

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*

August 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 The Virgin Mary

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." Luke 1:38

On August 15, we will celebrate the Feast of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary. The Virgin Mary is for us, the role model for every human being. She is honored above anything in the created world. Born from parents, in the same way that we are born, her life honored God each and every step of the way.

Tradition holds that the Virgin Mary was probably only 14 or 15 at the time of the Annunciation, when she was visited by the Archangel Gabriel and told she would bear the Christ in her womb. She had been raised among the temple priests from the age of two or three, preparing for a life of service to God. She was also betrothed to a man named Joseph.

The Angel told her that she was going to do something that was:

Impossible - she was going to have a child by the Holy Spirit. Who had ever heard of such a thing?

Hard to explain - How do you explain to your fiancé that you are pregnant, but not by another man? Who could believe that?

Risky - Assuming that Joseph would believe her, they both risked the scorn of society to be pregnant and unwed.

So, how does Mary respond to all of this? Remember that she is 14 or 15, and at this moment, by herself. There is no parent

present, no friend, no one to talk this through with. Mary responds "Behold, I am the handmaiden of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." The most important "Yes" in the history of humanity. What faith! What confidence!

Each of us is called to something. And whatever that something is—parenting, teaching, marriage, priesthood, medicine—none of us knows how it will end up. I know that as a teenager and young adult, I tried to run away from a calling to the priesthood—I wasn't as eager as Mary. I was actually pretty scared. We aren't told Mary's state of mind—did she cry? Was she in fear? Did she stay up nights worrying about what the angel told her? The most important part of the story is not how she felt, but what she did. Scared or not, she said YES and faithfully fulfilled God's call for her life.

In fulfilling each of our callings in life, it's okay if we are scared. It's okay to cry, or feel nervous, or stay awake and worry. But the overarching theme to our life has to be YES to God's call. And as the saying goes, it means "letting go and letting God." It means that God isn't your co-pilot, but that He is the PILOT. It means trusting in what we don't know, embracing the opportunities and gifts He gives us, and putting faith in His promises to us. Thankfully Mary said YES to God's call for her, and because she did, salvation came to all the world. Imagine if she had said NO.

In some way, we are all like the Virgin Mary—God has asked each of us to allow Him to take up residence in us, for each of us to be a "Theotokos," a God-bearer. He has asked each of us

to honor Him with our lives, and to spread His word by our example. So what is your answer?

And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” Luke 1:46

After the Annunciation, the Virgin Mary went to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, who was pregnant with St. John the Baptist, who was born six months before the Nativity. Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, knew what was so special about her cousin. How did she know this? Because John the Baptist, in the womb of Elizabeth, “leaped for joy” (Luke 1:44)—He recognized the presence of His Savior. Elizabeth exalts Mary and says to her:

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” Luke 1:42-45

Mary’s response is one of both humility and gratitude. She doesn’t complain “woe is me, woe is my lot,” nor does she gloat “look at me.” Rather she humbly replies “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

What a great mantra this could be if applied to every aspect of our lives. What if at every critical moment, before every decision, or during moments of anger and frustration, what if at all these points we prayed THIS prayer - “My soul MAGNIFIES the Lord and my spirit REJOICES in God my Savior.” Imagine if when you started a meeting, everyone around the table said this verse. If our souls truly seek to magnify the Lord at all times, and our spirits continually rejoice in God, then those critical moments will pass easier, decisions would be made better and more purposefully, and moments of anger and frustration would dramatically lessen if not disappear entirely.

And His father and His mother marveled at what was said about Him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.” Luke 2:33-35

Forty days after the Nativity, Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the Temple for His forty day blessing, something that was required under Jewish Law. This event is told in the second chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Many of us are familiar with the priest Simeon, and his beautiful prayer, “Lord now let your servant depart in peace,” that is offered over our children when they are 40 days old. What most of us are not as familiar with are the words Simeon offered immediately after that prayer. He said to Mary the above quote, saying the child would do amazing things, but would also be spoken against. And a sword would pierce Mary’s soul also. Can you imagine your reaction if, as a new parent, the priest of your church said that to you?

Again, we see the obedience of Mary—she perhaps didn’t fully understand the words of the priest, but she did not waver in playing her part in God’s plan for the world’s salvation. Mary was not a robot, she was a willing participant in God’s plan for the world’s salvation. That plan brought her both pain—she

watched her only Son die in the worst way possible—and it brought her salvation, as at the Dormition, we believe that Mary was taken body and soul into heaven.

God has a plan for the salvation of the world. Each of us plays a role in that plan. Each of us is of infinite value in the eyes of God, so each of us plays a role of infinite value in God’s plan for the world’s salvation. Some of these roles involve fame and wealth. Others involve pain and suffering. Perhaps the worst suffering one can have is to watch their child die. Having unfortunately experienced this with several parishioners whose children I have buried, each eagerly says that they would gladly trade places and suffer and die in place of their children. We also do not know fully the plan of God and our role in it. Like Mary, we have to be obedient and steadfast in playing our role, even when we don’t fully understand that role. And if that role includes pain and suffering, like the role of the Virgin Mary, even that is something we must learn to accept, if not embrace. Having said that, there are certain pains and people who suffer unspeakably in life, and this is hard to understand (a subject for another day). There are certain things that we won’t fully understand until we meet the Lord, and all things are revealed to us. In the meantime, we need to focus first on the glory of the Lord, be assured of His love for us, and eagerly embrace each victory and each challenge, leaning on the Lord to help us in all things.

On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with His disciples. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever He tells you.” John 2:1-5

The Virgin Mary is known as our fervent intercessor before her Son and our Lord. To intercede means to do something in place of someone else. These verses come from the story of the wedding at Cana, where Jesus and His disciples, as well as His mother were in attendance. There was a need for more wine. Mary went to Jesus, on behalf of the wedding guests, perhaps on behalf of the family hosting the wedding, and told Him, “They have no wine.” She didn’t tell Him what to do. She didn’t say “They have no wine, make some more.” She took the need to the Lord and let Him decide how to best fill the need. His answer sounds like a rebuke, particularly the term “woman.” In Greek, the word *gunai* is actually a term of endearment and respect. While not an exact answer to her request, the Virgin Mary put her trust in Jesus and told the servants, “Do whatever it is He is going to tell you.”

From this brief passage we learn a few things:

The Virgin Mary is our intercessor. She knows her Son more than we do. She is closer to Him than we are. So, we may use her as an intercessor on our behalf. We do not pray to her, but rather through her. Just as it was Jesus who ultimately provided the additional wine, it is Jesus who ultimately answers our prayers. But rather than pray alone, we use intercessors in addition to ourselves. Our intercessors include the Virgin Mary, the saints and EACH OTHER. That’s one reason why we belong to a church community, to have people who will join us in our prayers.

When bringing a request to the Lord, we don’t necessarily name the solution. We bring the request. He provides the an-

swer, in His way. It is sufficient to say, “There is no wine,” or “I need help” or “save me” and leave it to the Lord how that request will be filled. This is called trust, this is what faith is.

The answer to our prayers is not necessarily immediate. The request of the Virgin Mary was not answered immediately. She essentially told the servants, “I’m not sure what the answer is that He is going to provide but be prepared to do whatever He tells you. Trust Him.” Likewise we have to be ready for whatever solution He provides. For instance, the prayer that says, “I need a child,” may result in one child, or five children, or the opportunity to adopt a child. Once we make the request, we have to be ready to do “whatever He tells us.”

When Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing near, He said to His mother, “Woman behold your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.
John 19: 26-28

The Virgin Mary has been called the “Mother of all Christians.” This passage, which took place at the foot of Christ’s cross, depicts Christ entrusting the care for His mother to His beloved Disciple, John. Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, is held by tradition to be an older man, who had been a widower. At the feast of the Incarnation, Joseph is shown in the corner of the icon as an older man. He is believed to have children from his first marriage, who would be the half-brothers and half-sisters of Jesus. Hence, when Jesus talks about His “brothers and sisters” He may be in fact referring to them. Tradition holds that Joseph had passed away before the time of the crucifixion, thus the practical need to assign care for Mary to one of the disciples, rather than to her husband.

But this act is more than just entrusting Mary’s care to someone else. This act installs Mary as the Mother of all Christians. She is our “mother.” We are all her “children.” When Jesus said to the Virgin Mary, “behold your son,” He was establishing the church. She would now behold all Christians, all “disciples” as her children. Then, turning to John, the beloved disciple, He told John to “behold your mother!” In this act, Jesus tells not only John, but all Christians, all of us who are disciples of the Lord, to behold the Virgin Mary as our mother. Each of us has an earthly mother, who gave birth to us. But each of us also has a spiritual mother, the Virgin Mary.

As each of us has gone to our earthly mothers for comfort and guidance, we are to do the same with the Virgin Mary. Hence she is the first one whose intercessions we seek. In the month of August (and in other times of need), we offer the Paraklesis services, to ask the Virgin Mary specifically for her intercessions. The first hymn of the Divine Liturgy, “Through the In-

tercessions (Prayers) of the Theotokos, Savior, save us,” asks for her intercessions. Every time we commemorate saints, especially at the end of our services, the first person to whom we ask intercession is the Virgin Mary and THEN others.

As we celebrate the Feast of Her Dormition, we look to her to lead us both in life and in death. In our life, we ask her to intercede for us, to help us cross the sea of life with her constant prayers to her Son on our behalf. And in death, we look to her as a role model—the icon of the Dormition shows her being taken into heaven by the Lord. We pray that this is our destiny as well.

Below are a couple of stanzas from the Paraklesis (translation by Fr. Demetri Kangelaris and Fr. Nicholas Kasemeotes) service, which we will celebrate during the first 14 days of August, asking for the intercessions of the Virgin Mary:

Assaults of the passions have shaken me; my soul to its limits has been filled with much despair; bring peace O Maiden in the calmness, of your Son and your God all blameless one.

I entreat you, O Virgin, disperse the storm of my grief, and the soul’s most inward confusion, scatter it far from me; You are the bride of God, for you have brought forth the Christ, the Prince of Peace, only all-blameless One.

With most serious ailments, and with the passions so dark, I am being tested O Virgin, come and bring help to me; for I have known of you, that you are without fail, the endless treasure of cures, only all-blameless One.

Deliver us, all of your servants from danger, O Theotokos; after God we all free to you, for shelter and covering, as an unshakable wall and our protection.

Lady and the Mother of Him who saves, receive the supplications of the lowly who pray to you; mediate between us, and the One you brought forth; O Lady of all people, intercede for us.

With the hosts of Angels, God’s messenger, with the Lord’s Forerunner and Apostles, the chosen twelve, with the saints most holy, and with you the Theotokos, we seek your intercession for our salvation. Amen.

May God, through the Intercessions of the Virgin Mary, continue to bless and inspire your life!

+Fr. Stavros

Names to be Commemorated for Paraklesis

Please write the names of all those whom you wish to be commemorated in the Paraklesis Services this August on Friday, August 4; Monday, August 7; Wednesday, August 9, Friday, August 11 and Monday, August 14.

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Liturgical Schedule for August 2017

Friday, August 4

Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, August 6 **Holy Transfiguration** *Blessing of Grapes at the Conclusion of the Divine Liturgy*
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew/St. Mark

Ushers: Brett Mourer, Tom Georgas, Peter Theophanous

Welcome Ministry: Greeters: Marenca Patrascoiu, Jenny Paloumpis; Ambassador: Peggy Bradshaw;

Caller: Peggy Bradshaw; Get Acquainted: Ewana Forde, Dwight Forde

Coffee Hour: AHEPA/Daughters

Monday, August 7

Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, August 9

Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.

Friday, August 11

Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, August 13 **10th Sunday of Matthew**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew

Ushers: Tammy Christou, John Alexander, Amin Hanhan

Welcome Ministry: Greeters: Genie Carter Helen Cauthorn; Ambassador: Kalliope Chagaris; Caller: Carole Fotopoulos

Coffee Hour: Dance Groups

Monday, August 14

Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, August 15

Dormition of the Theotokos

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

Sunday, August 20 **11th Sunday of Matthew**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark

Ushers: Ron Myer, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis

Welcome Ministry: Greeters: Elaine Halkias Donna Hambos; Ambassador: Lisa Alsina; Caller: Betty Katsamakis

Coffee Hour: Sunday School

Sunday, August 27 **12th Sunday of Matthew**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke

Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, Marcus Calpakis, Peter Theophanous

Welcome Ministry: Greeters: Skip Higdon, Maria Karounos; Ambassador: Debbie Kavouklis; Caller: Christene Worley

Coffee Hour: Philoptochos' Fanouropita Day

Tuesday, August 29

Beheading of St. John the Baptist

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

Friday, September 1

Beginning of Ecclesiastical Year

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



We Live-Stream every service!
www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

Liturgical Notes for August

Paraklesis Services of Supplication to the Virgin Mary



The service of Paraklesis or “Intercessory Prayer” to the Most Holy Theotokos, the Mother of God, is chanted during the fasting period of the first fourteen days of August, preceding the Feast of the Koimisis or “Falling Asleep” of the Virgin Mary, which is August 15. In this service we ask the Theotokos to pray for us and to intercede for us with her Son and our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not the Theotokos who saves us. God saves us. Thus we do not pray to the Theotokos, but we pray through the Theotokos, that through her intercession, we may find favor with God. The Paraklesis service is chanted not only for fourteen days in August, but can be chanted in at any time of the year, for those who are in need of prayer in time of sickness, despair, struggle, or any occasion, since any of life’s experiences provide us an opportunity for prayer. The Paraklesis Service consists of soft, melodic chants of supplication to the Virgin Mary, and lasts about an hour. It is also one of few services in the church where we commemorate individuals out loud during the service. You will find a place to write the names of you and your families, loved ones and friends (who are living) to be commemorated at the Paraklesis Services in August. The Feast of the Dormition will be celebrated on Tuesday, August 15. We should all attempt to keep the fast, at least from meat, during the first fourteen days of August, and we should each plan to receive Holy Communion on August 7, 14 or 15.

Concerning the Dormition of the Theotokos, this is what the Church has received from ancient times from the tradition of the Fathers. When the time drew night that our Savior was well-pleased to take His Mother to Himself, He declared unto her through an Angel that three days hence, He would translate her from this temporal life to eternity and bliss. On hearing this, she went up with haste to the Mount of Olives, where she prayed continuously. Giving thanks to God, she returned to her house and prepared whatever was necessary for her burial. While these things were taking place, clouds caught up the Apostles from the ends of the earth, where each one happened to be preaching, and brought them at once to the house of the Mother of God, who informed them of the cause of their sudden gathering. As a mother, she consoled them in their affliction as was meet, and then raised her hands to Heaven and prayed for the peace of the world. She blessed the Apostles, and, reclining upon her bed with seemliness, gave up her all-holy spirit into the hands of her Son and God.

With reverence and many lights, and chanting burial hymns, the Apostles took up that God-receiving body and brought it to the sepulchre, while the Angels from Heaven chanted with them, and sent forth her who is higher than the Cherubim. But one Jew, moved by malice, audaciously stretched forth his hand upon the bed and immediately received from divine judgment the wages of his audacity. Those daring hands were severed by an invisible blow. But when he repented and asked forgiveness, his hands were restored. When they had reached the place called Gethsemane, they buried there with honor the all-immaculate body of the Theotokos, which was the source of Life. But on the third day after the burial, when they were eating together, and raised up the artos (bread) in Jesus' Name, as was their custom, the Theotokos appeared in the air, saying "Rejoice" to them. From this they learned concerning the bodily translation of the Theotokos into the Heavens. (From synaxarion of the Archdiocese)



Sunday, August 6 - Transfiguration of our Savior

We read in the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke, how Jesus was Transfigured on Mount Tabor in the presence of His Disciples. Matthew 17:2 says, “His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light.” Jesus was shown in the fullness of His glory as God, and standing beside Him were Moses and Elijah, the two greatest prophets of the Old Testament. This showed the Disciples that the man Jesus was indeed God as well, and pre-figured His glory at the Resurrection and Ascension. Right after the Transfiguration, Jesus began to tell His disciples about His upcoming Passion and Resurrection. The event of the Transfiguration probably happened only a few weeks before Palm Sunday. But since this feastday is so important, so it would not be lost in Lent, the Church has placed it on August 6, 40 days before the Feast of the Holy Cross (September 14), since the feast is tied to the Passion and Cross of Christ. Also, on August 6, we bless grapes, because it is the season of the harvest, in both material terms—this is the time of the year we harvest grapes. But also in spiritual terms—this was the time Jesus, through His blood, was going to harvest His followers into His kingdom.

Tuesday, August 29 - Beheading of St. John the Baptist

St. John the Baptist, according to the Gospel accounts, was beheaded in prison. We commemorate this event each year on August 29, which is also a strict fast day. As St. John the Baptist is the patron saint of our parish, we honor this feast day, and we pray for his intercessions over each of us and our parish.



Not Understanding the Creation of the World and Seeing it is Good

By Charlie Hambos

Fall 2007, Biology 101 at The University of Tampa put my feet back on the ground. There are many times throughout our lives when certain constructs created in our mind through personal experiences, education, family environment and moral compass headings are completely shaken and often times obliterated. This creates the opportunity to rebuild and to rebuild stronger even if it doesn't feel more stable.

For years of my life, going to a Non-denominational Bible-believing Christian school, creationism was taught and evolution was simply society's way of removing God from our lives (This is partially true, but nothing to worry about if our faith is strong). So there I was, a sophomore in college, with this thick Biology 101 book, studying systematics and phylogeny of micro and macro evolution. Something which defied a construct which I had held for so long. My faith was rocked and so was my science background. Again, a chance to rebuild and rebuild stronger.

Fast forward to Fall 2010, Old Testament at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. Studying the creation narratives in the Book of Genesis, we learn that the book is composed of several different Jewish sources combined together which came from oral history passed down from generation to generation. There are actually two creation narratives in Genesis. One in Genesis 1 and the other in Genesis 2. "Adam" could mean "red man" or it could mean "humanity." The first more correct to my previous held belief the second a little bit more concerning because maybe we weren't the first humanity around before the "Adam" that we all know and love.

So, that brings us to, today. Each one of the experiences above have shaped my theology, fueling the passion for the truth and to sometimes rattle the strongly held beliefs of some. I am grateful for those experiences. We have to understand that we will never fully get it until we are with the Creator in Paradise.

What is it that we believe as Orthodox Christians about the Creation of the world and about the Biblical narratives? First, we were not there at the time of the Creation of the world. We have faith that God was the creator, as it says in The Creed, "I believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth and all things visible and invisible." It wasn't just God the Father, but also the Son, the Logos, the Pre-incarnate Logos and the Holy Spirit all together. The best way to explain the relationship of the Holy Trinity is with words such as communion and cooperation, in terms of a dance where each step is made in synchronization with one another. It's still a mystery.

It is a mystery how God created everything. Even though we can not fathom, how God created everything, we know it did not happen by chance or by accident. He created everything from nothing. If He didn't create it from nothing, than He would not be the Creator. The Holy Trinity did it in a calculated and proper way out of His love for His creation. According to Archpriest Andrew Phillips, "Firstly, He made space and time, with light and water. Secondly, He made the sky and the earth. This was so that, thirdly, He could make all sorts of plants and trees, which can only grow if there is earth. Fourthly, God made days and seasons, creating the sun, the moon and the stars. Fifthly, He made everything that lives in the water (fish etc) and everything that lives in the air (birds etc), each

species or 'kind', as the Book of Genesis says, separately. In the sixth and final phase, God made all sorts of creatures that live on the land (animals and reptiles), again each species separately, and then He made the first man and the first woman."

Many Christian groups believe in a literal six-day creation. As Orthodox, we do not. Although St. Basil the Great and other Church Fathers give great detail on what consists of a day, as a twenty-four hour period, they also agree, that the creation of the world was done instantaneously before time existed. If we base a day on the movement of the sun and the moon, then it could not be done in the creation narrative since those were not created until the fourth day.

It is good to clarify that God made animals and in a separate action, created the first human beings. So everything was done in an certain order where each piece of creation could not exist without the other. Understanding, the context of the creation narrative, we know that man was created "in the image of God." For this date and time, that would have been an absurd idea because only kings were made in the divine image according to Fr. Lawrence Farley. This idea that God even had interest in the common man was tough to swallow but that was the truth. Not only that, of all the things in the created world, only the humans were made of both spiritual and material things. God created us from the dust of the earth and breathed His Spirit (Breath) into us. It is also interesting to note, besides piling up on our unkempt, surfaces, dust is found mostly in the air, somewhere between the ground and heaven. Our existence is somewhere between heaven and earth.

Here are a few more concluding thoughts on the subject borrowed from Fr. Andre Phillips. What we read in Genesis concerning creation, "is a telescoped version of the essential events which took place before recorded human history." There are no dogmas taken from here. As Orthodox Christians, we "understand the Scriptures spiritually, ascetically, allegorically and poetically," rather than only literally. As mentioned earlier, the major problem with evolution when it comes to the Creation is the using it in order to deny the Creator. There is a possibility that some tenets of evolution are true but can only be done with God and not without Him. God saw that each part of His creation was good and was created out of love. Borrowing a very important concept from Fr. Stephen Freeman, this is not a two-story universe. God does not operate only in heaven and leave us to our own devices here on earth. God works here with us. In terms of science and creation, we are only beginning to discover how he does it. These include the Laws of Thermodynamics; the Theory of Relativity, Quantum Mechanics and more. Fr. Andrew Phillips says, "We believe the world evolves because of the Creator's impulses sown in it."

There is no error in trying to figure it all out. The only error is limiting the work of God and His operation in His creation. Both ideas of Evolutionism and Creationism limit the work of the Holy Trinity. The former pushes Him far away so, if He exists, can not interfere with our freedom. The latter, believes in the Creator, but limits the mystery of what He can do that is completely beyond our understanding. We must allow ourselves to challenge our long held beliefs about things to gain an understanding without borders and even stronger than the ones we held for so long.

Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism - Alexis Mina Yohai, Daughter of Mark and Eleni Yohai, was baptized on Saturday, June 3. Antonia Mannarino was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

Wedding - Robert Genever and Stacy Tsimpedes were married on Sunday, June 11. Nicole Tsimpedes was the Koumbara! Congratulations!

Wedding - Theresa Rowe and Anthony Heilman were married on Sunday, July 2, by Fr. James Rousakis. Angelina Bartucci was the koumbara! Congratulations!

Funeral - Anna Sarris passed away on Tuesday, May 16. Funeral services were held on Wednesday, May 31. May her memory be eternal!

Get Acquainted Sunday, August 6



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



Altar Boys

Any young man entering 4th grade this fall or older is eligible to serve in the altar at St. John the Baptist. If your son is not on a team and wishes to serve, please contact Fr. Stavros. This coming year, there will be four teams. The new schedule will take effect on August 13. There will be a meeting for all altar boys on Sunday, August 27, following the Divine Liturgy. All altar boys are requested to attend to go over procedures for how to serve in the altar. ONE PARENT of each boy is also requested to attend. This meeting will last approximately one hour.

Calendar Meeting

We will have a meeting immediately following the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, August 13 in the Zaharias Room to set up the parish calendar for the upcoming calendar year. All ministry heads will receive a draft of the calendar by email around August 1 to use as a starting point for important dates of the new school year. Please bring your ideas, your schedules and your plans to this meeting.

Community Outreach - Saturday, August 19

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

Our first GOYA meeting of the new school year will be held on Sunday, August 13 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner will be provided. One parent of each GOYAn is asked to attend the meeting. Also, there will be a parents' meeting, while the GOYAns meet with Fr. Stavros to go over procedures for the year, review the yearly calendar, fill out emergency forms and arrange for parents to sign up to do a meal for one of the meetings. St. Stephen's Summer Camp Reunion and Lock-in is scheduled for Saturday, August 26 beginning at 5:00 p.m.

Prayer for College Students

All college students and professors are invited to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, August 13 with us. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, Fr. Stavros will offer a prayer for all college students as they begin a new school year.

Young Adults Dinner

Our young adult ministry will gear up again for the fall with our kick-off meeting on Sunday, August 20 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. We have a monthly dinner/discussion night at the church. Please bring \$10 to cover the cost of dinner.

New members are welcome.

Ecumenical Prayer Service with Christ the King at St. John the Baptist on Tuesday, September 26

It has become our custom to participate in two Ecumenical Prayer Services per year with Christ the King Roman Catholic Church. In February, they host the service. And in September, we host the service at St. John. We will hold this fall's Ecumenical Prayer Service on Tuesday, September 26, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Fr. Stavros and Fr. Len Plazewski (priest at Christ the King) will both offer homilies. A combined choir from both churches will offer the responses. Members of both congregations are invited to attend. And a reception will follow in the Kourmolis Center. Please plan to attend as we pray and worship together.

The Joys and Challenges of Being a Dad

Dad's Retreat

Saturday, August 26

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

In the Kourmolis Center

This will be a time to pray, to have fellowship, and to discuss the joys and challenges of being a Dad!
Open to all fathers and grandfathers in our community!

RSVP by August 20 to
officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com.

\$15 which includes lunch.



Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 900 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 and ask to add you.

~ Sunday School News ~

The Sunday School Staff is looking forward to serving the children of St. John the Baptist for the 2017-2018 school year. Our first day of Sunday School is Sunday, August 13. Please make sure to register your children on Sundays, July 30, August 6 or August 13, which is the first day of Sunday School. We need this information for our records and for communication.

We are thrilled to expand our Sunday School Program. This year we are adding a 6th Grade classroom taught by Stephanie Moran and a Toddler Program led by Mary Ann Konstas and Anastasia Stonestreet.

We are proud to announce our outstanding staff for the 2017-2018 Sunday School year.

Director of Sunday School: Vickie Peckham

Music/Special Programs: Maria Xenick

Music Assistant: Pam Irwin

Toddler Program: Mary Ann Konstas and Anastasia Stonestreet - Co-Teachers

Pre-K (3 and 4 year olds): Alexis Scarfogliero – Teacher and Denise Panos - Assistant

Kindergarten: - Debbie Nicklow - Teacher and Donna Trakas - Assistant

Grade 1: Melissa Krinos - Teacher and Eleni Pessemier - Assistant

Grade 2: Oliviana Catrone - Teacher and Georgia Kane - Assistant

Grade 3: Amy Kafantaris - Teacher and Freda Manuel - Assistant

Grade 4: Debbie Ferekides

Grade 5: Vickie Peckham - Teacher and Ana Mourer - Assistant

Grade 6: Stephanie Moran

Grade 7 and 8: Heidi Borgeas and Marina Choundas - Co-Teachers

High School: Peggy Bradshaw and Isidoros Passalaris - Co-Teachers

The teachers will meet with Father Stavros and Charlie Hambos for a Sunday School Teachers' Retreat on Saturday, August 12. This is a wonderful way to start the new Sunday School year. The teachers feel blessed to have Father Stavros guiding us as teachers. He is such an inspirational teacher and has provided each of us with a collection of lesson plans. We are looking forward to Charlie's continued involvement with the Sunday School. He will provide a children's sermon on Youth Sundays and also visit each of our classrooms twice, throughout the year. We are so thankful that he is able to have such a personal connection to our students and we are appreciative for all the work he does behind the scenes for our Sunday School.

More information will be provided about the first day of Sunday School in the bulletin and through our weekly e-mails to parents. Please feel free to contact Vickie Peckham at vickiepeckham@gmail.com or 813-406-5626 with any questions, suggestions, or comments regarding St. John's Sunday School Program.

Prayer for School Students-

All School students are invited to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, August 6. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, Father Stavros will offer a prayer for all of our school students, 3 years old through High School, as the school year is about to begin.

St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!

Sermons on Youtube Channel Each Sunday

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



Do you Like our Facebook page?

Like our page and suggest it to your friends. Announcements are posted frequently so you are up to date with everything going on at St. John the Baptist. You can find our page at [StJohnGOCtampa](https://www.facebook.com/StJohnGOCtampa).



Live Streaming

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

To access this page

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

All of the services are available to watch at anytime.



Pictures

Go to Flickr.com and search "St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church" or go to www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoctampa



What Stewardship means to me...

Longtime Loyal Stewards of St. John the Baptist, Dwight & Ewana Forde, have provided a two part message sharing their perspective of 'What Stewardship Means to Me.' We have included Ewana's message this month and will highlight Dwight's thoughts in our September Messenger. Dwight & Ewana married in 2007 in our beautiful church. They are dedicated servants of Christ attending services on a regular basis with Ewana sharing her gifts in the Choir and Dwight helping without hesitation wherever needed. We sincerely thank Dwight & Ewana for their dedication to our church and their time to prepare this thoughtful message.

Several weeks ago, I was praying about what I should write for this article, and I kept thinking about times in my life that have had significant impacts to me. I'm sure we all have days that will be burned into our minds forever. It amazed me how many of these memories happened in or around our beautiful church - my wedding, the day my husband was chrismated, special liturgies and Holy Week services, and funerals for dear friends. I think it only makes sense, then, that my stewardship should reflect how profoundly the church impacts my life. Stewardship, in my words, means living my life in such a way as to reflect the things that are most meaningful to me.

A few years ago, my husband and I were attending a service at the local Baptist church near our home, and the pastor happened to be preaching about stewardship that day. He placed a large glass bowl on a pedestal up at the front of the church with him, and he proceeded to fill it with various materials. He started with half a dozen large baseball-sized objects, and he called these the "need-to's." Then he added some large rocks ("have-to's"), next some smaller rocks ("want-to's"), and some marbles ("could-do's"). As he dropped in each item, things in the bowl gradually settled. Finally, he poured a bucketful of sand ("don't-needs") into the glass bowl, now filled to the brim, but the sand just filled in all of the gaps. The pastor explained that, if we prioritize things in the right order, God can help us make it all work. If the pastor had changed the order and started by pouring the bucket of sand into the bowl, then practically nothing else would have fit. I find that life works that same way. If I set aside time in my day to pray, for example, then I notice that I usually have time to get everything else done too. When I worry about the other stuff first, prayer time typically doesn't happen.

We hear all the time about stewardship being "time, talent, and treasure." One of my talents is singing. I sing along with the car radio all the time, but singing in the car has never made me weep with joy. Singing in church has done that many times. This time of year, I spend time almost every day watching the Rays play, but I know that will never change my life in any meaningful way. Spending time with our church's outreach ministry, though, has definitely transformed me. I should do more of it. I have spent plenty of money eating out at restaurants, but I can't name one significant impact any of those dinners has ever had in my life. The treasure that I give to support our church means that I have a part in bringing the people of our community closer to God.

I pray that all of us will continue to find more ways to make God a priority with how we spend our time, talents, and treasures.



Dwight & Ewana Forde

Please consider including St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church estate plans.

Please consider becoming a founding member of the St. John Legacy Society by leaving what might be left over in your estate to St. John once you've provided for your family. For more information about this new dimension to stewardship, please contact Fr. Stavros at 813-876-8830 ext. 103, or email at frstav@gmail.com or contact Debbie Gavalas at 813-505-8901 to learn how you can have an impact on our church. Whatever you do, please be sure to consult your financial and legal advisors and let your family members know of your intentions.

~ Stewardship Update ~

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God' Hebrews 13:16

We thank the loyal Stewards of St. John the Baptist and hope that each of you had a wonderful summer and enjoyed time with your family and friends. During the summer months our committee has been busy providing statements summarizing pledge commitments and reaching out to many that have not yet filled out a stewardship form. It is important that stewardship forms are completed and pledge payments are up to date. **At the end of this month, August 20, there will be a Special Parish Assembly to update the current By-Laws of our community to align with the Uniform Parish Regulations of the Archdiocese and the Model Parish By-laws of the Metropolis of Atlanta.** These 'Proposed' By-Laws govern and guide the operations of our church. Later in the year we will have our Fall Parish Assembly and Parish Council Elections In order to participate in these meetings and have your voice heard, we encourage you to be up to date with your stewardship commitment 30 days prior to the date of each meeting.

If you have not completed a form, we encourage you to do so today! It is 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.

In addition to securing commitments, we are also planning next year's stewardship campaign which consists of a multi-pronged approach that builds upon the current elements of stewardship, but will also incorporate some new approaches. More on that at a later date!

Debbie Gavalas is doing a great job building the St. John's Legacy Society. Members of this special group of people are leaving a lasting legacy to their spiritual community by leaving a portion of their estate to St. John the Baptist. This is the first year of this program and the response has been great. We thank those who have had the vision to support their church this way and encourage each of you to consider joining the society.

The community now has 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 and easy and it 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!

*YTD as of 7/17/17 & 7/22/16

| A little comparison ~ | 2017* | 2016* |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| Pledged Year to Date | \$397,786 | \$425,896 |
| Received Year to Date | \$274,527 | \$236,935 |
| Average Pledge | \$1,343 | \$1,325 |
| Median Pledge | \$700 | \$700 |
| # of Individual/Families Pledged | 296 | 321 |

THANK YOU!

building
THE DIAKONIA RETREAT CENTER
**PANAGIA
CHAPEL**
ROOF TILES
CAMPAIGN

For more information about
how to get involved please
speak with your parish priest



Thank you to all those who donated to the Diakonia Retreat Center Roof Tile Project. Our church was able to raise \$4,000 towards this project. Most importantly, over 130 families offered names to be commemorated in the Panagia Chapel for the years to come, which will also be sealed permanently in the Holy Altar Table at the consecration of the church.



THE PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETIES OF TAMPA BAY HUNGER PROJECT

To help the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the elderly, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widowed, the disabled victims of disaster whether they are in the United States or elsewhere in the world.

Join us in the fight against hunger as we assemble

20,000 healthy meals

for hungry children in the local community.

For I was *hungry* and you gave me something to eat, I was *thirsty* and you gave me something to drink, I was a *stranger* and you invited me in. *Matthew 25:35.*

When:

Sunday, September 24, 2017

Time:

1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Where:

**St. John the Baptist
Greek Orthodox Church
2418 W Swann Ave
Tampa, FL 33609**

Contact Jeanie Nenos at 813-451-9116 for any questions.

VISIT OUR PAGE TO VOLUNTEER AND TO DONATE:

WWW.FEEDINGCHILDRENEVERYWHERE.COM/EVENTS/PHILOPTOCHOS-SOCIETIES-OF-TAMPA-BAY-HUNGER-PROJECT/

Council of Ministries Open House

Sunday, August 27

Each Ministry will have a booth and representative to share information.

Last year the Parish Council formally approved the rollout of a Ministry Based Organization or MBO to include the Council of Ministries. This complements the current 'operational' efforts of our ministries.

We are very excited about this concept as a way to revitalize and energize our community! Our Council of Ministries brings together all levels of church leadership and provides a framework to work together to improve communication, provide testimonials, identify resources, best practices, goals, talents, etc. to serve the mission of our Church and broader vision of our parish.

We have many exciting ministries at St. John the Baptist with something for everyone and no limits on how many ministry groups you may choose for participation. They are all different, with varying objectives, age of members and activities.

Come learn more about the individual Ministries at St. John the Baptist Sunday, August 27 at our Ministry Open House!

Greek Dance Groups - I Hara Mas is the children's dance group; Parea is the teenage dance group; and Panigyri is the adult group.

The AHEPA Family - Promotes Hellenic culture and education by having fellowship gatherings and offering scholarships.

Greek Festival - Each November, our church sponsors the annual Greek festival, which shares our culture and faith with the Tampa community.

Sunday School - Weekly Sunday School classes teach our children about the Orthodox Faith. We are always looking for volunteers to teach our classes and we encourage those with children to bring them every Sunday.

GOYA - This is our teenage group for young people in the 7-12th grades. They participate in a monthly spiritual encounter, social events, retreats and sponsor a Lenten retreat each spring.

HOPE/JOY - Youth ages 3 years old through 6th grade come together for spiritual retreats, social events and service projects.

Small Group Ministry - There are at present four small groups that gather each week to discuss the Bible, Orthodoxy and the Christian life. They are led by lay people and meet in various locations throughout Tampa.

Bible Study - A traditional Bible study is offered once a week at the church in the evening.

Community Outreach - St. John the Baptist is affiliated with an interfaith coalition to serve food to the homeless in Tampa Bay once a month on Saturdays, with additional opportunities during the year.

Philoptochos - The Annunciation Chapter is a women's organization of the parish dedicated to providing aid for the poor and needy and enriching our parish life.

Choir - Our choir sings on Sundays and at other services throughout the year. They practice on Wednesday evenings and anyone interested is welcome to join.

Welcoming Ministry - This a group of people who welcome new people to our parish, get people connected and help to grow our parish on a weekly basis. Those who serve get on a list and serve on a rotating basis.

MOMS - This is a ministry for mothers to gather together to form a network of mutual spiritual support. It is for mothers with wisdom to share and mothers who are searching for answers and meaning in the vocation of motherhood.

Young at Heart - With faith, a desire to give back and in appreciation of our many blessings, we will use the experience of our years as a badge of commitment to encourage, to inspire and to set an example to others to ENJOY LIFE while HELPING our church and community.

For a list of more ministries and our Ministry Leader contacts, please visit our Website.

Want to Learn Modern Greek?

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Adult Greek School



Teacher born, raised, and educated in Greece with over 20 years of experience teaching the Greek language. Adult classes for beginners taught @ St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church 2418 W. Swann Ave, Tampa, FL 33609. Classes are held at 6:00 - 8:30 p.m. on Thursday evenings, starting on September 28, 2017. This will be the first of three sessions, with each session lasting three months.

- Speak Greek
- Read Greek
- Write Greek
- Basic Grammar & More.
- Some Greek History
- Book Included in Price!!

Price per session is \$100 for church members and \$125 for non-members.

Contact Ms. Magdalini Myer: at (813) 909-2327, aspis69@aol.com or the church office at (813) 876-8830.

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
Perry & Fay Stamatiades - Asheville, NC
Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI
Wesley & Melissa Thompson - Clearwater, FL
Demitrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH

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
Lillian Thomas - Highland, IN
Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL
Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD
Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA

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.



~AHEPA Family News~



Members of AHEPA Lycurgus Chapter 12 and Daughters of Penelope Alcmaeon Chapter 167 recently elected the officers of their chapters who will serve for the 2017-2018 year. The officers are shown below photographed during the 2017-2018 KICK-OFF DINNER.

The officers for the 2017 – 2018 year of Lycurgus Chapter 12 include the following:

Gus Paras, President
Ron Myer, Vice-President
Thomas Sakaris, Secretary
Tom Georgas, Treasurer
Michael Trimis, Advisor/Chairman
Congratulations to everyone!



The officers for the Daughters of Penelope Chapter 167 include the following:

Maria Zabetakis, President
Katherine Sakkis, Vice-President
Diane Trimis, Corr. Secretary
Nicole Leontsinis, Rec. Secretary
Kaliopie Chagaris, Treasurer
Magda Myer, Marshal
Jenny Paloumpis, Warden
Chris Frazier, Advisor/Chairman

TAMPA AHEPA AND DAUGHTERS RECEIVE LEADERSHIP ROLES AT DISTRICT CONVENTIONS.

This year members of AHEPA Lycurgus Chapter 12 and Daughters of Penelope Alcmaeon Chapter 167 were honored by being elected to leadership positions at the District Convention held in June at the Safety Harbor Resort and Spa. They will serve their Lodges during the 2017- 2018 year.

Michael Trimis elected to AHEPA Citrus District 2 Lodge as Lieutenant Governor.

Michael Trimis was sworn in during the Citrus District 2 convention held in Safety Harbor, Florida to the position of Lt. Governor. Michael who has served the local AHEPA Lycurgus Chapter 12 in many capacities including President for several terms, has been honored for his exemplary service to AHEPA and the local Tampa AHEPA Chapter. Congratulations Mike!

Ourania Stephanides elected to Daughters of Penelope Citrus District 2 Lodge as Lieutenant Governor.

Ourania Stephanides was sworn in to the position of Governor. Ourania has served the Daughters of Penelope in Tampa in numerous leadership positions and follows in the footsteps of her mother who served the Daughters in Tampa during the 1960's. Congratulations to Ourania!

Debbie Ferekides elected to Daughters of Penelope Citrus District 2 Lodge as Advisor to the Maids of Athena.

Debbie Ferekides was sworn in to the position of Advisor to the Maids of Athena. Debbie has served the Daughters of Penelope in Tampa as the Advisor to the Maids of Athena and will now serve in the Advisors position at the District level. Congratulations Debbie!

The Sun State 32nd Annual Eastern Orthodox Junior Olympics

Many thanks to those who helped us put on the Junior Olympics this past June 16-18. Nearly 150 people from five parishes (St. John the Baptist, St. Nicholas-Tarpon, Holy Trinity-Clearwater, St. Stefanos - St. Pete, and St. George-New Port Richey) participated in this event. And congratulations to our GOYAns for your great example of sportsmanship.





~Save the Date~



The Annual St. John the Baptist Greek Festival is Coming Soon!
November 10, 11 & 12, 2017

Things We Know

- It takes the effort of our entire Church Community to host a successful festival and highlight our Greek Culture/Heritage but more importantly OUR Orthodox Christian Faith!
- Our festival is a lot of fun but only happens as a result of many volunteers dedicating their time and talent!
- Planning meetings will be announced soon with Volunteer Sign-ups coming in September.
- Many opportunities will be available for participation; from planning, advertising, baking, decorating, dancing, raffle sales, donations needed for silent auction to the hundreds of opportunities over the festival weekend!
- This is our opportunity to showcase our faith, culture and beautiful place of worship at St. John the Baptist.
- **Our First Festival Meeting is Monday, August 21 at 7:00 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center.**

Your Ideas Are Welcome!

A Prayer from Parents for their Children as they begin a new school year

Dear Lord,

Thank you for the gift of a new school year. Thank you for our school community and the great education our kids enjoy. With gratitude I pray for the following:

CONFIDENCE. Help my children see themselves through your eyes and draw strength from their confidence in you.

"God is within her, she will not fall." Psalm 46:5

KINDNESS. Enable my children to be a blessing and a light to those they encounter.

"So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

WISDOM. Open my children's hearts and minds to your ways, and enlighten them with insight into your will.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." James 1:5

SELF-CONTROL. Give my children the discipline to work hard, control negative impulses, and grow in the virtues that draw them to you.

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

Hebrews 12:11

STRONG RELATIONSHIPS. Surround my children with positive influences and godly friends who help them grow in your image and become the best version of themselves.

"Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals.'" 1 Corinthians 15:33

COURAGE. Instill in my children the courage to be true to themselves and faithful to you, even if it means standing alone.

"The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." Deuteronomy 31:8

FAITH. Fix my children's eyes on the big picture and keep their minds in awe of your ability to create, control, and sustain the universe.

"The men were amazed and asked, 'What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him.'" Matthew 8:27

PEACE. Calm my children's hearts when they feel stressed, worried, or lost. Remind them you are the God of peace, not confusion. Make your presence known as you carry them through trials and challenges.

"I am leaving you with a gift; peace of mind and of heart. And the peace I give you is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid." John 14:27

CLARITY. Help my children hear your voice and see you at work in their lives. Make it clear what you want them to do.

"For God speaks again and again, though people do not recognize it." Job 33:14

FORTITUDE. Give my children strength and grit when they get tested, and help them recognize any escapes that you provide.

"And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

1 Corinthians 10:13

PROTECTION. Armor my children physically, mentally, and spiritually. Surround them with angels to guard them and guide them. Cultivate sharp instincts in each of them that allow them to be gentle yet smart.

"Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves." Matthew 10:16

HOPE. Equip my children to bounce back quickly from daily disappointments. Keep them anchored in the hope of heaven, the joy of Jesus, and the security of your promises.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Welcome to the Parish Council

The Structure of the Greek Orthodox Church

For the next several months, we will be printing excerpts from a pamphlet entitled “Welcome to the Parish Council”, which has been put out by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The material covered not only relates to the work of the Parish Council but how the church is set up to run in the United States, the relationship between clergy and laity, between parish and Metropolis and Archdiocese, and between ministries and parish. It is interesting and relevant information for all to read, whether you serve on the parish council or not.

In Tribute

To the untold numbers of dedicated clergy & laity whose devoted efforts and sacrifices over the decades have helped establish, strengthen, and maintain the parishes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

A Message from His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America

Beloved in the Lord,

I give thanks to God for each of you and for your commitment to the sacred task of serving our Lord and your brothers and sisters in Christ in the work of ministry. You have been chosen by your respective communities to an office that is essential to the mission of the Church in sharing the love of God and the truth of the Gospel. In addition, in an act of faith you have expressed your willingness to offer your time and abilities for the spiritual growth and well-being of your parish, for the salvation of souls, and ultimately, for the kingdom of God and His glory.

It is a joy for me on behalf of our Holy Eparchial Synod to commend to you this new resource, *Welcome to the Parish Council: A Guidebook for Parish Council Members Serving Communities of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*. Prepared under the guidance and direction of our Holy Synod, this book focuses on the meaning and significance of being a parish council member. The book also emphasizes the importance of living our Orthodox Christian Faith, understanding the history and structure of our Church, and having a “ministry-oriented” mindset. The quality, message, and information of this new text will make it a valuable guide both for those who have been recently elected to a parish council and for those who have served faithfully for many years.

The pages that follow will affirm that the nature of the office you hold is rooted in the ministry of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Our Lord emphasized to His disciples the priority of love when He said to them, “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). His Apostles shared and affirmed this ministry of love in word and deed as they established and nurtured communities of faith. As stewards of your parish, you are called to continue this sacred mission of building up the Body of Christ in a way that reveals your love for God and your love for His people. Further, the ministry of our Lord and His disciples was one of prayer. Communion with God through worship and prayer is our most sacred calling as Christians. It is also the foundation of the wisdom, attitudes, and perspectives you will need to serve your community. Through your continuous participation in the divine services of the Church and through regular prayer, you will have the strength and guidance you need to join with your fellow parishioners and council members in seeking the will of God. As a parish council member it is through love and prayer that you will be further equipped to help your parish fulfill the vital and sacred mission of the Church which is to reach out and to gather God’s people to His home.

Together as laity, clergy, and hierarchs, our greatest concern is the spiritual wellbeing and growth of each parish, and it is together in Christ that we will accomplish this sacred work of building parishes of faith and love. May our good and gracious Lord bless you with His divine strength and wisdom in your service. As we labor together for His glory and His kingdom, may we do so in a manner that offers a genuine witness of our love for God, for our Orthodox Christian Faith, and for one another, so that all will know that the blessed life of peace and joy in Christ is known and experienced in the community of believers.

With paternal love in Christ,

†DEMETRIOS
Archbishop of America



What is a Parish Council?

A Parish Council is the administrative body of a Church community elected by its stewards for the purpose of working together with the Parish Priest or Proistamenos in fulfilling the mission and goals of that particular community.

This brief description of the local governing body of a Parish also explains a fundamental aspect of the structure of the Orthodox Church. Both clergy and laity are the “People of God,” who seek by the grace of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the mission entrusted to them to live and proclaim the Holy Gospel and the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church.

Historically, clergy and laity have worked together in dealing with matters of the Church’s life. The Parish Council is an example of the synergy of clergy and laity; it is a vehicle for implementing the ongoing mission of the Church and planning the necessary strategies, policies, procedures, and activities that will enable the Parish to move forward in accomplishing God’s work.

As a member of the Parish Council, it is important to remember that you have been elected to serve a special ministry which requires total love, loyalty, and dedication to Christ and His Church. You are now an official representative of the Church and thus are expected to exert every effort to exemplify its sacred character and spirit. Upon election to this trusted office, you assumed three basic obligations which will help guide you in your ministry:

1. To understand, live by, and uphold the tenets, teachings, and traditions of the Greek Orthodox Church;
2. To understand and abide by the GOAA Regulations (formerly known as the UPR) as set forth by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America through the Clergy-Laity Congresses.
3. To live by and uphold your oath of office by utilizing your God-given time, talents, and treasures for the spiritual progress and advancement of your parish.

You attested to this publicly before the congregation of your parish when the following affirmation of office was administered to you by your parish priest (and to which you affixed your signature):

“I, _____, do solemnly affirm that I will uphold the dogma, teaching, traditions, holy canons, worship and moral principles of the Greek Orthodox Church, as well as the Charter and Regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, and that I will faithfully and sincerely full the duties and obligations required of a member of the Parish Council. So help me, God.”

The Ministry of the Parish Council

Christ-Centered Servant Leadership

Parish Council members serve as role models for parishioners and must take their ministry very seriously. They should lead by example by attending Church and parish events, and regularly participating in the sacramental life of the Church. By doing so, they will have a powerful effect on the overall life of the community. If Parish Council members treat everyone with love and respect, as Christ loves us, then parishioners will do likewise. The Council members must practice servant leadership by identifying and examining the ministry needs of the

parishioners and taking the necessary steps to meet those needs, whether through the improvement and expansion of existing ministries or through the creation of new ones.

Responsibilities and Roles

The most important responsibility of the Parish Council is to assist the Parish Priest in the administration of the ministries of the Parish (GOAA Regulations 29:1A). Some of the principal roles employed by effective Parish Councils include, but are not limited to, planning, developing, organizing, and implementing stewardship programs and various educational ministries of the Church; reporting and communicating to the parishioners the work and ministries of the Church at the Metropolis and Archdiocesan levels; and recruiting and training others for further service. The Parish Council must also abide by Local, State, and Federal statutes applicable to the Parish and by the GOAA Regulations.

In all things, Council members should imitate our Lord Jesus Christ, who “came not to be served but to serve” (Matthew 20:28). The entire focus of the Parish Council must be to serve the needs of the faithful and to spread the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Mentoring and Succession

Within the Parish Council, there are two very important activities needed to continue developing the leadership of its members. The first is to enhance leadership skills through the mentoring of competent leaders. In order to assist new members as they assume their positions and ministries within the Parish Council, *the more experienced* members should aid, guide, and encourage these new members to assume their responsibilities.

The second is the development of a systematic succession strategy in which each ministry has a chairperson and an assistant (who will eventually become the next chairperson).

The role that you assume as a member of your Parish Council is best understood when the Parish is viewed as an integral part of the “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church” that we confess in the Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed at every Liturgy.

Misunderstandings can occur when the Church is looked upon purely from a merely local or parochial point of view. To be sure, the needs of the local Parish are the most immediate concern of the Parish Council. To see only this is to fail to comprehend the role of the Parish in the overall life and structure of the Church at the Metropolis and Archdiocesan levels. It would be like a family member showing no interest in or responsibility for the problems and needs of other members of the family.

According to St. Paul, the Church is the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-27), and the pillar and foundation of the Truth (1 Timothy 3:15). Without this basic understanding the Parish can easily be reduced to little more than an organizational center or administrative structure, a kind of religious business enterprise, instead of being a Holy and Divine Eucharistic community, called to be in the world, but ultimately not of the world, a community that is set apart from all other organizations and bodies in our secularized society.

Next month, we will review the role of the Church in its basic form as the Body of Christ, the holy vessel of the Faith, for which both clergy and laity are responsible.

Class of 2017



Chace Sibley (right) graduated from Robinson's International Baccalaureate (IB) program and headed to University of Florida to study pre-med with an interest in forensic pathology.



John, Mikaela & Lukas Karamitsanis (left) graduated from George M. Steinbrenner High School and all three are planning on attending Florida State University.



Julia Blankenbaker (right) graduated Salutatorian from Wiregrass Ranch High School in Wesley Chapel. She will be attending Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale. She intends to major in Neuroscience.



Congratulations

Graduates!



| ~ August 2017 ~ | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--------------|--|--|
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
| | | 1 ** Beginning of Dormition Fast Basketball 8:00 p.m. | 2 ** | 3 ** | 4 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. | 5 ** |
| 6 ** Transfiguration Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. | 7 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. | 8 ** Basketball 8:00 p.m. | 9 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. | 10 ** | 11 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. | 12 ** Sunday School Teacher Seminar |
| 13 ** 10th Sunday of Matthew Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. First Day of S.S. Calendar Meeting GOYA Kick off | 14 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. | 15 Dormition of the Thootokos Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m. | 16 ** | 17 | 18 ** | 19 Community Outreach |
| 20 11th Sunday of Matthew Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Parish Assembly AHEPA/DOP YAL | 21 Festival Meeting 7:00 p.m. | 22 Basketball 8:00 p.m. | 23 ** | 24 | 25 ** | 26 Dad's Retreat GOYA Camp Reunion |
| 27 12th Sunday of Matthew Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Altar Boy Meeting Ministry Fair | 28 | 29 ** Beheading of St. John the Baptist Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m. | 30 ** | 31 | | |

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

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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.

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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

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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

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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
Dean Koutroumanis 813-624-4620

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
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Gary Ward 813-846-3898

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Usher
Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

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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.