

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*

February 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

Father Stavros' Message

How Can I Know God Better?

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10

How can I know God? This question is at the same time very simple and very complex. There are some concise answers—St. Gregory Palamas as an example, taught that we know God through His energies. We cannot know Him in essence but we know Him by His energies, the way that He is manifested in the world. We might say we experience Him in creation, in the sunlight, the wind, the water. We experience His majesty in the stars of the heavens, too numerous to count. However, all people experience these things and many people still do not believe in God.

Humility and Obedience

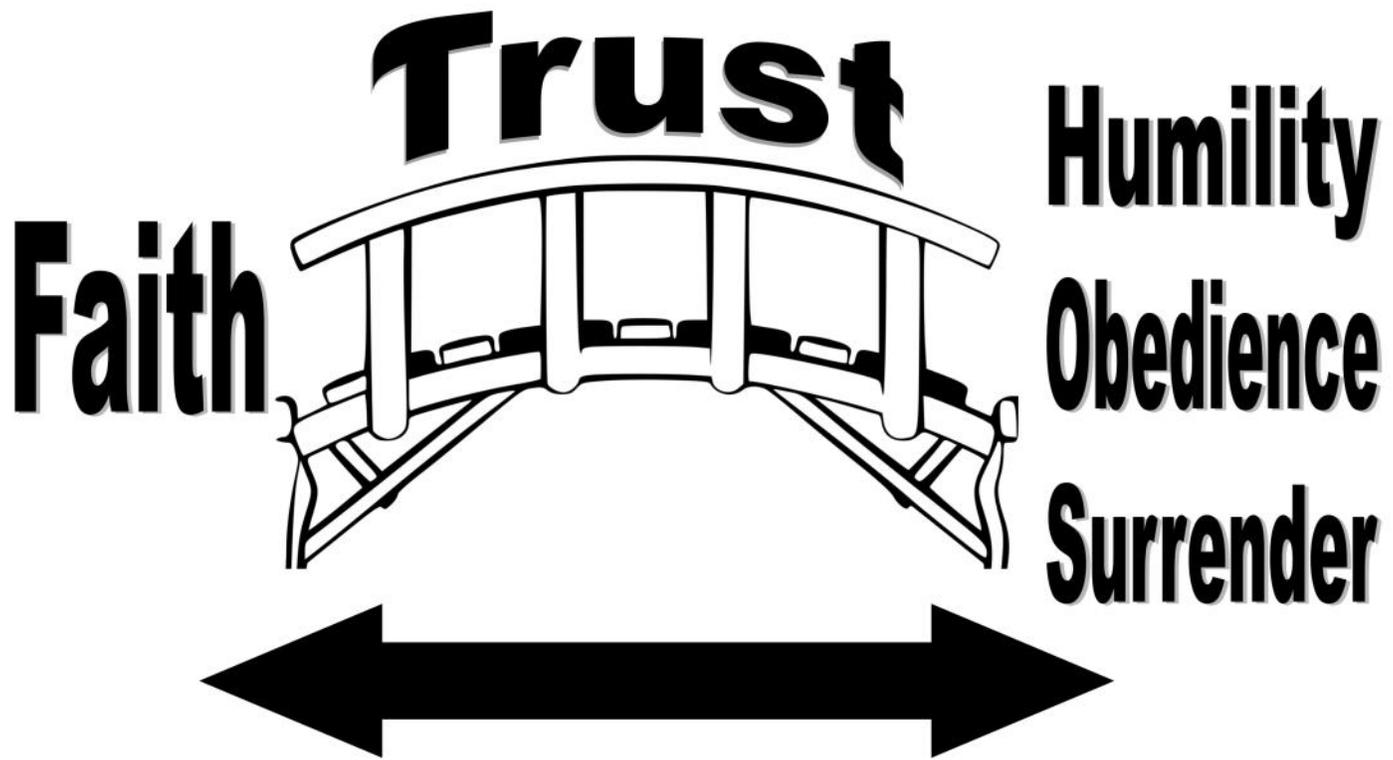
I recently heard a sermon by an Orthodox priest who said if we want to know God, we need two things—**humility and obedience**. Humility is the ability to check our ego. Some people pretend to be humble by displaying false piety or even use self-deprecating language. They put themselves down in an attempt to be humble. Humility is not something that is forced. Or pretentious. The truly humble person doesn't talk about their humility or flaunt their humility or make a show of their humility. They are just humble, quiet, unassuming. The truly humble person puts God at the front of everything. They walk behind God in everything. They credit God for their good things, not necessarily in public. Internally, they know

and believe that every blessing comes God. And that all good things happen because of God.

Obedience means that our lives follow after God's commandments. When you boil down every commandment God has ever given, they can all be summarized in one word: LOVE. So, to be obedient means to be loving. And to be truly obedient means to be loving at all times. To be obedient means to guard our words, which means first we must guard our thoughts. We also must guard our actions. Are the things that we think, say and do thoughts, words and actions of love? And are ALL the things we think, say and do thoughts, words and actions of love? Or are just some of them?

Surrender

Which brings us to a third word—**Surrender**. To surrender means to "give up." It does not necessarily mean "to quit." For instance, as a priest, I have many ideas, some of which may not totally be in line with the will of the people I serve. For instance, let's say that I want to offer Divine Liturgy on Christmas at midnight. However, I know the people of the parish I serve and I know that this will not serve them. They want the Liturgy at 7:00 p.m. If what we really want is maximum participation in the Divine Liturgy on Christmas, then I surrender my idea. I don't "quit" in the sense that there is no Liturgy,



but I get my plan behind what is best for the people I serve.

Moving this example to surrendering to God, let's say that we have an idea, even an idea that we think is good. I mean, we make wrong decisions and have bad ideas all the time, but when we start to make a decision or execute an idea, we don't know that it will end up bad. We don't execute ideas knowing that they are not going to turn out well, at least most of the time we don't. So, let's say we have an idea—I want to gossip because I'll look good, or I want to steal something because I think I deserve it, or I want to overeat because it tastes so good, etc.—and this

“Most people have a hard time with the concept of surrendering our whole life to God.”

idea doesn't fit the God we serve, then we surrender the idea. We don't quit living—we don't quit talking, we talk in a way that is edifying and encouraging rather than destructive; we don't quit acquiring things, but we acquire them in an honest way; we don't quit eating but we eat appropriately. We don't quit living. Rather we get our life plan behind the God who we believe in and the God we serve.

Most people have a hard time with the concept of surrendering our whole life to God. We eagerly (and some not so eagerly) give Him our Sunday morning (and some of us not every Sunday morning, or not much of it) to Him. We eagerly (and some of us begrudgingly) give Him whatever we think is fair back to Him through stewardship. We selectively fit Him in to our careers and our conversations, but oftentimes reason that if we get into

church on Sundays and “say our prayers” we're “doing okay.”

Knowing God is not just about following commandments and checking boxes. In Acts 17:28, we find a simple yet powerful verse, “*In Him we live and move and have our being.*” If we want to know God, we have to start living by this verse. We've got to take this verse with us into the classroom, the courtroom, the operating room, and the bedroom (the bedroom we share with our spouse, the bedrooms of our children). We've got to take it into our marriages, into our parenting, into our careers, into our friendships. If we really try to be obedient to God in how we live and move and have our being, we WILL know God. If we surrender every breath to Him, we WILL know Him. Because when we surrender to Him, we live room for His Spirit to dwell in us and to move in us, to stir our thoughts and soften our hearts.

“Here's the thing though—the MORE we surrender, the more we know God.”

The challenge or problem that we all face is that we can't surrender fully to Him. We surrender to Him in part. And we hold part back for ourselves.

Here's the thing though—the MORE we surrender, the more we know God. And the less we surrender (the more we keep for ourselves), the less we know Him. It stands to reason that the one who surrenders little knows God little. The person who shows up for church occasionally will not know God well. The person who prays only when they need something will not know God well. It's hard to call it a surrender when one says “Eh, I'll surrender a couple of hours a year for Him.” Or “I'll surrender

to Him only when all else has failed.”

The Lord's Prayer

In the Lord's Prayer, which we recite at nearly every service in the Orthodox Church, we pray *“Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”* (Matthew 6:10) This prayer rolls off our tongues so quickly, that I wonder whether we ever really take time to internalize what it is we are saying. I know I don't do this as often as I should. Every day we say and do things that go against God's will. If we took time and reflected on this prayer more often, perhaps we'd check ourselves better before starting an argument, or making an inconsiderate comment, or being petty. The next time you are considering one of these things, ask yourself “Is what I'm about to do in line with ‘Thy will be done’?”

The challenge, and we are all guilty of this, myself included, is that we compartmentalize God, and we selectively follow the Lord's Prayer. In reality, the prayer is “Thy will be done, on earth as it fits my lifestyle or my circumstance.” If we really want to follow after God, we have to surrender to Him. We have to let Him lead. We have to let His will lead, we have to conduct ourselves on earth, as things are conducted in heaven.

We worship God corporately in a compartment on Sunday mornings. We are supposed to worship Him privately at all times and in all places.

Faith is deepened through humility, obedience and surrender. When humility, obedience and surrender are not strong, faith is not strong. Where humility, obedience and surrender are strong, this is where strong faith grows.

Trust

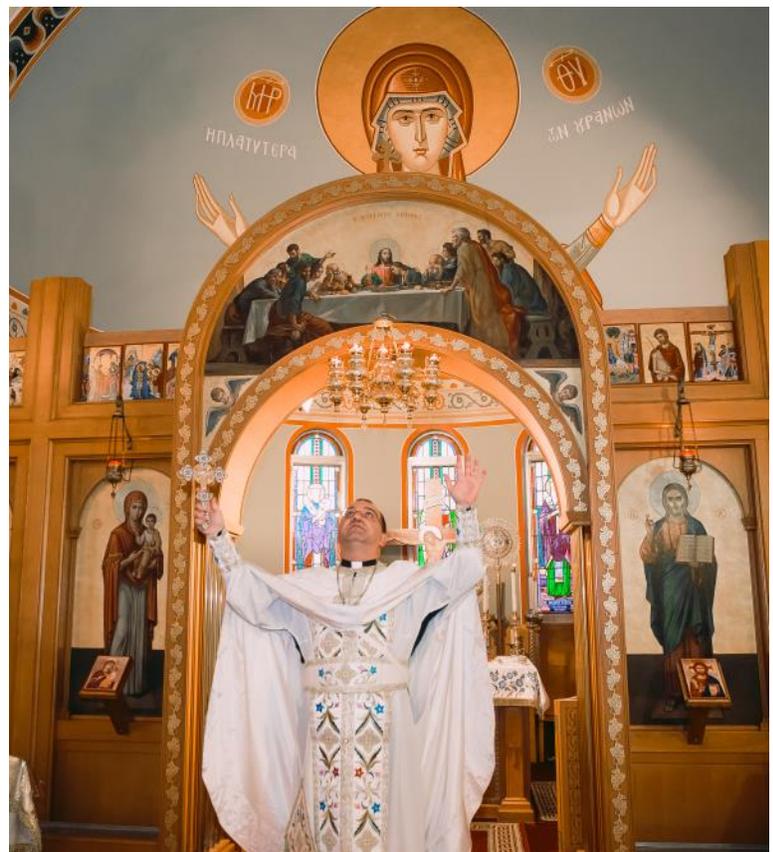
This is where trust comes in. Trust is the bridge between faith and humility, obedience and surrender. If I trust God and put faith in His message, it will be easier to be hum-

“Trust is the bridge between faith and humility, obedience and surrender.”

ble, to be obedient and to surrender my will to Him. Let's say I don't know God at all, or very well. If I commit to being humble, obedient and surrender my life to Him, if I put my trust in these three things, then I will trust that somehow He will use these things to grow my faith in Him. They go hand in hand.

Figure out which side of the bridge you are on—If you have faith, doing these things will make it a stronger faith. And if you don't have much faith at all in Christ, doing these things will build the strong faith you lack.

God works in tandem with us in our journey to salvation. When we are humble, obedient and we surrender, we have left room for Him to move in us. We pray to the Holy Spirit, the One Who is *“everywhere present and filling all things,”* He can only fill spaces that are empty. When we realize there is an emptiness in our life because our ego is



winning over humility and disobedience is winning over obedience—when we surrender our ego and our disobedience to humility and obedience, this is where the Spirit comes to fill the empty space and infuse us with faith.

Make is a point to pray the Lord's Prayer at least once a day. Offer it slowly and purposefully. And think about the words you are offering. *“Thy will be done”* needs to not just be words but actions and it needs to not be selective but inclusive of all that we are doing.

Let Us Lift Up Our Hearts

In the Divine Liturgy, there is a beautiful line offered by the priest, right before the Holy Gifts are consecrated, right before we call the Holy Spirit down on the Gifts. He says “Let us lift up our hearts.” And he raises His hands and looks towards the heavens, in a sign of surrender. The people respond with “We lift them up to the Lord.”

We offer this line at the Liturgy for two reasons. First, we are reminded that in order for the Holy Spirit to change our “gifts”, we need to surrender ourselves to the Lord, so that there is an empty space that the Spirit can fill. At the Divine Liturgy, our “gifts” are bread and wine, ordinary substances that become extraordinary through the descent of the grace of the Holy Spirit. In our daily lives, our “gifts” are our talents and our opportunities—our talents to teach or talk or write or organize, and our opportunities in our classroom, our office, our homes, etc. Our ordinary activities can become extraordinary if we surrender them to the Lord. The same principle that works in the Divine Liturgy can work in everyday life. Ordinary can become extraordinary through the grace of the Holy Spirit, which

fills the empty spaces that are created through surrender.

Secondly, this line of the Liturgy is offered so frequently so that it can be a continual voice in our minds and in our hearts—Let us lift up our hearts. We lift them up unto the Lord. (Insert your name) lift up your heart. I lift it up to the Lord.

Hearts Lead Us

If we want to know God, we can read the Bible, we can pray, we can read books and listen to podcasts. And we should do these things in order to gain knowledge. But knowledge is not what leads us. Our hearts lead us. Gain enough knowledge so that you know what humility is and you know which commandments to be obedient to. Then surrender your life to obedience and humility—in other words surrender to love and lift up your heart to God in ALL places. And then you will know God. The more we surrender, the more humble we are, the more obedient we are, the more spaces there are to be filled by the Holy Spirit.

What We Treasure Leads Our Hearts

There is one other important thing to say. The Bible doesn't say that our hearts lead us, as I just wrote in the previous paragraph. Jesus says "*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*" (Matthew 6:21) Our treasure is what we value—it's where we invest our time, our thoughts, our money. The Church talks about time,

talent and treasure regarding stewardship. But our treasure is whatever we value. If our treasure is our possessions, then our hearts are led by possessiveness, and surrender becomes hard. If our treasure is food, then our hearts are led by gluttony, and obedience becomes hard. If our treasure is gossip, then our hearts are led by pettiness and humility becomes hard.

If we take what we have, beginning with the day that God has given us, if we see today as a blessing, as a treasure, and we spend it being humble and obedient and we surrender it to God, it will be a day where faith can grow. And this goes for how we choose to spend our time, our talent, and our money today. If we let God lead us in how we are spending our time, our thought, our money, our marriage, our parenting, our jobs, our friendships and everything else that He has entrusted us, indeed when we see all of OUR things as HIS things, as things on loan from Him, then we've left plenty of room for Him to work in us and THIS is when we will really begin to know Him on a much deeper level.

Obedience, humility, surrender—these are things that build faith. To pray "*Thy will be done*" with our hearts is to offer these things!

+Fr. Stavros

The Prayer Team will celebrate its 4th Anniversary on February 20!

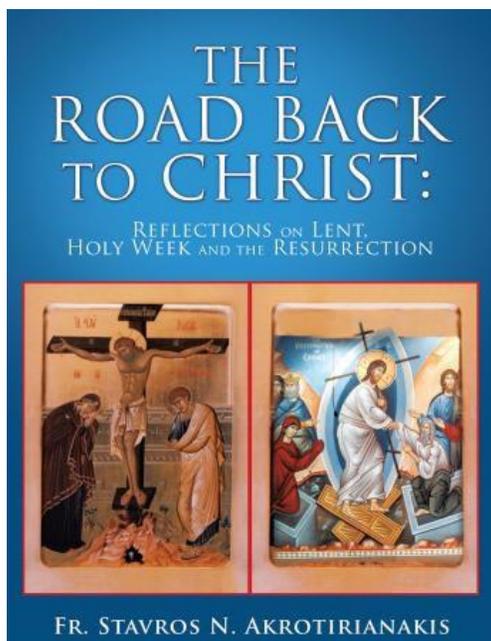
For four years, Fr. Stavros has been writing a daily reflection. It comes out every morning at 12:30 a.m. via Constant Contact. From Monday-Friday, Father will be writing on the subject of "Commissioned to Be Apostles" and on Saturday - Sunday, Father is writing on the Scriptures of each Sunday of Triodion and Lent. Over 1450 have joined the Prayer Team. Over half our parish receives it daily, as well as many people outside of our parish. Each day, a scripture verse, reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via constant contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team please email Charlie at charlie.hambos@gmail.com and ask him to add you.

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 1450 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 2 years! Over half of our parish receives it daily, as well as many people outside of our parish. Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email Charlie at charlie.hambos@gmail.com and ask to add you.



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

By Fr. Stavros

In January, we began the “Fifty-Two Verses in Fifty-Two Weeks” Bible Challenge, 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, as many of you have.

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 February. 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.

February 3 - 9

*As is it written in the Law of the Lord,
“Every child that opens the womb shall be
called Holy to the Lord.” Luke 2:23*

This verse from Luke 2:23 is read on February 2, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord. Not necessarily a well-known verse of the Bible (even Simeon’s Prayer is more well-known as part of the Gospel passage on February 2) it is actually pretty profound. For those of you who are parents, do you ever think of your children as being “holy to the Lord”? As you are making sure they know their academics, sports and manners, are you making sure they know Christ? For all of us, whether we have children or not, we should ask ourselves “Is our whole LIFE ‘holy’ to the Lord” or only small pieces of it?

February 10 - 16

*Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous
or boastful. I Corinthians 13:4*

February is usually the month of the year we are called to focus heart health. That’s probably because Valentine’s Day falls in the middle of the month. As we walk through stores and see the heart shaped boxes of chocolates, it’s

time to think about the heart that is inside of us and what is in it. Is it light? Or dark? Is it filled with “rose petals” or “stones”? Saint Paul, in his treatise on love, does not tell us that love is easy or that it is fun. He tells us first and foremost that it is patient and kind. It is not jealous (so it is content) and it is not boastful (so it is humble). As we evaluate our hearts from a physical health perspective, we should also evaluate them from a spiritual perspective. How could you rank yourself, on a scale of 1-10 (1 being poor, 10 being excellent) on your patience, kindness, contentment and humility? If we’re all honest, we’ve all got some work to do.

February 17-22

*The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and
saves the crushed in spirit. Psalm 34:18*

Is your heart broken? Do you feel down? One of the best things to read when you are feeling down and out is Psalm 34. That’s why Psalm 34:18 is one of my go-to verses. When we approach God with a “crushed and humble heart” (Psalm 51), we will get closer to Him and He will come closer to us. There is a saying, that it’s “always darkest before the dawn.” When we are down and out, this is often the point when spiritual breakthroughs occur, because this is the moment when God may feel like the only person in our corner.

February 23 - March 2

*There is no fear in love, but perfect love
casts out fear. I John 4:18*

Fear and love cannot co-exist. You can’t love someone while also stressing them out. Either you are loving them or you are stressing them. We can’t do both. In a relationship, you are either connecting or disconnecting at a given moment in time. You can’t be doing both. There are people who spend their lives bringing stress into the lives of others—maybe they are perpetually jerky drivers, or are always cranky and grouchy, maybe they are a “debbie-downer” or are unpleasant to be around, maybe they are overly aggressive, asserting that they are winners and everyone else is a loser. We probably all have some of these tendencies at least some of the time. This verse is a good reminder that we can’t love God while at the same time hating on someone else. We can’t love other people when we are being cranky and grouchy, unpleasant or overly aggressive. And we can’t connect with people if our behavior is disconnecting from them.

How did we do last month? Let us know. We want to help. Also, if there are any scriptures that mean the world to you, send them to Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com.

Liturgical Schedule for February 2019

Friday, February 1 **Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Evening Liturgy)**
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:** David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas
Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Genie Carter, Kalliope Chagaris; Ambassador: Carole Fotopoulos; Caller: Betty Katsamakis; Getting Acquainted: Ewana and Dwight Forde
Coffee Hour: OCMC Luncheon **Bookstore:** Rita Bedran and MaryAnn Rose

Sunday, February 10 Sunday of the Canaanite Woman / St. Haralambos
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew **Ushers:** John Christ, Byron Nenos, Chris Kavouklis
Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Lisa Alsina, Elaine Halkias; Ambassador: Donna Hambos; Caller: Vickie Peckham
Coffee Hour: AHEPA **Bookstore:** Thom and Angie Bougas

Monday, February 11 **Teaching Divine Liturgy at part of Orthodoxy 101 Class**
Divine Liturgy 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Sunday, February 17 Beginning of Triodion - The Publican and the Pharisee
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark **Ushers:** Tammy Christou, Nick Patides, Florin Patrascioiu
Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Maria Karounos, Skip Higdon; Ambassador: Debbie Kavouklis; Caller: Tanya Robinson
Coffee Hour: Dance Groups **Bookstore:** John and Anetta Alexander

Tuesday, February 19 Ecumenical Prayer Service for Children of our Country
@ Christ the King Catholic Church 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, February 24 Second Sunday of Triodion - The Prodigal Son
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke **Ushers:** Nick Kavouklis, George Trimikliniotis, Peter Theophanous
Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Edie Kavouklis, Julie Palios; Ambassador: Bessie Palios; Caller: Katherine Sakkis
Coffee Hour: GOYA **Bookstore:** David Voykin

Saturday, March 2 & 9 **1st Saturday of Souls (March 2) 2nd Saturday of the Souls (March 9)**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, March 3 Third Sunday of the Triodion - The Last Judgement (Meat-fare Sunday)
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John **Ushers:** Ron Myer, Jim Armstrong, John Alexander
Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Marenca Patrascioiu, Tanya Robinson; Ambassador: Skip Higdon; Caller: Christene Worley
Getting Acquainted: Maria and Mike Xenick
Coffee Hour: Choir Luncheon **Bookstore:** Zhana Temelkova and Elaine Daniels

Sunday, March 10 Forgiveness Sunday (Cheese-fare Sunday)
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew **Ushers:** Brett Mourer, Michael Bocancollins, Amin Hanhan
Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Cindy Xenick, Lisa Alsina; Ambassador: Genie Carter; Caller: Julie Palios
Coffee Hour: AHEPA/DOP **Bookstore:** Rita Bedran and MaryAnn Rose

Liturgical Notes for February 2019

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. **This year, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy on Friday evening, February 1, with Orthros at 5:00 p.m. and Divine Liturgy at 6:00 p.m.**



Sunday, February 10 - St. Haralambos

St. Haralambos was a Saint of the first century and lived in Greece. He was a priest who was martyred. Our parish has a special connection to St. Haralambos since his relics were interred in our altar table when the church was consecrated in 1986.

Monday, February 11 - Teaching Liturgy in the Evening

As part of the Orthodoxy 101 Class, we will have a teaching Divine Liturgy from 6:30-8:30 p.m. on Monday, February 11. The service will be interrupted frequently for explanations and questions. Anyone is welcome to attend the Divine Liturgy, even if you are not taking the Orthodoxy 101 class.

Christ the King Catholic Church and
St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
will pray together in an

Ecumenical Prayer Service for Children of our Country

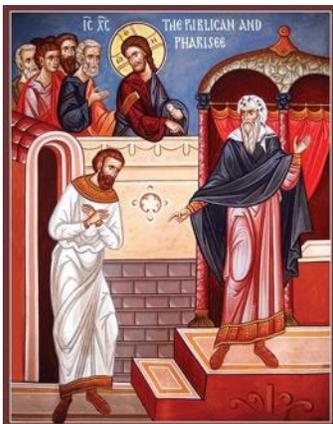
Tuesday, February 19, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.
at Christ the King Roman Catholic Church.
821 S. Dale Mabry Hwy.

Tampa, FL 33609

Let us join our Catholic brothers and sisters for an evening prayer service as we come to together to pray for the children of our country.

What We Celebrate on the Sundays of Triodion and Lent

Sunday, February 17 - Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee



The focus this Sunday is on the Gospel of Luke 18:10-14, in which two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, an externally decent and righteous man of religion, and the other was a publican, a sinful tax-collector who was cheating the people. Though the Pharisee was genuinely righteous under the Law, he boasted before God and was condemned. The publican, although he was truly sinful, begged for mercy, received it, and was justified by God. There is **NO** fasting this week, in preparation for our great journey.)

Sunday, February 24 - Sunday of the Prodigal Son

On this Sunday in the preparation for Great Lent, Orthodox Christians are to read Christ's parable about God's loving forgiveness (Luke 15:11-24). They are to see themselves as being in a foreign country far from the Father's house and to make the movement of return to God, where we truly



belong. The parable gives assurance that the Father will receive them with joy and gladness in their journey through Great Lent, their journey home.

Looking ahead to March—GREAT LENT BEGINS March 11

We will have our Wednesday Night Series again this Lent. The theme will be “Blessed are you. . .: You Are the Light of the World.” (See attached flyer) We will be discussing the Beatitudes, Matthew 5:1-16. Each Wednesday evening of Great Lent, we will have Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, a free Lenten dinner sponsored by one of our ministries, a presentation by Fr. Stavros, and then time for discussion in small group. The schedule will be as follows:

- 6:00 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
- 7:15 p.m. Lenten Dinner
- 7:45 p.m. Presentation
- 8:15 p.m. Small Group Discussion
- 8:45 p.m. Concluding remarks and closing prayer

So, mark your calendars and plan from now to be part of our Wednesday evening Lenten Series. The dinner/discussions will be held March 13, 20 and 27, and April 3, 10 and 17.

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.



Like

Live Streaming

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

To access this page

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

All of the services are available to watch at anytime.



Pictures

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



Blessed are You...

Becoming the *Light* of the World

A SIX-WEEK LENTEN STUDY TO HELP US
Apply the Beatitudes to our lives



*Join us to better understand the call to becoming the Light of the World
as Christians with more engagement.*

Weekly Topics:

Wednesday, March 13	Blessed are You: It starts with humility
Wednesday, March 20	Seeking comfort in God's strength
Wednesday, March 27	A hunger for righteousness and mercy
Wednesday, April 3	Purity and peace bring us closer to God
Wednesday, April 10	Blessed even on the worst day
Wednesday, April 17	YOU are the Light of the World

Each Wednesday evening schedule:

6:00 p.m.	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
7:15 p.m.	Lenten Dinner (provided by one of our ministries)
7:45 p.m.	Presentation by Fr. Stavros
8:15 p.m.	Small group discussion
8:45 p.m.	Concluding Remarks and Closing Prayer

**Childcare will be provided at no cost. Please contact the church office with the name and age of each child by March 1 so we can properly plan.*

St. John the Baptist Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism - Maxim Alexander Niculescu, son of Alexandru and Katarzyna Niculescu, was baptized on Sunday, December 23. Bogdan and Adriana Niculescu were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Adult Baptism - Axl (Gabriel) David was baptized on Sunday, December 23. Charlie Hambos was the Godfather. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Sebastian Michael Provenzano, son of Stephen Provenzano and Sofia Pahoumis was baptized on Sunday, January 13. Polichronia (Paulina) Katsouli was the Godmother. Na Sas Zisi!

Wedding - Joseph Samuel Krajacic and Alyssa Theone Skijus were married on Saturday, January 12. Demetrios Halkias was the Koumbaro. Congratulations!

Condolences to Jimmy Konstas, on the passing of his grandmother, Despina Konstantakis, who passed away on January 13. May her memory be eternal!

Condolences to Sandra Pappas and Gary Ward, on the passing of her mother Voula, on January 14. May her memory be eternal!

Celebration of Theophany and our Feastday of St. John—The first weekend of 2019 brought a lot of activity to the Orthodox of the Tampa Bay area. First, on January 6, we had seven young men from our parish dive for the Cross at the Epiphany Celebration in Tarpon Springs. They were Joseph Hambos, Matthew Robinson, Nicholas Katzaras, Frankie Giallourakis, Harry Koutroumanis, Demetri (DI) Tsetsekas, and Dominic Garcia. As part of the application process to dive for the cross, each young man must submit an essay about why he wants to dive. The top three essays for 2019 were ALL from our community—Nicholas Katzaras, Harry Koutroumanis and DI Tsetsekas. Congratulations!

On the evening of January 6, we had our annual St. John Feastday Vespers, presided over by His Grace Bishop Sevastianos. He was assisted by Fr. Stavros, Fr. Athanasios Haros (Tarpon Springs), Fr. John Bociu (Sarasota), Fr. Sampson Kasapakis (Tarpon Springs), Fr. Andrew Pavlakos (Clearwater), Fr. Theofanis Katsiklis (Tarpon Springs) and Deacon John Pantelis (St. Petersburg). The Philoptochos Society of our parish sponsored the reception that followed. A big thank you to Mary Nenos who offered the Artoklasia and who also decorated the flowers on the icons on the Iconostasion as well as for the procession.

We concluded our Feastday with a glorious celebration of the Divine Liturgy on January 7. His Grace Bishop Sevastianos officiated, assisted by Fr. James Rousakis (Vicar of the Tampa Bay Area, Fr. Stavros, Fr. John Stefero (St. Petersburg), Fr. Jim Paris (Clearwater), Fr. Athanasios Haros, Fr. Sampson Kasapakis, Fr. Andrew Pavlakos, Fr. Theofanis Katsiklis and Deacon John Pantelis. The Hambos family prepared the luncheon, which was coordinated by Carole Fotopoulos, Skip Higdon and their committee. A big thank you for everyone who attended and who helped make our feastday weekend truly special!

New Policy—no passing of trays (except for emergency fund)—As of January 1, there will no longer be a tray passed at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. The exception will be the last Sunday of the month, when one tray for the emergency fund will be passed. It is our hope that everyone will increase their stewardship in order to bridge this gap. Increased stewardship and less nickel-and-diming (trays) are the mark of a strong parish. This new policy is in line with our desire to be a strong parish. There will be a tray in the narthex. You can deposit your stewardship checks in that tray, give additional donations in that tray or ignore the tray. There is no charge for the small candles. The large candles (the red 7-day ones) will still cost \$5. We will continue to pass a tray on the last Sunday of the month which goes to the emergency fund of our parish, which has been set up to help parishioners in time of catastrophic loss.

Interested in hosting a coffee hour? - Some families have expressed interest in hosting coffee hour in the past—it can be for a birthday, an anniversary, a nameday or any other occasion, or can just be to do it. Coffee hour is an important part of our fellowship at St. John. The burden of this generally falls on our ministries. There are, however, several open dates in the months to come. If you are interest in hosting a coffee hour, or teaming up with a few families to host a coffee hour, please contact the church office.

Counting the Wins

Congratulations to Artemis Xenick who was invited to sing with the All0state Chorus. She represented Plant High School. Artemis is a junior and sings in the Varsity Chorale and the female acapella group, the Pink Panthers. Artemis is the daughter of Mike and Maria Xenick.

Congratulations to Stephan Morrow, who recently directed “Recovery” by Anne Lucas, at Theater for New City in Manhattan. Crystal Field, longtime veteran of Off Broadway in New York, and who is the Executive Director of the Theater proposed it for the Pulitzer Prize. This production is about the opioid crisis in this country.

If you know of any parishioner who has done something notable, please submit their story for consideration on “Counting the Wins” for our community.

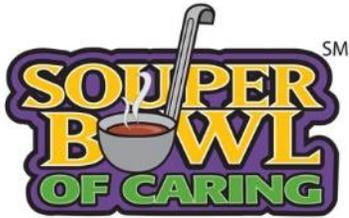
MOVIE NIGHT FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1

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

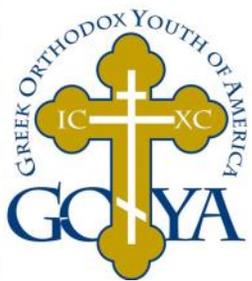
Super Bowl Sunday of course, but it is also “Souper Bowl of Caring” Sunday as well. This is a nationwide, youth-led initiative to tackle hunger across our country. Over 3000 Churches, youth groups, and other organizations will be collecting non-perishable items and monetary donations for local food banks. 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 8th 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.



Get Acquainted Sunday, February 3

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



GOYA Lockin on February 9 - Our GOYA will have its annual spring lock-in on Saturday, February 9, beginning at 5:00 p.m. and ending after Divine Liturgy on Sunday, February 10.

GOYA Meeting - February 17 - Father/Daughter Retreat, regular meeting for boys There will be a GOYA meeting on Sunday, February 17. For this meeting, all fathers and daughters will have a special session with Fr. Stavros. We invite all dads to come with their daughters. The boys will meet with Charlie. The meeting will be from 5:00-8:00 p.m. (This will be the last meeting of this duration, as we are trying to accommodate time for our dads and daughters to have meaningful time together.)

GO RED SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10

February is healthy heart month. We celebrate Valentine’s Day. We get our hearts ready for Great Lent. And we recognize the need to live healthier lives. As a show of support for our hearts and an opportunity to do something together, everyone is asked to wear RED on Sunday, February 10. We did this last year and it was great. See you in red on February 10.



Welcome Ministry meeting on February 10 - Father Stavros will meet with the welcoming ministry after Divine Liturgy on Sunday, February 10, in the Zaharias Room.

Community Outreach - Saturday, February 16 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!**

Photography Ministry - First, a big thank you to Olya Clifton, who helped create and oversee this ministry. Olya is moving during February. Karina Findlay is going to be the new chairperson of the photo ministry. If you are interesting in helping to document community life through the photo ministry, please contact Karina at 813-476-9632, kbilliris@verizon.net . We will be having an organization meeting at some point in February.

Young Adult Ministry - Sunday, February 24 - 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.



Orthodoxy 101 Class continues in February

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 “yiaiyalogy”

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, so he has enough materials for everyone. There is no charge for this class.

Archangel Michael Winners for 2018 Recognized!

We congratulate again Cindy Xenick and Peggy Bradshaw who were awarded the Archangel Michael Award from our parish in 2018. We thank you for your stellar stewardship to our community!



Stewardship Update February 2019

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 hit a St. John milestone in 2018 with over \$500,000 in Stewardship Gifts from 360 Individuals/Families. We are deeply humbled and express sincere gratitude for the blessings our loyal parishioners have provided to our beloved church!

We now turn the page to a New Year and our calling to ***Bridge the Gap*** in our spiritual life in many ways, highlighted in a message from Fr. Stavros in our 2019 Stewardship Materials. We are off to a to a very good start! Stewardship Sunday held December 9, 2018, was a day to celebrate our faith and offer our gifts to God as a community with love. **We currently have 216 families that have completed Pledge Forms including 12 new families! To date we have \$379,003 pledged for 2019!** But imagine if everyone attending St. John completed pledge forms at the start of the year. Help us encourage one another to make this happen and have 100% participation in Stewardship. If you missed Stewardship Sunday look for members of our expanded Stewardship Ministry being more proactive over the next few months reaching out with calls to members of our community to answer questions and provide pledge forms

On a closing notes, did you know the word for 'Steward' in Greek -"Oikonomos" translates into how the 'house is governed.' Imagine our beloved house of worship and active ministries without the gifts of Time, Talent and Treasures from the loyal Stewards of St. John to the Glory of God! As Fr. Stavros and the Philoptochos recognized ministry leaders and parishioners on Vasilopita Sunday last month, it was evident how much time goes into governing this house and how many give back. We want you to 'feel at home' and, in some cases, bring you back into God's House to feel the connection with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Stewardship can help us make that connection.

Good to Know ~ Stewardship Housekeeping

- ◆ ***We kindly remind you to complete 2018 Stewardship Commitments. We have recently provided summary statements recapping outstanding pledges.*** Please use the memo or comments field to identify Stewardship Year when submitting a check or via PayPal.
- ◆ We 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.
- ◆ **On behalf of the Stewardship Committee we thank-you for your support of God's Church in Tampa. Please feel free to share your thoughts to the office email -** Pledge forms are available in the Church Narthex, Office, Bookstore and Online. We make it easy! officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com or speak directly with Fr. Stavros, Sandra Pappas or Pete Trakas -Stewardship Co-Chairs. We are here for YOU!

Feast of Theophany/St. John the Baptist 2019



Vasilopita Sunday 2019



February is National Heart Month

Hear disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. Every year, 1 in 4 deaths are caused by heart disease. You can make healthy changes to lower your risk of developing heart disease. Controlling and preventing risk factors is also important for people who already have heart disease. The good news? Heart disease can often be prevented when people make healthy choices and manage their health conditions. .

Watch your weight. There are plenty weight loss plans and local programs that can help you loose weight if you need to. Ask for a referral and pick one that works for your lifestyle.

Quit smoking and stay away from secondhand smoke. Smoking is an addiction and your smoking affects the people around you. You will need help to quit. Ask your physician for available programs.

Control your cholesterol and blood pressure. These can be controlled with healthy eating, medications or high quality supplements. If you are considering nutritional supplements, be sure to consult with your physician especially if

you're on prescription medications as some supplements can react with prescription meds.

If you drink alcohol, drink only in moderation. This is just a good rule for everyone.

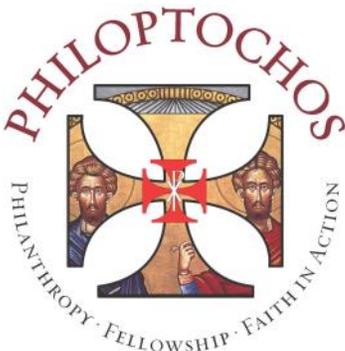
Get active and eat healthy. You don't need to join a gym to get active. Just start walking and pick up the pace a little bit at a time. Many local hospitals offer nutritional classes for free to the community that can help you get on track.

Reach out to your parish nurses for additional information. You only have one heart. Take good care of it so that you can give Glory to God for a very long time.

-Stavrula Crafa, RNC, Parish Nursing Ministry



Philoptochos Membership Brunch



Save The Date
Sunday, February 24

At the home of Brett & Ana Mourer
6002 S. 6th Street
Tampa, FL 33611



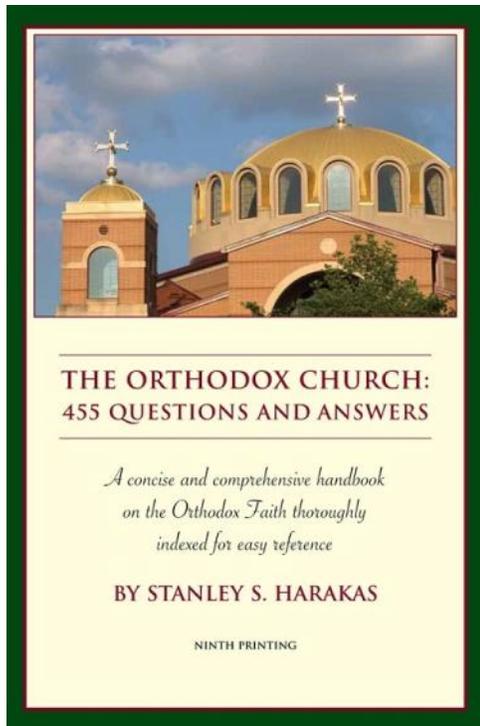
A big thank you from Philoptochos!

Philoptochos would like to thank all those who contributed to our Spring of Tampa Bay luncheon and diaper drive. This week we delivered approximately \$1,300 in gift cards, household and personal care items for moms and babies.

Please join us in making Bags of Love to hand out to those who need it the most on Sunday, February 17.

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

“The Orthodox Church: 455 Questions and Answers” by Stanley S. Harakas



This publication is a concise and comprehensive handbook on the Orthodox Faith, which is thoroughly indexed for easy reference.

Practically any question you may have about the Orthodox faith is answered in this book. The questions range from the spiritual to the mundane. The most popular areas of concern have to do with Baptism, Marriage, Holy Communion, Priests, the Bible and Biblical interpretation.

A graduate of Holy Cross School of Theology in Brookline, MA, Rev. Harakas received a Doctor of Theology degree from the Boston University School of Theology, followed by post-graduate studies at the University of Athens and Salonica in Greece.

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: February 4, (Tuesday, Feb. 12), 18 and 25

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: February 5, 12, 19 and 26

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: February 5, 12 and 26

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 2019

Name _____ Date _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell _____

Please circle which number is the preferred contact: **HOME/ CELL**

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.

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

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.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS FEBRUARY 2019

January was a very busy month for the Sunday School. Our topics for January were the Epiphany/ St. John the Baptist, the Vasilopita/St. Basil, Making Moral Choices, and The Sacramental Life of the Orthodox Church. Charlie Hambos was also very busy by working with our 2nd graders and 3rd graders.

Congratulations to the seven young men who dove for the cross at the Epiphany Service in Tarpon Springs. They are Harry Koutroumanis, Joseph Hambos, Matthew Robinson, Dominic Garcia, Nicholas Kazaras, D.I. Tsetsekas, and Frankie Giallourakis and they represented our church and our faith in a beautiful way!

On Saturday January 12th, the Sunday School Teachers participated in a retreat with Fr. Stavros. The Sunday School teachers are truly blessed to have Fr. Stavros and Charlie as our spiritual leaders of our Sunday School. Our Sunday School program would not be what it is today without them. THANK YOU Fr. Stavros and Charlie for dedicating so much of your busy schedule to our Sunday School.

On Sunday, January 13th, the Sunday School had their own Vasilopita Celebration. Each student received a piece of this sweet bread and one lucky student found the coin in their piece. We would truly like to thank Melissa Krinos for making this Vasilopita for our Sunday School Children year after year. It was delicious and appreciated by all of our children.

We also had our YOUTH SUNDAY on Jan. 20th. The children sang beautifully, our Epistle Reader did a fine job and the Prospora, made by our students, was delicious as usually. Our children are truly great stewards of St. John's.

The next few months will be busy as usual for the Sunday School. Our older students are preparing for the Oratorical Festival and everyone is getting ready for Pascha. Each Sunday School class will have the opportunity to participate in the important Sacrament of Confession. The dates are as followed: (Feb. 24th - 6th Grade), (March 3rd - 4th and 5th Grade), and April 14th - 1st - 3rd Grade). Of course, we will also have a Pre-Lenten Retreat and a Retreat on Good Friday.

FEBRUARY 2019 SUNDAY SCHOOL CALENDAR

Sunday, February 3:
Topic: Presentation of Christ
Charlie: 4th & 5th Grade

Saturday, February 9:
GOYA Lock-in

Sunday, February 10:
YOUTH SUNDAY
6th - 8th Grade Music at 11:50 a.m.
Topic: Salvation (Story of Zacchaeus)
Charlie: 1st Grade
Prospora: 2nd Grade

Sunday, February 17:
Topic: Publican & Pharisee
Charlie: Kindergarten
GOYA Meeting 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 24:
Topic: Prodigal Son
6th Grade will go to Confession

Father Stavros read "Song of the Stars" by Sally Loyd Jones to the children who joined us at the Christmas Eve Morning Divine Liturgy on December 24



Hospitality and Church Growth

Editors Note: The following message appears on the website of the Holy Nativity Catholic Church in Timonium, Maryland. Even though it is not Orthodox, it is about how to welcome people into the church, something that crosses jurisdictional lines. Also, welcoming people is not something limited to those on the welcoming ministry team. It is part of everyone's stewardship to the church, to welcome all who come through our doors, and to make all feel welcome in all the aspects of parish life.

We serve at a very critical time in the life of the Church. A time in which it's easy to be disheartened and disillusioned, and, as a consequence, disengaged.

It is rather like a systems wide implosion going on with lawsuits, investigations, indictments, bankruptcies, closures, consolidations, clustering, twining...the whole organization seems to be all about closing in on itself. Even among the most committed there is the instinct to hunker down, parishes can become holy huddles just trying to survive, while thousands close each year.

You know the church doesn't exist to survive...it exists to grow.

We are growth oriented, growth is one of our core values. And we talk about growth as going deeper and wider. Everything we do is about making disciples of Jesus Christ, that's the *wider* part, and about leading them into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, that's the *deeper* part.

When it comes to our member ministers, we want your service to help you to grow closer to Jesus Christ...that's the *deeper* part, and lead others to Christ. That's the *wider* part.

We hope by serving you are developing the character of Christ, who came not to be served but to serve...that's the *deeper* part.

We hope by serving you are revealing Christ to the unchurched and the lost, whom Jesus came to seek and save...that's the *wider* part.

Your particular form of service is all about hospitality. Hospitality finds its root in the Latin noun: *hospital*, the place where the sick go to find healing and wholeness, where they go to get better. In medieval times the people who ran hospitals were called hospitalers, they provided hospitality.

Hospitality is also one of our core values. It is how we propose to grow. Opening a door and greeting someone is a mighty simple things to do. It can also be mighty powerful things to do too.

When the average unchurched Catholic in north Baltimore shows up at church his number one question follows his number one fear:

Am I welcome? Will I be judged?

Your greeting can dispel that fear and answer that question in a moment with welcome and acceptance. And acceptance paves the way to influence. Guests will be far more willing to give my message a hearing if they feel accepted.

This is why our hospitality is not as much about function but feeling. It is feeling over function. When you step into a space, especially for the first time, there is always a feeling, a vibe, a spirit. As a greeter you are helping to form that feeling for our guests, invoking spirit, the Holy Spirit, into our fellowship.

We built the new church to create *empty seats at optimal times*. Now we have *empty seats at optimal times*. Not all the time, but certainly we now have room to grow. And one day, we hope to expand into our balcony too.

So this year we are working to fill those empty seats. Our basic strategy is called *invest and invite*... We challenge parishioners to invest in their unchurched neighbors, friends and family members, and when they have the opportunity invite them to church.

But think about it: the whole invest and invite strategy... comes down to your hospitality. Anyone can get a guest in the front door. Only you can shape how they feel once inside.

To increase the hospitality we have been talking about something called ***Wow One***.

Every weekend when you serve look for the opportunity to wow at least one person with your hospitality. How?

- *Listen to people* and give them your full uninterrupted attention.
- *Walk with people*. If someone asks you for directions say, "Let me show you."
- Its telling people, "We're glad you're here."
- *Get to know and call people by name*. The sweetest sound to anyone is the sound of their own name.
- *Anticipate service*. Be on the look out for people's needs before they know they have a need.

We want guests to walk away so WOWed by our hospitality they can't help but tell others about it. Wow hospitality will create conversations at schools, at sporting events, in offices and throughout our community. In other words, our guests become our most effective evangelizers.

Church Is Hard

Posted on "Her view from Home" Facebook site

Church is hard.

Church is hard for the person walking through the doors, afraid of judgement.

Church is hard for the pastor's family, under the microscope of an entire body.

Church is hard for the prodigal soul returning home, broken and battered by the world.

Church is hard for the girl who looks like she has it all together, but doesn't.

Church is hard for the couple who fought the entire ride to service.

Church is hard for the single mom, surrounded by couples holding hands, and seemingly perfect families.

Church is hard for the widow and widower with no invitation to lunch after service.

Church is hard for the deacon with an estranged child.

Church is hard for the person singing worship songs, overwhelmed by the weight of the lyrics.

Church is hard for the man insecure in his role as a leader.

Church is hard for the wife who longs to be led by a righteous man.

Church is hard for the nursery volunteer who desperately longs for a baby to love.

Church is hard for the single woman and single man, praying God brings them a mate.

Church is hard for the teenage girl, wearing a scarlet letter, ashamed of her mistakes.

Church is hard for the sinners.

Church is hard for me.

It's hard because on the outside it all looks shiny and perfect. Sunday best in behavior and dress.

However, underneath those layers, you find a body of imperfect people, carnal souls, selfish motives.

But, here is the beauty of church—

Church isn't a building, mentality, or expectation.

Church is a body.

Church is a group of sinners, saved by grace, living in fellowship as saints.

Church is a body of believers bound as brothers and sisters by an eternal love.

Church is a holy ground where sinners stand as equals before the Throne of Grace.

Church is a refuge for broken hearts and a training ground for mighty warriors.

Church is a converging of confrontation and invitation. Where sin is confronted and hearts are invited to seek restoration.

Church is a lesson in faith and trust.

Church is a bearer of burdens and a giver of hope.

Church is a family. A family coming together, setting aside differences, forgetting past mistakes, rejoicing in the smallest of victories.

Church, the body, and the circle of sinners-turned-saints, is where He resides, and if we ask, He is faithful to come.

So even on the hard days at church—

The days when I am at odds with a friend, When I've fought with my husband because we're late once again. When I've walked in bearing burdens heavier than my heart can handle, yet masking the pain with a smile on my face. When I've worn a scarlet letter, under the microscope. When I've longed for a baby to hold, or fought tears as the lyrics were sung. When I've walked back in, afraid and broken, after walking away.

I'll remember, He has never failed to meet me there.



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>.**

The Holy Eucharist

By Rev. Fr. George Alexson

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”

(I Cor. 11:28)

Beloved Parishioners and Friends,

When I was a boy, participation in the Eucharist (Holy Communion) was infrequent, no more than three to four times a year. Of course, the Divine Liturgy was being celebrated every Sunday, and on holy days. We attended church every Sunday, but the “tradition” passed on to us by our forefathers and mothers was such that, in order to take Holy Communion one must be “worthy,” a state which the average Orthodox Christian, at least in those days, considered difficult to achieve. As a result, the call, “with fear of God, with faith and love,” drew few participants to the chalice at any given Liturgy. Nor was preparation for Holy Communion easy back then. It required at least a week of very strict fasting, including no movies, dances or activities considered unseemly when preparing for such a sacred undertaking. It was an extreme—infrequent Communion—borne out of a piety that was not well informed and certainly not within the tradition of the early Church. Nevertheless, it was a form of piety that reminded us that approaching the chalice was an enormous responsibility and risk, grounded in the warning given by St. Paul to the Corinthians, “For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (I Cor. 11:20).

It might be interesting, of course, to inquire as to why previous generations believed that strict fasting, especially without the Sacrament of Confession, could somehow “make” a person worthy those three or four times a year. Perhaps there is an answer, but searching for it is beyond the scope of this message. Suffice it to say that, in those days we didn’t question our elders; that, too, was risky.

Somewhere in the late 1960’s the trend began to change, in what we might call a “Eucharistic revival,” that began with the writings of the late Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, a prominent Orthodox theologian in the western hemisphere. A prolific author, Fr. Alexander has left us a treasure house of books and articles explaining the profound depths of Orthodox liturgical theology. One quote on the significance of the Eucharist will help us understand the direction of his message: “The Eucharist of Christ and Christ the Eucharist is the “breakthrough” that brings us to the table in the Kingdom, raises us to heaven, and makes us partakers of the divine food. For eucharist—thanksgiving and praise—is the very form and content of the new life that God granted us when in Christ He reconciled us with Himself. The reconciliation, the forgiveness, the power of life—all this has its purpose and fulfillment in this new state of being, this new style of life which is



the Eucharist, the only real life of creation with God and in God, the only true relationship between God and the world.”

The emphasis on Eucharistic renewal in our parishes was a positive, all be it a gradual, step in the spiritual re-awakening of the faithful. This admonition of St. John Cassian on the danger of avoiding the Eucharist is useful. He writes, “We must not avoid communion because we deem ourselves to be sinful. We must approach it more often for the healing of the soul and the purification of the spirit, but with such humility and faith that considering ourselves unworthy . . . we would desire even more the medicine for our wounds. Otherwise it is impossible to receive communion once a year, as certain people do . . . considering the sanctification of heavenly Mysteries as available only to saints. It is better to think that by giving us grace, the sacrament makes us pure and holy. Such people manifest more pride than humility . . . for when they receive, they think of themselves as worthy. It is much better if, in humility of heart, knowing that we are

never worthy of the Holy Mysteries we would receive them every Sunday for the healing of our diseases, rather than, blinded by pride, think that after one year we become worthy of receiving them."

Cassian's explanation is noteworthy, and should be taken seriously. Yet, with the twentieth century revival in frequent Communion came the danger of presumption: that is, the rush to receive whether or not one is truly prepared. Indeed, I have even heard some claim that it is our "right" to receive, no matter the circumstances. Obviously, such statements are made from ignorance and can be spiritually harmful. A careful reading of the prayers in preparation for Holy Communion will quickly disabuse anyone of this false notion. Thus, the question, are we preparing ourselves properly for the chalice is immensely important, especially for those approaching frequently. St. Paul required examination of conscience as a prerequisite. Ancient liturgies also included corporate confession of sins, followed by prayers of forgiveness. Over the years, the Church acquired methods and prayers to assist us in approaching the Chalice with reverence, respect and awe. Following is a list of helpful steps (not suggestions) we should be practicing when preparing for Holy Communion.

First, every effort must be made to attend the Liturgy on time! There is nothing more disrespectful to the Lord and the Eucharist than arriving a few minutes before the invitation to receive. This is a practice that has gone on for too long. Those guilty of this sin are forewarned. Their attitude is no better than that of our Lord's betrayer, whose fate was indeed terrible.

Examination of conscience: have I sinned before God, the Church (in regards to matters of faith and belief), neighbor and myself. The Sacrament of Confession is a gift given to us by Christ Himself, to reconcile us to His Father, the Church and one another (St. John 20:21-23). Avoiding Confession because of fear and embarrassment is an inexcusable peril that endangers the soul and denies

the Lord's command (confession can be made to one's parish priest or another confessor of one's choosing). Preparation for confession is available at church and on line.

Prior to approaching the chalice, we should forgive all who have hurt us and ask forgiveness from those we have hurt (Matthew 5:24).

Fasting and abstinence: We should try to keep the Wednesday and Friday fast (especially from meat), as well as the fasting periods defined by the Church (unless medical reasons prevent this). And, we must keep a total fast from midnight until Communion (in other words, on the day of Communion we are to drink and eat nothing until after we partake of the Sacrament. The only exceptions to this are for medical reasons and young children).

Finally, we should read the Pre-Communion prayers before approaching the chalice. They can be found in most Orthodox prayer books and on line.

I conclude, my beloved, with this post-Communion prayer of St. Symeon, which sums up the great recompense awaiting us when we partake of the Lord's Body and Blood correctly and reverently:

"Lord Jesus Christ our God, may Thy sacred body be for me unto life everlasting, and Thy precious blood unto remission of sins. May this Eucharist be for me unto joy, health and gladness. And at Thy dread second coming, account me, a sinner, worthy to stand on the right hand of Thy glory: By the prayers of Thy most holy Mother, and of all the saints."

May the joy of the Lord be with us every day of our life and may His Kingdom be the reality that keeps us firmly in His way. God's blessing and mercy upon us all! Amen.

Fr. George Alexson is the Proistamenos of Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church in Dulles, Virginia.

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.

One Word Testimonial

By Chris Papataros

Editor's Note: As of January 14, well over 100 people have chosen a WORD that they want to define their 2019. By the time you get this issue of The Messenger, we will have our Wordle Poster in the Kourmolis Center. I received the following email in January, connected to a Word choice for 2019. With the author's permission, it is being reprinted here in the hope that it will inspire you with your word. I would like to invite anyone doing the One Word for 2019 to submit a testimonial of why you chose your word and how it's going so far in 2019. You are welcome to submit this at any time this year.

Happy day and Happy New Year! Just wanted to take a moment and let you know what my word for 2019 is.

This year I will focus on "FITNESS": physical, mental, financial, and spiritual.

This year I will approach each day focused on how I can become more fit in each of these ways. The end result, I hope, is to feel better, be less stressed, more confident, more secure, and closer to God. I'll approach each decision and cross every bridge with a mind toward the decision that will result in greater fitness.

So often the decisions we make, while they may seem right at the time, don't result in greater fitness. This year they will!

Whether it's a choice to watch the next episode of that cool new Netflix show or go for that walk/run, I'll focus on fitness to make my decision.

When I'm faced with a stressful situation I don't want to deal with and would rather push it off for another day, I'll face it head on instead. I'll consider my mental fitness rather than adding another pound of stress to my already sagging back.

When I see an opportunity to eat out, get that cool new thing, or whip out a credit card for something that's "only \$10", I'll consider whether or not spending that money will improve my financial fitness. If not, I'll skip it, save

it, invest it, or donate it instead.

And when a hunger drives me to eat without being thankful for the food on my plate, fatigue pushes me to close my eyes without asking for forgiveness and thanks, and when a Sunday morning kayak ride and my fishing pole beckon me to throw out a line instead of going to church, I'll focus on my spiritual fitness and make the choice to improve my relationship with God.

Best of all, making good choices with fitness of one kind in mind will impact fitness in every other area. Being physically fit makes it easier to tackle each days challenges and leads to clearer thinking. Being financially fit removes or lessens many of life's biggest stresses and helps mental fitness. Being mentally fit makes it easier to focus on what's really important, to make good decisions, and to remember God in everything I do.

I worked out today, dealt with a difficult situation at work, made the choice to change companies, agreed to speak to my brother instead of holding a grudge, made a list of what I needed to accomplish tomorrow, and remembered to thank God for all the good things in life and asked for forgiveness for things I wish I hadn't said or done or thought. I moved a step closer to being fit today. It was a tough day but a good day!

I know the road toward fitness is a long one and a hard one but each day's triumphs and each day's ending at a point in life closer to having a fit life will be motivation for the next day's challenges.

This is my goal for 2019! Please pray for my success. God knows I need all the prayers I can get. It's been a tough year, one of the toughest ever, but your calling to focus on just one simple word has inspired me to tackle this year in a whole new way. For that I offer you my sincerest thanks.

Chris and Jennifer and their daughter Ellie are members of our church.

The Easiest Way to Make an Impact A Gift in Your Will or Living Trust Join the St. John Legacy Society Today!

Interested in helping our beloved St. John Greek Orthodox Church well into the future but feel overwhelmed by the thought of writing another check or giving up your assets today? A simple, flexible and versatile way to ensure we can continue our work for years to come is a gift in your will or living trust, known as a charitable bequest. This special kind of gift entitles you to become a member of the St. John Legacy Society.

By including a bequest in your will or living trust, you are ensuring that we can continue our mission for years to come. Your gift also entitles your estate to an unlimited federal estate tax charitable deduction.

If you have additional questions on updating your will or are considering adding a gift to St. John, please contact Fr. Stavros at **813-876-8830 ext. 103** or frstav@gmail.com. Please be sure to seek advice from your financial and legal advisors, and discuss your charitable plans with your family.



AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – FEBRUARY 2018

On December 21, 2018 the AHEPA FAMILY hosted the annual **SCHOLARSHIP AND CHRISTMAS SOCIAL DINNER** at the Floridan Hotel, once again awarding scholarships to the young members of our community. The Ahepa Family Scholarship Program began in 2010 and we have awarded scholarships to worthy students of our community every year since then. The event was held at the Floridan Hotel as the AHEPA Family of Tampa awarded four Ahepa Family Scholarships to outstanding students who are members of the Ahepa Family and the St. John's Greek Orthodox Church Community.

The outstanding Scholarship recipients were:



Frank Nicholas Giallourakis

Frank attends Berkley Preparatory School and has a strong interest in Political Science. He has been on the football team for 4 years and as captain in his senior year, as well as, a coach of Youth Football. He served as commentator at many athletic events. Frank served in the altar at Saint John's and Saint Nicholas Cathedral as a captain. Congressman Gus Billirakis said: "As an intern over the spring of 2018, Mr. Giallourakis's assignments involved responding to constituent mail, research projects, preparing memoranda, and many other tasks associated with successfully running a congressional district office. He displayed impressive empathy and compassion in responding to constituents who often faced life-altering issues." His coach said: "Frankie is one of the most outstanding young men I have seen in my 38 years of education. Without reservation, and without exaggeration, Frankie is one of the most unique, high quality, and special young men with whom I have ever been associated. Each characteristic Frankie possesses could be impressive by itself; however, the combination of academic excellence, athletic achievement, a sense of concern for others, an enriching personality, and a strong sense of character present Frankie as one of the most completely well- rounded persons I have ever taught or coached."

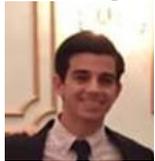


Nicholas Katzaras

Nicholas wants to be an orthopedic surgeon. He is an outstanding Athlete and has accomplished the following in athletics Football Captain, Basketball Captain, Soccer Captain, All Star Basketball, All state Football, MVP Basketball, Offensive player of the year in Football. His Headmaster said about Nicholas: His Headmaster said

Nick joined us late in his academic career, according to our standards, but despite this, he has flourished here. He has fit right in with our student body, kept up with his studies and even excelled, and plugged into extra-curricular activities like sports and student government. He has grown, personally challenging himself to study classical antiquity and ancient Greek culture as part of our curriculum. In addition to his academics, Nick was inducted into Geneva's chapter of the National English Honor Society, where he serves as an officer. He also played football all three years, being selected as the team quarterback and captain his senior year. If this were not enough, he was also elected as student government president, leading the students to raise money and put on several special events throughout the year. Though he has excelled in all these areas, I am most impressed with Nick's faith and character. Nick has demonstrated compassion, understanding, and kindness to a diverse group of people.

He helped rally our students to volunteer for to help handicapped students. He embodies the love of family and community, which I am confident are part of his upbringing.



Harry Nicholas Koutroumanis

Harry wants to be a business owner and has excelled with high academic standards at Jesuit High School. He has been accepted at the University of Central Florida. He has been on the Principal's Honor Roll with A's in all courses (grades 9, 10, and 11) He received the National Latin Exam (NLE) Gold Medal He had the highest level of performance on the Standardized Latin Exam (grade 11) and received the National AP Scholar with Honor Award (grade 11) His Soccer team was 2017-2018 Varsity District Soccer Champs/Regional Finalists and ranked number 5 nationally. Harry was a 2 year Varsity Letterman. He participated in many extracurricular activities including: Peer Ministry (Jesuit High School, Tampa), Captain of Hellas Greek Dance/Cretan Cultural Dance, Sons of Pericles District Lt. Governor, former Chapter VP

From his letters of recommendations: The two biggest characteristics that will allow Hany to find success in college is his determination and contagious love of life. Hany's ability to lead has been on display throughout his time at Jesuit and in pretty odd ways. Hany is Greek, and very proud of it. He is not Catholic, but he is the President of Peer Ministry, a group dedicated to helping students deepen their Catholic faith.



John Brigham Sibley

Throughout his high school years at Pepin Academies, John has demonstrated his dedication to academics and the community as well as displaying responsibility, integrity, and sportsmanship. He has been a member of the National Honor Society (holding executive board positions) and Student Government at Pepin Academies. Additionally, he has participated in Varsity Soccer, Golf and Track. Outside of school, John Brigham Sibley has earned his 3rd Degree Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do, is a member of his Boy Scouts Troop (awaiting Eagle Scout recognition), and volunteers regularly in the community. Recently, he used his talents and passion to build beautiful bird houses throughout his school campus! John has excelled in all these extra-curricular activities while consistently earning High Honor Roll, currently ranking number 1 out of 87 students in his class. John is in his second year of Dual Enrollment courses at Hillsborough Community College; exceeding academic goals is his priority.

From his letter of recommendation, we see that: "If you have the pleasure of simply spending a short time with Brigham, it is very easy to see his compassion for others, and the ability to not just seek success for himself, but the strong desire to bring others along the same path. Brigham is a natural leader and displayed those leadership skills not just in the Taekwondo class room as he is accustomed to, but during three summer camp enrollments at Tampa General Hospital, Brigham was incredibly instrumental in helping patients, visitors, and new summer camp enrollees in key situations

**JOIN TODAY – BECOME A MEMBER OF AHEPA OR THE DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE
OR IF YOU ARE – 18 YEARS OLD BECOME A MEMBER OF THE SONS OF PERICLES OR THE MAIDS OF
ATHENA**

~ February 2019 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Souper Bowl of Car- ing OCMC Luncheon Valentine Baskets	4 Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	5 WBS 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	6 ** Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	7 Greek School 6:00 p.m.	1 ** Presentation of Christ Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Parish Movie Night	2
10 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Wear Red Sunday Welcome ministry mtg after church Valentine Baskets Clergy Vasilopita	11 Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m. (Teaching liturgy)	12 WBS 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m. Monday Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	13 ** Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	14 Greek School 6:00 p.m.	15 **	16 Community Outreach
17 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m.	18 Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	19 No Fasting This Week WBS 10:00 a.m. Ecumenical Service at Christ the King Basketball 8:00 p.m.	20 Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	21 Philoptochos Board Meeting & Election Committee Greek School 6:00 p.m.	22	23
24 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	25 Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m. - Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	26 WBS 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m. Clergy Meetings for Fr. Stavros 2/26-2/28	27 ** Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	28 Greek School 6:00 p.m.		

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St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Timetable of Services

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

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

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firstav@gmail.com

Pastoral Assistant Charlie Hambos

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Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898
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AHEPA

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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

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Hope/Joy

Debbie Nicklow 813-690-0671

Junior Olympics

Dwight Forde 727-685-9028

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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

Karina Findlay 813-476-9632

Philoptochos

Lisa Alsina 813-728-1094

Small Group Bible Study

South, Bessie Palios 813-523-0347
Women, Debbie Kavouklis 813-258-5571

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Gary Ward 813-846-3898

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Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

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Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

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Young at Heart

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

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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 10th of each month. You may send announcements to the church office through email.

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