

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

October 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

LOVE - WORSHIP - COMMUNITY - LEARNING - SERVICE

How many of you can name the five core values of our parish? I'm sure that many cannot. They appear on every issue of the Messenger, as well as in every Sunday bulletin. We have huge signs in the office and in the Zaharias Room, and soon we will have them in the Kourmolis Center.

Why are core values important? Because they state what an organization (in our case a parish) values as most important and then these values guide all decisions that an organization makes. They hold up decisions to the core values and if there isn't a match, then the decision does not go forward.

In the context of St. Stephen's Summer Camp, that I am blessed to direct each summer, we have three core values: SAFE, EDIFYING, FUN. Everyone on the staff knows these values. Safety is first. If something isn't safe, it isn't done. Edifying means that there is a spiritual/religious education value to what we are doing. Because if there is nothing of spiritual value at the camp, it is just a place of fun and fellowship—it's the spirituality that makes the camp an Orthodox Christian camp. The third value is fun. We want people to have a good time, to make new friends and memories and to come back each year. So we try to strike a balance between spirituality (edifying) and fun. And we do it all under an umbrella of safety. If something isn't safe, edifying or fun, it's not part of our program.

The core values for St. John Greek Orthodox Church are these:

LOVE-WORSHIP-COMMUNITY-LEARNING-SERVICE

These values were developed by our strategic planning committee a few years ago and were approved by the Parish Council.

Love - The greatest commandments given by Christ were to love God and to love our neighbor. Sin can be defined as failure to love. Christ told His disciples that by THIS (LOVE) all people would know that they were His disciples. The Bible is often described as God's love letter to His people. Love was God's motive for creating the world, and for redeeming it when it fell. Love is the basis for all meaningful relationships.

In other words, we can't get very far in life and in Christianity without love. In fact, we can't get anywhere at all. Thus, the first core value of our church has to be love. Everything we do ideally should be done in love and with love—every comment, every sermon, every meeting, even every correction or criticism should be done in love.

Saint Paul tells us in I Corinthians 13, that love is patient and love is kind, that love rejoices in the right and not in the wrong. He doesn't say that love is easy. We are to be patient and kind, as well as rejoicing in what is right, which means we are to be optimistic, see the glass as being half full, give one another the benefit of the doubt. We are to count our wins and move quickly past our losses. Love also makes forgiveness possible.

Trust is a precursor to love. Thus a loving environment is a trusting environment, a place where one can feel safe to be honest, and more comfortable being vulnerable (recognizing that no one is really comfortable being vulnerable). Love is a

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“WHERE THERE IS NO VISION, THE PEOPLE PERISH.”
– PROVERBS 29:18

pursuit, not an achievement. Because the highest pinnacle of love is Theosis (Godliness) and all of us fall short of that. Love is not, however, an ideal that eludes us. Even in our brokenness, we can all experience love. The pursuit then is for a deeper expression of love, a deeper understanding of love, which goes hand in hand with a deeper understanding of God. We have what I believe is a loving community. Expressions of love happen here all the time. Love is also an area we can all improve in, whether that involves expressing our love for God (in prayer, worship, repentance, sacrifice) or one another (forgiveness, patience, stewardship).

Worship - The most important thing that we do in our parish is commune with Christ in the Eucharist. The most important thing that happens on our property is the Divine Liturgy. Holy Communion occurs in the context of worship. Thus, our most important ministry is worship. If a person comes down to the church once a week, it should be to worship, not for a meeting or a dance practice or even a Bible study. None of these things is as important as worship.

Like love, worship is something we seek to do on a deeper level throughout our lives. The most basic way to improve our worship experience is to worship more often. For some of us, that means coming on time. This is a big pet peeve of mine. We make it on time for pretty much everything else in life. Why can't we make it on time for the most important things in life—celebrating the Eucharist in the Divine Liturgy? I actually don't buy the excuse of having young children—when they are sick and cranky, we can get them to a doctor appointment on time. So, when they are healthy and happy, why can't we get them to church on time? Others argue that church is too long. That's like saying, "I get tired of standing in the presence of God." We have no problem sitting through long movies, we love it when sports games go into overtime, and all of us regularly stay on the phone or out with a friend longer than we had planned.

Other things we can do to make worship more meaningful include singing along with the choir or the chanter. We go out of our way to make our music friendly, so that people can sing along with it for the most part. Make a game plan for yourself before church on what you will think about while the service is going on. Be attentive to the petitions—call to mind things

from your own life on which you need God's mercies. Pray for those commemorated in the petitions—for our country, the President, for those who are sick and suffering, for good weather, for peace in the world, etc. Figure out how to spend the time it takes for Holy Communion to be distributed—Pray the post-Communion prayers after you've received, pray for those who are waiting in line to go, say the Jesus Prayer or another prayer as you wait your turn.

Like love, true worship is a journey, not a destination. The destination is to worshipping the Lord face to face in His Kingdom. The journey is our practice for that eventual destination. A coach from my youth used to tell our team, "we play how we practice." If we take practice seriously, we are going to play better. If we take worship seriously, we are all going to be in a better place to be ready to worship the Lord face to face in His Kingdom.

We place a lot of emphasis on the ministries connected to worship in our church—choir, chanters and altar boys. There is worship every Sunday and on many other days of the year. Overall, there are about 200 occasions in our church where we gather to worship, which appropriately makes worship the thing we do the most and most often in our parish.

Community - Christians exist in the context of community. We do not exist in isolation. There is a saying that "one Christian is no Christian." Part of our identity as Christians connects us to a community. Christ sent out His disciples to establish communities and to share the Gospel, not to live as hermits. We live our Christianity in community. In community, we pray together, and ideally we grow together, learn together and serve one another. When one community member is struggling, the rest of the community ideally comes to his or her aid. When someone new comes into the community, the community is supposed to embrace and welcome them. When someone in the community does something well, the rest of the community is supposed to rejoice with them. Again, this is the ideal.

Coffee hour is actually an important part of our community. Because outside of worship, that is always done in the context of community, fellowship, as well as learning and service (our last two core values) require a community in order to happen. I remember as a young priest, a Hierarch advised me that no one is going to come to Bible study or confession if I don't have a

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relationship with them. How is the relationship built? Through fellowship, by spending time together. How does one build a loving relationship? It starts with respect, then commonality (spending time together), and eventually leads to trust and ultimately love. There cannot be a loving community without community, without fellowship. Community then becomes an extension of worship. I encourage you to get involved in our community, by getting to know one another socially. This can happen during coffee hour or by participating in a ministry. Growing in a community gives us a better chance to minister to one another when we are struggling. It also gives us a greater sense of identity as a church community, and gives each member needed support and encouragement. A sense of community is what allows a church to grow.

Learning - Without knowledge of something, it is irrelevant. Thus, if we have no knowledge of God nor of the Orthodox faith, both will be irrelevant. On the flip side, if all we know is head-knowledge, knowing facts and figures without any application, the knowledge that we have acquired would be useless.

One of the most enlightening conversations of my life happened with my Dad, shortly before he passed away in 2014. My Dad was a loving man. He personified Christian love. Based on our core values, he was doing a great job with that. He rarely missed a Sunday Divine Liturgy and often went on other days. So, he was great when it came to worship. He also had a lot of friends in his community and he was a friend to many. In fact, his church friends were the center of his social circle. So, he did great when it came to community. My Dad had a great deal of knowledge about the Scriptures. He had memorized entire passages of the Bible that he would often quote. However, my Dad didn't understand until the last couple weeks of his life, what he was striving for. Because as he got older and sicker, he was scared of dying. He had spent a lot of time doing a lot of good things in his life but he hadn't really learned much about heaven. He also hadn't learned to articulate what he believed. We had this amazing conversation that went on for a couple of hours about what we believe, and how to prepare to meet the Lord. Dad was forthright in examining his life and asking me for help in spiritually examining it as well. The end result of that conversation was not only a setting aside of fear of death, but an embracing of death as the final step in a journey to everlasting joy. My Dad passed with joy and with confidence. I will be forever grateful to God for his courage, to learn in his last days, and for giving me the opportunity to be his teacher.

For far too many, religion is a set of facts and figures without much application in life. Without application, this knowledge is not very useful. Without knowledge of our why, our what and our how, it is no wonder that many people leave the

church. They aren't fulfilled just walking the paces and memorizing trivia. Many people crave a deeper understanding of God and they don't even realize it. Our pursuit of purpose, if God is not at the center of it, can quickly turn to other things. As a church we've got to do a much better job of speaking about God being our purpose, salvation being our destination, and faith being our means of getting there.

Whether it is learning through a Bible study, a Sunday school class, a spiritual discussion in GOYA or at a Philoptochos meeting, through a one-on-one conversation in confession or just from curiosity, whether going to the Orthodoxy 101 class, or studying the Bible on your own at home, there can't be a complete Christian experience without learning. Learning helps us understand more deeply what we believe, helps us to be more active in our expression of what we believe, helps us realize our purpose and our destination, gives us confidence in ourselves, allows us to defend what we believe to others as well as share it, and ultimately leads to the joyful understanding of who we are, what we are doing and where we are going.

Learning, like the other values, is something we will never complete. There are always newer and deeper levels at which to understand and experience God's glory. And these happen when we invest the time to learn.

Thus, one of our core values as a community is providing the environment where learning can occur. And one of each of our individual values should be taking (and making) the opportunity to learn more about Christ.

Service - Of our five core values, this is the one that I believe is the most underdone. There are lots of loving people in our community, the church is filled nearly every Sunday for worship, we are developing a better sense of community (though there is significant room for improvement in involving everyone in fellowship) and there are plenty of opportunities to learn. Service is the area where we need the most improvement, though I am proud to say we've certainly come a long way in this department.

As I mentioned above, knowledge without application is useless. Of what value is memorizing Biblical verses about love if we do not express love? Loving our neighbor as ourselves involves helping our neighbor, and serving our neighbor in the way that our neighbor needs service. This may include feeding a neighbor who is hungry, or listening a neighbor who needs a shoulder to cry on. Our neighbor might be the person in the pews next to us, or the homeless man on the street corner. Our neighbor is everyone.

Our budget for 2020, which will be voted on at the Parish Assembly meeting on October 20, includes nearly \$30,000 in charitable giving. This includes Orthodox institutions like Holy Cross Seminary and the clergy education fund. It also in-

cludes Orthodox Charities like Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry, FOCUS, International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) and the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC). It includes \$2,500 for disaster relief, money that is available to be sent instantly should a disaster strike somewhere in the world. It includes supporting LifePath Hospice, who not only partners with us for the Greek Festival but serves our people in their most difficult moments. It also includes Matthew 25 Outreach, which feeds the hungry, and Love, Inc., which helps get people off the streets and offer them housing and job training.

Your stewardship makes this all possible, which is why we are so thankful to you for participating in the life of our parish through your stewardship. It is very important that our church support charities. Charity should not be mandated by the government through our taxes. It should come from our hearts, which is what we are doing at St. John. This year's charity will represent about 5% of our stewardship and festival income totals. The goal is to raise this number to 10% over the next several years, going up 1% point each year. Thus, a tithe of our parish income will leave our parish in the form of charity, some to Orthodox causes and some to local causes in our Tampa community.

Money is not the only way to serve. There are ministries that require service. For instance, we need people to serve as Sunday school teachers, sing in the choir, serve in the altar, be ushers, serve on various committees like the Festival, Buildings and Grounds, etc., serve on the Parish Council (see below) and many other things. We need to have a conscience of service in our church community and far beyond it. Knowledge acquired for the sake of knowledge leads to narcissism. Knowledge applied in the form of service is a Godly thing.

There we have an explanation of our five core values—Love, Worship, Community, Learning, Service. We need to learn these. But more important, we need to live them. We need to make our decisions as a community by them. This is who Christ is calling us to be as a Church. This is the kind of Church we want to reflect.

The beginning and ending to everything is Christ.

Christ is love. In worship, we receive Christ in the Eucharist. In community, we share Christ-like love with one another. We learn about Christ in order to better understand Him, what He did, and what His call is for us. We serve in a way that is joyful and sacrificial, loving and serving our neighbor as Christ loved and served us.

Parish Assembly Meeting - October 20

On October 20, we will have our fall Parish Assembly Meeting. There are two things that we will do that are critical to our parish for the coming year. The first is to pass a budget. For most of the items on the budget, there is not much to discuss. We are not going to debate whether to pay the electric bill or the sewer bill. These are fixed costs to our church regardless of how many people attend here or how much we spend or save. There are a couple of areas of the budget where there is something to discuss.

Personnel—We currently employ two pastoral assistants, Charlie and John. Between them, they are covering the office and assisting me with ministries. Debbie is our bookkeeper and Felix takes care of maintenance. All are doing an excellent job and we are fortunate to have these four people who assist me in the ministry at St. John. This still does not get us what we really

need, which is a second priest. There is \$36,000 in the budget set aside for a part-time retired priest, should one become available this year. If not, this amount serves as a place-holder to be increased to getting us what we really need, which is a full-time assistant priest.

Charity—As mentioned above, charity is also discretionary in nature. I hope that we will pass a budget that includes an increase in charitable giving.

There is one other number that may jump out at you from the budget, and that is we've budgeted less for the festival. That is not because we will eliminate the festival necessarily, but because we want to eliminate our reliance on it. We don't want to have to stress about the weather, or have our ability to do ministry based on other people's willingness to buy our food.

The kind of budget that we pass says a lot about the kind of parish we want to have. And our financial support of our parish through stewardship says a lot about how important spreading the message of Christ is to us individually. While the budget will reflect a certain amount for stewardship, we don't offer stewardship in order to achieve some goal—rather we offer stewardship in a prayerful and personal way which reflects our love for Christ.

Ideally, we will get to a point one day, I hope, where our budget will be met entirely on stewardship. We eliminated trays this year and so far, we are in balance for our budget for 2019. As we go forward, our budget reflects a community that is not going to nickel and dime members, that is going to get personnel to adequately meet the needs of our members, and is going to make a statement outside of the community in terms of charitable giving.

Parish Council Nominations

At the conclusion of the Parish Assembly Meeting in October, we will again nominate people for the Parish Council for 2020. This is a critical decision each year, as it affects how our church will function in 2020 and beyond. Year after year, people decide to run for the Parish Council. Some are qualified and some are not. Some come in to speak with me about running, even asking a blessing to run. And many do not come into speak with me, they certainly don't seek any kind of blessing to run. As I have mentioned in previous writings and sermons, getting a blessing from the bishop in a Liturgy when multiple priests are serving creates a good sense of order, which in turn, leads to a good sense of Christ. Running without any input or blessing from the priest can create disorder and disharmony in the Parish Council and in the parish. I'm asking then, if you are thinking about running for the Parish Council, please make an appointment and come see me before October 20, and let's talk about it.

Conclusion—Christ's vision of the Church

Knowing and doing are two different things. I think I have a good idea of Christ's vision for my life. I don't always do a great job staying faithful to that. I still have some ways to go. As for our parish, every year, I believe we have a better understanding of Christ's vision for our church. And as we have in our own individual spiritual journeys, we all have some ways to go as a community as well. October is an important month because we vote not on a vision, but on how far we want to take that vision that Christ has given us.

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

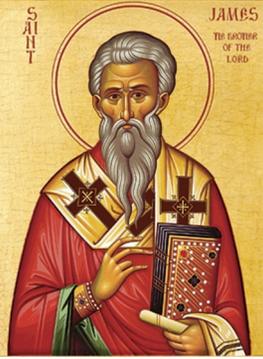
Liturgical Notes for October 2019

Monday, October 7 A “Teaching Divine Liturgy” Please also join us for a rare opportunity for a “Teaching” Divine Liturgy starting at 6:30 p.m. This is being done as part of the Orthodox 101 class. You don’t have to be involved in the class. Please come and take part in this unique service and bring your questions as well.

Sunday, October 14 - Special Prayer for Medical Personnel St. Luke, Apostle, Evangelist and also Physician, has his feastday celebrated on October 18. In conjunction with this, as he is the patron saint of doctors, we are going to offer a prayer for everyone in the medical field on Sunday, October 14 (Sunday closest to October 18), at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. All doctors, nurses, dentists, researchers, students and anyone connected to the medical field is encouraged to attend.

Friday, October 18 - Feast of St. Luke St. Luke was one of the Four Evangelists, along with Sts. Matthew, Mark and John. He was an artist, writer and doctor and is probably one of the most intelligent of all the saints in the history of our church.

Tuesday, October 22 - Liturgy of St. James - Evening Liturgy The Orthodox Church celebrates four different Divine Liturgies throughout the liturgical year. The most prominent is the Divine Liturgy written by St. John Chrysostom, which is celebrated almost every Sunday and on most feast days. The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is celebrated 10 times a year—on the eve of Christmas, the eve of Epiphany, on the five Sundays of Lent, Holy Thursday morning, Holy Saturday morning, and on the feast of St. Basil, which is January 1. The Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated on Wednesday and Fridays of Great Lent and the mornings of Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday and Holy Wednesday. The Divine Liturgy of St. James is celebrated only once a year, on his feastday, which is October 23.



The Divine Liturgy of St. James is the oldest of the Divine Liturgies and is also the longest. It was written around 70 A.D. making it the oldest Eucharistic service in the entire Christian world. Among the interesting things about this service is that by the end of the first century, the structure of the Liturgy we celebrate today was already loosely in place. The Divine Liturgy begins not in the altar, but in the Narthex of the church, as was the custom of the early church. The priest and faithful enter the church together from the narthex, and the next part of the service is conducted on the solea, with the priest facing the people. The priestly prayers, while very long in the liturgy, reveal a beauty and completeness which would later be shortened by St. Basil and even more by St. John Chrysostom. The most unique part of this service comes at the reception of Holy Communion. This is the only Divine Liturgy that has become the custom for the faithful to receive Holy Communion in separate elements, in similar fashion with how the clergy commune. The communicants first receive the Holy Body of Christ in their hands and consume it, and then drink from the Holy Chalice. This is a special beautiful tradition which will be continued at St. John the Baptist, and it is encouraged that all who attend this service fast beforehand and prepare to receive Holy Communion at this Divine Liturgy. The Divine Liturgy of St. James will be held on Tuesday, October 22 at 6:00 p.m. (Orthros at 5:15 p.m.)

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Saturday, October 26 - Feast of St. Demetrios St. Demetrios was born into a wealthy and distinguished Christian family in the Greek City of Thessaloniki in the late 3rd century. Demetrios was noted for his wisdom, and was a good speaker and polished orator. St. Demetrios was also a distinguished soldier. Thessaloniki was known for popular gladiatorial games which attracted the local pagans. Travelling with the Emperor Galerius after a military victory, Demetrios stopped in Thessaloniki, where many pagans, who were jealous of his successful life, denounced him as a Christian before the emperor, who ordered Demetrios put in prison. A man named Nestor befriended Demetrios in prison. The Emperor went to the arena to see his favorite gladiator, Lyaios and offered a reward to whomever could defeat him. Nestor accepted the challenge, and through the prayers of St. Demetrios, defeated the giant. When Nestor refused to kill Lyaios, because he had been helped by the “God of Demetrios,” the Emperor ordered that both be killed. This occurred in the year 306. We commemorate St. Demetrios on October 26 and St. Nestor on October 27. We will celebrate Divine Liturgy for St. Demetrios on Saturday, October 26, at 10:00 a.m.

Monday, October 28 – Feast of the Holy Protection of the Virgin Mary (Oxi Day) - (Mostly) GREEK Liturgy October 1 has been celebrated for many centuries as the feastday of the Holy Protection of the Virgin Mary. October 28, 1940, is observed in Greece as Oxi Day, the day the Greeks said no to the Axis powers who were trying to invade Greece. Since 1940, the church of Greece moved the feast of the Holy Protection of the Virgin Mary (Agia Skepi) to October 28, to coincide with Oxi Day. In other jurisdictions, it is still celebrated on October 1. Because many of us have our roots in Greece, celebrating the Holy Protection of the Virgin Mary on October is something that has great meaning. In trying to serve the many and diverse needs of our parish, we get requests periodically to do more Greek in the services. Our use of Greek in worship reflects a congregation that by and large does not speak Greek. Making an effort to accommodate these requests, occasionally a weekday Divine Liturgy will be scheduled that will be celebrated *mostly* in Greek. October 28 will be one of these. Based on the turnout, we can schedule more in the months to come.

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Friday, November 1 – Feast of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, the Unmercenary Healers Sts. Cosmas and Damian are the Patron Saints of the Philoptochos, as they went from place to place healing people and not taking any money for their services. Sts. Cosmas and Damian (called the Agii Anargyri) are also saints we pray to for intercession when we are sick, and are also patron saints of doctors (in addition to St. Luke).

Parish Council Elections

Even though it is October, it will be time to start thinking about Parish Council Elections. **On October 20, we will hold our fall Parish Assembly and open up nominations for the Parish Council.** This year, there are five (5) positions coming up for election for a two-year term. According to the Parish By-laws, nominations for the Parish Council will be closed following the Parish Assembly Meeting on Sunday, October 20. If you wish to be nominated for the Parish Council, please plan to attend the meeting on Sunday, October 20 and have someone nominate you, or send a letter to Fr. Stavros prior to the commencement of the meeting, stating your wish to be nominated for the Parish Council and he will read it at the meeting and have someone nominate you. Parish Council Elections will be held on Sunday, December 8, following the Divine Liturgy. A mailing to all eligible voters will occur following the close of the nominations period which will have the names of the candidates, a picture of each candidate and a statement by each candidate.

In preparation for nominations and elections, please keep in mind the following:

Regarding eligibility to be a candidate for the Parish Council: Uniform Parish Regulations (UPR) Article 18, Section 1:

PARISHIONERS

Section 1: Every person who is baptized and chrismated according to the rites of the Orthodox Church is a parishioner. The religious, moral and social duties of a parishioner are to apply the tenets of the Orthodox Faith to his/her life and to: adhere to and live according to the tenets of the Orthodox faith; faithfully attend the Divine Liturgy and other worship services; participate regularly in the holy sacraments; respect all ecclesiastical authority and all governing bodies of the Church; be obedient in matters of the Faith, practice and ecclesiastical order; contribute towards the progress of the Church's sacred mission; and be an effective witness and example of the Orthodox Faith and Traditions to all people.

A parishioner in good standing practices all the religious and moral duties as described in this Section 1. At a minimum, a parishioner in good standing must: be eighteen years of age or over; be current in his or her stewardship and other financial obligations to the Parish, abide by all the regulations herein stated and the Parish Bylaws; and cooperate in every way towards the welfare and well being of the Parish. (Stewardship is recommended to be ten percent (10%) of one's annual income as stated in Holy Scripture to help meet the financial obligations of the Parish, the Metropolis and the Archdiocese.)

2. Regarding Election of Parish Council: UPR Article 25, Section Two

Section 2: A candidate for the Parish Council must be a parishioner in good standing of the Parish for at least one (1) year immediately preceding the date of the election and must live his or her life in accordance with the Faith and canons of the Church. The Priest determines whether the Parishioners are in canonical and financial good standing as specified in Article 18, Sections 1 through 3.

Section 3: Candidates for election to the Parish Council shall be nominated in accordance with the provisions of the Parish Bylaws.

All candidates shall attend a seminar conducted by the Priest prior to the election at which the Priest shall discuss and explain to the candidates the Uniform Parish Regulations, and the significance of the affirmation of office.

At the discretion of the respective Hierarchy, such seminar may be held locally or regionally, provided that candidates are given appropriate advance notice and more than one reasonable opportunity to attend the seminar in a location within close proximity to the applicable Parish.

In the event that an otherwise eligible candidate(s) cannot attend the scheduled seminar(s) for justifiable cause, the Priest shall meet privately with such individual(s) to provide the seminar.

At the conclusion of the seminar all candidates must sign a statement acknowledging that they understand the Regulations and will abide by them and the affirmation of office. If a candidate for the Parish Council does not attend a seminar and sign the statement, his/her name shall be deleted from the list of candidates.

~A regional seminar for Parish Council Candidates will be held at Holy Trinity in Clearwater from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on November 16 and November 23. Every candidate will be required to attend **ONE** of the two seminars.

~ Each candidate is expected to be active in the sacramental life of the church. This is covered in Article 18, section one, above. This includes the sacrament of confession. If a candidate has not been to confession in the past year, they are not eligible to run for the Parish Council. In the event your spiritual father is serving another parish, he can send a one line email to Fr. Stavros indicating your participation in this sacrament in the past year.

~All candidates for the Parish Council will be subject to a background check. Any background check that reveals a felony conviction will make a candidate ineligible to serve for ten years. Any background check revealing a conviction for financial misconduct—embezzlement, fraud, etc., will make a candidate permanently ineligible to serve on the Parish Council.

~Each candidate is asked to write a half a page on why they want to run for the Parish Council and to supply a recent photograph that is able to be photocopied well. The statement and photo need to be to the church office no later than November 15.

Thank you for your interest in being a Parish Council candidate. If you have any questions on any of the above, please feel free to contact me at any time.

+FR. STAVROS

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 contemplate the verse each week. Read it, memorize it, and then contemplate 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 October. 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. Contemplate the Scripture each week and let it speak to you. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you through your reflection on Scripture.

October 6 - 12

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

If it’s not good, it’s not from God. Anything that is not good does not have its cause from God. A headache, a sadness, a frustration—all of these bad things and more have their cause from either a human being or a fallen world. If something is good, it is from God ultimately. He is the author of every blessing. A job promotion might be a result of hard work, but the job is made possible by a talent that we were first blessed with by God. Every good thing is from God. Meditate on your good things this week, the important people in your life, your successes and your joys, and think on how they are all rooted in God’s goodness. Be thankful to God for them in your prayers this week and always.

October 13-19

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him.

Psalm 103:11-13

Many times, we hear the question “What would Jesus do?” One of the answers comes from Psalm 103. Christ’s love is as vast as the heavens. His desire to remove our sins from us is as infinite as the horizon. And His mercy is as deep as a father has for his children. Thus, we should love in great abundance. We should forgive easily and often. And we should show mercy and compassion as if every person was our own child. Do we do these things? Probably not as much as we should. Psalm 103 gives us the ideal. This week, reflect on how deeply you love, how easily you forgive and how generously you give mercy. We’ve all got a ways to go I’m sure.

October 20-26

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13

Joy and peace are two things that seem to elude us. Perhaps they are shut out by our own stresses and disappointments. Perhaps we have set a bar for ourselves that is too high to reach. God is a God of hope, not of disappointment. When we are open to Him, He fills us with joy and peace. Any human joy eventually will dissipate. It is the joy of God that fills us. The grace of the Holy Spirit, which completes what is lacking in us, is able to fill out dark and sad spaces with hope. However, we must work in concert with Him. Think about joy, peace and hope this week, and how you can open yourself more fully to receiving them from God.

October 27 - November 2

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Corinthians 12:8-10

God is at His greatest in our lives when we are at our weakest points. That seems almost like a conflict in terms. Usually when we are at our weakest, we feel that God is the most absent or the farthest away. That’s a human response. I feel like that many times. When I truly surrender something to God, when I have nowhere to turn except to offer something to God, this is when I feel His grace the most. His power is at its greatest when I surrender to Him at my weakest moment. What stops me from doing this all the time? Pride. And my humanity. Think about the times when you are your weakest. And reflect on how much you have surrendered to God and how much you have held back.

St. John the Baptist Community News

Parish Registry

Condolences to Mary Voykin on the passing of her brother, Chris Adams. May his memory be eternal!

Condolences to the Corcoran/Syros Families on the passing of George Soublis. May his memory be eternal!

Condolences to Dina Kokenis on the passing of her Pappou, Anestis Tatsis. May his memory be eternal!

Get Acquainted Sunday, October 6

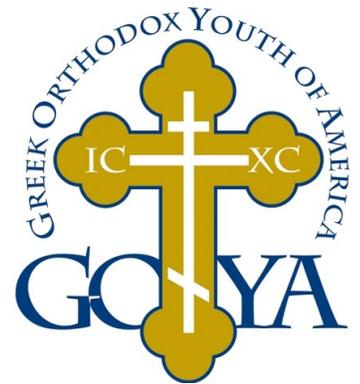
In an effort to get to know one another better, we are going to continue our "Get Acquainted Sun-days" one Sunday of each month. We will have nametags and markers in the entry way of the Kourmolis Center and will ask that each person put one on during coffee hour and introduce yourself to at least one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

GOYA Meeting - Sunday, October 6 Our Regular GOYA meeting for October will be Sunday, October 6, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be served.

Volleyball Tournament October 12-13 St. Stefanos Greek Orthodox Church in St. Petersburg is sponsoring a volleyball tournament from October 12-13. Our GOYAnS will be attending. Please contact Maria Koutroumanis for more information.

GOYA Service Project - On Saturday, October 19, the GOYAnS will be doing a service project to clean up the church grounds prior to the Festival. Time and details to be announced.

Senior GOYA Lock-in - November 2 Our 10-12th grade GOYAnS will be having a lock-in on Saturday, November 2, beginning at 7:00 p.m. This evening will include discussion geared toward our older GOYAnS. If interested in attending, please email Michael Palios (mpalios@gmail.com) by October 28. We need 10 GOYAnS committed by October 28 to make this event a go.



Men's Group - We had our first successful men's group evening on September 15. Fourteen men spent the evening enjoying food, fellowship and discussion. Our October meeting will be Sunday, October 13. We will meet at the church at 5:00 p.m., walk to a nearby restaurant for dinner and return to the church for discussion, ending by 7:30 p.m. All men of our parish are welcome and you can bring non-Orthodox friends as well. Other meetings will be Sunday, November 3 and Sunday, December 15.



College Student Sunday, October 13

If you are a college student, join us for some food and fellowship right after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, October 13. Contact Charlie or John and let us know if you can come. Bring a friend too.

PARISH ASSEMBLY

The Fall Parish Assembly Meeting will be Sunday, October 20, following Divine Liturgy. Father Stavros will present the “state of our parish” in church that Sunday. And at the meeting we will pass our yearly budget for 2020 and nominate candidates for the Parish Council.

Orthodoxy 101 Class is underway

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.

There are two classes left and even if you haven’t attended up to this point, you are more than welcome to attend.

Monday, October 7 The Divine Liturgy—We will do 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. We will actually be celebrating the Liturgy on October 7 during the class, with commentary and opportunities for questions at various pauses during the service.**

Monday, October 14 Orthodox Traditions—fasting, icons, prayer and separating Theology from “yiyalogy”

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.

Classes will be held on these four 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.

Adopt a college student Project

Fr. Stavros will be meeting with those signed up for this new ministry on Sunday, October 6 following the Divine Liturgy in the Zaharias Room. He will contact each of you via email prior to the meeting.

Policy for Letters of Recommendation

Every year, Father Stavros gets many requests for letters of recommendation for students to get into college or for scholarships. Here are some guidelines to assist those who will be making these requests.

The person for whom the letter is being written needs to contact Father Stavros, not their parents. Please give Father at least two weeks’ notice to write a letter. Please send your information to Father in an email at frstav@gmail.com.

1. Your current school, year of study, major, and career objective
2. The name of the scholarship, who it is to be addressed to, and whether the letter is to be mailed, or given to the student in a sealed envelope.
3. The kind of scholarship that you are applying for - is it for sports, or writing, or business, etc.
4. The due date of the letter
5. Some information about yourself that will be helpful in writing the letter - i.e. if the letter is for leadership, please send leadership activities.

Hope/Joy Fall Harvest Celebration

Sunday, October 20

4:00 – 6:00 PM

The Kourmolis Center



All children Pre-K through 6th grade
are invited to join us for an afternoon of
fun, food and fellowship!

[Come in costume](#)

(please no witches or devils)

Dinner will be served!

Games, crafts & prizes for all!

Kindly R.S.V.P. by October 15th

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040B45AAA82BA57-hope>

Text Zackie @ 813-245-3813

Please let us know if you would like to Volunteer during event
Goyans, parents, grandparents are all welcomed.



Bible Studies are Continuing

Monday Night Bible Study (for everyone)

Location: Administration Building meeting room

Studying: The Book of Revelation

Group Leader: Charlie Hambos

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

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

Meeting Dates: October 7 (Teaching Liturgy), October 14, 21, 28

Women's Group (for adult women of any age)

Location: At the church

Group Leader: Rotates between members and Father Stavros

Meeting time: Tuesday mornings from 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Meeting Dates: October 1, 8, 15 and 29 (Group members encouraged to attend Liturgy of St. James on October 22 at night)

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

Studying: Ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church

Group Leader: John Kokenis

jkokenis@stjohntpa.org; 630-306-7716

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

Meeting Dates: October 1, 8, 15, 22 (group will attend Liturgy of St. James), 29

No Basketball on Sundays - Sunday coffee hour is for fellowship, not for sports. Basketballs flying in all directions makes it unsafe for people who are sitting and eating. We've tried to curtail this but to little avail. Please cooperate by refraining from playing basketball in the Kourmolis Center during coffee hour.

No passing of trays —As of January 1, 2019, there will no longer be a tray passed at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. 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.

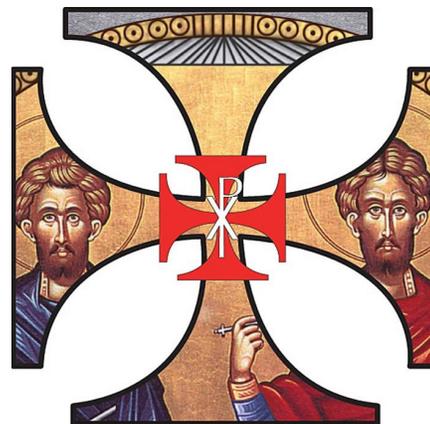
NEW PROCEDURE FOR UNCLAIMED COFFEE HOURS - We are excited to present a NEW procedure for hosting our weekly parish coffee hour for the weeks where no ministry has signed up for coffee hour. Certain letters of the alphabet according to last name, have been assigned to each open date. We will be emailing a link to a Sign-Up Genius. Please sign up for those Sundays which correspond to your last name. You may sign up for one or more items which include, set-up, serving, bringing items, or clean up on any particular date. Please see the dates and suggested items below. We would like to see as many different people as possible sign up, so that the burden will not fall on anyone repeatedly. It is also important that our worship experience not be compromised by putting on the coffee hour. Finally, if a family would like to pool together to go a coffee hour, to honor a loved one who has passed, or mark another occasion, please let us know and we'll reserve that date for your family. If there are any questions, don't hesitate to call the church office at 813-876-8830. Thank you for helping us to create an environment that encourages fellowship and community.

Philoptochos Society News and Updates

2019 Philoptochos Board

Jeanie Nenos, President
Katherine Sakkis, VP
Cindy Xenick Recording, Secretary
Kathy Maclaury, Corresponding Secretary
Lisa Alsina, Advisor

Myra Armstrong
Sia Blankenship
Elaine Halkias
Martha Kapetan
Melissa Krinos
Mary Voykin



THANK YOU

for making our first Philoptochos event a huge success! We could not have done it without you. Just a quick thank you to those who baked Fanouropites and who brought other items for coffee hour.

With your help, we were able to collect \$450 to support our youth programs.

Honoring All Active, Retired Military & First Responders on October 27



Philoptochos is calling all Active, Retired Military and First Responders to be honored Oct 27 in church. If your family member is currently serving away from home, please let us know as you will represent them. Please feel free to wear your uniform. There will be a special prayer at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. Please join us in thanking them during coffee hour. This is our way of saying thank you!

We will be collecting the following items and sending to our troops that need our thoughts and prayers . We will provide cards in the hall, please feel free to write them a note.

Food Items

Slim Jims and Beef Jerky
Single serving powdered drink mix
Canned tuna/chicken with crackers.
Individual bags of trail mix
Granola Bars, cookies or Rice Krispy treats
Instant Oatmeal (packets)
Fruit Snacks
Protein Bars
Pop Tarts or mini boxes of cereal
Cup-o-Noodles or Ramen in cups
(NO BLOCKS OF RAMEN)

MISCELLANEOUS

Colored Pencils + Pencil Sharpeners or Mechanical Pencils;
Pens
Puzzle Books, any kind
Decks of cards or travel games
Small pads of paper
Fun things like ear buds, **small** rubber balls or footballs

HYGIENE ITEMS

Travel size or full size Body Wash
Travel size or full size Shampoo and Conditioner
Deodorant, men's and women's or unscented: - either travel sized or full sized.
Lip Balm
Feminine Hygiene items
Razors & Shave Cream **NO AEROSOL CANS!**
Wet wipes
Travel Size Hand Sanitizer

PROHIBITED ITEMS

Pork or pork by-products (Slim Jims are OK)
Tobacco or alcohol products
Bars of Soap
Anything packed in glass
Pornography or other culturally sensitive material
Bagged potato chips: they are too easily crushed.
Unwrapped candies
No aerosol or sprays in cans
Nail polish
Perfume or Cologne...it is flammable and usually in glass containers.

Please contact Jeanie Nenos @ 813 451-9116 or Jeanierrt@aol.com to add you to our list.

live
orthodoxy

St. George
npr

young adult
ministry

offering
ourselves

Orthodoxy on Tap and Tampa Bay Young Adult Leaders kicks off this year with a special edition of Orthodoxy on Tap in New Port Richey, Florida. Light appetizers will be provided.

JOIN US FOR A
REFRESHING EVENING
OF REAL CONVERSATION
AND FELLOWSHIP

7835 Bayview St, Port Richey, FL 34668

Tampa Bay

YOUNG ADULT LEADERS

**orthodoxy
on tap**

7:00PM THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17

WHISKEY JOE'S - PORT RICHEY

Young Adult Ministry -

Sunday, October 20 -

The YAL will have our dinner and discussion. We'll meet at 5:00 p.m. in the Kourmolis Community Center, walk somewhere close by to have dinner, then walk back for some discussion. Please RSVP to Charlie if you are going to attend. Dates may change. Charlie will send an email.



Greek Dance Practices for the Festival continue

H Xara Mas for Kindergarten through 2nd

Grade will be taught by Alex DeMaio

H Xara Mas for 3rd through 5th Grades will

be taught by Maraquet Edquid

Dance Practices for H Xara Mas will be held

on Sunday throughout September

The Parea Dancers for grades 6th through 12th

Grade will be taught by Marina Choundas and

Anna Maria Bavaro and will also be held

throughout.

The Panigyri Dance Group for College Stu-

dents and older will have practices on

Wednesdays

in the Kourmolis Center at 7:00 p.m.



Let all Creation Rejoice: Reflections for Advent the Nativity and Epiphany

This book is a series of short daily reflections on the scripture readings of Advent, the Nativity and Epiphany, to be read between November 15 and January 7. Order your book today at www.xulonpress.com/

Interested in Joining the Prayer Team? Over 2030 people

have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for

more than 4 years! 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

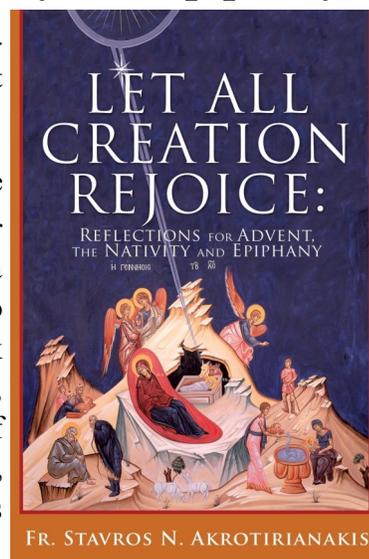
him to add you. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend,

please email Charlie or follow the link at the bottom of the daily emails to do so. If

you want to forward to a friend, please use the "forward to a friend" option. Also,

make sure frstav@gmail.com has been added to your contacts so that these emails

stay in your Inbox rather than going to the Junk or Spam folders.



St. John Greek Orthodox Church's Young-At-Heart Ministry

The Young-at-Heart Ministry members have life experiences, have had careers, are great role models, may not have spouses or children living with them anymore and may even be living alone. They may have some physical limitations but they are living a Church-Centered life with their YAH Church Family.

The YAH Ministry members at our last meeting discussed our Church's CORE VALUES of Love, Worship, Community, Learning, and Service.

- 1) We demonstrate the LOVE we have for one another by attending up-lifting and joyful meetings.
- 2) We have the available time and WORSHIP most weekday Church services.
- 3) We participate in the Festival cooking and baking. We bring our years of experience, wisdom, knowledge and humor to our COMMUNITY.
- 4) We plan this year to have lectures and videos to assist seniors to LEARN more about our religion, health and final planning.
- 5) We provide a SERVICE to our sick, injured and house bound members with phone calls, cards and visitations.

Everyone is welcome. There are no age restrictions.

We will have either a pot-luck lunch or go visit one of our local parishioners' restaurants.

For more information, contact
Michael Trimis, President, 813-784-4872 (vm/t)
TrimisM@gmail.com
Mary Nenos, Vice President 813-508-5553
MaryNenos@gmail.com

You can still confirm if you will be attending the Christmas Dinner Theater show on Saturday, December 7, 2019 Open to everyone

Buffet Opens at 12:00 p.m.
Showtime 1:30 p.m.

Cost is \$45.79 each if we have 15 or more are paid.
Make checks payable to: St John GO Church
Please write on the check notes: "YAH Show Palace Theater"

Mail checks to 2418 Swann Ave, Tampa, FL 33609
or give checks to Mike Trimis at Church

Deadline has past so respond ASAP. We have filled two tables and hope to fill a third.
You must let us know if you plan to attend. Reservations can only be made with your payment.

Show Palace Dinner Theatre

Address: 16128 US-19, Hudson, FL 34667 it takes approximate one hour to drive there from the Church

We will try to car pool from the Church from 10:45 am sharp or you can drive there yourselves. Just let us know.

Elf - The Musical venue with American fare served buffet-style.
December 7, 2019 Noon Matinee

Join us for the hilarious tale of Buddy the Elf, a young orphan who mistakenly crawls into Santa's bag of gifts and is transported to the North Pole. Buddy is raised unaware that he is actually a human, until his enormous size and poor toy-making abilities cause him to face the truth. With Santa's permission, Buddy embarks on a journey to New York City to find his birth father and discover his true identity. Faced with the harsh reality that his father is on the naughty list and his stepbrother doesn't even believe in Santa, Buddy is determined to win over his new family and help New York remember the true meaning of Christmas!



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

**“The Trial of Job”—Orthodox Christian Reflections
on the Book of Job by Fr. Patrick Henry Reardon**

St. James, the Lord’s brother, stated: “My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed, we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful (James 5:10-11).

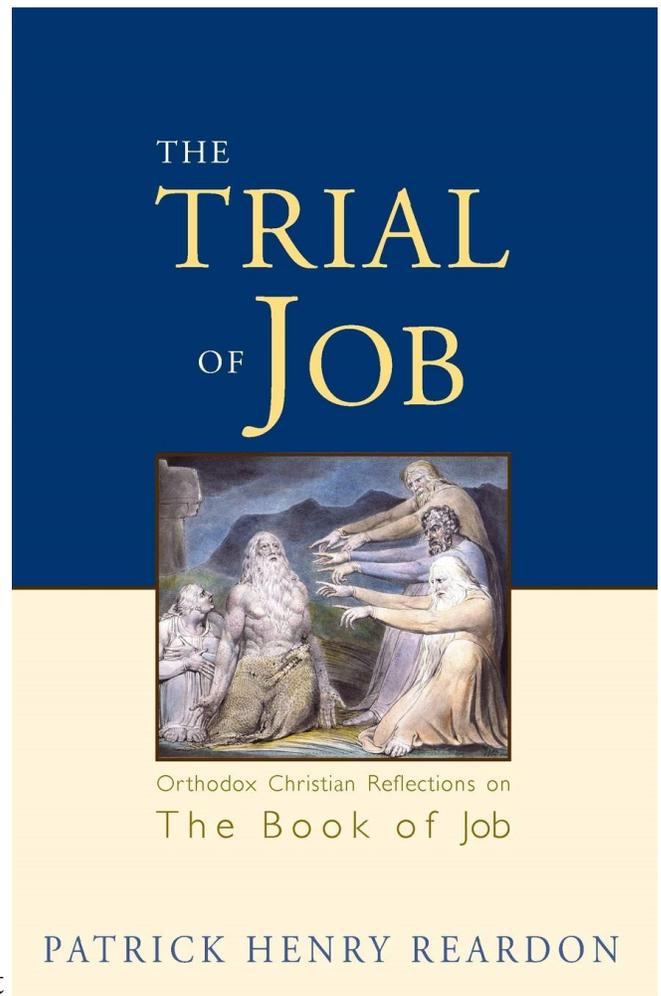
Following the lead of St. James, Christians have long admired this figure they call, great Job. St. James provides the traditional Christian approach to Job—namely, the theme of the just man who is tried in his faith. Christians have also given attention to the fact that Job’s sufferings were occasioned by Satan. Thus, the Church regards the patient Job as a figure and type of Jesus, the Just Man suffering and sorely tried. Job is, wrote St. Gregory the Great, “a type of the Redeemer.”

Fr. Patrick Reardon renders Job comprehensible (to those of us who are lay readers of Scripture), tangible (to those who have not yet tasted the way of darkness and despair), and accessible (to those who have already experienced any form of brokenness and brokenheartedness). His challenging meditations are sure to enlighten our minds, strengthen our hearts, nourish our souls and energize our actions.

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



OCTOBER 2019 SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

What a great start to the 2019-2020 Sunday School year. September was a great month for Sunday School. We would like to give thanks to all the teachers, parents, and children who are committed to our Sunday School program.

Yeah!!!! All the class pictures were taken last month and should be up on our bulletin board by the time you read this article. Please stop by and take a look at our beautiful students. We would like to thank Karina Findlay and her mother for taking these wonderful pictures.

September was a busy month. Our Topics for the month were the THE THEOTOKOS, THE SIGN OF THE CROSS, ROLES IN THE CHURCH -TALENTS AND GIFTS, and THE LORD'S PRAYER. John Kokenis presented the Church Vessels and explained the Service of the Preparation for the Divine Liturgy, also known as Proskomide, to our Pre-K and 2nd and 3rd graders. He also met with our High School students and discussed John 3:16 and what is the Church. Our 4TH Graders learned about and made Prospora for our Church on Sept. 22nd. We would like to thank Melissa Krinos for directing this program for our children year after year. The congregation of St. John's is truly blessed to have such wonderful stewards in our children.

On September 15th we also hosted a wonderful COFFEE HOUR for our parishioners. Thank you to all the parents who brought something to share and to the set up and clean up parents who truly made a difference with how smoothly everything ran.

Our first YOUTH SUNDAY SERVICE of the year took place on September 23rd. The students in 1st-5th grade sang the Liturgical Hymns beautifully with the choir. Many of our older students have joined the choir and we are very proud of them. Our music program is thriving and we need to thank Maria Xenick for that. We would truly like to thank our High School students for doing a fine job reading the Epistle on all of our Youth Sundays.

We understand that it is very difficult to attend church every week, but PARENTS, please make an effort. Your children's understanding of our faith is essential. Without this, they may not develop a personal relationship with Christ. It is also important to make it a "habit" of going to church on Sunday morning. When students come to church on a regular basis they feel CONNECTED to our church, to their teachers, and especially to their classmates. What better peers to have, than their Orthodox friends! These friendships could also last a lifetime. Students who do not come regularly may feel uncomfortable and miss so much of our valuable instruction. And why not arrive to CHURCH ON TIME. If you can do it for your jobs and school, why can't you do it for Christ!

Please feel free to contact us with any questions, suggestions, or comments regarding St. John's Sunday School Program. Parents: If you do not receive our weekly e-mails about our Sunday School Program, please contact Vickie Peckham at 406-5626 or e-mail her at vickiepeckham@gmail.com.



October 2019 Sunday School Calendar

Sunday, October 6

Topic: The Creed

John Kokenis: Kindergarten
(Vessels)

Kolyva: 1st and 2nd Grade
GOYA Meeting 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, October 13

Topic: The Bible

John Kokenis: 1st Grade (vessels)
Prospora: 3rd Grade
No Middle School or High School
Sunday School

Sunday, October 20

Youth Sunday (6th-8th Grade Music
at 11:50 a.m.)

Topic: The Ten Commandments
John Kokenis: 5TH and 6th Grade
(vessels)

Friday, October 11 - Sunday, October 13

GOYA St. Pete Volleyball Tournament

Saturday, October 19

GOYA Service Project Day

Sunday, October 27

Topic: Liturgy/Holy Communion
John Kokenis: 7th & 8th Grade
(Vessels)

Fall Festival (HOPE/JOY)

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

All women are at risk for breast cancer, which increases with age. Regular breast exams and annual screenings are key to early breast cancer detection.

Though breast cancer is most commonly thought of as a disease that affects women, male breast cancer is rare but does occur. Male breast cancer is most common in older men, though it can occur at any age.

The purpose of this article is to provide you with basic information about early detection, screening and signs and symptoms to look for.

EARLY DETECTION = Self-Breast Examination

Improve your chances of an early breast cancer diagnosis, treatment and cure with self-examinations.

Regularly checking your breasts allows you to become familiar with how they normally look and feel. You will be more likely to notice any changes, including:

- Lumps, hard knots or thickening inside the breast or underarm
- Breast swelling, warmth, redness or darkening
- Breast size or shape changes
- Skin dimpling or puckering
- An itchy, scaly nipple sore or rash
- Nipple or breast inversion or retraction
- Sudden nipple discharge
- New pain in one spot that does not go away

GET YOUR MAMMOGRAMS YEARLY

Women with average breast cancer risk begin annual mammograms at age 40. Women in their 20s and 30s should have clinical breast examinations during physical examinations. If your mother or sister have been diag-



nosed with breast cancer, your screening may start sooner. Please talk with your physician.

Early breast cancer detection helps in providing more treatment options and increases the possibility of a favorable prognosis.

Make sure you ask for a 3-D mammogram. This latest technology is highly efficient and accurate to identify smaller tumors for earlier breast cancer detection.

Decrease YOUR risk:

There is **NO** sure way to **prevent** breast cancer, but you can **lower** your risk. This can be especially helpful for women with certain risk factors for breast cancer, such as having a strong family history or certain genes.

Both increased body weight and weight gain as an adult are linked with a higher risk of breast cancer after menopause.

Be physically active

Avoid alcohol and tobacco

A diet low in fat, low in processed and red meat, and high in fruits and vegetables can have health benefits, including lowering the risk of some other cancers.

Please visit our Nursing Ministry table on Sunday October 20 for more information.

If you or someone you know would benefit from a breast cancer support group, please contact Marcelle Triantafyllou.

GriefShare Ministry Continues on Thursdays

It may be hard for you to feel optimistic about the future right now. If you've lost a spouse, child, family member, or friend, you've probably found there are not many people who understand the deep hurt you feel. This can be a confusing time when you feel isolated and have many questions. "Going to GriefShare feels like having warm arms wrapped around you when you're shivering." GriefShare groups meet weekly to help you face these challenges and move toward rebuilding your life. Each GriefShare session has three distinct elements: Video seminar with experts, support group discussion with focus and personal study and reflection. We will meet from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the Administration Building Meeting Room on Thursdays. For more information please contact Donna Hambos at 813-843-8412 or dhambos@msn.com. Books for the program will be provided. Donation for the book suggested but not required. Open to all family and friends. **October meetings will be held the 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31.**



~ Thank You for your gifts of Stewardship ~

We appreciate the gifts of our loyal parishioners and offer a heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you! Our pledges for the 2019 Stewardship year are \$512,082 with \$357,970 collected from 340 loyal stewards at St. John. ***We lovingly remind you to make your gift today if your name is missing from this list. Please don't wait!*** Your increased giving enables St. John to operate but more importantly helps us to grow, thrive and fulfill our church mission; Love God, Love thy Neighbor and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a united Orthodox Christian Community. Consider your gifts the gifts that keep on giving ... as they have allowed us to expand our charitable giving to Hospice and Christian Charities in need! Something we are very proud of as a church and hope to build on for years to come.

It is a joy to see our church full of faithful worshippers on Sunday and many new faces. Sunday School has started ministry activities are in full swing and festival planning underway. The next couple of months will keep the church calendar full but keep our hearts even fuller! Soon we will launch our 2020 Stewardship materials with Stewardship Sunday set for December 8th, 2019 – Keep Christ and the Church front and center as you make your plans for giving in 2020.

Now for a little housekeeping business ~ Please contact our church office or a member of the Stewardship committee with any questions on your commitment or renewal or if a correction is needed on your name.

Pledge forms are also available on line at <http://stjohntpa.org/2019-stewardship/>

According to the St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Tampa, FL By-Laws that remain in place for 2019 one must have completed a form AND be 'current' in their pledge (for this year and last year) to participate and vote at the Spring General Assembly Meeting and Fall General Assembly, Parish Council Elections and any Special Assembly Meetings – Dates TBD. If you have sent in a Stewardship Check and are not on the list, please contact the office so we can forward you a 2019 Stewardship Pledge Form. Our new Bylaws go into effect in 2020 which require a pledge form and fulfilled pledge commitments for the prior year only. More detailed information is included in the Bylaws article of this Messenger edition.

It is our hope the EVERYONE on our mailing list provides gifts of stewardship OR becomes a Friend of St. John the Baptist, for those who do not live in Tampa.

* Indicates receipt of a Stewardship Check without a completed pledge form. Our office will be happy to forward a pledge package and the form can also be completed on-line. Keep in mind pledges in writing help us adequately plan financially for our church and also bring voting privileges, which are critical to support the mission and vision of our church.

Afloarei, Michael & Mariana, Mr. & Mrs.	Calamunci, Chris & Crystal, Mr. & Mrs.	Demetriou, Nektarios & Peggy, Dr. & Mrs.
Akrotirianakis, Stavros & Lisa, Fr. & Pres.	Cantonis, George & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.	DeYoung, John & Jenna, Mr. & Mrs.
Alastanos, Jennifer, Ms.	Cara, Sphetim, Mr & Mrs. Donalda Shehu*	Diamantakes, Georgia, Ms.
Alexander, John & Anetta, Mr. & Mrs.	Cardy, Thomas & Gina, Mr. & Mrs.	Dimas, Gregory & Ms. Evelyn Patsavos, Dr.
Alithinos, Ekaterini, Mrs.	Carter, John & Genie, Dr. & Mrs.	Diniaco, Peter & Rebecca, Mr. & Mrs.*
Alsina, Alexa, Ms.	Cauthorn, Ken & Helen, Mr. & Mrs.	Doucas, Deborah, Ms.
Alsina, Angel & Lisa, Dr. & Mrs.	Celin, Edjir & Nadine, Mr. & Mrs.	Douglas, Dean, Mr.
Ameres, George & Zackie, Mr. & Mrs.	Chagaris, George & Kalliope, Mr. & Mrs.	Doxas, Joan, Ms.
Anton, Alex & Kristen, Dr. & Mrs.	Chakonas, Ethel Athena, Mrs.	Edquid, Marc & Maraquet, Mr. & Mrs.
Apockotos, James & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.	Charalabakis, Terry G., Mr.	Edwards, Jeffery, Dr. & Mrs. Christina Cardy
Apostoleres, Nicholas S. & Rosalie C., Mr. & Mrs.	Cherpelis, Basil & Alyssa, Dr. & Dr.	Ekonomou, Anthony & Diana C., Mr. & Mrs.*
Argyros, Harry & Linda, Mr. & Mrs.	Choundas, Marina & Mr. Greg Thatcher, Ms.	Elly, Jonathan & Jenivieve, Mr. & Mrs.
Armstrong, Jim & Myra, Mr. & Mrs.	Choundas, Peter & Adis, Mr. & Mrs.	Evdemon, Stanley & Mary Ellen, Mr. & Mrs.
Artzibushev, Dimitri & Sonya, Mr. & Mrs.	Christ, John E., Dr.	Fallieras, George, Dr.
Assimiadis, Paul, Mr.	Christodoulou, Mary Ann, Mrs.	Fallieras, Lauren, Ms.
Aviles, Pablo J. & Vanessa, Mr. & Mrs.	Christopher, Louis & Dr. Penny Plakas, Mr.	Fallieras, Nicholas & Susan, Dr. & Mrs.
Axelrod, Scott & Christine, Mr. & Mrs.	Christou, Tammy, Ms.	Fellios, Alexander, Mr.*
Badrane, Denise, Ms.	Colado, David & Alexandria, Mr. & Mrs.	Fellios, George & Zeina, Mr. & Mrs.
Bakirdgi, Joan, Mrs.	Conner, Michael & Artemis, Mr. & Mrs.	Fentress, Kevin & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.*
Balasis, Mathew & Suzy, Mr. & Mrs.	Constantaras, Carena & Mr. Kevin Bilt-hou, Ms.	Ferekides, Christos & Debbie, Dr. & Mrs.
Bavaro, Daniel & Anna Maria, Mr. & Mrs.	Corcoran, Joseph & Patti, Mr. & Mrs	Forde, Dwight & Ewana, Mr. & Mrs.
Beach, Kevin, Dr. & Ms. Heidi Borgeas, *	Costas, Maria, Ms.	Fotopoulos, Anthony & Carole, Mr. & Mrs.
Bedan, Matt & Christi, Mr. & Mrs.	Costello, Patricia, Ms.	Frantsvog, Eric & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.
Bedran, Rita, Ms.	Cotterman, Sandra, Ms.	Frazier, Chris, Ms.
Blackburn, Robert T. & Kathryn, Mr. & Dr.	Crafa, Paul & Stavru, Mr. & Mrs.	Freeman, Eugene & Jacqueline, Mr. & Mrs.
Blankenship, Alexander, Mr.	Crassas, Alkis & Aime, Mr. & Mrs.	Freeman, Katherine, Ms.
Blankenship, Wayne & Athanasia, Mr. & Mrs.	Cyhan, Dawn, Ms.	Freeman, Nicholas, Mr.
Bougas, Constantine & Angela, Mr. & Mrs.	Dalaklis, Joanne, Ms.	Galin, Mary, Ms.
Boulteris, Dionisios & Vasiliki, Mr.	Damian, Gabriela & Mihnea Anghelescu, Ms.	Gallo, Vasiliki, Mrs.
Bouzinekis, Andrew & Kathryn, Mr. & Mrs.	Daniels, Elaine, Ms.	Garcia, Rick & Stamie, Mr. & Mrs.
Bradshaw, Harold & Pelagia, Mr. & Mrs.	David, Axl, Mr.	Gavalas, Debbie, Ms & Mr. Robert Ritchie
Brown, Chrysanthi, Ms.	De La Cruz, Marilyn & Ms. Ariel Guy, Ms.	Geis, Jeffrey & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.
Burchill, George, Father	De Maio, Alexandra, Ms.	Georgas, Thomas & Janet, Mr. & Mrs.
Calamunci, Alex & Sarah, Mr. & Mrs.	Demas, Anna K., Ms.	George, Michael & Peggy, Mr. & Mrs.
Calamunci, Catherine, Mrs.	Demas, John, Mr.	Georgiou, Speros & Eleanor, Mr. & Mrs.

Gerecke, Ed & Terri, Mr. & Mrs.
 Giallourakis, Michael & Artemise, Mr. & Mrs.
 Gombos, Harriet, Mrs.
 Gorter, Maria, Ms.
 Grapsas, Constantine & Irene, Mr. & Mrs.
 Gregory, Daniel & Alicia, Mr. & Mrs.
 Guarino, Paul & Harriet, Mr. & Mrs.
 Halikoytakis, Alex, Mr.
 Halikoytakis, Michael & Edith, Mr. & Mrs.
 Halkias, Athanasios, Mr.
 Halkias, Chris, Mr.
 Halkias, Demetrios & Camille, Mr. & Mrs.
 Halkias, Evangeline, Mrs.
 Halkias, George & Elaine, Mr. & Mrs.
 Hambos, Charlie, Mr.
 Hambos, George & Donna, Mr. & Mrs.
 Hampers, Dean & Valerie, Mr. & Mrs.
 Hampton, Wade & Sarah, Mr. & Mrs.
 Hanhan, Amin & Gloria, Mr. & Mrs.
 Hartsfield-Molina, Christie, Dr. & Mr. David Molina
 Hartung, Mark & JoAnn, Mr. & Mrs.
 Henderson, Kenny & Nickollet, Mr. & Mrs.
 Higdon, Skip, Mrs.
 Hoff, Eleni, Mrs.
 Hoffman, Robert & Christal-Line, Mr. & Mrs.
 Hoppenstand, Anna Evelyn, Ms.
 Horack, Scott & Rena, Mr. & Mrs.
 Ioannidis, Theodore & Sharon, Mr. & Mrs.
 Iraklianos, Mike, Mr.
 Irwin, Jon & Pam, Mr. & Mrs.
 Jacobsen, Paul, Mr.
 James, Arthur M & Abby, Mr. & Mrs.
 Jennewein, Robert & Georgia, Mr. & Mrs.
 Jewtushenko, Raissa, Ms.*
 Johnson, Aphroditi, Mrs.*
 Johnston, Angela, Ms.
 Jolly, Jim & Jean, Mr. & Mrs.
 Kabougeris, Pete & Voula, Mr. & Mrs.
 Kaburis, George & Kathy, Mr. & Mrs.
 Kafantaris, Michael & Amy, Mr. & Mrs.
 Kananis, Evan, Mr.
 Kapetan, Martha, Ms.
 Kappiris, Stanley & Erin, Mr. & Mrs.
 Karpelenia, Loretta, Presbytera
 Kastis, Constantino, Mr.
 Katsadouros, Konstantin & Katherine, Mr. & Mrs.*
 Katsamakias, Perry & Betty Katherine, Mr. & Mrs.
 Katsaros, Andreas & Stacey, Mr. & Mrs.
 Katsouli, Paulina, Ms.
 Katzaras, Nick & Helen, Mr. & Mrs.
 Katzaras, Stefan & Kara, Mr. & Mrs.
 Kavouklis, Chris & Debbie, Mr. & Mrs.
 Kavouklis, Michael & Irene, Mr. & Mrs.
 Kavouklis, Nicholas & Edie, Dr. & Mrs.
 Kavouklis, Nick, Dr.
 Kazanis, Deno & Barbara, Dr. & Dr.
 Kelly, Brian & Ms. Amanda Cotterman, Mr.
 Kent, Thomas & Jennifer, Mr. & Mrs.*
 Kladakis, John & Julie, Mr. & Mrs.
 Kladios, George & Charlene, Mr. & Mrs.
 Kladis, Theodore & Amy, Mr. & Mrs.
 Koch, John & Cathie, Mr. & Mrs.*
 Konstas, Demetrios & Mary Ann, Dr. & Mrs.
 Korakis, Alexander & Margaret, Mr. & Mrs.
 Koudouna, Anthony, Mr.
 Koudouna, Dora, Ms.
 Koulianos, Mike & Stephanie, Mr.
 Koutroumanis, Dean & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.
 Krajacic, Joseph & Alyssa, Mr. & Mrs.
 Kremydas, Nick & Pauline, Mr. & Mrs.
 Krinos, Dimitri & Melissa, Mr. & Mrs.
 Krinos, John & Sue, Mr. & Mrs.*
 Kwasny, Foti & Fatin, Mr. & Mrs.
 Kyrus, Chris & Katherine, Dr. & Dr.
 L'Hommedieu, Tim & Tia, Mr. & Mrs.
 Labatos, Angelika, Ms.
 Langas, Dimitrios & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.
 Larino, Michael & Amanda, Mr. & Mrs.
 Laskey, Fred & Coleen, Mr. & Mrs.
 Lazaridis, Steve & Rebekah, Mr. & Mrs.
 Lenardos, Steven & Melissa, Mr. & Mrs.
 Leontsinis, Nicole, Ms.
 Letobarone, Domenic & Melanie, Dr. & Dr.
 Liakopoulos, Stephanie, Ms.
 Limberatos, Alexander & Alexandra, Mr. & Mrs.
 Limberopoulos, Chris, Mr.
 Lindiakos, Lauren & Richard, Dr.
 Lucas, Velina, Ms.
 Maas, Mary, Ms.
 MacLaury, Kathryn, Ms.
 Makrides, Peter, Mr.
 Malacos, John G. & Lucy A., Mr. & Mrs.
 Mangarides, Markos, Mr. & Ekaterini-Petranell, Mrs.
 Manikas, William & Nancy, Dr. & Mrs.
 Mantzanas, Chris & Nicole, Mr. & Mrs.*
 Markowski, Katina, Ms.
 Marmagkiolis, Kostas, Mr.
 Martinez, Alexander & Andriana, Mr. & Mrs.
 Matassini, Nicholas G. & Christina, Mr. & Mrs.
 Mekras, Demosthenes & Luisa, Mr. & Mrs.
 Mellen, Andrew, Mr.
 Mellon, Andria, Ms.
 Melton, Greg & Victoria, Mr. & Mrs.
 Melton, Jaime, Ms.
 Miaoulis, George & Debbra, Mr. & Mrs.
 Miaoulis, Maria N., Ms.
 Michos, Sylvia, Ms.
 Milonas, Taso & Thay, Mr. & Mrs.
 Mitchell, John & Edith, Mr. & Mrs.
 Mitseas, George & Catherine, Mr. & Mrs.
 Moran, Andrew & Stefanie, Mr. & Mrs.
 Morgan, Theodora, Ms.
 Morros, Stephen, Mr.
 Moshos, Doukissa, Ms.
 Mourer, Brett & Ana, Mr. & Mrs.
 Mueller, Jeffery & Melinda, Mr. & Mrs.
 Myer, Ronald & Magdalini, Mr. & Mrs.
 Naum, Dean & Sandra, Mr. & Mrs.
 Nenos, Byron & Jeanie, Mr. & Mrs.
 Nenos, John, Mr.
 Nenos, Mary, Mrs.
 Nenos, Peter, Mr.
 Nenos, Vasilios, Mr.
 Nicklow, Tom & Demetra, Mr. & Mrs.
 Nicolaou, Christos & Dee, Mr. & Mrs.
 Niculescu, Marian & Alexandru, Mr. & Mrs.
 Nolas, George S. & Cheryl, Dr. & Mrs.
 Nolen, Pamela, Ms.
 Olsen, Scott & Elphida, Mr. & Mrs.
 Pahoumis, Sofia, Ms.
 Palios, George & Julie, Mr. & Mrs.
 Palios, Michael & Bessie, Mr. & Mrs.
 Paloumpis, Tom & Jenny, Mr. & Mrs.
 Panopoulos, Theodoros & Marisa, Mr. & Mrs.
 Panos, Euripides & Denise, Mr. & Mrs.
 Papadakis, Alec & Lauren, Mr. & Mrs.
 Papadakis, Justin, Mr.
 Papadopoulos, John & Irene, Mr. & Mrs.
 Papaeconomou, Lambros & Deborah, Mr. & Mrs.
 Papaefstathiou, Louis & Joanna K., Mr. & Mrs.
 Papataros, Christopher & Jennifer, Mr. & Mrs.
 Pappas, Paul & Georgia, Mr. & Mrs.
 Paras, Gus & Marina, Mr. & Mrs.
 Parker, Ryan, Mr. & Mrs. Alexa Koulouris-Park
 Passavanti, Robert & Debbra, Mr. & Mrs.
 Patellis, Theophilos, Dr. & Mrs. Maria Dorkfy
 Patrascoiu, Florin & Marenca, Mr. & Mrs.
 Payne, Suzanne, Mrs.
 Peckham, Richard & Victoria, Mr. & Mrs.
 Perdicas, Ernest & Nancy, Mr. & Mrs.
 Perry, Christian & Athina, Mr. & Mrs.
 Peters, Alexandra, Ms.
 Phillips, Thomas & Georgia, Mr. & Mrs.
 Phillips, Thomas, Mr.
 Pierroutsakos, Alex & Valerie, Mr. & Mrs.*
 Pileggi, Suzanne, Ms.
 Plakas, Theodore & Kyriakoula, Mr. & Mrs.
 Pondi, Pierce & Ms. Jaclyn Savidakis, Mr.
 Preston, Joshua & Marian, Mr. & Mrs.
 Prodromitis, Theo, Ms.*
 Prokos, Fran, Ms.
 Rahn, Ruby, Ms.
 Resvanis, Styliana, Ms.
 Ricalde, Russell & Pat, Mr. & Mrs.
 Rindone, Ryan & Megan, Mr. & Mrs.
 Robinson, Tanya, Mrs.
 Rogers, II, Aris, Mr.*
 Rose, Maryann, Ms.
 Ross, Daniel & Nicole, Mr. & Mrs.
 Roussos, Archie & Eleftheria, Mr. & Mrs.
 Roussos, Basileios, Mr. & Anna Laoudis, Ms.
 Roussos, Nicholas, Mr.*
 Roy, Perry & Alysa, Mr. & Mrs.
 Sakaris, Thomas & Barbara, Mr. & Mrs.
 Sakellaris, Anne, Mrs.
 Sakkis, John & Katherine, Mr. & Mrs.
 Samuel, Calvin & Vivian, Mr. & Mrs.
 Sandborn, Marilyn & Steve, Mrs.
 Santana, Robert & Alexandra, Mr.
 Sarantos, Christos & Sara, Mr. & Mrs.
 Sarantos, Pete & Ann, Mr. & Mrs.
 Scourtes, Christine, Mrs.
 Sengsouvana, Say & Sarah, Mr. & Mrs.
 Serbanos, Michael & Patricia, Mr. & Mrs.
 Sermier, Eustace G & Bennette, Dr. & Mrs.
 Sibley, Rusty & Despina, Mr. & Mrs.
 Sinadinos, Gregory & Mary, Mr. & Mrs.
 Skijus, Steven & Ellen, Mr. & Mrs.
 Skourellos, Dante & Lindsey, Mr. & Mrs.
 Skourellos, Michael P & Shirley A., Mr. & Mrs.
 Skourellos, Petros, Mr.
 Skoures, William & Egli, Mr. & Mrs.
 Smith, Brad & Nicolette, Mr. & Mrs.
 Smith, Thomas & Golfo Alexopoulos, Dr. & Dr.
 Smyrnakis-Rodriguez, Theresa A., Ms.*
 Sorolis, Eftihia, Ms.
 Soteriou, George & Selena, Mr. & Mrs.
 Sotiropoulos, Bill & Jenny, Mr. & Mrs.
 Sotiropoulos, Paul & Terri, Mr. & Mrs.

Spanos, Peter,Mr.
Speegle, Maria,Mrs.
Spencer, Wayne & Pauline,Mr. & Mrs.
Spirides, Harry G.,Mr.
Stacy, Stephanie,Mrs.
Stamoolis, Christina,Ms.
Stavropoulos, Jane,Ms.
Steele, Elliott & Dianne,Mr. & Mrs.
Stephanides, Christos,Mr.
Stephanides, Marios & Ourania,Dr. & Mrs.
Stilian, Douglas & Bridget,Mr. & Mrs.
Stingulescu, Razvan & Mrs. Juliana
Singu,Mr.
Stonestreet, John & Anastasia,Dr. & Mrs.
Strahan, James Michael,Mr.
Stratigakos, Helen & Judge Daniel Sleet,Ms.
Stratigakos, Louis & Georgia,Mr. & Mrs.
Tedrick, Matthew & Ellen,Mr. & Mrs.*
Temelkova, Zahana,Ms.

Theofilos, John & Elizabeth,Mr. & Mrs.
Theophanous, Peter,Mr.
Thomas, Larry & Tina,Dr. & Mrs.
Tisdale, Greg,Mr.
Toney, Sam D. & Alice,Dr. & Mrs.*
Touliatos, Markissa,Ms.*
Trakas, Andrew & Adrienne,Mr. & Mrs.
Trakas, Peter & Donna,Mr. & Mrs.
Triantafilou, Marcelle,Ms.
Triantafyllopoulos, George & Maria,Mr. & Mrs.*
Trimis, Michael & Diane,Mr. & Mrs.
Tsambarlis, Maria,Ms.
Tsetsekas, Steve & Deanna,Mr. & Mrs.
Tsibris, John,Dr.
Tziotis, Michele & Andreas,Dr.&Mr.
Valaes, Demetrios & Lynn A.,Mr. & Mrs.
Voisey, Richard & Katherin,Mr. & Mrs.
Vourloumis, Joanna,Mrs.

Voykin, David & Amy,Mr. & Mrs.
Voykin, Mary H,Mrs.
Vukmer, Daniel & Sheila,Mr & Mrs.
Ward, Gary,Mr. & Ms. Sandra Pappas
Westmoreland, Jim & Joanne,Mr. & Mrs.
Wiel, Nick,Mr.*
Worley, Christene,Ms.
Xanthopoulos, Joe & Margaret,Mr. & Mrs.
Xenick, Emanuel & Maria,Mr. & Mrs.
Xenick, George & Cindy,Mr. & Mrs.
Xeroteris, Evangeline,Ms.
Yohai, Eleni,Ms.
Yotis, William & Eleonora,Dr. & Mrs.
Zabetakis, Maria,Ms.
Zaharis, Constantine & Rachel,Dr. & Dr.
Zeban, Peter & Judy,Mr. & Mrs.
Zelatis, John P. & Denise M.,Mr. & Mrs.

More than \$2,000 Sent for IOCC Relief in the Bahamas

The Parish Council approved \$1,000 from our discretionary charitable donations to be sent directly to IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) so they can serve the people and communities devastated by Hurricane Dorian.

On Sunday, September 15 an addition \$1,000+ was collected in the church for these efforts.

Well done, St. John's!



Kourmolis Center AC Overhaul

Starting October 1, Almost every single air conditioning unit responsible for keeping the climate nice in the Kourmolis Center will be replaced. The project will cost roughly \$120,000. This is the first time many of these units will be replaced. Please pardon our dust and be prepared for the Kourmolis Center, not to be climate controlled for the first 2 - 3 weeks of October. Thanks to your Stewardship, we are being proactive in this replacement rather than waiting for all the unites to break down. Many thanks to the Parish Council for approving this project and for Felix Ramirez, who has kept all of the ACs alive by performing routine maintenance and even repairing them, saving us thousands of dollars.

~Save the Date~



The Annual St. John the Baptist Greek Festival is Coming Soon!

November 8, 9 & 10, 2019

Things We Know

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



We do it for our Church and We do it for the Greater Community of Tampa. Let's show Christ's Love through our food and hospitality.

Raffles Sales ARE STARTING!!!!

Save the Date – Our Annual Tampa Greek Festival is set for November 8-10, 2019



RAFFLE TICKET
Support the church! Win a BMW!

TAMPA GREEK FESTIVAL

3 Series BMW

Enter for a chance to win a new **BMW** or \$20,000 cash or other prizes!
See back for details.

Tampa Greek Festival Raffle Ticket
Suggested Donation \$100

Sponsored in part by
MORGAN
AUTO GROUP

Planning is underway for our 2019 Tampa Greek Festival and we are excited to get a jump start with Raffle sales beginning THIS MONTH! Last year, we set a record in raffle sales and it has a lot to do with us starting early. This year we hope to do even better. Tickets will be available online through the Tampa Greek Festival Website and the Church office very soon. Stay tuned to the bulletin and emails for further announcements. Remember, we limit sales to the first 1,000 tickets and really count on our parishioners promoting the Raffle to friends and family.

Imagine the relief, if we could begin the weekend with a solid start of pre-sales for the Raffle and not be so reliant on good weather or attendance to make the necessary profit our church currently needs. Our Festival is an opportunity to showcase not only our Greek culture but more importantly our Orthodox Faith! It requires a great deal of planning and effort BEFORE the weekend even kicks off.

The raffle is one of the easiest, most profitable methods to make this happen. With your support early in the season, we can make it the best sales year in history!

For 2018, our net festival profit was \$129,048!

This year, we will do even better.

For 2019, in addition to LifePath Hospice, a large portion of our proceeds will go to help LOVE Inc. of Tampa Bay.

Come by the table in the Kourmolis Center on Sundays

Website & Email Update

Our new web domain is STJOHNTPA.ORG

New email addresses:

Debbie: debbie@stjohntpa.org

Charlie: chambos@stjohntpa.org

John: jkokenis@stjohntpa.org

Confidential Request for Counselors from Fr. Stavros

We've all asked for and been asked for references for different kinds of people. I.e. Do you know a good plumber or a reliable lawn care service? I would like to put together a resource manual of mental health professionals in this area to help people from our parish who need certain kinds of services. I'm looking specifically for the following:

1. Therapists/counselors who can counsel
 - a. People in grief
 - b. Teenagers
 - c. Marriage counseling
 - d. Other general counselors/therapists who you've had a good experience with.
2. Anyone good programs for people who are struggling with addictions (Drugs, alcohol, etc.)

While I do a lot of pastoral work that involves counseling, there are certain areas that either I'm not qualified to offer assistance in, or more likely, unable to engage in long term counseling/therapy. However, without first-hand knowledge of these kinds of counselors in our area, I am at a loss as for where to direct people to go. If you have some recommendations, please know they will be kept in confidence. If you are really concerned about anonymity, please send an unsigned note to my attention (this is the only time I will read an anonymous note). I really want to put together a list of resources to be able to recommend to our parishioners. Thank you.

St. John's is proud to offer a new ministry for families with special needs:

Connect Through Christ

According to the US Census, 18.5% of American Children under age 18 are Special Needs Children. That doesn't mean that they aren't smart, talented, or capable. Just that they have specific challenges that a "typical" student would not face.

There are four major types of special needs children:

- Physical – muscular dystrophy, chronic asthma, epilepsy, etc.
- Developmental – down syndrome, autism, dyslexia, speech delays, processing disorders
- Behavioral/Emotional – ADD, bi-polar, oppositional defiance disorder, etc.
- Sensory Impaired – Blind, visually impaired, deaf, limited hearing

Our mission is to break down barriers that keep children with disabilities and their families from being able to participate in the Church community. By discretely identifying families that Connect Through Christ can serve we hope to assist in providing a life long relationship with Christ. For more information please contact Lindsey Skourellos at 813-503-7845 and lskourellos@yahoo.com or Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534 and d_skourellos@yahoo.com

Youth Protection Update

Please be aware that the youth protection enrollment for ecclesiastical year 2019–2020 has begun and will continue this month. Prior to this starting date, you will receive email communication regarding what steps to take if you are volunteer who works with children or leads our Church. We ask that you keep an eye out for these emails and read the Messenger for updates as our methodology may change due to the new requirements. Thank you for serving so faithfully at St. John's.

Yours in Christ,

Catherine S. Mitseas, ministry head
Nick Kataras, Parish Council Liaison



Community Outreach

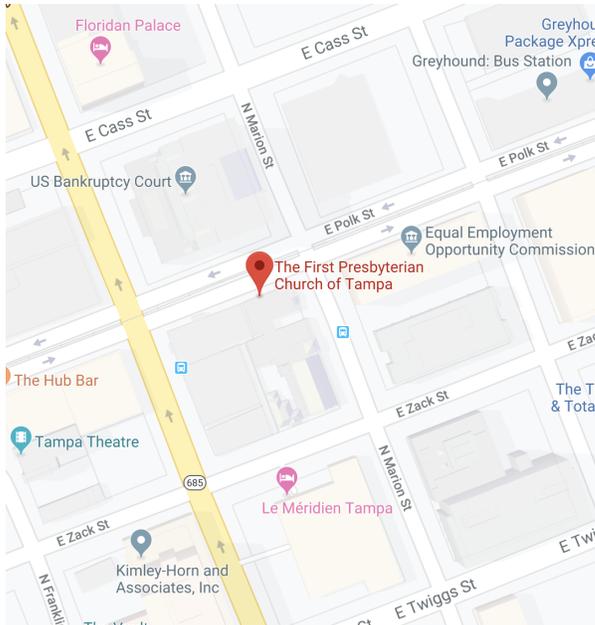
Saturday, October 19

We Want You to Serve with Us!

Hello and WELCOME! My name is Greg Melton and on behalf of our Community Outreach Ministry I want to thank you for your interest in participating with our group. **On the third Saturday of each month**, we volunteer our time to provide for those of our community in need in downtown Tampa. We partner with Matthew 25 local charity, USF Medical School, and Metropolitan Ministries to serve breakfast, provide clothing, and care for the medical needs for our guests.

To Volunteer: Go to our Sign Up Genius, see URL below or scan the QR CODE and sign up.

Place: First Presbyterian Church @ 412 Zack Street, downtown Tampa. The entrance for volunteers is on the Polk Street side of building.



Time: 8:00 AM to 10:30AM

Volunteer Check-In Process:

- 1) Sign in and choose the job you want on the Duty Sheet
- 2) Prepare and wear your name tag
- 3) Don't be shy...if not sure where to go or what to do to get started, ask someone who looks like they know what they're doing.
- 4) Set up and Preparation 8-9AM, Serving 9-10:15AM, Cleanup 10:15-10:30AM.

Matthew 25 founders Peggy & Mike Kanter, as well as Bill Stone from Metro Ministries, are Go To people if you have questions or need direction on where you may be needed when you arrive.

Here is the URL for the Sign Up Genius for every upcoming 3rd Saturday of Month. Find the dates that work for you and sign up.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f48a5a62da3f49-community>



Scan with your
Smartphone to
Sign-Up Today

Please don't hesitate to ask any questions. Thank you and God Bless
Greg Melton 813-967-2074 gmelt12@gmail.com

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
- Body Wash
- 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.

As we make our way through 2019, anyone who has chosen a word for this year is welcome to submit a testimonial for the Messenger each month. If you'd like to share your word and how it's shaping your year, please email Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com This month's testimonials are from Jenivieve Ely and Kathy Kaburis.

My One Word for 2019: ENGAGED

By Jenivieve Ely

The word I chose for 2019 is "engaged." Being present and engaged is something I have always struggled with--even as a child. As I grew older, my struggle continued. In college, multitasking was the key to success! However, with so many things to do and see in this world, engagement in a single task is tricky. The problem has only grown with the advent of the smartphones we hold in the palm of our hand. Even in a room full of family and friends you can become disconnected and isolated. I became hyper aware of this when I became a parent. The last message I want to send to my children is that there is something more important than my time with them.

I am a wife, homemaker and mother of three beautiful, incredible children--two of which have special needs. I homeschool, I teach Sunday school, I have some medical issues, and I am trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle of eating clean and exercising regularly. I also run a homeschooling website and I'm writing a children's book series. My life is blessed and full. But these wonderful things all require time, energy, effort and research. I always have something I need to research, a lesson to plan, an article to write, or a doctor's appointment to make. At

times, I have found myself multitasking to the point that I miss out on what is happening right before me. Since choosing my word, I now try to make a conscious effort to be 100% in the moment, creating a valuable interaction for myself and the people I am with. I try to limit distractions when I am with loved ones and engage in their presence and give them my best; close the door, put my phone away, put tasks aside. When I am working on my tasks, I write out a list of what needs to be done and tackle one thing at a time. I try to manage my energy within the moment and focus it on what is happening presently. I am a work in progress and still struggle at times. However, most of the time when I fall back into my bad habits I notice I tend to feel overwhelmed, and I am able to catch myself and refocus my energy. At the end of the day, I want my loved ones to feel how important they are, I want to put my best effort into anything I am doing and live my best life.

Jenivieve Ely is married to Jon, and mother of three children Lucas, Liam, and Lorelei. She also is a Sunday school teacher at St. John.

My One Word For 2019 - LISTEN

by Kathy Kaburis

The word I selected this year was LISTEN! As an Educator and Administrator it was extremely important that I was always LISTENING. I needed to know what the students said or what the parents and teachers said so I was better able to help them. As teachers, we always told the students to look at us so we could make sure they were LISTENING. Looking at people when they are talking to us is an important factor in LISTENING. God gave us two ears and one mouth. (James 1:19 " Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger."). I believe that is so we LISTEN twice as much as we talk and also take time to process what we hear.

As an Administrator, when someone came to speak to me, I needed to stop and focus on them. I repeated things to make sure that I understood what they were saying. The majority of the people, whether parents, teachers or students needed someone just to hear them out.

We are all so busy and multi task so much. Do we really LISTEN to someone when they are speaking to us? I am

more guilty of that now than I was before. Last year when my Mother, Eleni was still alive, she would greet me each morning and ask me to sit and LISTEN to her for 5 minutes. I realized then that I wasn't paying attention to her when she spoke to me. Imagine your 85 year Mother putting you in your place. Good for her. I wish I could LISTEN to her voice now!

Taking time to LISTEN is so important. We can't stop what we are doing all the time. We can take time to LISTEN to our family and friends and someone that just needs to talk to someone.

We pray and know that God LISTENS to us! We owe others the same respect. Take time to REALLY LISTEN to others! It can make a Big Difference in all of our lives!

This year I have spent a lot of time making sure that I LISTEN to people when they speak to me. I feel better with the communication and I hope they feel like someone cares enough to LISTEN.

Kathy Kaburis is married to George, they have a son, Mihail, who is in college at USF.

Welcome Ministry - Come and See Dinner

As many of you know, our Welcome Ministry has hosted a “Come and See” Dinner following our Greek Festival. Our third annual dinner event will be on Tuesday, November 19th.

We want to emphasize this year that this event is not just limited to guests who want to learn more about us after meeting us at the Greek Festival. *This is a great opportunity for you to invite your friends, coworkers, neighbors, and your family members to enjoy a meal with us and have fellowship in a casual and comfortable church setting.* We will have postcards available over the next few weeks for you to use as an invitation and we encourage you to go for it and invite someone to join you.

You won't regret introducing someone to our church family!

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,
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

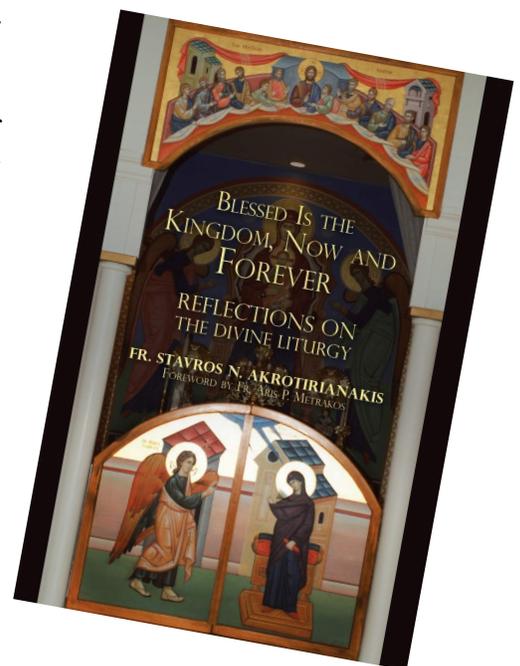
Go to Flickr.com and search “St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church” or go to www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoctampa

“Blessed is the Kingdom, Now and Forever” On Sale Now in the Bookstore

“Understanding” and “Application” are two of the challenges we face as Christians. First, we have to understand what it is we believe and what it is we are to do. And second, we have to go out and do what we've learned. We can't go do something if we don't know what we are doing or why we are doing it. This is one of the things that motivates me to write. Since February 2015, I've written a daily reflection, called “The Prayer Team”.

From the Prayer Team, has come a third book, called “Blessed is the Kingdom, NOW and Forever: Reflections on the Divine Liturgy.” It is now on sale in the bookstore. The purpose of this book is to give us something to think about during the Divine Liturgy. There are distinct thoughts we can and should have on each line of the Liturgy. While it would be virtually impossible to have big thoughts on every line every time (there are so many lines and we do not pause in between them to give us time to reflect), this book will give you plenty of things to think about and pray over during the Liturgy for a long time to come.

“Blessed is the Kingdom, NOW and Forever: Reflections on the Divine Liturgy” is now on sale! It is a series of reflections on the Divine Liturgy. Pick up your copy today! This book costs \$19.00 at the church bookstore.



Want to Learn Modern Greek?

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Adult Greek School

- Speak Greek
- Read Greek
- Write Greek



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

Teacher born, raised, and educated in Greece with over 22 years of experience teaching the Greek language. Adult classes for beginners taught @ St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church 2418 W. Swann Ave, Tampa, FL 33609. Classes are held at 6:00 - 8:30 p.m. on Thursday evenings, starting on October 3, 2019. This will be the first of three sessions, with each session lasting three months.

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

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

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

George & Maria Andros - Birmingham, AL
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Kay Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA
Katherine Beasley - Vero Beach, 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.

Charity Begins At Home

By Kathy MacLaury

I feel blessed every day. I learned that in Church. It's a wonderful feeling, but I haven't always felt that way. There have been many bumps along my way. Several touching experiences influenced my state of mind as I settle into a pattern of prayer and purpose with joy that I find through stewardship, community outreach and in the service of Philoptochos.

These benchmark experiences struck a chord, molded my behavior and helped me grow closer to God. In 1973 I moved to Florida from Michigan to follow my husband and continue my career as a teacher/counselor. I didn't particularly want to move to the deep south, because I thought it would be a little "backward." A pleasant surprise was my 9th grade students calling me Miss Kathy or "mam." I rather enjoyed that. To this day when I see former students, they still address me like that. It is so genteel to me.

The rougher side of my "southern exposure" involves a desperate act. After work I stopped at a convenience store for a soda. What I saw touched my soul. A woman in the food aisle lifted up her skirt to put a box of pasta into her under pants, and she walked out. She had stolen food. I was speechless, frightened, and shaken. I thought what would drive a person to steal food? Did she wake up that day thinking today I will go out and steal something to eat? Hunger is a basic need. That woman's act shaped my future. This was really only a few blocks from my home.

Our church has a food bank, and I thank God for all who donate and distribute to hungry people. Our church also has a Community Outreach ministry every 3rd Saturday of a month. On average 150 poor people get a hot breakfast. There is also a medical clinic with a doctor and USF medical students to see guests who need help. This is a grand effort supported partly by grants to buy fresh fruit, with the hot food provided by Metropolitan Ministries. County Social Services routinely has a Social Worker there to help guests sign up for health insurance or deal with problems beyond hunger like the location of shower facilities.

Philoptochos has done blanket drives and clothing collection to help guests who sleep outdoors in the cold, and we volunteer to serve the meals. We are looking forward to another day where we will prepare meals to feed at least 10,000 families. We have collected used eye glasses we take to the Lions Club for recycling for people with vision needs.

Philoptochos, with the help of the Sunday school children, prepared 150 Bags of Love so anyone could carry a bag or 2 in a car to give to people in need. This ministry has suggested dues of \$35/year, and those funds support programs at the national and international level. Every August we sell Fanouropita, a somewhat spicy cake to honor a Saint of things that are lost. The money goes to the Metropolis of Atlanta to support St. Stephen's Camp, the Hellenic Dance Fest, the Oratorical Program, Goya, Young Adult Life, and a Youth Rally.

On Vasilopita Sunday bread is sold and the funds go to St Basil's Academy, and orphanage in New York. We support international programs by hosting a luncheon each year with the proceeds going to the Orthodox Christian Mission Charity. We support the International Orthodox Christian Charity which



helps in major disaster areas, clergy education and a Special Needs Camp. We comfort families in grief by making koleva for memorial services.

The second dramatic event I experienced recently at our church. This brought the reality of poverty right to my front door. I encountered an elderly man on our church steps one Sunday. He asked me for money to fill a prescription, and I was taken aback. I told him I couldn't help him. I was on my way to the restroom after my drive to get to church. I had time to reflect, remembered the woman who stole food, and decided to go help him. He was then sitting at the bus stop. I gave him money and went to church. I concluded he did not wake up feeling blessed, nor did he think, "I will go to the church so I can do a do gooder." Who would think like that? I accept that some may not agree with my decision. He was at my home, and he had a need.

Charity begins at home, and the church is my spiritual home. Each person in our church family can decide the level of commitment to our collective efforts to help others, and that is through stewardship. I see this as the beginning of my mission. Stewardship gives me the support needed to gather and function as an organization dedicated to help others. We gather to foster our beliefs which center in treating others as we want to be treated with respect and dignity. We have many other ministries offering care for our church family. We have avenues to share and to give back for the glory of God. I have grown in so many ways over the past few years. I am grateful my sister and I get to see each other every Sunday...long drive for each of us, but so worth it. Remember we collect clothing and used eye glasses. God bless Father and Charlie for helping us focus on what matters.

Kathy MacLaury is a member of our Philoptochos Board.

Don't Flatter! Encourage

By Sean DeMars

I live in the South. In my town, tiny church buildings pepper every street, avenue, and alley. We have a lot of really nice people. We are polite, sometimes to a fault.

Small-town Southern culture is pleasant in many ways, but it can complicate church life considerably. In a city where everyone is a “member” of a church, it’s hard to know who’s a true disciple and who isn’t. Everyone is nice, but have they been made new? And even if someone has been made new, our genteel Southern ways can get in the way of our growth in sanctification.

Mere Niceness Is Overrated

One Sunday, I was filling the pulpit for a friend. I hazily remember stepping down from the pulpit, folding my manuscript in my hands, and crumbling into my seat. I had just finished preaching one of the worst sermons in 2,000 years of church history. And, as if on cue, several people passed me on the way out and said, “Thanks! You did great.”

The thing is, I didn't.

I know the Lord can use bad sermons. But I’m here to tell you that I did not do a great job that day. Or an okay job, even. I preached a bad sermon.

That experience left me wondering.

How am I ever going to get good feedback on my teaching if no one will look me in the eyes and tell me the truth?

No matter how bad a job you do at preaching, it can be hard to find someone who won’t lovingly smile and say you did a good job and thank you for your service. The heart behind this dynamic is good—full of warmth, love, and sympathy. But is it always healthy?

I would argue that it’s not.

A few years later, I was sitting in my new pastor’s office in Washington, D.C. A group of men from the church gathered on Sunday evenings to discuss the church’s ministry activities throughout the week and how they might be improved. It was called “service review,” and here I first saw the distinction between being encouraging and being merely nice. Flattery and encouragement are different, I realized. For encouragement is godly, but flattery is sin.

Flattery vs. Encouragement

Flattery is defined as “excessive and insincere praise, given especially to further one’s own interests.” Much of what passes for encouragement in our churches these days is flattery in disguise. Though we may not necessarily be trying to further our own interests, some of our positivity is excessive and insincere.



Much of what passes for encouragement in our churches is flattery in disguise.

Biblically speaking, however, encouragement is never excessive; it’s exact. It’s never insincere; it’s always an overflow of the heart. I first saw this in those service-review meetings. A Sunday-school teacher would receive feedback (usually a mixture of critique and encouragement), and the positive feedback was always specific and concrete. There was never any, “You did a good job, bud. Thanks.” The feedback usually sounded more like, “I thought you did a great job with your illustrations today. I can tell you’ve been working on them. So good job taking feedback and applying it to your lessons. The body was really built up by your service today.”

Pocket-Sized Definition

I think a good, pocket-sized definition of encouragement might go something like this: *Encouragement is pointing out the grace of God in the lives of others.*

More can be said, of course, but I believe this sentence carries the freight of the meaning fairly well.

In Acts 11, Luke tells us about a great work of the Lord that broke out in Antioch. Many were turning to Christ for salvation. When the church in Jerusalem heard about it, they sent out Barnabas to be their eyes and ears: “When [Barnabas] came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose” (v. 23).

Do you see that? Barnabas saw the grace of God; it excited him; and then he *told* them about it. “I see the hand of the Lord here,” he said. “Keep going!”

And that, friends, is encouragement.

Let’s resist the urge to merely be nice. Instead, let’s look for real evidence of God’s grace at work in others’ lives—and then point it out to them.

Sean DeMars is husband to Amber, dad to Patience and Isabella, and pastor at 6th Ave Church in Decatur, Alabama.

Hurricanes, shootings and other tragedies require our prayers – Praying isn't a waste of time

By Pastor Greg Laurie; Fox News

The last few days have been filled with tragedies – Hurricane Dorian bringing massive destruction and claiming at least five lives in the Bahamas; seven people shot dead and 22 wounded by a gunman in Texas; 34 people killed in a boat fire off the California coast; seven people killed and 34 wounded in several shootings in Chicago.

“Thoughts and prayers” has been a comment frequently tweeted and spoken by Americans shocked and saddened by these horrific events. In fact, it’s something millions of us say when tragedy strikes.

Some would criticize people of faith when we offer our thoughts and especially our prayers at times like these. They instead say we should do something – as if praying was useless and just a waste of time.

Certainly, our response to tragedies can't be limited to only thoughts and prayers and nothing else. But those of us who pray know that prayer is important, in addition to taking other actions. I know this personally from my own very sad experience.

Our son Christopher was killed in a tragic automobile accident 11 years ago. My world as I knew it seemed to end. But suddenly, I was surrounded by people praying for me and for my wife Cathie.

We were made aware of thousands of prayers directed toward heaven on behalf of our family, many of them posted on social media. And so many kindhearted people helped us and our son's widow, Brittany, in other ways as well.

No, it did not take the terrible pain of losing our son for us to realize the power of prayer, but it buoyed us above the raging waters of grief and helped us to make it through another day.

People who sneer at the idea of praying do not understand the power of prayer and more importantly the power of the one we are praying to – God Himself. But the fact is, as important as it is, we don't just pray. We are always “doing something” in addition to praying.

I have found that people of faith are at the forefront of doing many things in addition to praying whenever a crisis hits. You will often see church vans filled with supplies like food and drinking water arriving on the scene of a hurricane or tornado before help from the government has arrived. People of faith donate their time and money generously to those in need.

You see organizations founded or led by people who believe in prayer, such as the two my friend Franklin Graham leads. These are Samaritan's Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Organization, providing whatever relief is necessary – including food, rebuilding homes, and sending in chaplains to provide counseling and assurance in places where tragedy has hit.

This life is hard. And bad things happen to good people. We know this well. And we know there is an afterlife and that dramatically affects what we do in this life.

As C.S. Lewis once said: “If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next.”



So, “thoughts and prayers” have their place – now and for all time.

Now, if we flippantly say we will pray and not do so, that is of no value. But if we really pray it can change circumstances, and it can change us.

In the Bible, the Prophet Daniel prayed and he was freed from a den of lions. In the gospels, a man with a sick child called out to Jesus, and his little one was healed.

Prayer matters and prayers change things.

What is prayer?

Prayer is talking to God. For Christians, this is a privilege given to us through our relationship with the Father through his son Jesus. People of other faiths pray in different ways. And God loves to hear our prayers.

The Lord Himself says: “Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” (Jeremiah 33:3 NASB)

So, yes, offer your thoughts but more importantly your prayers for those who are hurting today. And if you are having a relatively problem-free day remember to shoot up a prayer of thanks to God.

It's important that we remember that our lives are a gift from God. Everything we have comes from Him as well.

The Bible says: “Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6)

We live in such a scary time, with so many things that frighten us and give us deep anxiety.

But God can give us that supernatural peace and strength to go on another day.

Cranky Old Man

By Anonymous

When an old man died in the geriatric ward of a nursing home in an Australian country town, it was believed that he had nothing left of any value.

Later, when the nurses were going through his meagre possessions, they found this poem. Its quality and content so impressed the staff that copies were made and distributed to every nurse in the hospital.

One nurse took her copy to Melbourne .. The old man's sole bequest to posterity has since appeared in the Christmas editions of magazines around the country and appearing in mags for Mental Health. A slide presentation has also been made based on his simple, but eloquent, poem.

And this old man, with nothing left to give to the world, is now the author of this 'anonymous' poem winging across the Internet.

Cranky Old Man.....

What do you see nurses?What do you see?
What are you thinking . . . when you're looking at me?
A cranky old man,not very wise, Uncertain of habit with faraway eyes?

Who dribbles his food and makes no reply.
When you say in a loud voice . . 'I do wish you'd try!'

Who seems not to notice . . .the things that you do.
And forever is losing A sock or shoe?
Who, resisting or not lets you do as you will,
With bathing and feedingThe long day to fill?
Is that what you're thinking?. . Is that what you see?
Then open your eyes, nurse .you're not looking at me.

I'll tell you who I am As I sit here so still, As I do at your bidding, as I eat at your will.

I'm a small child of Ten . .with a father and mother,
Brothers and sisters who love one another A young boy of Sixteen with wings on his feet
Dreaming that soon now a lover he'll meet.

A groom soon at Twentymy heart gives a leap.

Remembering, the vowsthat I promised to keep.

At Twenty-Five, nowI have young of my own.

Who need me to guide . . . And a secure happy home.

A man of Thirty My young now grown fast,
Bound to each other With ties that should last.

At Forty, my young sons . . .have grown and are gone,
But my woman is beside me . . to see I don't mourn.

At Fifty, once more,Babies play 'round my knee,
Again, we know children My loved one and me.
Dark days are upon me My wife is now dead.
I look at the future I shudder with dread.
For my young are all rearing young of their own.
And I think of the years . . . And the love that I've known.

I'm now an old man and nature is cruel.
It's jest to make old age look like a fool.
The body, it crumbles grace and vigour, depart.
There is now a stone . . . where I once had a heart.
But inside this old carcass . A young man still dwells,
And now and again my battered heart swells I
remember the joys I remember the pain.

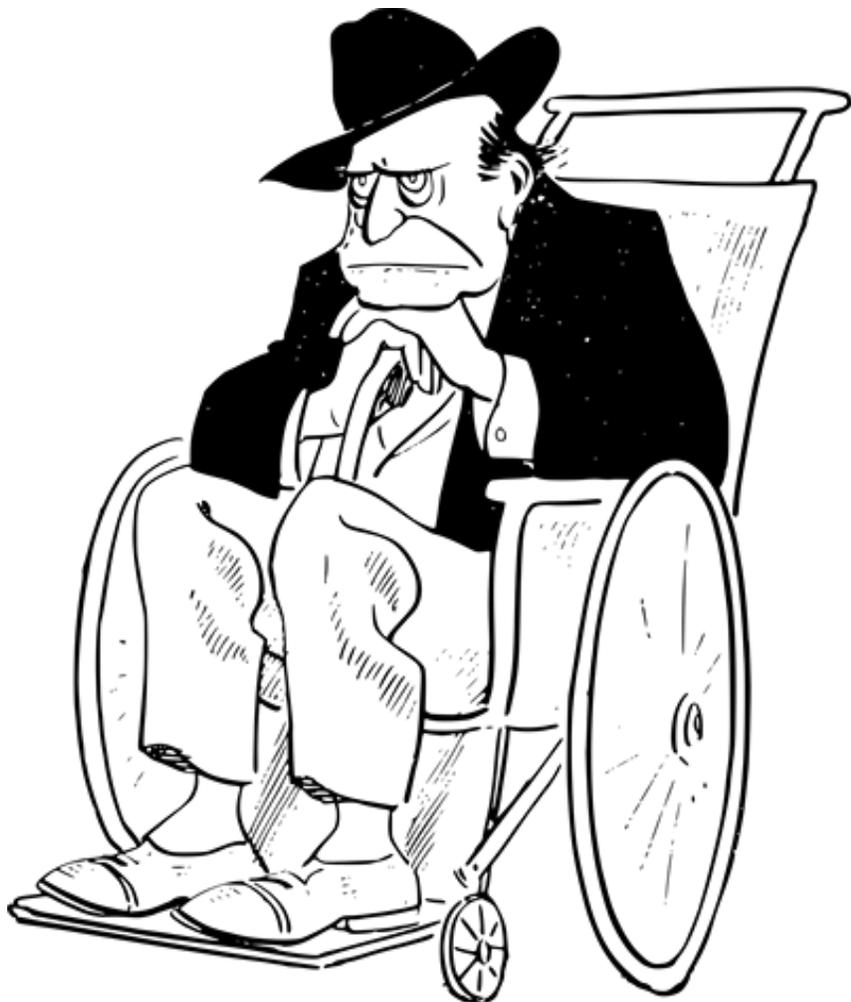
And I'm loving and living life over again.
I think of the years, all too few gone too fast.

And accept the stark fact . . . that nothing can last.
So open your eyes, people open and see.

Not a cranky old man .

Look closer see ME!!

Remember this poem when you next meet an older person who you might brush aside without looking at the young soul within



Only as Good as Your Next Banquet

by Fr. John Hondros

Several years ago, our newly-hired parish catering and events manager – who before coming on board at Saint John the Baptist Church was a seasoned banquet manager on the Las Vegas Strip – asked me what I thought about his chef’s chicken piccata which I had just been served. After giving the manager the unexpected response that, “It was all right,” he quipped, “I guess you’re only as good as your next banquet.” When it comes to food, most of us would agree that the longevity of a dining establishment depends on its quality and consistency: If our experience of a meal or service is less than par on one or two occasions, there is less likelihood that we will continue to return to that place for the “next banquet.”

The longevity of the Orthodox Christian Church is primarily due to the fact that “the main course” – namely, the Dogmas, the Holy Gospel and the Holy Mysteries (particularly the Eucharist) – has by God’s grace remained consistent and unchanged from the Apostolic period. Moreover, our adherence to Holy Tradition has ensured that the mystical quality of the Divine Liturgy and all the worshiping services is preserved through the ages: As long as the Orthodox Church continues to offer – without trying to change or put our own spin on – what has been received from Jesus Christ through His Apostles, we should rest assured that there will always be the “next banquet” until the Lord returns again.

With our foolproof recipe and approach, how can the Orthodox Church possibly fail? However, if we look at recent statistics of the Greek Orthodox Church in America alone, we cannot deny that in some respects we are indeed failing: For several years, Baptisms have been on the decline while the number of Funerals have risen, and the absence of Young Adults in our parishes raises a red flag regarding our future growth. While admittedly many of our parishes are engaged in building projects, it is also sadly true that we have witnessed the shuttering of some Churches and even others struggling to keep the doors open. Our Lord did indeed promise that *“the gates of Hades shall not prevail against” His Church (Matthew 16:18)* . . . but this does not let us – as members of His Body – off the hook: We must do our part to make sure the Orthodox Church prevails!

Is our parish a welcoming place? Saint Paul instructs, *“Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.” (Romans 15:7)* Is our Church a place where everyone feels welcome – from the first experience in the Narthex to the Fellowship after the Divine Liturgy? Do we have friendly greeters and ushers who are welcoming, and not staring people down or asking in Greek which village the newcomer comes from? Are there service books available for our worshippers? Do we have an inviting and useful bookstore . . . informative newsletters . . . a regularly updated website? Do we have a real person answering the phone, and if not, do we follow up? As visuals equally leave an impression, is the exterior and interior of our Church, including the grounds and the bathrooms, well maintained?

Is parish health a priority? Given that so many of us have suffered (or continue to suffer) from toxic relationships or workplaces, is our Church truly a sanctuary from unwellness? Saint John Chrysostom wisely wrote, “The Church is a hospital, and not a courtroom, for souls.” Through the Holy Mysteries, and especially the Sacraments of Confession and Communion, we receive by grace the remission of sins. With that said, is our parish a place where these Sacraments are regularly received by a majority of the faithful . . . and are our clergy also frequently going to Confession? Does our parish offer special services for the faithful, such as Paraklesis and Holy Unction, even outside the prescribed seasons? Saint Paul asked the battling Church in Corinth: *“Is Christ divided?” (1 Corinthians 1:13)* Do we have factions . . . power struggles . . . toxic relationships in our parish? Is our Church a place where people can be nurtured to full health? Parish health is also tied to financial health: Does our parish both encourage and practice good stewardship . . . do we feel accountable, and are we transparent before God and all regarding Church income and expenditures?

Do we have a graying parish? Is our Church a place that welcomes our babies without hushing them . . . our youth by actively engaging them . . . and equally, if not more importantly, our young adults by reaching out to them *without* judgment? Thank God, our Metropolis had the wisdom to revive the Young Adult Conference this Labor Day weekend: Past conferences resulted in connecting the 18 and older group closer to Christ and His Church – indeed, many priests and marriages were the product of these gatherings. How often do we hear that our Choirs or parish leaders and volunteers are graying – and if this is truly the case, what are we doing to engage our disengaged younger members?

Finally, is our parish (clergy and laity alike) engaged in active outreach, apart from the Greek Festival? When I meet people in the larger community and tell them I am the priest of Saint John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, that usually does not invoke a response. However, when I clarify that this is where the Greek Festival is held, then the connection is made. How visible is the Orthodox Church in the larger community, and more importantly how are we perceived? When you Google a Greek Orthodox Church in your city or town, observe the comments, as they reveal much: Great gyros . . . the best baklava . . . beautiful Church and worship . . . unfriendly . . . helped me in my time of need . . . where God is present . . . forget about it . . . authentic . . . come and see . . . this is a place where every person is welcome, spiritually fed, loved and healed!

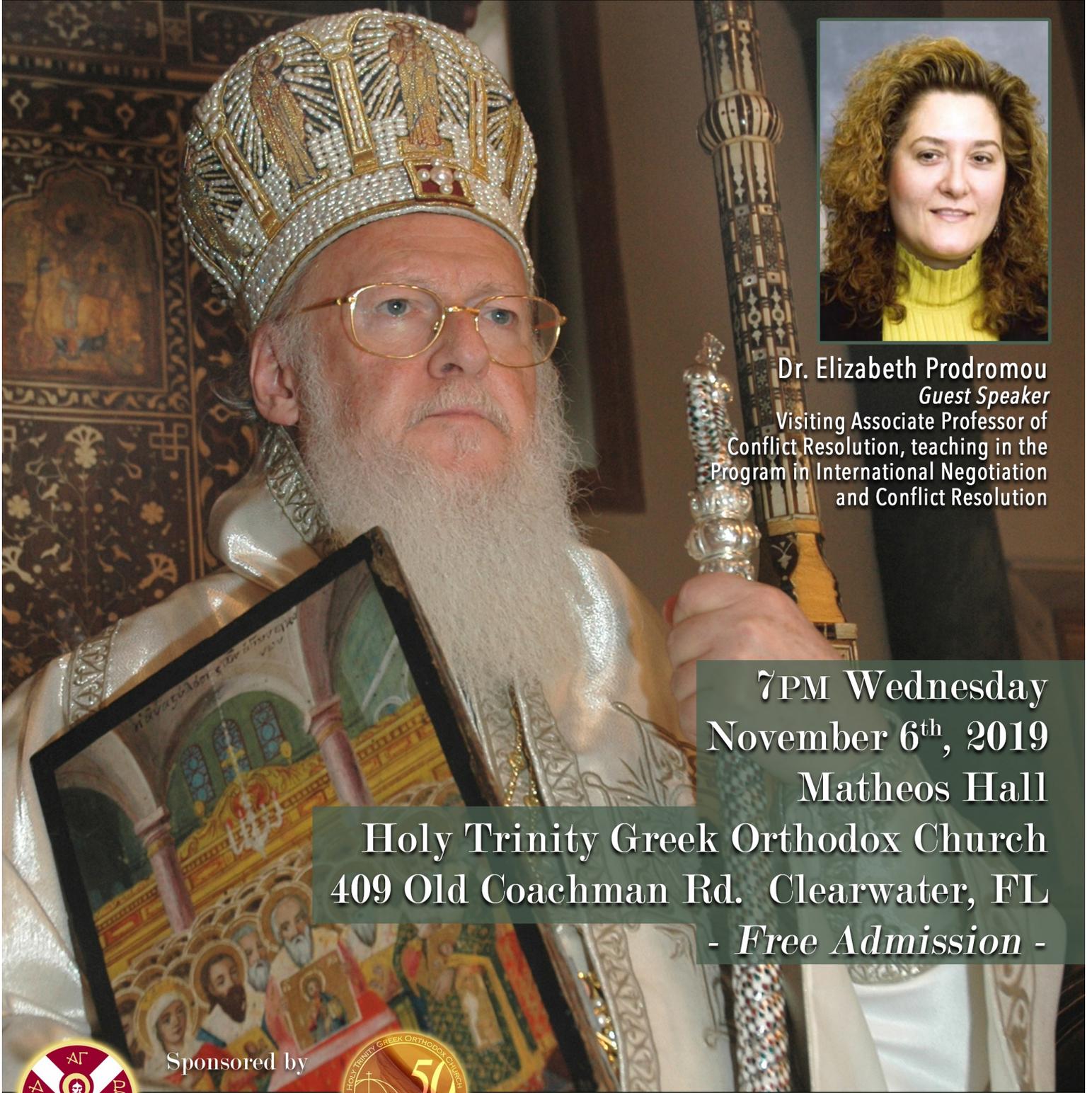
As we begin the new Ecclesiastical Year, may we have the continuous desire and vision for parish growth and wellness – for the glory of God and our sanctification!

Fr. John Hondros is the Proistamenos of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Elevation of the Holy Cross 2019



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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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Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963
Parea, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
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Panigyri, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

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Donna Hambos 813-843-8412

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GOYA

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George & Zackie Ameres 813-245-3813

Junior Olympics

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

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