

# 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*

# January 2019

### 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

## Services for Theophany and Feast of St. John the Baptist

The Epiphany celebration in Tarpon Springs is the largest in the Western hemisphere and among the largest in the world. Each year, we close our church so that we can take part in this great celebration. His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios has asked all of the priests of this area to join him (along with His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios) for this annual celebration. Recognizing that this is a Sunday, His Eminence gave us the option to celebrate the Divine Liturgy very early Sunday morning or on Saturday night. I think more people are likely to attend on Saturday night than early Sunday morning, so we are scheduling Divine Liturgy for Saturday evening, January 5, at 6:00 p.m. There will be no Divine Liturgy at St. John on Sunday morning, January 6. If you are not planning to attend the Divine Liturgy in Tarpon Springs, please plan to come Saturday evening. The Feast of Theophany is one of the major feasts of the Liturgical year. (see more in the Liturgical notes). Services will be as follows:

### **Friday, January 4**

Royal Hours of Theophany 9:30 -11:00 a.m.

### **Saturday, January 5**

Orthros 4:45 p.m. Divine Liturgy for Theophany 6:00 p.m.  
Great Blessing of the Waters 7:15 p.m.

### **Sunday, January 6**

Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas in Tarpon Springs 9:30 a.m.

### **Sunday, January 6**

Great Vespers for Feast of St. John the Baptist 6:30 p.m.

### **Monday, January 7 - Feast of St. John the Baptist**

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m.

## Fr. Stavros' Message

In late 2017, I read a book called "My One Word" by Mike Ashcraft and Rachel Olsen. The premise of this book was this: Most of us, every New Year, make a list of New Years' Resolutions that a) we don't keep and b) we have a hard time remembering. Rather than making a list of goals, their premise was that one should choose a single word, and base the entire year around that one word. Rather than trying to remember a list of things, remember one word. One word is easy enough to remember that we can check in with that one word every day. However, the word should be carefully chosen. It should certainly encompass goals. It should define an overall mindset that we want to have during the year.

In 2018, I chose both a personal word, as well as word for our parish of Saint John. My personal word was "faithful." I wanted to be faithful to projects I started, faithful to eating better, faithful to exercising, faithful to family and friendships, and most especially faithful to God. I'm not sure how I succeeded in any of these things actually. The one word, while easy to remember, was certainly a challenge to incorporate into life on a daily basis. I guess that's why it's good that a New Year is coming, and with the New Year, I'll choose a new word.

The word for our parish was "engaged". The idea behind this word was that we wanted to move people from being "active" to being "engaged" in both the life of Christ and of the Church. It is possible to be active in church without being engaged. An example is someone who attends Divine Liturgy, even every Sunday, but doesn't participate in worship. They are active, in the sense that they are physically present, but they are not engaged, or involved, in worship. As with anything in life, change generally occurs slowly, so, as with my personal one word, our parish one word had some good results but certainly could have been better.

Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis, Priest

2418 W. Swann Avenue, Tampa, FL 33609 Office: (813) 876-8830 Email: officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com>

# Blessed

I asked each person in our parish to choose one word to define your 2018. In fact we even created a “wordle” on a large board and posted it in the hall. I don’t know whose word is whose. Each person who chose a word will know how they did with it.

With 2019 upon us, I wanted to use the one word theme again personally, and for our parish and I’d like to encourage each of you reading this message to consider choosing a word of your own which will define your 2019. (I’d like to ask that you email me your word by January 10, so we can create another “wordle” for our hall for 2019—you can email me at frstav@gmail.com and all you have to email is your “one word”).

The word for our parish for 2019 is **BLESSED**.

There are many aspects to this word “Blessed.” Allow me to reflect on four of them.

## Counting Ourselves Blessed - An Attitude of Gratitude

*Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from Above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*

*James 1:17*

Many of us are familiar with this line of Scripture. In fact, this verse is quoted in a prayer near the end of the Divine Liturgy. This verse of Scripture, as well as the line in the prayer, acknowledge that everything good that we have is a blessing from God. One cannot feel blessed without a sense of gratitude that every blessing we have is from God and that everything good that we have is a blessing, not an entitlement. Each day we wake up, we are blessed to have woken up. Each bit of food we have is a blessing, so we are blessed every time we eat.

Clothes, a home, a means of transportation—think where we’d be without these ordinary and mundane things. So even the ordinary things we have are blessings for which we should feel grateful.

Next we come to the important things—our jobs that allow us to provide sustenance for our families. Our ability to have a job comes from a talent that God has first blessed us with. So, jobs and talents are blessings. Then we come to the more extraordinary things—marriages, children.

We move next to the beautiful things in life—marriages, children, family, close friendships. These are all blessings that ultimately have their origin with God. So, if we are married, or if we have children, or if we have a family, or if we have close friendships, we are blessed.

Next, we move to the sublime—These are the things that we take for granted, but if stopped to think about them, they are the

greatest blessings. We have air to breathe, water to drink, sunlight to warm us and allow plants to grow. We have wind and rain. We have all the processes of the human body—from its ability to heal and fight off injury, to intelligence, laughter, lungs, hands, feet and heart. There are so many blessings that each of us has.

Finally, we move to the Divine—Through the Lord we have our very being, forgiveness when we make errors, purpose, and the most important blessing of all, the potential for salvation.

The person who is blessed has an “attitude of gratitude.” Read over the preceding paragraphs on even the worst of days and you’ll see exactly how much we are all blessed. Family, marriage and children aren’t even the greatest blessings. They don’t come ahead of salvation, or even the gift of life we’ve all been given.

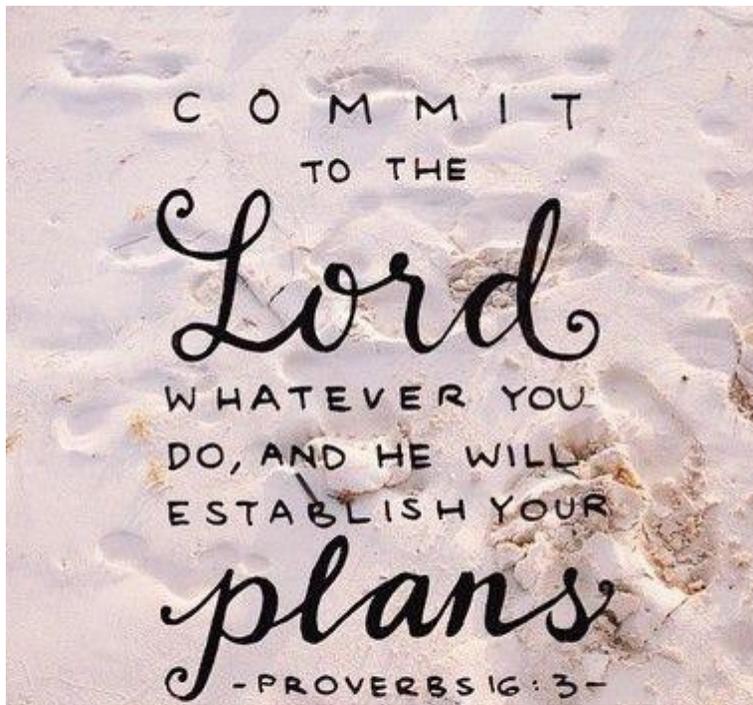
The first way that we manifest the word “blessed” in our lives is to be grateful for what we have, rather than being upset with what we don’t have. We also learn to see even the smallest things as blessings. We feel blessed even in the mundane. An average day can become better if we feel blessed to be alive.

So much of what trips us up in life is an attitude of entitlement. We feel entitled to each day, so bad days happen when things don’t happen as we feel entitled that they should happen. If we approached each day as a blessing, just to be alive to start the day, then each day will start out great no matter when mundane or even difficult things it may hold. Think about how different life could be if it was approached with this attitude.

Count your blessings today. Feel blessed for all that is good in your life. Feel blessed that God has given each of us a path to eternal life and today is one blessing on the continuum of that journey. If we start actually counting our blessings, we will all realize that we are each pretty blessed, regardless of what challenges we have in our lives.

Start your day with an attitude of gratitude. Count your blessings. Feel blessed.

Gratitude  
is the best  
Attitude



## Do I Have God's Blessing? - The Need to Focus

*Blessed is everyone who feasts the Lord, who walks in His ways!*  
*Psalm 128:1*

In the Old Testament, when a man's father was about to die, he would go to him and ask for his blessing. The son would want to know that whatever he was doing was going to be under the umbrella of his father's blessing even after his father died.

We are all children of God. He is our Father. In doing the things we do, do we think about whether we have His blessing. But then we try to rationalize the things we do, thinking that certainly God would bless whatever thing we want to do. I recently heard a podcast that got me thinking about God's blessings in a different way. The speaker said that rather than ask God to bless what we are doing, that we should be doing what God is blessing.

So, how can we know that we are doing what is pleasing to God, that we are doing what God is blessing? Well, there are two things that we know are never wrong—it is never wrong to love God and it is never wrong to love our neighbor. We don't have to wonder what God's reaction will be, whether He will bless us or not, if we are loving Him or loving our neighbor. We know that God is love and God blesses gestures of love towards others.

There are two ways to look at behavior as it pleases God each day. The first is to ask for God's blessing often. It is to ask God to help us to keep things under His umbrella throughout the day.

We have discussed this before, but when a Metropolitan or Bishop serves at the Divine Liturgy, the priests and deacons who serve with him bow to him before every line or movement to receive his blessing. In the case of the Divine Liturgy, this provides good order and makes it more certain that priests won't speak over each other. Each of us makes dozens of decisions each day. Imagine asking God for a blessing before each of them. Here are some examples:

Upon waking up—Ask the Lord to bless your day

Before breakfast—Ask God to bless your food

After breakfast—Thank God for the food you ate.

Before getting in the car to go to work—ask the Lord to bless your commute. That doesn't mean to ask Him to make every light green or to break up rush hour traffic. It means asking the Lord to keep you safe and for you to keep others safe. It means asking Him to bless you and to help you in turn to bless others. Asking for His blessing and for help to be a conscientious driver will undoubtedly make us less likely to drive like a maniac, have road rage, or be texting while driving. Why? Because we've just asked God for His blessing.

After getting to work—thank the Lord for your safe arrival. Ask Him to bless your day.

Before a contentious meeting—Ask the Lord to walk with you into the meeting.

Before lunch—Ask the Lord to bless your food.

After lunch—thank God for the food you ate and ask God to bless the work you'll do in the afternoon.

And this list could go on and on for events throughout the day. If we are continually asking God to bless us as we go throughout our day, then we are never going to be too far away from Him.

The second way to look at behavior is not to ask God to bless what you are going to do, but asking God, and I mean, asking in prayer, "Lord, help me stay focused on the things You are blessing. Let everything that I'm going to do today be something that You have blessed."

We know what is right and wrong according to God. We also know what is right and wrong according to us. And we also know the gap between what we think is right by us and what we know is right by God. Many times, we rationalize what we are doing as a way to bridge that gap—i.e. I know this isn't "quite right" but hey it's still better than most people. If we want to bridge this gap, then we should ask God for the strength to do His will and the strength to fight the temptation to do ours.

Someone recently asked me what is the purpose of life? The answer simply is, "to glorify God." If everything we do, say, think and plan glorifies God, then we'd have the perfect life, we'd be saints. The bar is set extremely high. None of us can hit it. But that should stop us from trying. That shouldn't stop us from trying to live in step with God.

For the very righteous, this is still a life-long struggle. However, there are many who don't even make a struggle of it—they just give in to what they want and don't give much thought to what God has blessed us to do, which is to glorify Him on earth, so that He will glorify us in heaven.

To do all this requires a lot of focus. Which again comes back to why we pray so often. Prayer helps us to maintain focus. It helps us to stay under the "umbrella of God." It helps us to keep doing the things that God has blessed, rather than the things we want to do, or the things we try to rationalize Him blessing.

Don't just ask God to bless what you are doing. Work to do the things that He is blessing!

## Sharing My Blessings with Others - A Spirit of Generosity

*And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work.*  
2 Corinthians 9:8

If everything we have that is good is a blessing from God, then nothing is truly ours. And if nothing is truly ours, we should be eager to share what we have with those who are in need. The information in the following paragraphs of this section was taken from a podcast, as well as from my sermon on December 2.

Imagine that you go to a McDonald's drive-thru and you buy your child or grandchild some French fries. You decide not to order any for yourself, because you tell yourself they aren't healthy. Then you give the fries to your child in the backseat of your car. They smell so good, you ask your child for a few fries. And your child says "Hey, these are MY fries, and I don't want to share them." And you think "Hey, I drove over here, I bought you these fries, without me you wouldn't have them, I made it possible for you to have them." This is the opposite of generosity. God blesses us with so much, from the very air we breathe to our freedom to another day of life, and yet we have a hard time reciprocating His generosity. A part of what it means to be blessed is to share our blessings with others. To give back to others from what God has first given us.

You are reading this message because someone passed the faith on to you. Maybe you've had it your whole life and you received it from your parents. Maybe you've discovered it in adulthood because you heard the message from a friend or through an article or in some other way. At some point, someone told you about this faith.

It is our duty to pass the faith on to the next generation. Psalm 78:4 says, "*We will not hide them from their children but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord and His might, and the wonder which He has wrought.*"

What legacy will we pass on? We will hopefully pass on our faith and our values. Which values? Our society values a lot of things today that are ungodly and unhelpful. The Bible identifies three specific values that are timeless. They are found in I Corinthians 13:13, "*So faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*"

In the Bible you will find the word "faith" used 246 times. The word "hope" is used 185 times. And the word "love" is used 733 times.

The word "give" appears 2,285 times. The Bible says more about generosity than faith, hope and love combined. Why does the Bible talk more about generosity than these other things? Because generosity is an expression of faith, hope and love.

Generosity is an expression of faith—it says that God will take care of my needs so I don't mind giving things away.

Generosity is an expression of hope—it says that my hope is in heaven, not just to get a bunch of things here. So, I can give away my things.

Generosity is an expression of love—you can give without loving but you can't love without giving. Your generosity is your heartbeat. Where your treasure goes, that's where your heart goes. How generous you are correlates with how your heart beats for God.

Love is about giving. You can't love someone without being generous. In loving someone, we give what THEY need, not what they deserve. God gives us what we need—forgiveness, redemption, salvation—not necessarily what we deserve. Love is about blessing others with what they need, not what is comfortable for us to give. Love includes sacrifice. And sacrifice is hard.

One legacy we want to leave with our son is that we want him to be generous. We want him to be generous with his time, his talent, his treasure, his encouragement, his compliments. We want him to be blessed with abundance. But we want him to share from that abundance with others.

There are two kinds of people in the world—givers and takers. We want our son to be a giver. We don't want him to be stingy, or have his life be an "all about me" proposition. We want it to be not about counting his blessings but sharing them with others.

Generosity is an essential component of mental health.

Generosity displays God's character. It shows what God is, a giver—He gives us our next breath, our heartbeat, our freedom. We would have nothing without God's generosity.

Our money comes from talents, blessings that come from God. Freedom is another blessing from God. God wants us to be generous like Him.

We live off of God's generous blessings—God gives to all generously and ungrudgingly. In John 3:16 we read, "For God so loved the world that He GAVE His only-Begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

God doesn't want our money—He wants our hearts. God doesn't want our time—He wants our hearts. We don't own anything—we don't come into this life with anything, we don't leave this life with anything. Everything is on loan from God. God wants us to be like Him, unselfish, generous. Generosity defeats materialism, the antidote to materialism.

What are we teaching our kids about materialism versus generosity? What are we going to pass on to our kids about materialism? We are getting more and more materialistic, pressure to get more and more stuff. Christmas catalogues come out before the end of summer and the Birth of Christ has become the most important materialist holiday of the year. Instead of receiving the gift of hope from the manger, we are focused more on getting.

Our motto has become "Spend it all, have it all, get it all." And our goal is to get more and more and more.

I saw a bumper sticker which read: "He who dies with the most toys wins." It should say "He who dies with the most toys still dies."

We can't take our things with us. Yet materialism pervades every corner of our culture. It's all about "get, get, get, get all you can." Buy things you don't need with money you don't have to impress people you don't even like—Keeping up with Joneses.

Jesus says in Matthew 6:24 (and in Luke 16:13) "*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (money).*" He does not say that we "should not serve God and money." He says that we cannot.

We cannot have two number one goals—only one can go first. We can say “I want to serve God and I want money.” We cannot say “I feel so blessed by God that I don’t want to share my blessings with anyone else, particularly people in serious need.

One thing goes first—it’s either God, or its money. If God doesn’t go first, what is the blessing in life that goes before Him? Whatever that is is our idol. And idols can’t forgive, idols can’t give purpose, and idols can’t give us a home in heaven.

Nothing should go before God—no career can meet your life needs like God can, no person, not your spouse, or children.

Jesus talked more about money than heaven or hell. Why? Because it is the number one thing that keeps us from God. Thinking that life is all about things keeps us from getting to know God.

So put yourself in the place of the child in the back seat of the car. You’ve received the blessing of a large order of tasty French fries. Will you give back some of your blessings to your Father, by sharing them with others? Do we eagerly give back to God what He first gave us?

There is no loving without giving. And one who is blessed eagerly shares blessings with others. To be blessed is to have a spirit of generosity.

## Turning My Blessings into Praise of God

*And Job said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return; the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”*  
Job 1:21

It is easy to feel blessed when everything is going well. It is easy to praise God when we feel abundantly blessed. But how about when we don’t? What about the times when everything is going wrong? There are people reading this message FOR SURE that don’t feel blessed right now. Maybe they’ve lost a job or fallen on financial hard times. Maybe their marriage isn’t the greatest or their kids are having a hard time. Maybe they are having a crisis of conscience or a crisis of faith. It’s easy to tell people to “count your blessings” but we all know that there are times in any life when blessings seem few and far between.

Perhaps the truest test of this word “Blessed” is to be able to see good in all things, to find blessings even in hard times and to turn those blessings into praise of God. The Bible verse above is from the book of Job. The story of Job is 40 chapters long. In the first two chapters, Job is afflicted by Satan with all kinds of calamities. He loses his possessions, his family and his health. He loses everything that is important. But he doesn’t lose faith. For sure his faith is challenged. For 37 chapters he cries out to God to help him. He asks the hard questions of why did this befall him and how will he survive it. He stays faithful and in the last chapter of the book is rewarded by God for his faithfulness.

His statement in Job 1:21 is very poignant. Job said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Job recognizes that all he has is from God. Every blessing is not his to possess but a loan from God. He didn’t come from the womb with anything. He won’t die with any-

thing. He understood that the Lord can give and take away, the same way that an owner can lend or recall from a tenant. And despite his calamities, Job managed to say “Blessed be the name of the Lord.” If we continue reading to verse 1:22, we will read this: “In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.”

Nothing worthwhile in life is easy. The journey to salvation is hard. So is the one word exercise. Both can be filled with meaning and reward. We know the journey to salvation will bring infinite reward if we finish the journey. And the journey through one year with one word will bring reward as well. Imagine how your life could be if you could appreciate your blessings, do what God has blessed, share of your blessings and still feel blessed on the bad days. Imagine how you’d feel after a year of this. You’d be a changed person.

This is the challenge I’m giving to our parish—to count our blessings, to do things that God has blessed, to share of our blessings (both sharing our personal blessings with the church and sharing our church’s blessings far outside of it) and still feeling blessed during the bad days and hard times.

You may find that a different word would be better to define your 2019. But I encourage you to pick a word, define how that word will shape your year, set some goals related to your word and then check in with your word on a daily basis.

If you are looking for a “Theme song” based on this one word “Blessed,” there is a wonderful song called “Blessed be Your Name” by Matt Redman:

Blessed Be Your name  
In the land that is plentiful  
Where Your streams of abundance flow  
Blessed be Your name.

Blessed be Your name  
When I’m found in the desert place  
Though I walk through the wilderness  
Blessed be Your name.

Blessed be your name  
When the sun’s shining down on me  
When the world’s “all as it should be”  
Blessed be Your name.

Blessed be Your name  
On the road marked with suffering  
Though there’s pain in the offering  
Blessed be Your name.

Every blessing You pour out  
I’ll turn back to praise  
When the darkness closes in, Lord  
Still I will say

Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your name  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your glorious name.

You give and take away  
You give and take away  
My heart will choose to say  
Lord, blessed be Your name.

We don’t need a long list of resolutions to have a life-changing 2019. You can change your life, believe it or not, with just one word!

**Have a Happy and Healthy New Year 2019!**

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

# Fifty-Two Verses in Fifty-Two Weeks: The Bible Project

By Fr. Stavros

This month's message focused on choosing one word in place of our usual list of New Years' Resolutions. In addition to the one word challenge, I am proposing one more challenge for 2019, to memorize one Bible verse per week for fifty two weeks. I will provide a verse per week (four or five per month in the Messenger and then repeated weekly in the bulletin). I will choose verses that are meaningful to me. You are welcome to submit verses via email to me as well.

Most of us don't spend enough time in the Bible. Sadly, some of us don't spend any time. If you want a challenge, do the following:

- Memorize the verse of the week.
- For a greater challenge, read the entire chapter of the book that the verse comes from.
- For a greater challenge, read the entire book where the verse comes from.

Another challenge to consider is to keep a journal and sit with the verse each week. Read it, memorize it, and then sit with it. Allow the Holy Spirit to move your mind and your thoughts and then write down those thoughts and keep them in a journal. If you do one reflection on Scripture each week, you will have the best book that could be. A book written by you, for you, guided by the Holy Spirit, who will guide your thoughts as you read the Scriptures.

Below are verses for the month of January. There is one verse for each week. I have written a few comments below each verse to get your mind going. Don't let my thoughts be your interpretation. Sit with the Scripture each week and let it speak to you. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you through your reflection on Scripture.

## December 30 - January 5

*Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

*2 Corinthians 6:2*

With the New Year beginning, what is a better time to take stock of your spiritual life and your relationship with Christ? Make a fresh start, start some new habits, including sitting with the scripture and meditating on the areas of your spiritual life (and over all life) that need improvement. The emphasis in this verse is the word "now," as it is used twice. What are the things that hold you back from a deeper sense of Christ, of purpose and of hope in your life right now?

## January 6 - 12

*"He must increase, but I must decrease."*

*John 3:30*

This is a quote from St. John the Baptist, whose feastday we celebrate on January 7. What a humble statement. John had been anointed by God to be the Forerunner of Christ, a very important job. John had done God's will and work, baptizing people, having a group of disciples who followed after him. He prepared them to receive Christ. And when Christ came, John

directed them to him. His work now over, he said he would willingly recede into the background so that Christ could increase. We all wrestle with our egos. Think about ways you can be more humble. Think also of things in your life that should decrease so that the things of God can increase in you.

## January 13 - 19

*And a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with Thee I am well pleased. Mark 1:11*

As we conclude our celebration of Theophany, the marquee verse from the story of Christ's baptism is this one, as the voice of God was heard endorsing His Son. Have you ever heard this verse in a personal way, as if God said to you, "YOU (insert your name) are my beloved son/daughter; with you I am well pleased." Do you think that God is pleased with your life? Why or why not? What aspect of your life could you change this week so that your life is more pleasing to God? We are God's beloved children, each and every one of us. There is no one that He does not wish to love. Let us make ourselves then worthy of His love by living lives that are pleasing to Him.

## January 20 - 26

*For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11*

We all make plans constantly. We plan work things, social things, kid things, family things. We make plans for travel, education, and retirement. Do we plan for charity? Are our plans in line with God's commandments? Do we ever consider that God has plans for our life? Do we feel called to do the career we have chosen? Did we ever feel called and didn't follow? We make plans each day, each year and we make "life plans." Let's make sure that our plans are for good and not for evil, and not only for the good of us, but for the good of others. Make charity a regular part of your life plan.

## January 27 - February 3

*Let me hear in the morning of Thy steadfast love, for in Thee I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go, for to Thee I lift up my soul. Psalm 143:8*

We all feel lost and confused at times at what we are doing, or what we should be doing. We all come to "forks in the road" and wonder which one we should take. In times of confusion and uncertainty, this is a great verse to pray.

# Liturgical Schedule for January 2019

Tuesday, January 1, 2019 **Circumcision of Christ/St. Basil/New Year's Day**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday, January 4 Royal Hours of Epiphany 9:30 -11:00 a.m.

**Saturday, January 5 Theophany - Evening Liturgy at St. John**  
Orthros 4:45 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.  
Great Blessing of the Waters at the Conclusion of the Divine Liturgy

**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. John **Ushers:** Tammy Christou, George Mitseas, Nick Patides  
**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Julie Pailos, Maria Xenick; Ambassador: Donna Trakas; Caller: Betty Katsamakis  
**No Coffee Hour** **Bookstore:** John and Anetta Alexander

**Sunday, January 6 Theophany - No Morning Services at St. John**  
Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas Cathedral (Tarpon Springs) 9:30 a.m.  
**Great Vespers for the Feast of St. John the Baptist 6:30 p.m.**  
*His Grace Bishop Sevastianos will preside, assisted by area clergy*

Monday, January 7 **St. John the Baptist - Feastday of our Parish**  
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Hierarchical Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m.  
*His Grace Bishop Sevastianos will officiate, assisted by area clergy*

**Sunday, January 13 Sunday after Theophany**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Matthew **Ushers:** Nick Kavouklis, George Trimikliniotis, Peter Theophanous  
**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Bessie Palios, Edie Kavouklis; Ambassador: Marenca Patrascoiu;  
Caller: Vickie Peckham **Coffee Hour:** Philoptochos' Vasilopita Sunday  
**Bookstore:** David Voykin

Thursday, January 17 **St. Anthony**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

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

**Sunday, January 20 12th Sunday of Luke**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Mark **Ushers:** Ron Myer, Jim Armstrong, John Alexander  
**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Debbie Kavouklis, Katherine Sakkis; Ambassador: Despina Sibley;  
Caller: Christene Worley **Coffee Hour:** Altar Angels  
**Bookstore:** Zhana Temelkova

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

**Sunday, January 27 15th Sunday of Luke**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Luke **Ushers:** Brett Mourer, Michael Bocancollins, Amin Hanhan  
**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Tanya Robinson, Axl David; Ambassador: Cindy Xenick; Caller: Helen Cauthorn  
**Coffee Hour:** AHEPA/DOP  
**Bookstore:** Pam Irwin and Elaine Daniels

Wednesday, January 30

**The Three Hierarchs**

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

Friday, February 1

**Evening Liturgy for the Presentation of Christ**

Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

**Sunday, February 3**

**16th Sunday of Matthew**

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

**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. John

**Ushers:** Davide Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Marenca Patrascioiu, Tanya Robinson; Ambassador: Skip Higdon Caller: Christene Worley

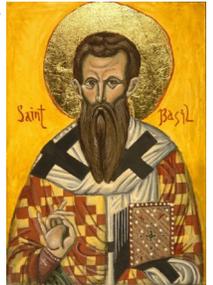
Getting Acquainted: Mike Xenick, Maria Xenick **Coffee Hour:** OCMC Luncheon

**Bookstore:** Rita Bedran and MaryAnn Rose

# Liturgical Notes for January 2019

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

Three things are commemorated on the first day of each year. First, the circumcision of Christ, which occurred historically 8 days after His Nativity. He was circumcised according to the rites of the Jewish law and given the name Jesus. Secondly, we commemorate the feast of St. Basil the Great, one of the Great Hierarchs of our church. St. Basil authored one of the Divine Liturgies used in our church, which is celebrated on his feastday. He also helped found monasticism. St. Basil was a friend to the poor, often baking bread with money in it and throwing it through the windows of widows and the poor. Hence the tradition of the Vasilopita, the bread with the coin baked inside, which we cut at the New Year. Finally, we are supposed to pray every day and commemorate all of life's milestones with prayer. So, we open a new year, 2019, with prayer and the Divine Liturgy.



## Friday, January 4 - Royal Hours of Epiphany 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Like Nativity and Pascha, there is a service of the Royal Hours which is celebrated in anticipation of Epiphany. This service consists of prayers, Psalms, hymns and Gospel readings which both foretell and recount this Great Feast of the church year.

## Saturday, January 5 - Eve of Epiphany - Divine Liturgy, Blessing of the Waters

The Feast of Theophany commemorates several things: First, and most well-known, it commemorates the Baptism of Christ. Christ was baptized in the Jordan River by St. John the Baptist. Second, at the moment of His descent into the River, the Jordan River reversed its course, and all of Creation changed its course with the presence of the Christ. Third, the Holy Trinity was made manifest for the first time in human history, as the Son of God was in the water, the Holy Spirit hovered over as a dove, and the voice of God was heard. The feast of the Theophany is the manifestation of God, as well as the Baptism of Christ. The name "Epiphany" refers to the enlightenment of the world. After the Divine Liturgy, there is a service called the Blessing of Waters during which water is blessed and sprinkled over the church and over the people as a way to renew and reconsecrate ourselves on this feastday. The Divine Liturgy will

begin at 6:00 p.m., followed by the Blessing of the Waters at 7:15 p.m. Please make every effort to attend the Divine Liturgy and come to reconsecrate yourself as we remember the day that the world was renewed through the baptism of the Lord.

**On Sunday, January 6, we will NOT hold the Divine Liturgy at St. John the Baptist. Rather, we will all gather at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Tarpon Springs for Divine Liturgy beginning at 9:30 a.m., followed by the yearly diving for the cross at around 12:30 p.m.**

## Sunday, January 6 - Great Vespers of St. John the Baptist - 6:30 p.m.

The Vespers Service is the service that begins the liturgical day. In our church, the day begins at sundown. Thus the feast of St. John the Baptist, celebrated on January 7, begins with the sunset of January 6. Properly celebrated, all feastdays should begin with the celebration of Great Vespers, including every Sunday which should begin with Great Vespers on Saturday evenings. Because this is not practical in most parishes, Great Vespers is celebrated in most parishes on a limited basis. We will, of course, celebrate the complete cycle of services related to our feastday of St. John, which will begin with Great Vespers. His Grace Bishop Sevastianos of Zela will preside at the Vespers, assisted by Clergy of the Tampa Bay area. His Grace was recently transferred to our Metropolis to assist His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios in visiting and helping in the 74 parishes of our Metropolis. We welcome His Grace, who has visited us before, and who will be making more frequent visits to our parish in the years to come.



## Monday, January 7 - Feast of St. John the Baptist

The day after a major feastday often commemorates the secondary figure of the Feast. On January 6, we celebrate the Baptism/Epiphany of Christ, who is obviously the major figure. The secondary figure of that feast is St. John the Baptist, whose feastday we commemorate the next day, January 7. St. John is the LAST of the Prophets before Christ and the first of the Saints, those who believed in Christ. Righteous figures who came before Christ are called either "Righteous" or "Prophet." Holy People who came after Christ are called Saints. St. John the Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist, as both titles. As this is the feastday of our church, His Grace Bishop Sevastianos will officiate at the Divine Liturgy, assisted by the clergy of the Tampa Bay area.

## Sunday, January 13 - Philoptochos' Vasilopita Sunday

If you would like to bake a vasilopita for our coffee hour to benefit St. Basil's Academy please call or email Jeanie Nenos 813 451-9116/jeanierrt@aol.com.



## Thursday, January 17 - Feast of St. Anthony

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

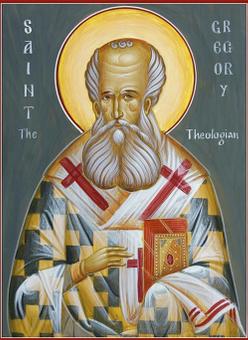
## Friday, January 18 - Feast of St. Athanasios and Cyril

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



## Friday, January 25 - Feast of St. Gregory the Theologian

One of the Three Hierarchs, also lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Was a friend and contemporary of St. Basil and St. John the Theologian. He was an accomplished speaker and writer, was the Bishop of Nazianzos and was one of the Bishops who presided at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381, which finalized the Nicene Creed that we recite to this day.



## Wednesday, January 30 - Feast of the Three Hierarchs

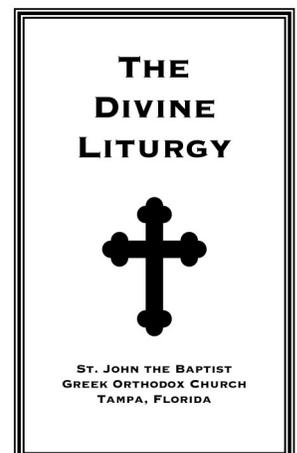
The Three Hierarchs are St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom. Each had his own feastday and all are honored together on January 30. Each of them lived in the 4th Century, each was an accomplished writer and speaker, each was a Bishop, each authored a Liturgy and each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

## Friday, February 1 - The Presentation of Our Lord into the Temple (Evening Liturgy)

The Presentation of Christ is a major feastday of the church and commemorates the day, 40 days after the Nativity, when Christ was brought to the temple when He was 40 days old. According to the Law of Moses, every male child was brought to the temple on its 40th day, together with a sacrifice of pigeons or turtle doves by the parents, and the child was "consecrated Holy to the Lord." Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the temple on His 40th day, because it was the law to do so. In the temple was a priest named Simeon, who was an older man, who had been promised by God that he would not die until he saw the Christ. When Simeon saw the baby Jesus, he knew in his heart that this was the Lord's Messiah. He took the child in his arms and prayed "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light to enlighten the Gentiles and for glory to Your people Israel." (Luke 2:29-32) This prayer is recited over every child in the Orthodox Church when they are brought to church for the first time when they are 40 days old. That's where this beautiful tradition comes from. February 2 is indeed a special day for all parents and all young children. We will celebrate this Liturgy on Friday evening, February 1. Orthros will be at 5:00 p.m., Divine Liturgy at 6:00 p.m.



**New Liturgy Pew Books** - The Liturgical book ministry of our parish has produced a new liturgy book for the pews. It is easier to hold than the other one. It includes the Divine Liturgy in English and phonetics, with the translation that the choir uses each Sunday. These books include the "substitutions" (special hymns) for each of the weekday liturgies we do, so we will all be able to follow not only the parts of the liturgy that are the same but also the parts that change. On weekdays, there will be a sign in the narthex near where you light the candles to indicate which page the substitutions for that day will be found on. (Some old Liturgy pew books will remain in the pews for those who wish to follow the service in Greek). It is our hope that this new book will make it easier to not only follow the service but to participate in it. Let's all do our part to keep these books in good condition (please don't uncoil them, or write in them) so that we will have them for years to come.



# St. John the Baptist Community News

## Parish Registry

**Chrismation** - Suzanne Payne was Chrismated on Wednesday, November 21. Her Godparent is Stavroula Crafa.

**Chrismation** - Ruby (Angeliki) Rahn was Chrismated on Wednesday, November 21. Her Godparent is Eleni Hoff.

**Chrismation** - Nancy (Nicoletta) Vear was Chrismated on Sunday, November 25. Her Godparent is Artie Palios.

**Trisagion** - Michael Zoumberos passed away on November 23. A Trisagion was offered for him on November 28. May his memory be eternal!

**Funeral** - Eleni Maltezos passed away on December 13. Funeral services were held on December 20. May her memory be eternal!

**Condolences** to Donna Hambos and the entire Hambos family on the passing of her father, Donald Neubert, who passed away on December 13. May his memory be eternal!

## Registry Statistics for 2018

	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
<b>Weddings</b>	8	9	9	8	12
<b>Baptisms</b>	27	20	36	22	18
<b>Funerals</b>	9	9	9	6	8
<b>Chrisimations</b>	6	7	4	5	8

**Parish Council Election Results** - Congratulations to Jim Armstrong, George Chagaris, Nicholas Katzaras, Edie Kavouklis, Jimmy Konstas and Gary Ward who were elected to the Parish Council for 2019-2020. They join Alkis Crassas, Amin Hanhan, Sandra Pappas, Ryan Rindone and Mike Xenick to comprise this year's Parish Council. Thank you to our election committee of Dan Bavaro, Carole Fotopoulos and Marenca Patrasciou. And a special thank you to Dante Skourellos (6 years) and Aris Rogers II (2 years) for their service on the Parish Council.

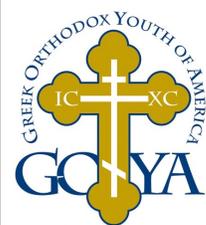
**Sunday School Teachers' Seminar, January 12** - On Saturday, January 12, from 9:00 a.m.-noon, there will be a seminar for all Sunday school teachers.

## Get Acquainted Sunday, January 13

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.

## January 13 Mother/Son Retreat, Regular meeting for girls

The GOYA Meeting for January will be Sunday, January 13. All MOMS are invited to this meeting along with their sons for a mother/son retreat. This will last from 5:00-8:00 p.m. with dinner, presentation, special time for moms and sons to talk and a closing prayer in church. The girls will have dinner at 5:00 p.m. followed by regular sessions. At our February meeting (February 17), we will have a father/daughter event and a regular meeting for boys.



**GOYA Parents Meeting on January 20 after church**—As discussed at our November meeting, Father Stavros will meet with the parents of all of our GOYAnS after church on Sunday, January 20. We will have something for the rest of the GOYAnS while this meeting is taking place. It will last approximately 1 hour and will begin at 12:15 p.m. More information to follow.

**GOYA Clearwater Event** - Our GOYAnS will be participating in the GOYA Clearwater Winter Retreat on January 25-27. Anyone interested in attending needs to contact Maria Koutroumanis ([mrk1997@verizon.net](mailto:mrk1997@verizon.net)) by January 10.

# Philoptochos Vasilopita Sunday

Sunday January 13 is Vasilopita Sunday. Philoptochos will be hosting coffee hour and will be serving Vasilopita. If you would like to make a Vasilopita for the coffee hour please contact Jeanie Nenos @ 813 451-9116 or [Jeanie.nenos@moffitt.org](mailto:Jeanie.nenos@moffitt.org). We hope to have a large number of Vasilopita so that parishioners can purchase whole pitas to take home as well. All proceeds from Vasilopita Sunday will go to St. Basil's Academy.

**Meeting of Ministry Heads, January 14** - On Monday, January 14, there will be a meeting of ministry heads in the Kourmolis Center from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Each ministry head is requested to attend and other members of each ministry are invited to attend. If the ministry head cannot attend, please ask someone else in your ministry to attend, so that all ministries are represented.

**Community Outreach - Saturday, January 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. 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!**



## Ye Holy Krewe of Tampa Gasparilla Parking Fundraiser

On Saturday, January 19 and Saturday, January 26, we will be renting out the church parking lot for Gasparilla Parking. This year the children's parade is on January 19, and the main event is on January 26. If you are interested in volunteering a few hours to help the church make some easy \$\$\$, and also have a good time socializing while directing traffic, please contact **John Kokkas, the Captain of Ye Holy Krewe**, at 727-992-4165 or [johnkokkas@hotmail.com](mailto:johnkokkas@hotmail.com). The primary hours needed are approximately 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. each Saturday. This is a very easy and fun way to generate income for our parish.

**Young Adult Ministry - Sunday, January 20** - The YAL fellowship dinner will be on Sunday, January 20, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Please RSVP to Charlie if you are going to attend. Dates may change. Charlie will send an email.



**Prayer for Teachers on Sunday, January 27** On January 30, we celebrate the feast of the Three Hierarchs, who are also the patron saints of teachers. On January 27, immediately prior to Holy Communion, we will offer a prayer for all teachers and anyone who works in education in our community.

## Orthodoxy 101 Class will Begin in January

Fr. Stavros offers this class two times per year, in the spring and in the fall. This will be a Four-week course of study on Monday nights to make people aware of the basics of being an Orthodox Christian. The classes will be part lecture, part discussion, with lots of time for questions and answers.

### Who should attend the Orthodoxy 101 class?

- **Interfaith couples.** This will help the non-Orthodox person understand more about what is going on in our church.
- **Anyone who is considering joining our church.** Going forward, this class will be a requirement for those who wish to join our Orthodox faith.
- **New converts to Orthodoxy.** For those who recently joined our church and who want to know a little bit more.
- **Anyone who wants to know more about the basics of our faith**, or who wants a refresher course in the basics of Orthodoxy is encouraged to attend.

### The four sessions will be done as follows:

**Monday, January 28** A Tour of the Orthodox Church: What we see in the Church and what it means

**Monday, February 4** Orthodox Spirituality—Introduction to the Sacraments

**Monday, February 11** The Divine Liturgy—**This will actually be a “teaching” Liturgy on the solea of the church. If you have taken the class, or if you wish to only attend THIS session, please feel free to do so.**

**Monday, February 18** Orthodox Traditions—fasting, icons, prayer and separating Theology from “yiyalyogy”

Classes will be held on these three Mondays from 6:30-8:30 p.m. and will be held in the CHURCH Sanctuary.

Please sign up with Fr. Stavros at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com), so he has enough materials for everyone. There is no charge for this class.

# Counting the Wins for our Community!

We've got lots of interesting people doing lots of interesting things in our community. If something notable happens in your life, please submit a short blurb to the office. We love "counting the wins" of our parishioners.

**Second "Come and See" Dinner a success**—On Tuesday, November 27, we had our second annual "come and see" dinner. People from our festival who wanted to come and see more about our church came to a dinner that evening. Several parishioners also invited neighbors and friends to come and see. Overall, there were 45 people in attendance, including 16 who are not members of our church. If we are called as Christians to call people to "come and see" who we are, this is a great event in the life of our parish. Thank you to Maria Xenick and the Welcome Ministry of our church for organizing this event, and to all the ministry heads and parishioners who came.



## MOVIE NIGHT FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1

**Dinner: 7:00 p.m. Movie: 7:45 p.m.**

Join us for dinner, a movie and discussion in the Kourmolis Center  
(There is no charge for this event)

### "I Can Only Imagine"

Growing up in Greenville, Texas, Bart Millard suffers physical and emotional abuse at the hands of his father, Arthur. When Arthur becomes terminally ill, he finds redemption by embracing his faith and rediscovering his love for his son. Years later, Bart's troubled childhood and mended relationship with his dad inspires him to write the hit song "I Can Only Imagine" as singer of the Christian band MercyMe.



## Sunday, February 3

Super Bowl Sunday of course, but it is also "Souper Bowl of Caring" Sunday as well. This is a nationwide, youth-led initiative to tackle hunger across our country. Over 3000 Churches, youth groups, and other organizations will be collecting non-perishable items and monetary donations for local food banks. Mark your calendars to help HOPE/JOY collect donations to be given to the children at [HOPE CHILDREN'S HOME](#) - a Christian home that takes abused, unwanted, discarded or orphaned children and is entirely supported by churches, private individuals and organizations.

**OCMC Mission Sunday** As they do every year, Philoptochos is going to sponsor it's 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Missions Sunday to support overseas Orthodox Missions. Philoptochos will sponsor a luncheon to benefit missions work, with all proceeds going toward the Mission Center.



## THE ROAD BACK TO CHRIST:

REFLECTIONS ON LENT, HOLY WEEK AND THE RESURRECTION



FR. STAVROS N. AKROTIRIANAKIS

**The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection is now on sale!**

It is a series of daily reflections to be read from the beginning of Triodion (this year that is February 17) through All Saints Day (this year that is June 23). Pick up your copy today so you can begin reading it on February 17. This book costs \$18.99 and all monies taken in at the bookstore go to the church.

### Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 1395 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

# January 2019 Stewardship Message

*“What do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”*

*-1 Corinthians 4:7*

## *Please give back your Time, Talents and Treasure in 2019*

We wish everyone a Happy New Year and pray your time spent rejoicing in the birth of Christ, our Savior brought peace and love to your Christmas Holiday. The month of December can be fulfilling, exhausting and joyous all at the same time. We suggest you take time in the New Year to commit your ‘Gift of Time’ to worship, prayer and study to deepen your Orthodox Christian life. The ‘Gift of Time’ personal commitment cards were included in your 2019 Stewardship Package.

Stewardship Sunday, December 9, 2018, was a day to celebrate our faith and offer our gifts to God as a community with love. Fr. Stavros spoke of the joy in sacrificial giving and the calling to ‘Bridge the Gap’ and we came together as a community to give on a very rainy Sunday! **We are humbled and grateful for the 136 families that turned in Pledge Forms including 7 new families!** Many Stewards increased their pledges, some significantly, which is indeed a blessing to our beloved church. **To date we have \$294,726 pledged for 2019!** We are answering our calling from God with a blessed start to our New Year! Next month we will have a recap of our 2018 Stewardship Year.

*We thank our loyal Stewards of 2018 for your gifts that help sustain our church mission and vision. Of note the Stewardship Committee will be expanding in 2019 to include a dedicated team focused on individual outreach. Stay tuned for exciting things happening with the 2019 Stewardship Committee.*

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

### **Good to Know ~ Stewardship Housekeeping**

It’s not too late to complete your pledge commitment for 2018 – We can address any questions you have regarding your remaining commitment.

Tax Letters will be compiled *in January 2019 to reflect donations received in the 2018 calendar year.* We can address any questions you may have regarding your remaining commitment.

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

**YES - Stewardship Pledge Forms really are required and can now be completed on-line.** They not only provide family information on areas of interest and talents but also help us determine how much income the Church can expect to support our operations. **Pledge Forms and current contributions are required to meet the Uniform Parish Regulations (UPR) of our Archdiocese as well as our local by-laws, which enable participation at Parish General Assembly Meetings, Nominations and Voting for Parish Council in December.**

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

## **A Little Story about Stewardship and Thankfulness**

**A** mother baked some tasty buns one day. Her son took one and said, “Thanks, mom, for the delicious buns.”

The mother said, “Don’t thank me. Thank the grocer who sold me this new flour.”

When the child went to thank the grocer, he was told, “Don’t thank me. Thank the miller who produced the flour.”

When he went to the miller, he was told, “Don’t thank me. Thank the

farmer who grew the wheat.”

When the child went to the farmer, he was told, “Don’t thank me. Thank God who provides the earth and the seed and the sun and the rain.”

We thank God faithfully and systematically through the stewardship of our time, talents, and possessions. He is behind every blessing we have. “Bless the Lord, Oh my soul, and forget not all His benefits.”

# The Story of A Blind Girl

**T**here was a blind girl who hated herself just because she was blind. She hated everyone, except her loving boyfriend. He was always there for her. She said that if she could only see the world, she would marry her boyfriend.

One day, someone donated a pair of eyes to her and then she could see everything, including her boyfriend. Her boyfriend asked her, "Now that you can see the world, will you marry me?"

The girl was shocked when she saw that her boyfriend was blind too, and refused to marry him. Her boyfriend walked away in tears, and later wrote a letter to her saying: "Just take care of my eyes dear."

This is how human brain changes when the status changed. Only few remember what life was before, and who's always been there even in the most painful situations.

Life Is A Gift

Today before you think of saying an unkind word—think of someone who can't speak.

Before you complain about the taste of your food—think of someone who has nothing to eat.

Before you complain about your husband or wife—

think of someone who is crying out to God for a companion.  
Today before you complain about life—  
think of someone who went too early to heaven.  
Before you complain about your children—  
think of someone who desires children but they're barren.  
Before you argue about your dirty house, someone didn't clean or sweep—  
think of the people who are living in the streets.  
Before whining about the distance you drive—  
think of someone who walks the same distance with their feet.  
And when you are tired and complain about your job—  
think of the unemployed, the disabled and those who wished they had your job.  
But before you think of pointing the finger or condemning another—  
remember that not one of us are without sin and we all answer to one maker.  
And when depressing thoughts seem to get you down—  
put a smile on your face and thank God you're alive and still around.

Life is a gift – Live it, Enjoy it, Celebrate it, and Fulfill it.

*Author Unknown*

## Thank You to all of Our Friends!

Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA	Bessie Bliziotes - Palm Cost, FL
William J Camarinos - Alexandria, VA	Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL
Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC	Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL
Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL	William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL
Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL	Lillian Thomas - Highland, IN
Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI	Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL
Perry & Fay Stamatiades - Asheville, NC	Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD
Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI	Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA
Wesley & Melissa Thompson - Clearwater, FL	Nicholas & Vaso Anton - Dunedin, FL
Demitrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH	Gerald & Deborah Galovic - Tampa, FL
Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL	

**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.**

# Weddings, Divorces, Baptisms, Funerals, Memorials as well as Office, Fundraisers and Hall Use Procedures

*The Greek Orthodox Church is not a church of rules. But without some guidelines to go by, there would be chaos. The following guidelines are rooted in Orthodox Tradition and Canon Law. These guidelines are printed in **The Messenger** in the beginning of each calendar year, and it is a good idea from time to time for people to review them. These guidelines have been copied from the 2018 Yearbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Please review them, and keep them in mind when planning for your important life events. If you have any questions, please contact Fr. Stavros. (Special requirements specific to sacraments at St. John the Baptist appear in italics.)*

## Weddings

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

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

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

In cases involving the marriage of Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians, the latter must have been baptized in water, in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Church cannot bless the marriage of an Orthodox Christian to a non-Christian. The couple should be willing to baptize their children in the Orthodox Church and raise and nurture them in accordance with the Orthodox Faith. *There is a list of religious groups that Orthodox are prohibited from marrying, i.e. Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, and others. Fr. Stavros can provide you with this list. **This is IMPORTANT to consider when you begin to date someone. Make sure your children are aware of this!** Because circumstances exist where a couple is dating where one of the two is not eligible to be married in the Orthodox Church, and this causes heartache in the relationship and often leads to someone leaving the church.*

A baptized Orthodox Christian whose wedding has not been blessed by the Orthodox Church is no longer in good standing with the Church, and may not receive the Sacraments of the Church, including Holy Communion, or become a sponsor of an Orthodox Marriage, Baptism, or Chrismation. A non-Orthodox Christian who marries an Orthodox Christian does not thereby become a member of the Ortho-

dox Church, and may not receive the Sacraments, including Holy Communion, serve on the Parish Council or vote in parish assemblies or elections. To participate in the Church's life, one must be received into the Church by the Sacrament of Baptism, or in the case of persons baptized with water in the Holy Trinity, following a period of instruction, by Chrismation.

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

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

## Days when marriage is not permitted

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

## Prohibited Marriages

The following types of relationships constitute impediments to marriage:

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

Godparents with Godchildren or Godparents with the parents of their Godchildren. (In the Chrismation of an adult, one has potential marriage impediment. For any questions regarding, please see Fr. Stavros)

*A date cannot be set for marriage unless one of the parties getting married, NOT THE PARENTS, contact Fr. Stavros, who sets all the dates for weddings. In order for the date to be locked in, one person in the couple has to come and meet with Fr. Stavros to go over the wedding procedures. Pre-Marital Counseling is also required for weddings at St. John the Baptist. There is a two-fold requirement. One is that the couples need to meet with Fr. Stavros for two sessions. Second, the Metropolis of Atlanta requires couples participate in a Saturday regional premarital counseling seminar. Contact the Metropolis of Atlanta or visit the Family Life Ministry section of their website for dates in 2019. For people who wish to be married at St. John the Baptist who are not members anywhere, a substantial fee is imposed for use of the church, thereby encouraging all those who wish to have the sacraments of the church to be members in good standing. Also, the Koumbaro/Koumbara for a wedding must be in good sacramental standing. If they are not members of St. John the Baptist, they must bring a letter from their parish priest saying that they are in good sacramental standing. Otherwise, there will be a fee imposed as well. Also, the only instrument permitted to be played at weddings is the organ.*

# Baptisms

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

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

## Funerals

Funeral services are permitted on any day of the year, except for Sunday and Holy Friday, unless permission is granted by the Metropolitan. If you wish to have a service outside of the church, it will not be a funeral service. It will either be a Memorial Service or a Trisagion. A funeral service must be in an Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church does not allow for cremation. This is based on Ezekiel's vision of a valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37) and St. Paul's writing that the Body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19) and thus must be treated with dignity even in death and allowed to return to its elements naturally. The Orthodox Church will not allow a funeral service for someone who has been cremated. *Many people have mentioned in their will their desire to be cremated. Please discuss this with Fr. Stavros if there are any questions regarding this, and make the appropriate changes, because Fr. Stavros cannot grant oikonomia (dispensation) and do a funeral service if someone has been cremated.*

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

## Memorials

Memorial services may not be chanted from the Saturday or Lazarus through the Sunday of Thomas, or on any Feastday of the Lord or any Feastday of the Theotokos. We customarily do not offer memorial services on the 1st Sunday of Lent (Sunday of Orthodoxy) or the 3rd Sunday of Lent (Sunday of the Holy Cross), or the Sunday after September 14. In 2019, the Sundays when NO memorial services will be offered include: January 6, March 17 (Sunday of Orthodoxy), March 31 (Sunday of the Holy Cross); April 21 (Palm Sunday); April 28 (Pascha); May 5 (Sunday of St. Thomas); June 16 (Pentecost); September 15 (Sunday after Holy Cross Day). Please follow these steps.

**Step 1 – Call the office to schedule a memorial service date.** Any date can be chosen to the closest date of passing if it is for a 40-Day memorial and a 1-year memorial. Any less (6-month) or more than (1+ years) can happen on a designated Memorial Sunday predetermined at the beginning of the calendar year by the Church Office.

**Step 2 – Name and Initials** When making the initial phone call to the office, please provide the baptismal name of the deceased and the initials needed, if a Kolyva is desired.

**Step 3 – Reserving pews.** A certain amount of pews can be reserved for the family of the Memorial Service. Please request when making the initial phone call to the office. The pews will be reserved in the church on the scheduled Sunday until 10:20 a.m. (if the Divine Liturgy begins at 10:00 a.m.) and 20 minutes after the start of the Divine Liturgy if there is an earlier start time for whatever reason. If your family arrives after 10:20 a.m., the reserved pews will be forfeited to the general public.

**Step 4 – Reserving tables in the Kourmolis Center.** Tables can be reserved in the hall for your family. Simply reserved. Tablecloths and other decorations (flowers, candles, etc.) are used at the family's discretion but is not required to be provided by the Philoptochos Society or the church.

**Step 5 – Kolyva from the Philoptochos.** Our Philoptochos Society is responsible for making Kolyva. Please notify the office if you would like the Philoptochos Society to make the Kolyva. Do not contact the Philoptochos Society directly. The Church Office will make the requests and the Philoptochos will confirm. There is a three-week minimum notice needed in order to ensure someone can make the Kolyva. There is a \$100 suggested/enforced donation. This includes the Philoptochos Society to scoop the Kolyva for coffee hour on the designated memorial dates.

**Step 6 – Making your own Kolyva or getting someone else to prepare.** Please notify the Church Office when scheduling the Memorial Service date that your family or someone you know will be making the Kolyva. If a family chooses to make their own Kolyva, the family will be responsible for scooping the Kolyva in the kitchen after the Memorial Service to share with the entire community. The Philoptochos is not required to scoop the Kolyva even if they prepared a Kolyva on the same Sunday.

**Step 7-Luncheon and other food items requested on a Memorial Sunday.** Additional food can be provided, whether that is simply Paximathia (memorial cookies) or an entire lunch or Coffee Hour. The family is responsible for working with the ministry or the families scheduled to host coffee hour to provide additional food/help necessary to set up, serve and clean up a coffee hour/luncheon for food that is provided for the whole community not just for the family of the memorial service.

If there are ever any questions about this, please call the office and ask to speak directly with Fr. Stavros or Charlie at 813-876-8830 or email the office at [officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com](mailto:officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com).

## Organ Donation

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

## Forty-Day Blessings

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

## Some Guidelines Unique to our Parish

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

## PROCEDURES FOR THE OFFICE:

- The deadline for submitting information for the weekly bulletin is Wednesday at 12:00 p.m. All submissions must be sent electronically to [officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com](mailto:officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com). The deadline for the Messenger shall be the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month. As a cost cutting measure we reduced the size of the Messenger, so no full page flyers will be put in. All submissions must be sent electronically via email. Simply send in your event information to [officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com](mailto:officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com).
- Events may be advertised a maximum of two months prior to the event date for *The Messenger* and four weeks prior for the bulletin.

- **Open Office Hours and Monday - Friday 10:00 a.m. -2:00p.m. Or By Appointment Only.** If you wish to see Fr. Stavros or the office staff, you must make an appointment. Also, when meeting with the office staff, or when meeting with Father Stavros on a non-pastoral matter, please be efficient with your time. There is lots of work that goes on in the office and constant interruptions make for little progress. Planned appointments are fine, they are not interruptions.

## FUNDRAISERS/HALL USAGE:

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

## COFFEE HOURS/FUNDRAISERS:

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

## It's Easier to Prevent a Cold or The Flu Then it is to Deal With One

**I**t's flu season. Hopefully, you were one of the people that took advantage of the flu shots that were offered after church in Oct or you got one some place else. If you didn't, it's not too late. See your primary care physician or you can get one at Walgreens or CVS.

There are other things you can do to keep from getting a cold or the flu. Frequent hand washing with soap is #1. When that's not practical, use a good quality hand sanitizer frequently. Look for one without alcohol, which can dry out your hands.

Keep your hands away from your face, especially your mouth, eyes and nose. Those are the usual entry points for germs. Consider defusing essential oils in your home. Thyme and citric acid are especially good, as germs are vulnerable to these essential oils.

Exercise, but you don't have to join a gym. Just move. Take a brisk walk for 30 minutes every day if possible or at a pace you can tolerate. Take high quality multi vitamins/supplements that include a daily pro biotic too. I started taking supplements in Sept of 2017 and haven't been sick even one day since and my energy has increased significantly. .

If you are on prescription medications, consult with your physician before taking any vitamins/supplements as some can react with medications. Take care of your health. You don't realize how important it is until you no longer have it. Your parish nursing ministry is here to help. Reach out to us if you have any health related questions.

Stavrula Crafa, RNC, Parish Nursing Ministry Leader

## Our Food Pantry is very active helping people near and far in the Tampa Community.

### Here are some special requests we have:

- Pasta
- Spaghetti Sauce
- Tomato sauce/chopped tomatoes etc.
- All kinds of white flour
- Canned Tuna
- Canned Chicken
- Canned fruits and vegetables
- Gluten Free Foods and Flours
- Cereal
- Whole wheat rice and pasta
- Men's and Women's razors and shaving cream (travel size)
- Toothbrushes
- Gift cards in any amount for Publix, Walmart or Save-a-lot

All food items offered are accepted. Thank you for supporting those who need it the most. For more info and questions about our Food Pantry please contact Anetta Alexander at 813-758-2689 or exchange2861@yahoo.com.

# What Does It Mean to Put God First in Your Life?

By Rick Warren

*"You should live in a way that proves you belong to the God who calls you into his kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12 GW).*

**T**he Kingdom of God is a present reality. It's what we're to be doing on the earth right now. The power of God is the present resource. It's the energy God gives you so that you can do what he wants you to do once you've surrendered and submitted to his will.

Romans 11:36 says, *"Everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory"* (NLT).

I talk to people all the time who say, "I have so much, yet I feel unfulfilled. I've got a good family. I've got a good job. I've got great kids. I've got good friends. I'm part of a good congregation. Why am I so unfulfilled?" It's because you were made for more than this! You were made for more than survival. You will never find fulfillment in life until you begin to live in God's Kingdom, by God's power, and for God's glory. How do you live a fulfilled life—the kind of life that you were designed by God to live?

The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 2:12, *"You should live in a way that proves you belong to the God who calls you into his kingdom and glory"* (GW).

What does it mean to live in God's Kingdom? It means you make God's agenda your agenda. You make God's will your will. You care about what God cares about. Whatever you want God to bless, you put him first in that area.

What does it mean to put God first in your life? I made up a little acrostic, **FIRST**, to give you five things you need to put God first in.

**Finances.** If you want God to bless your finances, even during difficult seasons, you must tithe. Sorry! There's no other alternative.



**Interests.** Put him first in your hobbies, your career, and your recreation. Give God first consideration in every decision.

**Relationships.** Put him first in your family, your marriage, and your friendships.

**Schedule.** Give him the first part of every day. Get up and sit on the side of your bed every morning and say, "God, if I don't get anything else done today, I just want to love you a little bit more and know you a little bit better."

**Troubles.** You need to turn to God first when you have a problem. Prayer should never be your last resort. It should be your first choice.

## How to Practice Praying Out Loud

From the Website of LifeChurch in Edmond, OK

**D**oes the thought of praying out loud fill you with anxiety? Even just thinking about it makes your heart beat faster, you start sweating, or you become overwhelmed with fear. You think to yourself, I'm not very good at praying, I don't know what to say, or my prayers are too short.

*Can you relate?*

Being uncomfortable praying out loud is really common. But did you know praying out loud, in groups or even with a friend, can exponentially grow your faith? All it takes is some practice and motivation, so here are some reasons why you should pray out loud and how to start.

**External declarations can change your internal dialogue.**

When we pray for things out loud, we change our internal dialogue and posture. Praying things like, "Jesus, You are enough" or "God is greater than my grief" will build your faith and help change the way you view things.

**Keeps you awake.** Jesus reminds us, *"Our spirit might be willing, but our flesh is weak."* If you're prone to falling asleep during prayer, like Jesus' disciples did in Mark 14:37-38, praying out loud will help you stay awake. You're more likely to stay awake through prayer when your brain is listening to what your mouth is saying.

**Sets the standard in your house.** If we want our household to serve the Lord, we must set an example through our relationship with Jesus. Kids need to hear us praying outside the church walls. The same is true if you live with an unbelieving spouse, parent, or friend.

**Practice for when you are called upon in public.** Like anything, we practice behind the scenes to get better for those moments we're in public. It's uncomfortable to be asked to pray for people and not know what words to say. Praying out loud privately helps us get comfortable with the sound of our own voice. Repetition gives us the confidence to approach God in

public.

**Encourages each other.** Praying in a community of people draws the Lord in and builds our faith. In the book of Matthew, Jesus tells us there is power when we pray in groups, and there's purpose when we make declarations out loud. Praying out loud is a bold move in your faith. When you unashamedly confess Jesus as your Savior, the enemy's grip on your problem loses its power. Praying out loud is an internal decision speaking a bold declaration that Jesus sits on the throne, high above your struggles.

So where can you begin?

Start when you're alone. This may seem awkward at first so try it behind closed doors where no one is listening or when everyone has left the house. You can even do this in the car on your way to work or the grocery store.

Whether this is your first time or you simply hit a rut in your prayer life, all it takes is practice. It gets easier and more comfortable the more you pray out loud.

Here are some cues to kickstart your out-loud prayers:

### **Use an outline for your prayer.**

One way to pray follows the A.C.T.S. model:

- *Adoration*: Praise God for who He is.
- *Confession*: Confess your sins and ask for His forgiveness.
- *Thanksgiving*: Thank God for His protection and provision.
- *Supplication* (an appeal to God): Make your requests known.

**Create a prayer list.** It can be immensely helpful to write down what you want to pray about before you get started. Use a journal to keep track of your prayers. To encourage your faith, take it a step further and mark the date your prayer is answered or follow up with an entry about God's alternate plan.

**Read Scripture out loud.** David wrote many of the Psalms as prayers, so it's a good place to start. Here's a few of our favorites: [Psalm 30](#), [Psalm 51](#), [Psalm 63](#), [Psalm 91](#), [Psalm 139](#), and [Psalm 145](#).

**Keep it short.** We can get caught up in the length of our prayers and struggle to come up with words to fill the silence. There is no rule on how long your prayer should be. There is no benefit to babble. God sees the heart of your prayers. Stretching them out for the sake of filling time is unnecessary.

**Pray like you.** God created you to communicate in a unique way. Don't get caught up trying to say the "right" things, using "fancy" Christian terms, or praying like someone else. Prayer is meant to be a personal conversation with God. Like you would have between friends, family, or a mentor. Let go of how you think you should pray and just be you.

Prayer changes things, but it changes us more. Praying out loud can transform what we believe and how we act when trouble comes. When you pray out loud, you are declaring victory by faith.

If you want to learn more interesting ways to pray and learn from our very own Fr. Stavros, please consider joining the Prayer Team and inviting your friends to do the same. Email Charlie or Fr. Stavros and we will be happy to add you to this daily message of encouragement and faith.

## ***Connect Through Christ*** **Special Needs Ministry for Children**

### **Vision / Mission Statement and Goals**

#### **Vision Statement**

Connect through Christ Special Needs Ministry for Children believes that everyone is made in God's image and is a unique and valuable part of God's creation and our Church. Jesus's ministry not only included, but welcomed people and children of all abilities, and St. John's wants to be a church that does the same.

#### **Mission Statement**

Connect through Christ purpose is to break down barriers that keep children with disabilities and their families from being able to participate in the Church community.

#### **Goals**

- To show families of children with special needs that we believe that each child is a unique creation of God.
- To provide a safe and loving environment where children with special needs and their families can worship God and learn about Jesus.
- To nurture each child's individual skills and abilities while learning about the Greek Orthodox faith.
- To cultivate an inclusive community for children with special needs and their peers.

*If you want to learn more about this new and exciting ministry, please email Dante Skourellos at [d\\_skourellos@yahoo.com](mailto:d_skourellos@yahoo.com)*

# **Buildings & Grounds Makes High Level Recommendation for Future of Our Facilities**

The Parish Council, in coordination with the Building & Grounds (B&G) Committee, commissioned GLE to study our aging campus and provide a Property Condition Assessment (PCA) report. GLE is a leading integrated architecture, engineering, and environmental consulting firm, headquartered in Tampa, Florida, with offices throughout Florida and the Southeastern United States. The purpose of the PCA report was to provide an objective review of the general condition of our facility, evaluate major building components, and provide a general estimate of future needs so we can proactively plan for them. In addition, the B&G Committee reviewed the PCA report and has made high level recommendations to the Parish Council as a first step in interpreting this information. We encourage you to look at the B&G Committee recommendations below as well as the full PCA report which is available on our website.

## **Buildings and Grounds Committee Recommendation**

### **Based on GLE Report**

Based on the Property Condition Assessment provided by GLE related to the condition of the grounds, the committee is recommending the following:

1. Because the church has a brand new AC system and a relatively new roof with clay tile coverings, the church does not appear to need any immediate attention, notwithstanding current damage to the duct system over the dome caused by squirrel intrusion. Once this is repaired and we are certain that the attic is water tight, plans should be made to repair the plaster and water damage to the iconography in the church. Based on repairs in the past, it is certain that the cost to repair the plaster and painting will be substantial.
2. Plan and budget for the installation of a new roof for the Community Center in the next 2 to 3 years. The roof is old and has been patched over in many areas. Even if we elect to continue in this fashion, certain areas of the exterior brick are showing cracking and separation because water is seeping in behind the bricks as a result of an old and failing roof. As a result, an actual roof replacement is recommended sooner than later;
3. Plan and budget for the installation of a new AC system in the Community Center in the next 2 to 3 years.
4. Plan and budget for the installation of a new roof and new AC system in the School Building in the next 5 to 8 years. Although there does not appear to be immediate repair issues that are significant, the school building is 15 years old and the life of the roof and AC system are heading toward their end. Having said this, we may get another 10 years out of both but we should plan and budget for a more realistic timeframe.
5. The administrative building is very old and has a failing roof, a very old AC system and many other aspect of the building are in need of replacement or repair as well. Because of this, the committee does not think it would be wise to sink significant amounts of money in the structural integrity of the building as long term plans may include the destruction and replacement of the building, the partial replacement of the building or other different scenarios as well. Given this, it is the committees suggestion that we continue with our long pattern of deferred maintenance of patch and repair with the understanding that we have tenants in the building and we must maintain safety for those that use the building during the day.
6. There are many other minor issues that need repair throughout different areas of each building. It is the suggestion of the committee that Felix be utilized to address those areas unless we feel he is not capable and outsourcing would be required.

*The Buildings and Grounds Committee is made up of the following individuals: Chris Kavouklis, Alkis Crassas, Mike Xenick, Charlie Hambos, Demosthenes Mekras and Ryan Rindone. Please contact the church office for a questions to be directed toward the Buildings and Grounds Committee. The above was sent out in an email to the community on October 26, 2018.*

# January 2019 SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

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

This year's Christmas Pageant was the biggest and best ever. Our students are very talented and all the parts could be heard clearly. All of our actors did a fantastic job. Weren't the animals adorable? How did you like the acting of Arianna Karounos (Friend) and Helen Fentress (Visitor)? We would like to thank all of Fr. Stavros, Charlie Hambos, the Sunday School students, teachers, and parents for helping to make this pageant a HUGE success.

A big thank you goes out to Debbie Nicklow for planning the Christmas Party on Saturday, December 15th. We would also like to thank all the children, teachers, and parents for making the afternoon such a success! This year, in addition to all the Christmas crafts, the children made fleece blankets that will be donated to hospitalized teens at St. Josephs Children's Hospital. Thank you to Bavaro's Pizza Napoletana & Pastaria for donating the delicious pasta and to Emily's Restaurant for donating the Greek salad.

Our Sunday School topics for December were STEWARDSHIP and of course the NATIVITY OF CHRIST. Charlie Hambos also visited the Toddler Twos Class with the Church Vessels.

## JANUARY 2019 SUNDAY SCHOOL CALENDAR

Saturday, January 12  
Sunday School Retreat  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 13  
Sunday School Resumes  
Topic: Vasilopita/St. Basil  
GOYA Meeting 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 20  
YOUTH SUNDAY  
6th-8th Grade Music at 11:50 a.m.  
Topic: Making Moral Choices

Friday, January 25  
Hope/Joy Movie Night  
Friday, January 25 - Sunday, January 27  
GOYA Clearwater Winter Event

Sun., January 27  
Topic: Sacramental Life of the  
Orthodox Church  
Charlie: 2nd & 3rd Grade

## Hope / Joy News— HAPPY NEW YEAR!

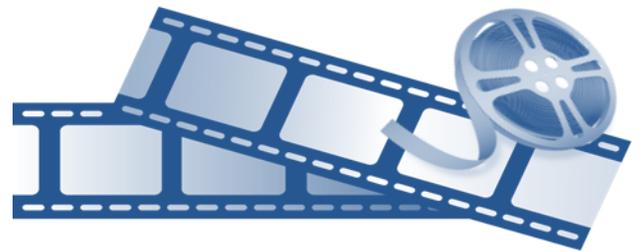
### Sunday School / Hope & Joy Christmas Party

The Sunday School Christmas Party was held on Saturday, December 15<sup>th</sup>. It was a fun afternoon filled with crafts, lunch and the pageant rehearsal. This year, in addition to all the Christmas crafts, the children made fleece blankets that will be donated to hospitalized teens at St. Josephs Children's Hospital. It was a fun service project that will bring a smile and warm wishes to a hospitalized teen. Thank you to all the children who attended the Christmas party, to all the parents that helped make the afternoon a success, to Charlie and to Father Stavros for your continual support of the Hope/Joy ministry, to Bavaro's Pizza Napolitana & Pastaria for donating the delicious pasta and to Emily's Restaurant for donating the Greek salad.

### Boxes of Hope

This year the kids assembled 33 Boxes of Hope for the Metropolitan Ministries food drive. Along with the 33 Boxes of Hope assembled, Hope & Joy collected \$740 in gift cards and cash donations to go to Metropolitan Ministries. A big thank you goes out to our St. John's community for all the food and monetary donations made toward the Boxes of Hope. Together we helped 63 families enjoy a meal during the Christmas season! Wishing everyone a very blessed and happy 2019!

In Christ, Debbie Nicklow, Hope & Joy!



Movie and Pizza Night  
Featuring

**WONDER**

Friday, January 25, 2018  
at 6:00 – 8:30 pm  
St. John Greek Orthodox Church  
Kourmolis Hall

Grab your favorite blanket, come in your pajamas & Join us for pizza, popcorn, treats & movie fun! All children ages Pre-K through 6<sup>th</sup> grade welcome! R.s.v.p. to Debbie by: January 20<sup>th</sup>  
[Debbienicklow@hotmail.com](mailto:Debbienicklow@hotmail.com) or 813-690-0671

# The Gifts of Christmas Loved by All



# Philoptochos 2019 Membership Drive

**We are on the MOVE for a Great New Year!**

We invite all women ages 18 to 118 to join the St. John the Baptist Philoptochos Annunciation Chapter!

Membership Drive: January thru April, Suggested Stewardship is \$35.00. However, we accept whatever you have in your heart to give.

Your donation makes you a member of the National, The Metropolis and our Local Chapters of Philoptochos.

**Members 80 years of age or older are honorary members- NO DUES NECESSARY.**

**THANK YOU SO MUCH AND HAVE A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR 2018**

Name _____	Date _____	
Street Address _____		
City _____	State _____	Zip _____
Home Phone _____	Cell _____	
Please circle which number is the preferred contact: <b>HOME/ CELL</b>		
E-mail address _____		

*The Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, Inc., is the duly accredited women's philanthropic society of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The mission of the Society shall be:*

*To aid the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the aged, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widowed, the handicapped, the victims of disasters, to undertake the burial of impoverished persons and to offer assistance to anyone who may need the help of the Church through fund raising efforts; and*

*To promote the charitable, benevolent, and philanthropic purposes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, through instructional programs, presentations, lectures, seminars and other educational resources;*

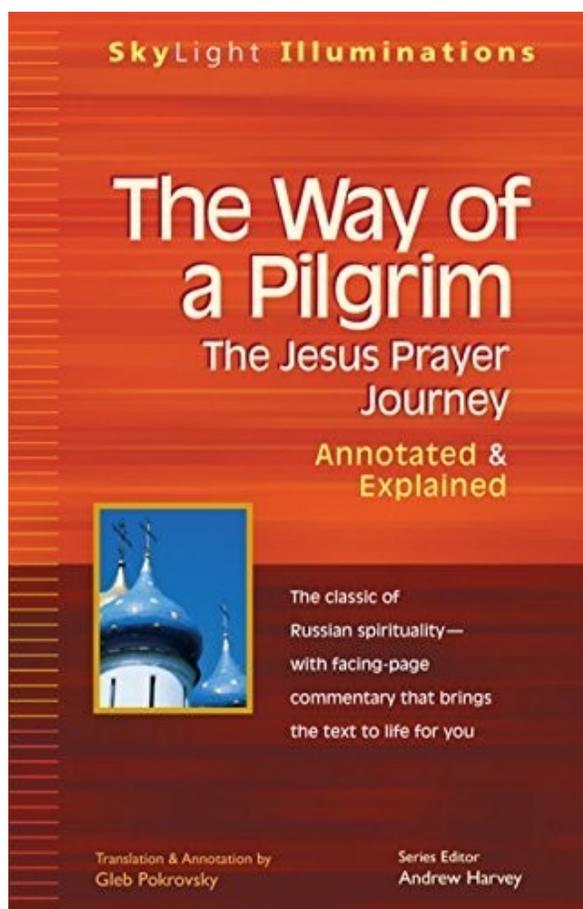
*To preserve and perpetuate Orthodox Christian concepts and the Orthodox Christian Family, and through them, to promote the Greek Orthodox Faith and traditions, in accordance with its doctrines, canons, discipline, divine worship, usages and customs;*

*To promote participation in the activities of the Greek Orthodox community, with the cooperation of the Parish Priest and the Parish Council.*

Please return from to: Jeanie Nenos, 14506 Nettle Creek Rd, Tampa, FL 33624

Or the Philoptochos mailbox in the church office.

## Featured Book of the St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Bookstore



### “The Way of a Pilgrim” translated and annotated by Gleb Pokrovsky

The prayer of the heart is a spiritual practice that produces, joy, inner peace, and a heart brimming over with love for all creation. This delightful account is the story of one man who sets out to learn the prayer of the heart—also known as the “Jesus Prayer”—and how the practice transforms his existence. Its anonymous author was one of the wandering pilgrims who were a regular feature of the Russian countryside from medieval times up until the early twentieth century. Through his eyes we get a charming look at rural life in nineteenth-century Russia, and with him we discover the secret of putting into practice the words of St. Paul: “Pray without ceasing.”

This classic of Russian spirituality—with facing-page commentary brings the text to life.

This book is available in the bookstore. We would love to hear from you, particularly what you think of the book after reading it.

P.S. If there is an Orthodox Christian religious item that you would like the bookstore to order, please contact us. We are often able to get a discount as a bookstore.

Brett and Ana Mourer

## Small Group Bible Study

**Our Bible Studies are going in full swing. New people are welcome at any time!**

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

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

**Group Leader:** Charlie Hambos

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

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

**Meeting Dates:** January 15, 21 and 28

### **Women’s Group** (for adult women of any age)

**Location:** Meets at the home of Debbie Kavouklis, 3315 Jean Circle, Tampa, FL 33629

**Group Leader:** Debbie Kavouklis

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

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

**Meeting Dates:** January 8, 15, 22 and 29

### **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 813-523-0347

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

**Meeting Dates:** January 8, 15, 22 and 29

# A Tax-Saving Way to Help St. John Greek Orthodox Church If you are 70½ years old or older...See Your Generosity in Action

## Join the St. John Legacy Society Today!

If you are 70½ years old or older, you can take advantage of a simple way to benefit St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church and receive tax benefits in return. Have you considered paying your annual stewardship gifts to St. John by making a gift through your IRA? You can give up to \$100,000 from your IRA directly to St. John without having to pay income taxes on the money. If you have not yet taken your required minimum distribution for the year, your IRA charitable rollover gift can satisfy all or part of that requirement.

### *Why Consider This Gift?*

- Your gift will be put to use today, allowing you to see the difference your donation is making.
- You pay no income taxes on the gift. The transfer generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so you benefit even if you do not itemize your deductions.

If you include St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in your plans, please use our legal name and Federal Tax ID # 59-1170684. Additionally, please contact Fr. Stavros at 813-876-8830 ext. 103, (email [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com)) so that we may properly thank you and include you as a member of the St. John Legacy Society.



## Join the IOCC Emergency Action Team

Are you interested in helping your neighbors get back on their feet after a disaster? When a disaster strikes, families often need help removing debris, tearing down water soaked walls, or ripping out buckled floors. In the event of a disaster in your greater community, IOCC will reach out to you to join one of our Emergency Action Teams. If you are willing to travel to a disaster affected area that is not in your greater community, please let us know that as well. Go to <https://www.iocc.org/take-action/join-action-team/emergency-action-team>.

## St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!

### 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](http://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)





## AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – January 2019



**AHEPA FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP DINNER AND CHRISTMAS SOCIAL** - On December 21, 2018 the AHEPA FAMILY hosted the annual SCHOLARSHIP AND CHRISTMAS SOCIAL DINNER at the Floridan Hotel. Once again scholarships were awarded to the young members of our community including high school seniors, and college students. To date Ahepa has awarded over 35 scholarships worth over \$40,000 to worthy students. Everyone, including Ahepans, Daughters Sons and Maids, friends, family and members of the community attended this fun event filled with holiday cheer to support the deserving young members of our community. The entertainers this year were Strolling Carolers who imparted a festive affair! Everyone left saying they had a wonderful time.

### SISTER CITIES EVENTS



The schedule for the activities related to the Signing of the Sister Cities has been established and is presented below. The Mayor of Tampa and the Mayor of Heraklion have approved the establishment of a Sister Cities Relationship and approved the Agreement document. Signing of the Agreement will be in Tampa and it is scheduled on January 31, of 2019. We will also have a formal Reception/Dinner for the Mayors and meetings with members of the Heraklion delegation. Supporters in addition to Ahepa Tampa include: the Greek Embassy Washington D.C.; the Greek Consulate in Tampa; Ahepa Family of Tampa, The Tampa Museum of Art; the Pan Cretan Association, the University of South Florida and the list is growing.



**We welcome your participation in all of our Sister Cities activities. Join us in this great new effort!**

**The Events will include the following:**

**January 31, 2019 Thursday**

**4:00 PM Official Signing Ceremony**

Everyone is invited to attend this event at the Tampa City Hall. Mayor Bob Buckhorn and Mayor Vassilis Lambrinos will sign the Sister Cities Agreement officially designating Tampa and Heraklion as Sister Cities and part of the International Sister Cities Program.

**7:00 PM Celebration Dinner - Floridan Hotel**

A Banquet will be hosted by the Tampa-Heraklion Sister Cities Committee commemorating and celebrating the signing of the Agreement and the beginning of programs linking citizens and organizations from the two cities.

**February 1, 2019 Friday**

**9:00 AM Breakfast at the Floridan Hotel**

**10:00 AM Overview Presentation Hillsborough County and Tampa and the Port**

**12:00 PM Lunch at CAMLS**

**1:00 PM CAMLS and USF Presentation**

University of South Florida medical school faculty and staff will discuss opportunities for joint efforts between USF and University of Crete and other Institutions.

**3:00 PM Individual Group Opportunities for meetings**

**7:30 PM Dinner Columbia Restaurant – Ybor City**

**February 2, 2019 Saturday**

**9:00 AM Breakfast at the Samaria Restaurant**

**10:30 AM BUSINESS SYMPOSIUM**

Discussion about linking our business communities and opportunities for business and cultural exchanges.

**12:00 PM Lunch at the Floridan Hotel with keynote speaker**

**7:00 PM Banquet at the Cretan Center**

Sister Cities members will attend the final event. This will be the Annual Banquet of the Cretan Association. Members will be able to meet our guests, discuss mutual interests and bid them farewell. Everyone is invited.



**TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS — SPACE WILL BE LIMITED FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

**CALL (813) 254-6980 OR EMAIL GUSPARAS@PARASASSOCIATES.COM**

# ~ January 2019 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<b>1</b> St. Basil-New Year's Day Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. No Basketball	<b>2</b> Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	<b>3</b> YAH 11:30 a.m. No Greek School	<b>4</b> Royal Hours of Epiphany 9:30 a.m.	<b>5</b> Theophany-evening Liturgy Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
<b>6</b> Epiphany Liturgy In Tarpon Springs Great Vespers for St. John the Baptist 6:30 p.m.	<b>7</b> Feast of St. John Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:30 a.m. AHEPA St. John's Day Dinner No Bible Study	<b>8</b> WBS 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m.  Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>9**</b>  Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	<b>10</b> Philoptochos Board Meeting  Greek School 6:00 p.m.	<b>11**</b>	<b>12</b> Sunday School Teachers' Retreat 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
<b>13</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m. Vasilopita Sunday	<b>14</b> Ministry Head Meeting 6:30 p.m. in K Center No Bible Study	<b>15</b> WBS 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Monday Night Bible study at 6:30 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>16</b>  Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	<b>17</b> St. Anthony Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  Greek School 6:00 p.m.	<b>18 **</b> Sts. Athanasios and Cyril Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>19</b> Gasparilla Children's Parade Fundraiser Community Outreach
<b>20</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday GOYA Parents Meeting after church AHEPA/Daughters	<b>21</b> MLK Day No Bible Study	<b>22</b> WBS 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>23 **</b>  Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	<b>24</b> Greek School 6:00 p.m.	<b>25 **</b> St. Gregory the Theologian Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Hope & Joy Movie Night	<b>26</b> Gasparilla Adult Parade Fundraiser  GOYA Clearwater Event
<b>27</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Prayer for Teachers Philoptochos General Meeting	<b>28</b> Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m.  Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>29</b> WBS 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>30**</b> Three Hierarchs Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	<b>31</b>		

# St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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

officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com

www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

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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)  
firstav@gmail.com

#### Pastoral Assistant Charlie Hambos

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

#### Parish Council

Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867  
Mike Xenick, VP 813-340-8737  
Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898  
Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747  
George Chagaris 727-420-1920  
Amin Hanhan 813-846-2957  
Edie Kavouklis 813-758-0305  
Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352  
Ryan Rindone 704-564-2046  
Aris Rogers, II 813-309-5525  
Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534

#### Office Staff

Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper  
debstjohntpa@gmail.com fax:813-443-4899

#### Adult Greek School

Magda Myer 813-909-2327

#### AHEPA

Gus Paras, President 813-254-6980

#### Altar Angels

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

#### Basketball

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

#### Bible Study

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### Bookstore

Brett Mourer 813-376-9315

#### Chanter

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### Choir

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

#### Community Outreach

Greg Melton 813-967-2074

#### Connect Through Christ - Special Needs Ministry for Children

Dante and Lindsey Skourellos 813-765-9534

#### Dance Groups

H XAPA ΜΑΣ, 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, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

#### Daughters of Penelope

Nicole Leontsinis, President 703-585-7490

#### 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

#### Hope/Joy

Debbie Nicklow 813-690-0671

#### Junior Olympics

Dwight Forde 727-685-9028

#### MOMS

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

#### Parish Nurse

Stavrula Crafa 727-409-0686  
Edie Kavouklis 813-758-0305

#### OCF

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### Oratorical Festival

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

#### Photography Ministry

Olya Clifton 661-243-9352

#### Philoptochos

Lisa Alsina 813-728-1094

#### Small Group Bible Study

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

#### Welcoming Ministry

Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

#### Young Adult

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### Young at Heart

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

#### Youth Protection

Catherine Mitseas 813-571-0658

*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.