms.  
Kladis, George & Charlene, Mr. & Mrs.  
Kladis, Theodore & Amy, Mr. & Mrs.  
Koch, John & Cathie, Mr. & Mrs.  
Konstas, Demetrios & Mary Ann, Dr. & Mrs.  
Kontzamanys, Alexis, Ms.  
Korakis, Alexandros & Louise, Mr. & Mrs.  
Koudouna, Anthony, Mr.  
Koudouna, Dora, Ms.  
Koutroumanis, Dean & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.  
Krinos, Dimitri & Melissa, Mr. & Mrs.  
Kyrus, Chris & Katherine Apostolakis, Dr. & Dr.  
Labatos, Angelika, Ms.

Langas, Dimitrios & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Laskey, Fred & Coleen, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Lenardos, Steven & Melissa, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Leonitsinis, Nicole, Ms.  
 L'Hommedieu, Tim & Tia, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Limberopoulos, Chris, Mr.  
 Maas, Mary, Ms.  
 MacLaury, Kathryn, Ms.  
 Makrides, Amanda & Michael Larino, Ms. & Mr.  
 Makris, Dean, Mr.  
 Mangarides, Markos & Ekaterini, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Manikas, William & Nancy, Dr. & Mrs.  
 Matassini, Nicholas G. & Christina, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Meadows, Alexander & Elishia, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Mellon, Andria, Ms.  
 Melton, Greg & Victoria, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Melton, Jaime, Ms.  
 Melton, Stephanie, Ms.  
 Merrell, Dustin & Cory, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Milligan, Mary, Presbytera  
 Mitchell, John & Edith, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Mitseas, George & Catherine, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Morgan, Theodora, Ms.  
 Mourer, Brett & Ana, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Mueller, Jeffery & Melinda, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Myer, Ronald & Magdalini, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Naum, Dean & Sandra, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Nenos, Byron & Jeanie, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Nenos, Mary, Mrs.  
 Nenos, Peter, Mr.  
 Nicklow, Tom & Demetra, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Nicolaou, Christos & Dee, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Nolas, George S. & Cheryl, Dr. & Mrs.  
 Nolen, Pamela, Ms.  
 Olsen, Scott & Elphida, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Orfanakis, Michael & Michelle, Mr.  
 Palios, Artemis, Mrs.  
 Palios, George & Julie, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Palios, Michael & Bessie, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Paloumpis, Tom & Jenny, Mr. & Mrs.

Panopoulos, Theodoros & Marisa, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Panos, Euripides & Denise, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Papadopoulos, John & Irene, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Papaefstathiou, Louis & Joanna K, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Pappas, Paul & Georgia, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Paras, Gus & Marina, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Parker, Ryan & Alexa, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Passavanti, Robert & Debbra, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Patellis, Theophilos & Maria Dorkfy, Dr. & Mrs.  
 Pavloulos, George, Mr.  
 Peckham, Richard & Victoria, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Perdicas, Ernest & Nancy, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Pessemier, Tom & Christy, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Peters, Alexandra, Ms.  
 Pileggi, Suzanne, Ms.  
 Plakas, Theodore & Kyriakoula, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Ricks, Georgia, Ms.  
 Rindone, Ryan & Megan, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Ritchie, Robert & Debra Gavalas, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Rogers II, Aris, Mr.  
 Rose, Maryann, Ms.  
 Roussos, Archie & Eleftheria, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Roussos, Nicholas, Mr.  
 Roy, Perry & Alysa, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Sakaris, Thomas & Barbara, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Sakellaris, Anne & Anne, Mrs.  
 Sakkis, John & Katherine, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Sarantos, Christos & Sara, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Scarfogliero, Gennaro & Alexis, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Scharbach, Michael, Mr.  
 Scourtes, Christine, Mrs.  
 Serbanos, Michael & Patricia, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Sermier, Eustace G & Bennette, Dr. & Mrs.  
 Shah, Syed & Ms. Kelly Psilos, Dr.  
 Sibley, Rusty & Despina, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Skourellos, Dante & Lindsey, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Skourellos, Michael P & Shirley A., Mr. & Mrs.  
 Skoures, William & Egli, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Smith, Thomas & Golfo Alexopoulos, Dr. & Dr.  
 Sorolis, Eftihia, Ms.

Soteriou, George & Selenia, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Sotiropoulos, Bill & Jenny, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Sotiropoulos, Paul & Terri, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Speegle, Gary & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Spencer, Wayne & Pauline, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Spirides, Harry G., Mr.  
 Stavropoulos, Jane, Ms.  
 Stephanides, Christos, Mr.  
 Stephanides, Marios & Ourania, Dr. & Mrs.  
 Stilian, Douglas & Bridget, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Stitt, William & Deborah, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Stonestreet, John & Anastasia, Dr. & Mrs.  
 Stratigakos, Helen, Ms.  
 Stratigakos, Louis & Georgia, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Theofilos, John & Elizabeth, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Theophanous, Peter, Mr.  
 Toulaitos, Markissa, Ms.  
 Trakas, Andrew & Adrienne, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Trakas, Peter & Donna, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Tsibris, John, Dr.  
 Tziotis, Andreas & Michele, Mr. & Dr.  
 Valaes, Demetrios & Lynn A., Mr. & Mrs.  
 Vourloumis, Joanna, Mrs.  
 Voykin, David & Amy, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Voykin, Mary H, Mrs.  
 Walling, Jacklyn, Ms.  
 Ward, Gary & Sandra Pappas, Mr. & Ms.  
 Whaley, Susan, Ms.  
 Worley, Christene, Ms.  
 Xenick, Emanuel & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Xenick, George & Cindy, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Xeroteris, Evangeline, Ms.  
 Yohai, Eleni, Ms.  
 Yotis, William & Eleonora, Dr. & Mrs.  
 Zabetakis, Maria, Ms.  
 Zaharis, Constantine & Rachel, Dr. & Dr.  
 Zeban, Peter & Judy, Mr. & Mrs.  
 Zelatis, John P. & Denise M., Mr. & Mrs.

## ***Make a Plan to Amplify Your Impact - Join the St. John Legacy Society***

Those parishioners who include St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in their estate plans will become founding members of the St. John Legacy Society, a new initiative we have launched to help provide for our beloved church's future. Estelle Kavakos is the first founding member – having left a bequest to our church last year.

Whether you would like to put your donation to work today or benefit our church after your lifetime, you can find a charitable plan that lets you provide for your family and at the same time supports St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church. After you've considered how much you'd like to leave each of your heirs, would you consider leaving what might be left over in your estate to St. John the Baptist? Take care of yourself and your family, plan for your future, do everything you want to do in your lifetime – and then consider leaving what is left (or the residue) to our church. Whatever you do, please be sure to consult your financial and legal advisors and let your family members know of your intentions.

If you have additional questions about joining the St. John Legacy Society, please contact Fr. Stavros at 813-876-8830 or [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com) or call Debbie Gavalas at 813-505-8901 for more information.

If you include St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church of Tampa in your plans, please use our legal name as previously stated and Federal Tax ID # 59-1170684. Additionally, please contact Fr. Stavros or Debbie so that we may include you as a founding member of the St. John Legacy Society and properly thank you for this very special type of stewardship.



# Oratorical Festival Speeches

In the Messenger for May, we print all of the Oratorical Festival Speeches from the Junior Division.  
In the June/July issue, we will print all of the Senior Division Speeches.

## Junior Division

### **Discuss the role of bread and its symbolism in the Bible and the life of the Church.**

Bread is more than just a food, it is Christ. Bread is a crucial part of the Greek Orthodox religion faith, it is a symbol to us it represents God. God even says in John 6:47- 50 *"I'm the bread of life."* Bread symbolizes many things that are key to our salvation.

Some of the many things bread represents and the names of these breads are, Prosforo Symbolizes Christ's body, it is used for holy Communion and is given at the end of services. Artoklasia symbolizes health and wellbeing, this is more cultural. The five pieces are divided up this way for two reasons. One being that the whole community can get a piece. Second that it symbolizes the five thousand people Jesus fed with five loaves and two fish. Tsourekis, is bread with a red egg in it represents Jesus resurrection we celebrate it on Pascha (A.K.A Easter). Finally, it is phanouripita is bread made to help you find something you have lost to reveal. Saint Phunouro is the one who created phanouripita.

In John 6:32- 35 Jesus says *"Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven."* I believe Jesus means that it is not physical bread as in food; but as in the way of internal life that bread is the pathway to heaven a reward.

In my church bread has a very important role it helps raise money for the church and it represents our Lord Jesus Christ. Ask yourself how does bread improve your relationship with God? How does bread effect your church? Do you feel that it has a major or minor impact on your relationship? I think it has a major input to my relationship.

When I first moved down here I didn't know what the bread was until I learned that it was more than just a food a tasty treat, that it is a symbol of Jesus and God. It was then I realized bread has one of the most important jobs in the church, to reflect God.

*Antonio Bavaro,  
son of Dan and Anna Maria Bavaro, is in 8th grade*

### **Explain why the Orthodox Church focuses more on the resurrection than it does on the passion and suffering of Christ.**

*God has sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. -John 4:9*

This is a very powerful bible verse about Jesus and God, God sent Jesus down to earth to help all people. To me, Jesus is my savior, a pure man without sin. Jesus is one man who can look at me with love when I am covered with dirt. He is a real hero who I look up to. Of course, God sent Jesus down to earth to die on the cross for our sins, but there are actually some more reasons. Here are a few more bible verses that will help you

understand what I mean.

*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. -John 3:17*

This means Jesus did not come down to us to judge us, but to save the world using his teachings.

*For the Son of man come to seek and to save what was lost. -Luke 19:10*

*I have not come to call the righteous but sinners repentance. -Luke 5:32*

In conclusion, Jesus came down to us to help all people and to teach us the importance of life. Thank you.

*Ariana Evangelia Karounos-Shawn,  
daughter of Maria Karounos, is in 5th grade.*

### **Discuss the role of bread and its symbolism in the Bible and the life of the Church.**

The Old Testament often references "unleavened bread" but in our church, we use leavened bread. That means we use yeast in it. Our fathers ate Manna in the desert, as it is written, *"he gave them bread from heaven to eat"* John 6:31. And Jesus said to them, *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger and he who believes in me shall never thirst but I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe."* John 6:35. I think those are good bible verses about the bread.

To me, the bread means the bread of life. When I eat bread, I feel that Jesus is entering my body. Jesus is the bread of life.

The prosforo that father blesses is sacred to us because he blesses it in a way that it is holy. The prosforo represents the prayer that we say when we're making it, the body of Jesus. The seal on it represents the cross. I always feel lucky when I get a piece of the seal.

*Dimitri Karounos-Shawn,  
son of Maria Karounos, is in 7th grade.*

### **The opening petition of the Divine Liturgy is "In peace let us pray to the Lord." What is this peace, and why do we need it to begin our prayers?**

It has been the presupposed job of theologians and philosophers to throw themselves into exploring their own thoughts on happiness in life, and marketers claim to hold the age-old secrets helping you achieve this. Our hymns and calls say, "in peace let us pray to the Lord", promising that we will endure and preserve the idea of peace on Earth, as it is in Heaven, that He has intended since Jesus' descent, and we sing ever the louder in order to banish our doubts. And as Philippians 4:7 proclaims, *"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* But myself, and others my age, will always find ourselves puzzling sleeplessly, unsteadily wondering how to fulfill this – each new generation grapples to carry out the elusive peace of God.

I grew up knowing without question that with no good, there wouldn't be bad either, and thus peace would be achieved – I believed this from my very first Christmas recital, singing “Peace on Earth” to the high. Since being first aware of the church, I have detached myself from others, arrogantly, because it was too much work to understand how they worked. But when we speak of peace, we mean to feel connected with others.

It was in this belief that I was rushed headlong with The Sin of Doing Nothing. It was last year after I bowed my head to the Confession sacrament at St. Steven's Greek Orthodox camp that a priest, moments after I would nervously admit a doubt to God, was chiding – he asked me, don't you think that the goodwill of God, which is peace and acceptance, is worth protecting? He warned out against placidity. I came home to sit down with a Bible, and remember reading reproach in Proverbs 13:4, and feeling my heart throb; “The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.”

We charge those who offend us rude, selfish, annoying. Stand-offish people who oppose us are unbearable, but complacent people don't bother us. I hated to think then that my own quietness will equate to complacency - whether being averse to butting heads is slower suicide. As we try to forgive those who trespass against us and protect all humans, if we refuse to acknowledge strife that is the reason imaginations become captivated with perfect peace... then aren't any declarations we make rendered idle? Studying the New Testament, we find that though many written passages contradict, we absorb the life of Jesus with the burden that He endured by sharing the enlightenment with us. In the same way, though I know it may be thorny for us, shouldn't we be reaching out to others, and going with hand in hand to resolve problems?

Through contemplation we answer this - though we must continue the unity that Orthodoxy honors, we must also see that every person's inner peace is not identical – especially in variant faiths. As James 2:17 closes, it rings in heavy air, “*So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*” It may be that in order to find peace to pray, it's necessary to first see our own reluctance to do as we know is right – like assumptions I've made that I still am yet to confess, like my hesitance to see other people, when I prefer to be by myself. With the prose of James in mind, shouldn't we act out a peace that is side by side with others, and one that defines what just acting can do, and not just bask in the comfort of our loneliness?

*Angelina Krinos,  
daughter of Demetri and Melissa Krinos, is in 8th grade*

**St. John Chrysostom said, “Our alms are judged not by the measure of our gifts, but by the largeness of our mind” (Homily 52 on the Gospel of Matthew). Discuss how even small acts of kindness and generosity can make a difference.**

We live in a world where violence is constantly hovering over us, threatening to shatter every good aspect of our lives. Some have adopted the idea that to make a difference, a revolutionary act must occur, as if just this could change the entire world. The impact may not be immediate with one simple act, but by the addition of infinite acts, completed by numerous people. And it all begins with kindness.

In the book of Luke, a lawyer approached Jesus and asked him what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus answered by telling him a story, which we now know as the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this parable, a man was attacked by robbers who left him on the side of the road; hurt and stripped of all his belongings. A priest and a Levite walked by and carefully avoided helping the man. But, a Samaritan passed and was filled with pity for him. He cleaned his wounds, fed him, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. These acts were individually small, kind gestures, but they saved this man's life. The Samaritan's kindness is more pronounced, considering the relationship between the Jews and Samaritans: they harbored extreme feelings of hatred toward one another. The priest and the Levite were of the same social status as the man, yet they still couldn't find it in their hearts to help him. The Samaritan's immeasurable kindness saved and changed this man's life and gave us an example to follow.

The ways that we love our neighbors do not have to be as drastic as saving their lives; they could be as simple as a smile or a compliment. St. John Chrysostom's Homily 52 on the Gospel of Matthew says, “Our alms are judged not by the measure of our gifts but by the largeness of our mind.” If our gift to others comes from a genuine and loving heart, then they will be worth more than we can imagine.

Small acts of kindness can be day-altering in themselves, but once a few are added up, they can be life-changing. Take philanthropy, for example. Organizations do not function off of only large donations. Small donations can add up to colossal amounts. For example, take the story we find in the Gospel of Mark, where Jesus watched a crowd of people give money to the temple treasury. Multiple wealthy people donated large amounts, which was only a portion of their fortune. But a woman stricken with poverty gave all that she had: two battered coins. Jesus explained that the poor woman gave much more than the rich because she sacrificed everything with a humble and giving heart. If we emulate the actions of this woman and fully commit ourselves to offering all that we are capable of, we will please God immensely. Imagine if people who couldn't give much to charity didn't donate at all. That would definitely change the outcome of a charity's success and not as many lives would be impacted. And giving doesn't always involve donating money.

A few years ago, I volunteered at the kid's area at Metropolitan Ministries, where the children go while their parents are shopping in the tent. For almost the entire four-hour shift, I played with these two brothers named Caesar and Eddie. Even though the hardships in their lives were prominent, they still found every reason to smile. I still think about these kids today and the memory of them inspires me to spread kindness everywhere I go, no matter how small of an amount it may be.

Small acts of kindness are vital to being a successful advocate of God's word. If we each start committing these simple deeds all the time, then our world will be forever transformed for the better. Our world needs kindness, and it starts with you.

*Artemis Xenick,  
daughter of Mike and Maria Xenick, is in 9th grade.*

## **The Orthodox Church venerates saints and martyrs every day. Talk about a saint whose life inspires you to be a better Orthodox Christian.**

The Orthodox church venerates saints every day, and each one is inspiring in their own way. One saint in particular devoted her entire life to God and believed in him, so as a reward, the impossible became possible. This saint is Saint Elizabeth, mother to Saint John the Baptist and cousin to the Virgin Mary. The life of Elizabeth inspires me to be a better Orthodox Christian.

When Elizabeth was in her old age, an angel came to her and exclaimed that she would have a son and he would be *"great in the sight of the Lord."* (Luke 1:15). That son was Saint John the Baptist. When her husband Zachariah found out, he went into denial. In return, God took away his voice, and Zachariah was forced to write on stone tablets if he wanted to speak. To make sure her pregnancy was successful, Elizabeth hid away for five months.

At the same time, the Virgin Mary who was a relative of Elizabeth, was pregnant with Jesus, and she went to visit her cousin. When Elizabeth saw her, the baby leapt in her womb, and she exclaimed, *"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the son you will bear! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of the Lord has come to me."* (Luke 1:42-43) When making this exclamation, Elizabeth set an example for all of us Orthodox Christians by recognizing the importance and significance of Mary and the role that she played in bringing Christ to earth. This great announcement from Elizabeth is now part of our Friday night Lenten services which are devoted to the Virgin Mary. And in every Divine Liturgy, we ask the Virgin Mary to intercede for us in many petitions and hymns. How awesome is it that what Elizabeth proclaimed that day so long ago still has an impact on our faith today!

Another part of this miraculous story that inspires me is that Elizabeth is singled out in scripture as a family member of Mary and therefore of Jesus himself. When Elizabeth was in a time of need; Mary came to her. In my family, it is the same way. I have two siblings, many cousins, and countless aunts and uncles. I know that if I'm in need, they will come to my side and help me in any way that they can. I also know that if they have a problem I can help them with, I will. When something bad happens we all support each other endlessly. Remember how Luke described the joy that Elizabeth and her unborn child John felt just at the sound of Mary's voice and the aura of her presence.

As the mother of St John the Baptist, we cannot diminish Elizabeth's role in helping him become the great saint he was destined to be. St John the Baptist played a vital role in Jesus's life and ministry by preaching the coming of Christ, witnessing to Him, and ultimately baptizing Jesus. He is known as the forerunner of Christ and is one of our faith's greatest saints. And with his good work, a lot of the credit probably ought to go to his mother. When it comes to one's faith, the parents' role can make all the difference in shaping their child's spirituality. From a young age, the foundation is set. I wonder if Elizabeth had not been so connected to Christ, and if she had chosen not to share that faith with her son, if St. John would have been ready to serve the Lord the way he was called to do. I am always reminded of Elizabeth's dedication to her son because St. John is the patron saint of my church.

St. Elizabeth is a wonderful saint that is important to all Orthodox Christians and will always be remembered for her faith and her loyalty to God. Her life is one that we can look to for encouragement and inspiration.

*Elizabeth Xenick,  
daughter of Mike and Maria Xenick, is in 7<sup>th</sup> grade.*

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# Great News!

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is partnering with Republic Services to recycle our fluorescent light bulbs, lighting ballasts and dry cell batteries with their Universal Recycling Program. These materials have mercury and lead which rank 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> on the EPA's list of hazardous substances. It only takes ¼ teaspoon of mercury to contaminate all this fish in a 20-acre lake. Each year 2-4 tons of mercury are released from the disposal of fluorescent bulbs every year in the U.S. With this very small step, we as a community are becoming better stewards of our environment.

## **Universal Recycling**

Simple ways to recycle bulbs, batteries, ballasts and other Mercury-containing devices.





# Small Group Bible Studies

Small group Bible Studies are well underway. These groups gather once a week to study the Bible, discuss how to apply scripture to daily life, pray together and become small spiritual support groups. These sessions are discussion based, not lecture based. This is an opportunity to work side by side with each other to learn more about the faith. As group members get to know one another on a deeper level and as groups become more committed, you'll see that the groups will not only become a resource to help learn and live the faith, but through these groups, we'll eventually help *"carry one another's burdens and so build up the body of Christ,"* as we are told to do in Galatians 6:2. And this is what the church is all about—helping one another through this life, on the journey to everlasting life.

## **Monday Night Bible Study** (for everyone)

We are studying the Wisdom of Solomon.

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

**Group Leader:** Charlie Hambos

[Charlie.hambos@gmail.com](mailto:Charlie.hambos@gmail.com), 813-843-8471

**Meeting time:** Monday evenings from 6:45– 8:15 p.m.

**May Meeting Dates:** May 1, 8, 15, 22

## **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:** At the Church in the Library

**Group Leader:** Bessie Palios

[bmp1126@yahoo.com](mailto:bmp1126@yahoo.com), 813-523-0347.

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

**May Meeting Dates:** May 2, 9, 16

## **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](mailto: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 2, 9, 16, 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](mailto:dhambos@msn.com), 813-843-8412

**Meeting Time:** Tuesday evenings, Dinner at 6:30

Bible Study from 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

**May Meeting Dates:** May 2, 9, 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:** Michael Palios

[mpalios@gmail.com](mailto:mpalios@gmail.com); 813-523-0346

**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 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

## 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](http://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.**

### Pictures

Go to Flickr.com and search "St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church" or go to [www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoctampa](http://www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoctampa)





# Jesus Said Get Some Rest

by Jeff Manion from *Dream Big, Think Small*

*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed. - Mark 1:35*

I settled in at a coffee shop to read and journal.

It was the perfect, peaceful setting to quiet my heart and reflect on life. But my tranquility was quickly disrupted by the onset of a throbbing headache. I've experienced this dull throb before, and as soon as it started I knew exactly what was happening and why.

Earlier in the morning I'd taken off on a long training run in damp air. The temperature was chilly and I overdressed. I warmed up during the run and overheated a bit. I wasn't particularly thirsty and didn't drink anything during the run, or when I reached my car, or when I got home. Big mistake.

Returning home, I showered, gathered my journal and laptop, and headed to the calm of the coffee shop. That's when the dehydration-induced headache began to rob me of focus. I approached the counter and requested a glass of water, then another. But dehydration takes time to remedy, and the headache grew. The pain didn't fully dissipate for hours.

I've made this mistake before and probably will again. The lesson is simple: Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink. Know what your system needs, and act accordingly. In a prolonged endeavor — a long hike, bike ride, or run — take in water before you grow thirsty. If you wait until you are parched, you've probably waited too long. Unfortunately, we usually discover what we should have done after we didn't do it.

My coffee-shop headache serves as a parable for emotional depletion and the need to replenish ourselves. Serving a family, a company, or a ministry depletes your emotional reserves. If you are constantly pouring yourself out, you require a regimen of filling yourself up — rehydrating, if you will. Every “mile” of serving takes something out of you. If you want to live and love faithfully for decades — marathon distance — you had better know how to consistently restore depleted resources. And preferably before you are in desperate need.

The lesson is clear. Don't wait until you feel a searing headache and then begin your search for water.

Drink before you are thirsty.

Let's talk about ways to fill your spirit long before you grow emotionally, spiritually, or relationally dehydrated.

## Time Away

Don't wait for the compounding symptoms of emotional burn-out before you justify a vacation or build rest into your schedule. Plan time away long before you experience a crash. Once you're totally depleted and drained, a week away isn't enough to repair the frayed ends of your weary life.

During a complicated season in Jesus's ministry, as enthusiastic crowds clamored for His attention and resentful enemies badgered Him, He chose to get away with his apostles.

*Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest. — Mark 6:31*

Read His words again. Hear them as a personal invitation. We all have intense seasons when we need to get away to a quiet place and rest. And also, remember that some trips aren't restful. You're probably familiar with the type of getaway that causes you to need a vacation to rest up from your vacation. Years back we pulled the plug on a complicated road trip and instead rented a simple lake cottage not far from our home.

## Daily Retreats

Don't wait for a vacation to recharge your batteries. Nourish yourself daily.

*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed. - Mark 1:35*

Embrace the practice of the daily retreat. Seek quiet moments to reflect on Scripture, express gratitude for the blessings that surround you, and invite God into your challenging relationships and decisions.

Don't wait until you find yourself in the middle of a spiritual desert to refill your tank. Create space to fill your thirsty spirit each and every day.

## Life-giving Friendships

Make space for life-giving friendships. Who are your true friends, and how does your calendar reflect your devotion to them?

On occasion, Jesus taught thousands of people. But He also had an inner circle He limited to twelve disciples, and among those, had an even closer relationship with Peter, James, and John. Jesus also often visited the home of siblings Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany. Because their village was only a couple of miles from Jerusalem, Jesus could find refuge among trusted friends while encountering hostility in the capital.

Life can be lonely, but we make it lonelier than it needs to be by expending our life energy among a hundred shallow acquaintances while neglecting to connect deeply with any one individual. Don't wait until you are relationally famished to invest in life-giving friendships.

## Healthy Family

All you have to do for family relationships to erode is nothing.

Relationships slide downhill by gravitational force in the routine wear and tear of life. How are family members prioritized in your busy life? Schedule downtime together, an occasional weekend away, a weekly date night with your spouse, or breakfast with one of your children. Create time to sit and eat and laugh. Invest in each other long before stress fractures are visible. Seek help early, before someone is ready to call it quits. Hydrate before a massive headache lets you know that you didn't.

## Energizing Activities

What energizes you? Walking, painting, sailing, time with grandkids? What activities recharge your batteries, and how do

you give these activities priority in your schedule? It isn't selfish to invest in your emotional health. When I am running on fumes, slogging through life in a perpetually depleted state, I am not leading, serving, or loving at my best. Life is draining. We need to discover ways to fill ourselves long before we crash.

Road races of any length have aid stations along the way. Volunteers fill thousands of cups with water or Gatorade. These tables are placed at predictable intervals along the course, with race maps letting you know exactly where you will find the aid stations. I think this is a great image of how to prepare for keeping ourselves hydrated in all parts of our lives.

Remember these words of Jesus to His disciples:

*Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.*  
- Mark 6:31

Know where the aid stations are. Drink before you are thirsty. Don't wait for a meltdown or a breakdown before you refill

your tank.

Before closing out today's reading, pull up your calendar.

Look ahead four weeks to discern where the aid stations can be scheduled into your life. Over the course of the next month, where can you spend unrushed time with family or close friends?

Where can you capture quiet moments to sit, read, and reflect? Schedule these now. Write them into your calendar before every moment is claimed by draining activity.

Now look ahead three months. Where can you carve out significant time away? Schedule these times of rest long before routine commitments and demands stake a claim on every breathing moment.

*Excerpted with permission from Dream Big, Think Small, copyright Jeff Manion. Published by Zondervan.*

## Thank You to all of Our Friends!

Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA  
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**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 the Baptist 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.

### Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

**Friend of St. John the Baptist:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*I wish to become 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 W. Swann Ave Tampa, FL 33609.**

# ~ May 2017 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
	<b>1</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Fr. out of office 5/1-5/12	<b>2</b> WBS 10:00 a.m. EBS 6:30 p.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>3**</b> MBS 7:30 a.m.	<b>4</b> Young at Heart 11:30 a.m. Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m.	<b>5**</b>	<b>6</b>	
<b>7</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. YAL 5:00 p.m. Philoptochos Meeting	<b>8</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>9</b> WBS 10:00 a.m. EBS 6:30 p.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>10**</b> MBS 7:30 a.m.	<b>11</b> Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m.	<b>12**</b>	<b>13</b> Retreat for Moms 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	
<b>14</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday	<b>15</b> <b>Fr. Stavros' Anniversary of Ordination</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>16</b> WBS 10:00 a.m. EBS 6:30 p.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>17**</b> MBS 7:30 a.m.	<b>18</b> Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m.	<b>19**</b>	<b>20</b> Community Outreach	
<b>21</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Last Day of SS AHEPA/DOP GOYA 5:00 p.m.	<b>22</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>23</b> <b>Leave-Taking of Pascha</b> Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>24</b> MBS 7:30 a.m.	<b>25</b> <b>Ascension</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m.	<b>26**</b> Last Day of School	<b>27</b>	
<b>28</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>29</b> Memorial Day Office Closed	<b>30</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>31</b> MBS 7:30 a.m.				

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TAMPA, FL

PERMIT NO. 461

## 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)  
frstav@gmail.com

**Pastoral Assistant** Charlie Hambos  
813-876-8830 (Office) 813-843-8471 (Cell)  
Charlie.hambos@gmail.com

**Parish Council**  
Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867  
Mike Xenick, VP 813-340-8737  
Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898  
Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747  
George Chagaris 727-420-1920  
Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947  
Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352  
Catherine Mitseas 813-571-0658  
Ryan Rindone 704-564-2046  
Aris Rogers, II 813-309-5525  
Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534

**Office Staff**  
Monica Gjerde, Office Manager 813-876-8830  
officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com  
Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper  
debstjohnntpa@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 Katsamakis 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 Katsamakis 813-468-1596

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

**Daughters of Penelope**  
Chris Frazier, President 813-661-2290

**Finance Committee**  
Gary Ward 813-846-3898

**Food Pantry**  
Anetta Alexander 813-758-2689

**Gasparilla Parking**  
John Kokkas 727-992-4615

**GOYA**  
Maria Koutroumanis 813-245-3854  
Kara Katzaras 863-669-6739

**Hope/Joy**  
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

**Strategic Planning**  
Marc Edquid 813-422-8940  
Gary Ward 813-846-3898

**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 Ministry**  
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 10<sup>th</sup> 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.