Father Stavros’ Message

My Soul _____ the Lord, and my spirit _____ in God my Savior

How do you fill in the blanks of the title of this month’s message? There are infinite possibilities.

My soul is disappointed in the Lord, and my spirit has stopped trusting in God my Savior.

My soul is very distracted from the Lord, and my spirit has forgotten about God my Savior.

My soul gets mixed messages from society about the Lord and my spirit is questioning is God my Savior.

My soul isn’t immediately concerned about the Lord, and my spirit is putting off growing in God my Savior.

My soul is burdened because I have sinned against the Lord, and my spirit feels unworthy of God my Savior.

My soul desires the Lord, but my spirit can’t commit to God my Savior.

My soul compartmentalizes the Lord, and my spirit thinks only on Sunday about God my Savior.

My soul is “captained” by me and therefore there isn’t much room for the Lord, and my spirit therefore doesn’t pay much attention to God my Savior.

My soul is too busy for the Lord, and my spirit doesn’t give much thought to God my Savior.

My soul wants to do more for the Lord, and my spirit, in this society, seems conflicted about God my Savior.

My soul really likes the Lord, and my spirit, influenced by my friends, causes me to not grow as much as I want to in God my Savior.

The Annunciation

On March 25, we celebrate the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary. The actual date of the Nativity is not known, but it was placed in December, right after the winter solstice for two reasons—first, to counter the pagan feast of the solstice that occurred at that time of the year. And second, because at the solstice, the northern hemisphere (where most of known civilization was at the time of Christ and in the early centuries after His Resurrection), the earth begins to tilt towards the sun, the days get longer and the light begins to overtake the darkness. With the Nativity placed on December 25, working nine months back, the feast of the Annunciation is placed on March 25.

At the Annunciation, the Archangel Gabriel was sent to Nazareth, to a young girl named Mary. History says that Mary would have been about fourteen when this happened. The Archangel told Mary that she was going to carry the Son of God in her womb and that this would be made possible by the Holy Spirit. Mary had been raised in the temple by priests, as her parents, Joachim and Anna, had had her in advanced age and died soon after. Coming out of the temple, she was immediately betrothed to Joseph, an older man. They were not married. The request of the angel must have been overwhelming. First, it must have been incredibly scary, how an angel could appear out of nowhere and speak the words of God to a young girl. Second, how could she possibly understand what was being asked of her. Third, the whole thing must have been very
confusing. How could a person have a child while remaining a virgin? How would she explain this to Joseph? What would people think—pregnancy out of wedlock would have been very frowned upon back then. And further, would people be scandalized? This was the girl who had been in the temple from childhood. How could she commit such a sin?

But Mary answered the angel and said “Behold, I am the handmaiden of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” This is the greatest YES that has even been said. Mary’s yes changed the course of human history. God needed a way to bring His Son into the world. He wasn’t just going to drop Him into society as a total stranger, or as an adult. He was going to bring Him into the world as a baby, with a mother who had a name. God needed someone special who could do this awesome task. And He asked Mary. This is why we revere Mary so much in our church, because she is the person who had the greatest hand in our salvation. She also showed us what it means to be obedient to God, and His plan for salvation.

My Soul Magnifies the Lord

Mary had a cousin named Elizabeth. Elizabeth was much older than Mary and has gotten pregnant in old age, also by a miracle. Elizabeth was pregnant with John the Baptist, who is Jesus’ cousin. When Mary became pregnant, she went to visit Elizabeth, who was at this time six months pregnant with John the Baptist, the one who would point to Jesus as the Christ. When Mary entered the house of Elizabeth, the baby in Elizabeth’s womb leaped for joy. John already was recognizing the Christ. Elizabeth praised Mary with the words “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” (Luke 1:42) And Mary responded with a voice of praise to God, and said:

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!” (Luke 1:46-47)

We Are Each Called to Something Unique

There are several take-aways from the story of the Annunciation. The first is that like Mary, we have each been called by God to do something unique with our lives. Mary had a unique role and so does each of us. There are no two people who are perfectly alike. Each of us has God’s imprint on us, as we are made after His image and likeness. But this is where the similarities end. Each of us has a different personality, a different set of skills and talents, and a unique way in which we will contribute to the world. There are as infinite number of roles in the world as there are people. Sure, some of the roles appear to be common—like there are many mothers and fathers, people who are married, teachers, doctors, police officers, coaches, etc. But each of us does our role in a unique way. I’m not the only father in the world, or the only Orthodox priest, or the only clergyman in Tampa, but I am the only Greek Orthodox clergyman in Tampa who is married with one son who likes writing—in that way I am unique.

As an aside, spend a few moments and reflect on ways in your life that you are unique.

Our Role in the Salvation of the World

The second take-away from the story is that God has called each of us not only to a role in society, but a role in the salvation of our society. That role is also unique. It starts off with a unique journey each of us will take to salvation. For some it will seem relatively easy, and for others it will seem extremely difficult. Some will receive rewards along the way, and others will suffer.

As I said recently in church, God’s plan for the salvation of the world is like a puzzle that covers our church campus. If you are in the church, you can’t possibly see the soccer field. So, if God’s plan for salvation is like a gigantic puzzle and we each have a piece, we shouldn’t focus on the parts we can’t see, and wonder whether those pieces are most “prestigious” than ours. All God expects us to do is put our piece of the puzzle into the whole thing so that when it’s all done, the puzzle is complete, God’s plan for the salvation of all is complete. Thus, our placement of our piece of the puzzle not only affect us (did you do what you were supposed to do with the piece—talent, gift, life—God gave you) but will affect everyone else (if we don’t do our part, God’s plan for the salvation of world, at least in our part of it, will be incomplete, because perhaps others will not come to know the Lord if we haven’t done our part to share Him).

Did You Say Yes?

The third take-away is our overall response to God’s call. Have we said yes? And have we said yes with the obedience of the Virgin Mary. Have we answered “Let it be to me according to your word” at all? Begrudgingly? Joyfully?

Our Identity—Servant or Master?

The fourth take-away is a matter of identity. Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaiden (servant) of the Lord.” (Luke 1:38) She didn’t say “Behold, I am my own person.” In fact, the word “doulos” (or in the feminine case used by the Virgin Mary “douli”) means more “slave” than “servant.” In modern society, “slave” is a bad word. Another translation of “doulos” is “bondservant.” A bondservant, in the time of Christ, could have been a slave, or also could be someone who voluntarily served others. In either case, the word referred to someone who had a permanent role of service. So, when Mary said “I am the handmaiden of the Lord,” she was saying “I am agreeing to sign up for a lifetime of service to God.” In our identity as Christians, do we see ourselves more as servants or as masters? Of course, it is easy to say “A little bit of each.” We may say, “I see myself as a servant of God, of course, but I am also boss of my company, man of the house, captain of the team, etc.” Which then leads to the question of if one is boss at work, boss at home and boss at leisure, when exactly is one servant?

We live in a society where we encourage our children to be bosses. Get good grades, so you can go to a good college, so you can make money, so you can own a house, so you can have financial security, so you can live well. This is a “master” mentality.

The “servant” mentality message would go something like this: Discover your talent, so you can use it to serve the Lord by contributing positively to our society, so that when God asks...
you to account for your life before His Awesome Judgment Seat, you’ll be ready to answer and receive eternal life.

Can we be on a course for both? Yes, it is possible. However, only one course can lead. Is the “master” mentality leading? Or is the “servant” mentality leading?

The Beginning of Great Lent

Great Lent begins March 2. Great Lent is a perfect time to think on this sentence:

My soul _________ the Lord and my spirit _________ in God my Savior.

How do you fill in the blanks? If your soul is not magnifying the Lord and rejoicing in God your Savior, ask yourself, “why is that?”

If it is because you haven’t dedicated enough time, Lent is a perfect opportunity to invest some time. Added service provide us additional opportunities to be quiet, to reflect, to set aside worldly cares to worship.

If it is because you don’t know enough about God, Lent is a perfect opportunity to learn. There are many ways to learn: First, we have a Lenten series of lecture/discussion every Wednesday evening after Pre-Sanctified Liturgy. Second, you can pick up a copy of the book “The Road Back to Christ” (or another Lenten book) which has a devotional for each day of Lent. Third, the services themselves are opportunities to learn, especially when Holy Week approaches. The services of Holy Week not only include hymns of worship and praise, but most of the hymns are teaching opportunities as they explain, in song, the theology of Christianity and the history of what happened two thousand years ago and its significance.

If it is because you have a guilt or sadness that is a burden for you, Lent is a perfect opportunity to come and talk about it. That might be in confession. Or it might just be in conversation. Maybe God has let you down. Maybe you have let yourself down. Maybe you feel that because you have sinned, that you have let God down. You owe it to yourself to have a conversation about this. I have these kinds of conversations all the time with our parishioners. It brings them closer to God, it helps them understand themselves, it helps them to be rid of guilt, and rather than being embarrassed about the conversation, it actually brings people closer to their priest.

The ideal answers to fill in the blanks of the statement “My soul _________ the Lord and my spirit _________ in God my Savior” are the words of the Virgin Mary: “My soul MAGNIFIES the Lord and my spirit REJOICES in God my Savior.” If this is not how your statement and your soul and spirit reads, make it a goal to work on that this Lent.

This issue of the Messenger is filled with information on how to get the most out of your Lenten journey. As Lent is beginning March 2, please read over this information quickly, so you can make the most out of the next seven weeks. It’s hard to believe that this is my 16th Lenten journey at St. John. I look forward to making this journey with you and I pray that we will not just pass this time between now and Pascha, but that we will pass it purposefully, looking specifically at the proclamation of Mary in Luke 1:46-47 and reflecting on how our lives can reflect her words. Make this your Lenten goal:

My soul WILL BETTER MAGNIFY the Lord and my spirit WILL BETTER REJOICE in God my Savior.

Kali Sarakosti! Have a blessed Lenten journey!

With love in Christ,
+Fr. Stavros

The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection is now on sale! It is a series of daily reflections to be read from the beginning of Triodion (this year that is February 9) through All Saints Day (this year that is June 14). Pick up your copy today so you can begin reading it on February 9. This book costs $18.99 and all monies taken in at the bookstore go to the church.

Opt-in on Messenger

In an effort to be more environmentally conscious, we will be mailing the Messenger ONLY to those who ask. If you wish to receive the Messenger by mail, you certainly may. We just ask that you indicate on your stewardship form, or let the office know, that you wish to receive the Messenger by mail. We will no longer be mailing the Messenger unless you ask us to.
What does it mean to be a Christian in today’s post-Christian world? Fortunately, the answer is not a secret nor hard to find. In fact, Christ Himself even tells us what we must do: love God and love our neighbor. These are just as true today as they were over two thousand years ago when Christ told His apostles. These are not mere words, however. They have been put into practice by countless men and women over the course of the Church’s history. This was not as easy as it is here in the United States. One such example is that of a group of neo-Christian martyrs known as the 40 of Sevastia whom we will celebrate March 9th.

The history of these martyrs is a worthy example of faith in Christ against adversity and even shows us the importance of being a witness for Christ no matter the consequences. These men, having been in the Roman army, were sentenced to death upon confessing their faith in Jesus Christ. Their penalty was both one of harsh punishment as well as great temptation. As it was the midst of winter, the forty men were forced naked into a lake with freezing temperatures near the city of Sevastia. As if this was not enough, the Roman guard, which was stationed nearby, set up hot baths so as to draw any of the forty into renouncing their Christian faith. Due to this great worldly temptation, one of the men did indeed leave his faith for the comfort of the baths. As he was making his way to the baths, one of the Roman guards, Aglaius, saw that the remaining 39 had crowns upon their heads while the other did not. Upon seeing this miracle and the steadfast faith of the 39, Aglaius himself, declared his newfound faith in Christ; thereby making him the 40th. This story of this martyrdom is first recounted by Basil the Great a mere fifty years after their repose thereby solidifying the significance of their witness to Christ. Found within this hagiography, we may easily see three perspectives:

1. That of the one man who abandoned his faith for the comfort of the baths
2. That of the 39 men who remained strong in faith accepting their fate as martyrs

AND

3. That of Aglaius who, by seeing the faith of the others, converted and joined in martyrdom.

Each perspective in this story offers insight as to what a martyr is in the true sense as well as the strength that is necessary to truly follow Christ. In the first instance, the man, who is tempted by the warm baths, had succumbed to his worldly needs and desires. As we are told by Christ in the book of Matthew regarding temptation, we are to watch and pray so that we do not fall into temptation; for the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. This man, instead of being a witness to Christ’s glory became an example of our bodily weakness.

In the second case of the 39 who remained in the freezing water, we are offered an example of not only maintaining faith in harsh conditions, but, more importantly, expressing this to those nearby. It is because of their witness that the Holy Spirit was able to work a miracle on the Roman guard.

In the third instance, we see that the Roman guard, Aglaius, receives a miraculous vision and, in turn, declares himself a Christian. Not only did he express his newfound faith, but he immediately put it into action by joining the other martyrs in the freezing lake.

What we may take from each of these perspectives is simple; we must not only believe that Christ is the Savior, but we must also put our belief into action thereby becoming witnesses, in a sense, to Christ’s glory. It is easy to say and think we truly believe in Christ when everything is going to plan. The real test comes when we are challenged to uphold His commandments: love Him and love our neighbors. This is what it means to be a Christian. We must love God and our fellow man. We cannot do one or the other we must do both. How can we love God yet hate a person? Are we not all made in the image and likeness of God? That means that every single person, the orthodox, the protestant, the Muslim, and the atheist are all icons of Christ regardless of creed or background. Such a simple yet foundational commandment must not be overlooked otherwise we may lack any true sense of Christianity and, perhaps, even become hypocrites.

As we enter into the great Lenten season, we must push ourselves to be the Christians we are called to be and the new witnesses for Christ in modern society. This is especially pertinent in the face of temptation which surrounds us everywhere we go and even look. Whether browsing the web or walking down the street, we are constantly bombarded with advertisements that may not be appropriate for the Christian life. This does not mean that we should avoid the internet or public spaces. On the contrary! This is an opportunity for us to exercise our faith as modern day Christians. We are to lead by example.

Therefore, let us pray for the strength of the 40 martyrs of Sevastia as we continue our studies here and may their example illumine our hearts and minds to be witnesses for Christ’s Gospel in everything we do.
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Time/Details</th>
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<td>Sunday of Cheese Fare</td>
<td>Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Altar Boys:</td>
<td>Captains &amp; St. Luke</td>
<td>Ushers: Skip Higdon, George Trimikliniotis, Peter Theophanous</td>
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<td>Welcoming</td>
<td>Greeters: Donna Hambos, Elaine Daniels</td>
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<td>Ministry:</td>
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<td>Caller: Vickie Peckham</td>
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<td>Coffee Hour:</td>
<td>AB Families</td>
<td><strong>Bookstore:</strong> John and Anetta Alexander</td>
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<td>Wednesday, March 4</td>
<td>Reading of Great Lent 5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Presanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Friday, March 6</td>
<td>Salutations to the Virgin Mary-1st Stanza 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Saturday, March 7</td>
<td>3rd Saturday of Souls</td>
<td>Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. <strong>Memorial Service at the end of the Liturgy</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday, March 8</td>
<td>1st Sunday of Lent-Sunday of Orthodoxy <strong>DAYLIGHT SAVINGS—Set your clocks ahead one hour</strong></td>
<td>Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Procession of icons at the end of the Liturgy</td>
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<td>Altar Boys:</td>
<td>Captains &amp; St. John</td>
<td>Ushers: Nick Kavouklis; Ed Gerecke; Pete Trakas</td>
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<td>Welcoming</td>
<td>Greeters: Louis &amp; Georgia Stratigakos</td>
<td><strong>Ambassador:</strong> Julie Palios</td>
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<td>Ministry:</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Caller:</strong> Christine Worley</td>
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<td>Coffee Hour:</td>
<td>CD Families</td>
<td><strong>Bookstore:</strong> David Voykin</td>
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<td>Sunday, March 8</td>
<td>Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers in Tarpon Springs 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Monday, March 9</td>
<td>Great Compline 5:30-6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Wednesday, March 11</td>
<td>Reading of the 9th Hour 5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Friday, March 13</td>
<td>Salutations to the Virgin Mary-2nd Stanza 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Sunday, March 15</td>
<td>2nd Sunday of Lent-St. Gregory Palamas <strong>BOOKSHELF</strong></td>
<td>Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Altar Boys:</td>
<td>Captains &amp; St. Matthew</td>
<td>Ushers: Tammy Christou; Jim Armstrong; Florin Patrasciou</td>
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<td>Welcoming</td>
<td>Greeters: Michael and bessie Palios</td>
<td>Ambassador: Marena Patrasciou</td>
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<td>Ministry:</td>
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<td>Caller: Helen Cauthorn</td>
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<td>Coffee Hour:</td>
<td>EFG Families</td>
<td><strong>Bookstore:</strong> David Bouzinekis</td>
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<td>Monday, March 16</td>
<td>Great Compline 5:30-6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Wednesday, March 18</td>
<td>Reading of the 9th Hour 5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Friday, March 20</td>
<td>Salutations to the Virgin Mary-3rd Stanza 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Sunday, March 22</td>
<td>3rd Sunday of Lent—Veneration of the Holy Cross</td>
<td>Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.</td>
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<td>Altar Boys:</td>
<td>Captains &amp; St. Mark</td>
<td>Ushers: Brett Mourer; John Alexander; Amin Hanhan</td>
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<td>Welcoming</td>
<td>Greeters: Tanya Robinson; Katherine Sakkis</td>
<td>Ambassador: Despina Sibley</td>
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<td>Ministry:</td>
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<td>Caller: Betty Katsamakis</td>
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<td>Coffee Hour:</td>
<td>H1J Families</td>
<td><strong>Bookstore:</strong> Bill Manikas</td>
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<td>Monday, March 23</td>
<td>Great Compline 5:30-6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Wednesday, March 25</td>
<td>Annunciation of the Virgin Mary</td>
<td>Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Reading of the 9th Hour 5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Lenten Dinner and Discussion 7:15-9:00 p.m.</td>
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Sunday, March 29  
4th Sunday of Lent—St. John of the Ladder  
Orthros 8:30 a.m.  Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.

Altar Boys: GOYAns may serve  
Ushers: John Christ; George Mitseas; Byron Nenos  
Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Cindy Xenick; Lisa Alsina  
Ambassador: Helen Cauthorn  
Caller: Julie Palios  
Coffee Hour: Greek Independence Day Luncheon  
Bookstore: MaryAnn Rose and Rita Bedran

Monday, March 30  
Great Compline 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 1  
Reading of the 9th Hour 5:30 p.m.  
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.  
Lenten Dinner and Discussion 7:15-9:00 p.m.

Friday, April 3  
Vigil of the Akathist  
Akathist Hymn 6:30-8:15 p.m.  
Divine Liturgy 8:15-9:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 5  
5th Sunday of Lent—St. Mary of Egypt  
Orthros 8:30 a.m.  Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains & St. Luke  
Ushers: Skip Higdon, George Trimikliniotis, Peter Theophanous  
Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Kathy Bouzinekis; Kalliope Chagaris  
Ambassador: Elaine Daniels  
Caller: Christine Worley  
Coffee Hour: KLM Families  
Bookstore: John and Anetta Alexander

Monday, April 6  
Great Compline 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Special Altar Boy Schedule for Lent

Wednesday, March 4  
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.  
John Palios and St. Luke

Friday, March 6  
Salutations 6:30 p.m.  
Genaro Scarfogliero and St. John

Wednesday, March 11  
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.  
Nicholas Katzaras and St. Matthew

Friday, March 13  
Salutations 6:30 p.m.  
Aris Rogers and St. Mark

Wednesday, March 18  
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.  
Genaro Scarfogliero and St. John

Friday, March 20  
Salutations 6:30 p.m.  
John Palios and St. Luke

Wednesday, March 25  
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.  
Aris Rogers and St. Mark

Friday, March 27  
Salutations 6:30 p.m.  
Any GOYAn may serve

Wednesday, April 1  
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.  
Nicholas Katzaras and St. Matthew

Friday, April 3  
Akathist and Liturgy 6:30 p.m.  
Captains and St. Luke

Wednesday, April 8  
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.  
John Palios and St. Mark

Liturgical Notes for March 2020

Sunday, March 1 - Forgiveness Sunday (Cheesefare)

Cheese-Fare Sunday is the last day in which dairy products are allowed. The Monday after Cheese-Fare Sunday is the official beginning of the Great Lent; this Monday is also called Clean Monday (Kathara Deftera). On Cheese-Fare Sunday the Church commemorates the sending away of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Paradise. Adam and Eve were in complete harmony with God, nature and themselves. They were tempted by the devil and they agreed to eat from the tree of knowledge, in order that they themselves might become gods. The result was fatal; they were cast out of Paradise and sin came into the world. The Holy Fathers selected this event to remind us of our obligations to God and about the laws of fasting and Christian behavior (Matthew 6:14-21).

Sunday, March 1 - Forgiveness Vespers

Great and Holy Lent begins on Monday, March 2, a day called Clean Monday, or “Kathara Deftera” in Greek. Vespers is the service that ends one day and begins another, so we will celebrate the Vespers of Forgiveness and beginning of Great Lent on Sunday evening, March 10, at 6:00 p.m. This service lasts about an hour and marks the beginning of Great Lent, which is announced during one of the hymns mid-way through the service. During this hymn, the priest changes vestments from white to purple, the lights in the church are dimmed.
and the mood of the service becomes somber. In fact, it is the opposite of the Resurrection Service on Easter, where everything begins dark and goes to light. The service concludes with a prayer of forgiveness being read over the congregation and the exchange of mutual forgiveness among the members of the congregation. This service is an especially appropriate way to begin the Lenten season, and for those who attended last season, is one of the most moving services of the church year.

Monday, March 2 - Canon of St. Andrew

The Penitential Canon of St. Andrew will be read from 10:00-11:00 a.m. on Monday, March 2 as we begin Great Lent. The Canon, in its entirety, takes hours to read. We will read and chant an abridged version of this Canon on Clean Monday. Service books for this service will be available in the narthex.

Monday, March 2 - Holy Unction on Clean Monday

The Sacrament of Holy Unction is always offered during Holy Week on Holy Wednesday. But the sacrament can be done at any time of the year. The emphasis of this sacrament involves, spiritual healing, spiritual cleansing and repentance. What better way to begin Great Lent than the sacrament of Holy Unction. Please bring your Holy Week book to follow along. The service will be held on Monday, March 2, from 6:00-7:30 p.m.

Saturday of the Souls – Saturday, March 7

It is a Tradition in the Orthodox Church to offer prayers for the souls of all of our loved ones who have departed this life, in the hope of the Resurrection to Eternal Life. There are four Saturdays of the year that are dedicated specifically to this purpose. There are three Saturdays at the beginning of Lent and the Saturday before Pentecost. Everyone is encouraged to submit the names of their loves ones to be commemorated at the services. Everyone is encouraged to attend one of these services (and bring Kolyva) if you are able, as a way of honoring the people in your family who have passed away, once a year.

Divine Liturgy to begin at 9:45 on the Sundays of Great Lent

Since the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is offered on each Sunday of Lent, and this Divine Liturgy is slightly longer than the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the Divine Liturgy will begin at 9:45 a.m. from March 8 - April 5. The Choir will begin the Doxology at 9:40 a.m.

Mondays of Lent - Great Compline

The service of Great Compline will be read on the following Mondays of Lent—March 9, March 16, March 23, March 30 and April 6. This service lasts about an hour and consists of Psalms and hymns of repentance. Service Books for this service will be available in the Narthex.

Wednesdays of Lent – 9th Hour and Pre-Sanctified Liturgy

The Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts (also called Pre-Sanctified Liturgy) will be held on the Wednesdays during Great Lent. This service consists of Vespers with Holy Communion that was “Pre-Sanctified” the previous Sunday. It is an opportunity to receive Holy Communion frequently during the season of fasting. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy is preceded by the reading of the 9th Hour, a short service with penitential prayers as well as the recitation of the Creed, a pre-requisite for the reception of Holy Communion. Service books for this service will be available in the Narthex.

Following the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy each week, one of our ministries will host a Lenten Dinner

| Wednesday, March 4 | Choir |
| Wednesday, March 13 | Sunday School |
| Wednesday, March 18 | AHEPA |
| Wednesday, March 25 | Philoptochos |
| Wednesday, April 1 | Welcoming Ministry |
| Wednesday, April 8 | Bible Studies/Young Adults |

So, spend the hour you would spend cooking dinner worshipping in church and then stay for a complementary dinner. This is being offered in the hopes that more people will attend this service, and that each member of each ministry will attend at least one of these moving services.

Fridays of Lent - The Salutations to the Virgin Mary (Heretismoi)

This service also lasts about an hour and is a series of prayers and devotions that invoke the intercessions of the Virgin Mary for our salvation. It will be held on March 6, March 13, March 20, March 27 and April 3. Service Books for this service will be available in the Narthex.

Sunday, March 8 - Sunday of Orthodoxy

A grand procession with icons took place on March 11, 843 A.D., marking the permanent triumph of icons and their return to the churches after a 150-year absence. From this time, icons were defined as objects to be venerated and not worshipped. They are spiritual mirrors through which we see the heavenly saints. Their restoration in our churches is a rue victory for Orthodoxy. Thus, on the first Sunday of Lent each year, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Triumph of Orthodoxy with a procession of icons, together with the reading of a Synodal Statement, authored in 843, marking their return to the church. If anyone has new icons that have not been blessed, please bring them to church on Sunday, March 8, the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and place them in the windows of the church. They will be blessed with Holy Water during the service.
Sunday, March 15 – Second Sunday of Lent - St. Gregory Palamas

On the 2nd Sunday of Great Lent, which is called the “Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas,” we commemorate the memory of St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Salonica. He dedicated his life to Christ, even though he was raised in the royal palace of Constantinople. He withdrew to Mount Athos, where he lived an exemplary life of asceticism and scholarship. He defended the Faith against Garaam the Calabrian (who was against monasticism). He taught that divine grace is not created, but the uncreated energies of God are poured out through creation; otherwise, humanity could never have authentic communication with God. He was appointed Archbishop in 1349 and served with distinction; he died at the age of 63 and his relics rest in Salonica.

Sunday, March 22 - Third Sunday of Lent - Veneration of the Holy Cross

On the 3rd Sunday of Great Lent we celebrate the Veneration of the Cross; the Cross helps us to prepare for the Crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are not just witnessing from afar the passions of our Lord, but we participate in them. In the Synaxarion we read, “Through the forty-day fast, we too are in a way crucified, dying to the passions.” Our efforts to keep up with the Fast, through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, might take a toll over our bodies; we need help and encouragement, and the help and encouragement comes from the power of the Cross. In the middle of Great Lent, the Church gives its faithful a sign of victory, one that can bring strength to them in this time of fasting. The Sunday of the Holy Cross is one that brings everything into perspective, especially with the Gospel reading (Mark 8:34-9:1), the Lord saying to all His disciples: “If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?” A special procession of the Holy Cross, on a tray covered with flowers, will be held at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

Wednesday, March 25 - Feast of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary

The Angel Gabriel came directly to the Virgin Mary and told her that she was going to have a child. Naturally, she was alarmed at first and asked many questions. “Do not be afraid,” said Archangel Gabriel, “the Lord is with you because God has chosen you among all the women in the world and in history.” The word “Evangelismos” means not only “Annunciation” but “Good News.” The Gospel is called in Greek, “Evangelion,” and the authors of the Gospels are called “Evangelists,” meaning those who proclaim the Good News of Christ. The announcement of Christ’s birth is placed on March 25, 9 months before the feast of the Nativity. We, in turn are told to spread the Good News of Christ as well, imitating the faithful example of the Virgin Mary. Greek Orthodox Christians celebrate March 25 not only because it is the Feast of Annunciation, but also because of its political significance. On this day, March 25, 1821, Bishop Germanos of Patras, Greece, raised the cross of Jesus Christ and proclaimed the freedom of Greeks from the Turkish yoke. March 25, 1821 was declared the beginning of the Greek Revolution against the Turks.

Sunday, March 29 - Fourth Sunday of Lent - St. John Climacus

St. John of the Ladder was only 16 years old when he left Palestine and went to St. Catherine’s monastery (at Mt. Sinai, Egypt). He lived there for 50 years, where he wrote his famous book, The Ladder of Divine Ascent. This is a spiritual ladder. Christians follow certain rules so that they can get closer to God, and symbolically climb to heaven. He had struggles, like any person does, but he won over those struggles that the Devil put for him. That’s why we celebrate his memory on this Sunday of Lent. St. John is a perfect example of how a person could be faithful all of their life, and be together with God in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Friday, April 3 - Vigil of the Akathist

It is the tradition of the Orthodox Church (practiced in monasteries and in a few parishes) that the Akathist Hymn is celebrated as part of an all-night vigil, culminating in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. A Vigil is when more than one service is held in sequence. Father Stavros has always made it a practice to celebrate the Akathist Hymn (the fifth Friday of Lent) and to immediately follow it with a celebration of the Divine Liturgy. So, as we do each year, we will begin the Akathist Hymn at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, April 3, followed by the Divine Liturgy at 8:15 p.m., with both services concluding by 9:30 p.m. This will afford us the opportunity to pray the Divine Liturgy together in a more subdued atmosphere (and how often do we get to celebrate Liturgy at night in our church?) and to receive Holy Communion on this very special feast day. For those who wish to receive Holy Communion, please abstain from food after 2:00 p.m. on that Friday.

Sunday, April 5 – Fifth Sunday of Lent - St. Mary of Egypt

St. Mary of Egypt was anything but a Saint throughout the first part of her life. From a very young age, she was a prostitute. Being from Egypt, she decided that she wanted to see the Holy Land and the Tomb of Christ (also known as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre). As she went to enter the Church, a force kept her from entering. She was unable to enter, while so many others did. She realized that God had done this to have her stop her sinning. She promised to God that day she would stop. She repented with a pure heart, and she was allowed to enter. She went for Confession, received Holy Communion, and then went to the desert to live for years in repentance. Years later, she was visited by a Priest-monk, Zosimos (later a Saint in our Church). He gave her Holy Communion, and they discussed her trials and tribulations. Although she suffered much, she was so happy to be with Christ. Later that same day, she fell asleep in the Lord. Her example of repentance is SO great, we commemorate her life many centuries later.
Why does Liturgy seem longer on Sundays during Lent?

Because it is. It is the Tradition of the Church to celebrate the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great on the 5 Sundays of Great Lent, Holy Thursday morning, and Holy Saturday morning. St. Basil wrote his liturgy in the middle part of the 4th century. St. John Chrysostom would later edit some of the priestly prayers of St. Basil’s liturgy, significantly shortening them. The Anaphora of St. Basil (from the Creed until right before the Lord’s Prayer) has the priestly prayers significantly longer. They contain all the theology of the Orthodox Church. A copy of the “Anaphora” of St. Basil’s Liturgy has been placed in the pews for you to use on Sundays.

Other Opportunities This Lent

Lenten Covenant

As we have done in years past, we will offer the Lenten Covenant, a “covenant” made between you and God about your plan for spiritual growth this Lent. The Covenant will be available on our website, and as an insert in the weekly bulletin on Sunday, March 1. Please fill out one and put it in the special box in front of the church.

Sacrament of Confession

Many people have already made appointments for their confessions to be heard, many for the first time in their lives. It is confidential. It helps you reconnect with God and unburden yourself of guilt. It helps you to make a new start in your spiritual journey and is an integral part of any successful Lenten journey. If you have questions about confession, please ask. There is no better way to prepare for Pascha than to receive this sacrament. Confessions will be heard up to April 9, and then again after Pascha. Please make your appointment as soon as possible, because Fr. Stavros likes to give people whatever time they need. As it gets closer to Holy Week and more and more people are coming, He is forced to go quicker, and it is very important not to be rushed in this Sacrament.

Interested in Reading during Lenten Services?

In years past, we’ve offered the opportunity to parishioners to read during the Lenten services on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings. If you are interested, you can sign up by calling the office and Father will tell you the times and dates that are available or email Father at frstav@gmail.com or Charlie at chambos@stjohnampa.org.

Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 2250 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.

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

—Please be reminded that we no longer pass a tray in our parish. There will be a tray in the narthex in which you may deposit your stewardship offerings and any additional donations. There is no charge for the small candles. The large candles (the red 7-day ones) will still cost $5.

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.
Lord, TEACH us to PRAY:

Rediscovering the Beauty of The Lord’s Prayer

A SIX-WEEK LENTEN STUDY
To help us apply The Lord’s Prayer to our lives

Join us Wednesday evenings during Great Lent to experience all five of our core values:
Love + Worship + Community + Learning + Service

Weekly Topics:

Wednesday, March 4    Our Father Who Art in Heaven
Wednesday, March 11   Hallowed Be Thy Name
Wednesday, March 18   Thy Will Be Done
Wednesday, March 25   Our Daily Bread
Wednesday, April 1    Forgive Us
Wednesday, April 8    For Thine Is the Kingdom

Each Wednesday Evening Schedule:

6:00 p.m.    Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
7:15 p.m.    Lenten Dinner (provided by one of our ministries)
7:45 p.m.    Presentation by Fr. Stavros
8:15 p.m.    Small Group Discussion
8:45 p.m.    Concluding Remarks and Closing Prayer
In January 2019, 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 March. 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.

**March 8-14**

*Then God said, “Let us make man in Our Image, after Our Likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the girds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created man in His Own Image, in the Image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1: 26-27*

This week we celebrate the Sunday of Orthodoxy, which commemorates the historical return of the icons to the churches in the year 843 A.D. The word “icon” means “image,” and refers to the holy images that adorn the walls of our churches and our homes. Did you ever wonder why when the priest offers incense in church, he censes the icons and the people? The reason is because we are created in God’s image and likeness. Therefore, we are holy images. We are holy because we have the presence of God in each of us. Thus, we should carry ourselves accordingly, not acting in unchristian and foolish ways, but ways that reflect the image of God in which we are created.

**March 15-21**

*And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic carried by four men. Mark 2:3*

On the second Sunday of Lent, we read the story of Jesus healing a paralytic, who was carried by four men and let down to Jesus to the roof of a house. It was Jesus who made the miracle. It was Jesus who healed the man. However, it was the friends who brought the friend to Jesus. They play an integral part in the story. The man had to get to Jesus in order to be healed. We each are called to play a role in the salvation of others. We are each called to bring others to Jesus. At this point in your life, do you know of anyone who has come closer to Jesus because of something you have done? In every life, at some point the answer to this question hopefully is “yes.” This verse also highlights the importance of friends. Thankfully, the paralytic had four friends to carry him to Jesus. Do you have four friends that help carry you when life is hard? Are you on the top four list of anyone else, who calls on you to carry them?

**March 22-28**

*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Luke 1:34*

On March 25, we celebrate the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary. The Archangel Gabriel came to a 14-year-old virgin named Mary and told her that God wanted her to do something extraordinary, something miraculous, something that could not be explained, and something so profound no person could actually be prepared to do it. When she asked how it would be possible for her to give birth to the Son of God, the Archangel answered that “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.” It is the grace of the Holy Spirit that allows ordinary people to do extraordinary things. It is grace that allows ordinary substances like bread and wine to become the Body and Blood of Christ. And it is this same grace that allows ordinary people, people like Mary, and people like you and me, to do extraordinary things. When-

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**March 1-7**

*And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men, but by your Father Who is in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you. Matthew 6: 16-18*

As we begin the Great Lent this week, fasting will be on a lot of our minds. Fasting is not about deprivation. It is certainly not about outward suffering. Fasting is about discipline. Disciplining our stomachs to abstain from certain foods, disciplining our minds to control our desire for certain kinds of foods. The goal is then to discipline our minds to control our desires from certain kinds of behaviors that are detrimental to our Christianity. Fasting is a private matter. It is not a competition. It should not be something we flaunt. In fact, if we go to someone’s house and they are serving food that is not according to the fast, we should eat it anyway (a minimal amount) so that we don’t draw attention to our fasting. We should fast to a degree during Lent—if you’ve never tried fasting, try something simple, like fasting from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays and Holy Week. If you have already mastered fasting to a degree, then try to fast from something else—i.e. if you are used to not eating meat, try fasting from fish in addition to meat. The idea is that we all do some level of a fast in order to focus on disciplining ourselves.

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**March 21-27**

*So God created man in His Own Image, in the Image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1: 26-27*

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ever you feel overwhelmed and afraid and then come through and do something you didn’t think you could, that is an example of God’s grace coming on us as it came upon Mary and allowing us to be extraordinary when we didn’t think we were anything more than ordinary. God will call each of us at some point to do something extraordinary, something outside of our comfort zones. When we say yes, that is faith. When we achieve what we thought was impossible, that is called grace. Indeed God allows Mary’s experience.

March 29-April 4

I believe; help my unbelief! Mark 9:24

This is one of the most refreshingly honest statement in the whole bible. It is made by a man whose son is very sick. The son suffers greatly. And likewise, any parent of a child with a serious illness suffers right alongside. Undoubtedly, seeing a child suffer greatly creates not only sadness on the part of a parent, but doubt. In the society of that time, people who suffer greatly often have their faith shaken. They may wonder, have I lost the favor of God and my child’s affliction is the result? And it’s not only sick children that make us wonder this. Troubled marriages, job difficulties, overall stress and struggle may make us question our faith. So when Jesus asked the man if he wanted Jesus to heal his child, the man was certainly reasonable in wondering was that even possible. When Jesus intimated that all things are possible if we believe, the man blurted out “I believe, help my unbelief!” As if to say, I am conflicted. I believe, but I also doubt. I believe but I want to believe more. This is the feeling of all of us at times, if we are honest. We want to believe, but circumstances of life cause us to doubt. In these times especially, it is good to remember the cry of this father—that indeed we believe, as he did, and want to believe with even more conviction. Thus, we ask the Lord to help us to have conviction in our faith, especially in times when we are besieged by doubt.

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**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 - i.e. 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.

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**St. John the Baptist Community News**

ΧΑΡΑ ΠΟΥ ΤΟ ΄ΧΟΥΝ ΤΑ ΒΟΥΝΑ ΓΙΑΤΙ ΓΙΟΡΤΑΖΕΙ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ ΚΙ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΔΑ

Sunday, March 29 Greek Independence Day Luncheon

We will be hosting our annual Greek Independence Day Luncheon and program on Sunday, March 25, following the Divine Liturgy, in the Kourmolis Center. There will be several performances by our dance groups, singing of some folk songs, Greek poems form our Adult Greek School and a tasty lunch. All proceeds will go to our church. Thank you to the Kalojiannis family for again sponsoring and donating this luncheon.

Our Annual Church St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival will be on April 5

All students from grades 7 - 12 are encouraged to participate. For more information, please contact Peggy Bradshaw at (727) 244-1374. The actual competition will be held inside the church sanctuary, on Sunday, April 5, following the Divine Liturgy and anyone is welcome to attend.

**GOYA NEWS & EVENTS**

Our 16th Annual GOYA Lenten Retreat will be held March 27-29. We will welcome GOYAns and advisors from around the Tampa Bay area who will be with us for the Salutations service on Friday, March 27 and the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, March 29.

March 22-Movie for GOYAns and Adults—To Save a Life—NOTE SPECIAL STARTING TIME—The GOYA Meeting will be from 4:30-8:00 p.m. We will be showing a movie “To Save a Life”. This movie touches on several teenage issues—Suicide, drinking, peer pressure, faith and others. We will serve dinner promptly at 4:30. The movie will begin at 5, and we will have a discussion when it concludes from 7-8. Please make every effort to attend this meeting—parents are welcome and encouraged to attend.

April 5—Our April GOYA Meeting will be held on Sunday, April 5. For those who have siblings, this will be a session with Fr. Stavros for all siblings. There will also be a discussion for everyone who doesn’t have a sibling in GOYA with Charlie and John.
Get Acquainted Sunday, March 1

In an effort to get to know one another better, we are going to continue our “Get Acquainted Sundays” one Sunday of each month. We will have nametags and markers in the entry way of the Kourmoli 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.
**GriefShare Ministry Continues on Tuesday**

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 Tuesdays (note date change), starting January 14, for 13 weeks, ending on Tuesday, April 7. For March, GriefShare will meet March 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31. 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. **GriefShare remains open enrollment with support towards healing and hope. You can begin at any time. If you attended last semester and missed a day or two, you can come for those days or repeat the whole thing.**

**Hope and Joy**

**On January 25**, Hope and Joy had their annual movie night. They saw the movie “Dora and the Lost City of Gold” Special thanks to Zackie Ameres for organizing everything.

**On Super Bowl Sunday, February 2**, Hope and Joy again collected for the Souper Bowl of Caring, providing food and funding for local organizations that feed the hungry. In the competition of which team would have more money put in its pot, the Chiefs won (just like the game) $248, to $222 for the 49ers, a close score like the game. Overall, $470 was raised for local food banks plus various food donations.

**Great and Holy Friday Youth Retreat**

**Friday, April 17, 2020 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

*Service of Royal Hours - 9:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.*

Our retreat will begin in church at 10:00 a.m. for the last part of the Service of Royal Hours. **Please join us for a day filled with crafts, activities, reflection, and worship with your Sunday School friends.** The retreat will end with The Apokathelosis Service -- Descent from the Cross Service at 3:00 p.m. **All Parents are encouraged to attend!**

*Lunch and snacks included* **Please r.s.v.p. for your child by Friday, April 10, 2020** *Parent volunteers are needed*

Call or email Zackie Ameres at zackiec@yahoo.com or 813-245-3813.

Students should dress appropriately for Church and for comfort during the retreat. **Come spend a wonderful day at Church preparing for the Triumphant Resurrection!**

**Young Adult Ministry Sunday, March 15**

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.

**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:** March 9, 16, 23, and 30

**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:** March 3, 10, 24, and 31

*During Great Lent, the Tuesday night Bible study group will attend Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and the Lenten Discussion.*
On behalf of our Sunday School we pray that you will have a meaningful Lenten journey, starting March 2nd. The Sunday School will start off right by having a Pre-Lenten Retreat on March 1.

February has been a busy month for our Sunday School students. Our topics for February were: The Presentation of Christ, Salvation (The Story of Zacchaeus), The Publican and the Pharisee, The Prodigal Son, and The Last Judgement. John Kokenis did a lesson for each of the 1st, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade classes this past month.

This month’s YOUTH SUNDAY took place on February 2. We need to thank our children who are singing louder and more beautifully than ever and our Epistle Reader, Hannah Passalaris. She did an exceptional job. We would not have a Youth Choir without Maria Xenick. She has done an amazing job directing our youth in this music program. Thank you Maria.

Our Hope and Joy sponsored SOUPER BOWL of CARING was a huge success on February 2. Thank you to Zackie Ameres and our 4th Graders who helped with this fundraiser for Hope’s Children’s home. A total of $470 was collected. The CHIEFS Won the Super Bowl and this fundraiser. ($248 Chiefs vs. $222 for the 49ers)

Our Second Graders made Prosphora on February 9. Under the direction of Melissa Krinos. We hope you like these pictures. Our children are truly great stewards of St. John’s Greek Orthodox Church.

One of the best ways to prepare for Pascha is to participate in the Sacrament of Confession. Each Sunday School class had, or will have, the opportunity to participate in this important Sacrament. On February 9, our 5th and 6th Graders attended. On February 16 our 1st and 2nd Graders participated and our 3rd and 4th graders went to Confession on February 23. Our 7th - 12th graders will go to Confession during their GOYAN Lenten Retreat. We would like to thank Father Stavros for hearing the confessions of these young children. It is a wonderful thing to see our children going to Confession year after year.

On February 16 our 5th and 6th Graders learned all about Memorials and Kolyva under the direction of Cindy Xenick. This is a valuable, new program for our Sunday School and we are thankful to Cindy for offering it to our students.

Also on February 16th, the Sunday School sponsored the Coffee Hour for our parishioners. We would like to thank Zackie Ameres and her team for setting everything up and cleaning afterwards. Of course we couldn’t have a successful coffee hour without the food donations from our parents. Thank you so much.

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**March 2020 Sunday School Calendar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday, March 1</th>
<th>Sunday, March 15</th>
<th>Fri. March 27-Sun. March 29</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Lenten Retreat for 1st Grade through High School</td>
<td>Topic: Being a Good Friend</td>
<td>GOYA Lenten Retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Kokenis: Pre-K</td>
<td>John Kokenis: 4th Grade</td>
<td><strong>Sunday, March 29</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday, March 8</strong></td>
<td>Kolyva: High School</td>
<td>Youth Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Icon/Sunday of Orthodoxy</td>
<td><strong>Sunday, March 22</strong></td>
<td>Topic: Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Sunday School for 7th-12th Grades</td>
<td>Topic: Holy Cross</td>
<td>No Sunday School for 7th-12th Grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prosphora: Pre-K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GOYA: Meeting 4:30 p.m.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
St. John Greek Orthodox Church’s Young-At-Heart Ministry

Open to everyone

MEETING DATE AND TIME: First Thursday of Each Month at 11:30 a.m. (unless otherwise posted)

LOCATION: Zaharias Room in Peter and Sophia Kourmolis Hall at St John Greek Orthodox Church.

We welcome people of all ages to join our email list as a member or a friend of YAH.

Lunch is either a pot-luck lunch or we visit one of our local parishioners’ restaurants.

OUR ACTIVITIES INCLUDE
- Welcome new members
- Celebrating Birthdays,
- Wellness committee visitations
- Sharing and giving thanks to recent happiness events
- Games and activities
- Humor Time

OUR EVENTS
- February 6, 2020 - Pot Luck Lunch in the Zaharias Room at St John Church
- January 2, 2020 - Lunch at the new Psomi Bakery and Restaurant
- December 7, 2019 - Trip to the Show Palace Dinner Theatre featuring Elf the Musical
- October 5, 2019 - Ybor City Museum State Park and lunch at the Soup Stone Grill

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

OUR OCTOBER ACTIVITY INCLUDE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOVE</th>
<th>Eight visitations where conducted to people who are home-bound or at a facility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WORSHIP</td>
<td>Weekday Church Services is attended by many YAH members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY</td>
<td>YAH members played a large part in this year’s Church Festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING</td>
<td>Five YAH members attend bible studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERVICE</td>
<td>YAH performs a service to seniors and the homeless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AHEPA’s Florida District 2 and St John Greek Orthodox Church have join together to make March 2020 Cooley’s Anemia Month

Cooley’s Anemia or Thalassemia is an inherited blood disorder in which the body makes an abnormal form of hemoglobin. Hemoglobin is the protein molecule in red blood cells that carries oxygen. The disorder results in excessive destruction of red blood cells, which leads to anemia. It mostly affects people of Mediterranean descent. People with severe thalassemia depend on blood transfusions to give them working red blood cells. A type of bone marrow transplant has been used to try to cure thalassemia, but it's hard to find compatible donors. And even if a donor can be found, there's still a risk that the patient's body will reject the transplant.

AHEPA Bone Marrow Registry

The mission of the Ahepa Marrow Donor Registry is to add persons of Mediterranean descent into our database of prospective donors. The best chance for a leukemia patient is from a family member, Secondly, from relatives, and then from their ethnic group. The chances of finding an unrelated (allogeneic) match are 20,000 to 1. We must add to our database so that any Greek patient has a realistic chance of finding a match. Last year, some 35,000 children and adults with life-threatening diseases could have benefited from a marrow, blood stem cell or cord blood transplant. Some found a donor within their families, but 70 percent were put in the unthinkable position of desperately searching among strangers for a match.

How can you help?
1. Educate others. Understand the need that exists to provide financial support for research and to enhance the number of prospective marrow donors of Greek descent.
2. Donations
   a. Please make checks payable to AHEPA Cooley’s Anemia Foundation with “Cooley’s Anemia” in the Note section of the check. Tom Georgas our AHEPA Chapter Treasurer will be collecting donations throughout the month of March.
   b. AHEPA Marrow Donor Registry – There was more than $180,000 a year in expenses to test prospective marrow donors around the country. Each person is tested at a cost of $50 to the AHEPA Marrow Donor Registry.
3. Get tested. It’s not enough to spread the word. We also must test ourselves as potential marrow donors. Anyone of us might hold the cure for cancer—not in the form of a vaccine or pill, but in the blood-forming cells inside our bodies. A simple mouth swab is all it takes to find out

Since April 2006, we've added 3,000 donors to the Registry. And we're already doing good things. More than 4000 patients around the world have searched our database since then, and three of our donors have been asked to "be at the ready" for a donation (cancer patients have to be "healthy” enough to receive the transplant). Please visit ahepamarrow.org and ahepa.org/programs/publichealth for more information.
Philoptochos 2020 Membership Drive

We are on the MOVE for a Great New Year!

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

Membership Drive: January thru April, Suggested Stewardship is $35.00.

However, we accept whatever you have in your heart to give.

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

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

THANK YOU SO MUCH AND HAVE A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR 2020

Name______________________________________________   Date________________________________

Street Address_______________________________________________________________________

City______________________________________________  State______________

Zip___________________________________

Home Phone__________________________                      Cell___________________________

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

E-mail address___________________________________________________________

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

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

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

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

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

Please return from to: Katherine Sakkis, C/O Philoptochos 2418 W. Swann Ave Tampa, FL
Stewardship Report
by Fr. Stavros

We offer a stewardship message each month as a way of motivating, inspiring and encouraging all of us to be better stewards. Some messages are more spiritual/theological in nature. They focus on offering back to Christ from what He has first offered us. Some are more practical in nature, how offering a percentage of your income allows you to build up your stewardship gradually. This report is more “material” in nature. It gives some good news about our mortgage.

Since 2003, our parish has been encumbered by debt having to do with the school building that was built at that time for nearly $2M. The rent we receive from our current tenant enables us to pay our contractual payment of $8,046 per month to the bank on our mortgage.

Your stewardship allows us to make an additional $7,000 per month on the mortgage, and for the past four years, has allowed us also to make an additional $50,000 towards the principle at the end of the year.

The lease of our tenant expires in July 2022. They have the right to renew for an additional five years. Or they may choose to not extend their lease. In either case, if our stewardship continues the trend of the last few years, we are on track to pay off our mortgage by summer of 2022.

This is important for two reasons:
If our tenant doesn’t renew the lease, we will not need their income to pay off the mortgage.
Without being encumbered by a mortgage, it affords us the ability to consider possibilities like expansion of our church (which is too small to fit everyone), replacement of our administration building (which we continue to put band-aids on because it has really gone passed its intended life), a second priest, etc.

People have asked “Why should we offer more in stewardship? What is the material benefit?” We know that there is a spiritual benefit when we offer more. And what we offer should not be offered based on the church’s financial need. It should be offered as a gift to Christ, in recognition of what He has first given us. Having said that, there are people who feel more motivated to give for a cause. And a great cause is retiring the mortgage to free our community from this albatross that has hung around our necks for many years, and has encumbered our ability to function as a parish in the way Christ intended for us to function. Your stewardship will allow us, among other things, to continue to pay down our mortgage at an accelerated rate.

Someone told me recently that the church has enough money to pay off the mortgage right now. That is actually not true. The church is required to maintain the school building for our tenant, including major things like replacement of the roof which will happen in the next few years. There was also a report about deferred maintenance needed on our church facilities that was close to $800K. With this in mind, the Parish Council has strictly held money in reserve for repairs. The additional money paid to the mortgage does not cut into these reserves. Your stewardship allows the church to fund our budget, keep enough money in reserve for repairs and unforeseen circumstances and to pay down the mortgage at an accelerated rate. It also allows us to not rely so heavily on the Festival. That doesn’t mean eliminating the Festival. It means that instead of budgeting $100K net and praying it doesn’t rain, we can budget $70K net and have less stress about the weather and other things over which we have no control.

Thank you to everyone for your support of our stewardship program.

### STEWARDSHIP TOTALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YTD 2020: 261 Families</th>
<th>YTD 2019: 265 Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pledged</td>
<td>$426,850 pledged</td>
<td>$440,593 pledged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Terms
- Matures 12/30/2024
- Contractual payment $8,046
- Payments until Oct 2031

### Mortgage Balance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Year</th>
<th>$ thousands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>End 2012</td>
<td>$1,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End 2013</td>
<td>$1,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End 2014</td>
<td>$1,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End 2015</td>
<td>$1,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End 2016</td>
<td>$1,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End 2017</td>
<td>$985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End 2018</td>
<td>$798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End 2019</td>
<td>$605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-20</td>
<td>$580</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Currently Paying
- Paying $15,000 per Month
- Saves $200,000 in interest
- Paid extra $50,000 last 4 yrs
NURSING MINISTRY: Don’t take your organs to heaven….. heaven knows we need them here.

In 2018, 36,528 solid organ transplants were performed in the United States. Yet, over 113,000 men, woman, and children still remain on the national transplant waiting list. Twenty people die each day waiting for a living saving organ transplant and every 10 minutes another person is added to the transplant waiting list. This list continues to grow as only 3 in 1,000 people die in a way that allows for solid organ donation. 95% of U.S. adults support organ donation but only 58% are actually registered to be organ donors. A single deceased organ donor may save up to 8 people and a single tissue donor may enhance the lives of up to 50 people.

Deceased Donor Organ Donation

Trauma & End-of Life
Whether in a hospital or at the scene of an accident, emergency medical personnel immediately begin life-saving procedures. Medical care is not affected in any way by your status as a registered organ donor. In fact, patients must receive the most aggressive life-saving care in order to be potential organ donors

Referral
Once a patient is determined brain dead by doctors who are unrelated to the transplant process, the hospital, by law, must refer the patient to the designated organ procurement organization (OPO).

First Person Authorization
The OPO will check the state registry to determine if the patient is a registered donor. If he or she is a registered donor, the OPO will inform the family that their loved one decided, while he or she was living, to give the gift of life to someone who truly needs it. The OPO maintains a legal obligation to observe all end of life decisions, including donor designation. The state of Florida recognizes this as a legally binding decision. The OPO and the hospital are legally obligated to honor advance directives, including organ, eye, and tissue recovery decisions made by the patient.

Authorization
After the doctor talks to the family about the patient’s death, a specially trained transplant coordinator from the OPO discusses the option of organ, eye, and tissue donation. The decision to donate is much easier if the family has already discussed organ and tissue donation at an earlier time or if the deceased individual has already given authorization for donation.

Organ Recovery
Once authorization is granted, either by first-person authorization or family authorization, organs are recovered with care and respect by the transplant surgical team and allocated to help save the lives of those on the organ transplant waiting list. Recipients are matched by a complex computer matching system based on a variety of factors such as blood and tissue type, organ size, urgency, waiting time, and geography.

Hospitals across the United States are holding “honor walks” to show respect to patients at the end of life who are donating organs to others. The ritual is held with the consent of the patient’s loved ones, as the patient is wheeled from their hospital room to the operating room, where the organ donation process will take place. The team and hospital staff pay their respect to the donor and lends support to the family on their journey. Honor walks provide families of intended organ donors, as well as the medical care team, the opportunity to honor the generosity of the donor for sharing the gifts of life.

Funeral arrangements and costs
Families can proceed with regular funeral arrangements. The decision to donate does not affect the option of an open casket, nor does it delay funeral services. There is no cost to the donor, their estate, or to their family members. However, the family is responsible for the donor’s medical care and funeral costs. The organ recipient pays for all costs related to the donation. Private insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid pay for these expenses. It is against federal law to sell human organs or tissue in the United States.

Organ donation, with the primary exception of living kidney donation, occurs after someone has died from an injury that results in brain death. Such an injury might be from an accident, other traumatic event, or occur or from a heart attack or stroke that prevents the brain from receiving vital oxygen. When this happens, the brain dies and brain death is determined. There are specific tests and exams to confirm brain death.

Living Donor Transplants

In 2019, more than 7,300 people became living organ donors. A living donor transplant includes a donor surgical procedure to remove an organ or a portion of it, from a living person, and to place it into another person whose organs are no longer functioning properly. The organ most commonly given by a living donor is the kidney. Parts of other organs, including liver, lung, and pancreas are now being transplanted from living donors. The popularity of living organ donation has increased dramatically in recent years as an alternative to deceased organ donation, due to the growing need for organs for transplantation and shortage of available deceased donors.

Types of Living Donor Transplants

Directed Donations
This is the most common type of living donor organ donation. In this type, the donor directs the organ to a specific recipient for transplant.

Non-Directed Donation
In this type, also known as good Samaritan or altruistic donation, the donor does not name the recipient of the donated organ. The match is based on medical need and blood and tissue compatibility.

Paired Organ Donation (also known as paired exchange).
This may be an option when a donor and intended recipient have incompatible blood or tissue type. In paired donation, two or more organ recipient pairs trade donors, so that each recipient gets an organ that is compatible with his or her blood or tissue type.

Organ donation is a gift that provides renewed life to a patient in need. After a life-saving heart, liver, lung, kidney, pancreas, or small intestine transplant, many transplant recipients go on to lead normal, active, and productive lives, working, spending time with families, contributing to their communities, and making memories which would be otherwise impossible.

If you would like to know more about organ donation, go to donatelifeflorida.org.

Lisa Alsina RN, BSN-Nursing Ministry
**Featured Book of the St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Bookstore:**

**Lives of the Saints and Major Feast Days**  
by Rev. Fr. George Poulos

The author presents over 100 biographical sketches of Saints and Major Feast Days. Each Saint is given equal importance and prominence in this book just as God intended. We have many Saints in our Church who have been hidden for centuries from our view simply because certain Saints have appeared greater. With this book, which also has famous and great Saints, we draw out from the shadows a list of men and women who, like so many others, also walked with God.

Our learning about the lives of Saints enriches our own lives. Plus, our intimacy with the lives of additional Saints brings into sharper focus the principal purpose of our existence, which is to follow Jesus Christ!

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

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**Community Outreach Saturday, March 21**

**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 can the QR CODE and sign up.

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

Time: 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

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 8-9 a.m., Serving 9-10:15 a.m., Cleanup 10:15-10:30 a.m.

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

Please don’t hesitate to ask any questions. Thank you and God Bless

Greg Melton  813-967-2074  gmelt12@gmail.com
Our One Word for St John in 2020 is **TIME**

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven. Ecclesiastes 3:1

Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day. Matthew 6:34
My One Word for 2020: Kindness
By Penny Plakas

What does kindness mean to you? Is it opening the door for someone, offering a compliment or donating time or money to those in need? To me, kindness is having a warm heart and making life easier for others. Being kind is easy because all it takes is one act, one gesture or one word and it can make someone’s day. That’s why I chose kindness as my word for 2020.

Two places where I hope to improve and show more kindness is at work and at home. At work it is the expectation that you get all your tasks completed on time and that you are polite no matter how you are treated. But how much kindness does your employer expect you to have and show? How much kindness do you choose to give? I have worked in retail for over 20 years and I have to admit I have not always been kind to every customer. It is hard to accomplish when someone is directing their anger towards you or if they are just plain impatient. Oftentimes I am very busy at work and pressed for time so it’s challenging for example when I have to stop what I’m doing and help someone find a product on the shelf by walking them over to that part of the store. By doing this I will have missed the phone ringing or have impatient customers waiting for me at the register. Other times I am not thinking kind thoughts when a customer has to wait longer for their order and they get upset about it and take it out on me. I get frustrated when these things happen and over the years have even seen colleagues become bitter and less friendly as a result. However as the years progress, I have been working towards becoming more patient and kind with all of them. Why do this? Because being kind is easier, less stressful, means a great deal to people and pleases God.

For me, the most important reason to be kind is that you just don’t know what a person is going through. This is difficult to think about at work because the focus is on being productive and finishing my tasks on time. Over the years however my family has had various illnesses to deal with and that changed how I think about others. Also seeing what other people have gone through whether it is on the news or someone we are acquainted with has really changed my perspective. The fact is that people deal with all kinds of issues that we don’t know about so the best we can do is be kind. So at work I think to myself maybe someone needs my help finding a product because they have impaired vision. Perhaps they are upset because they or a loved one just got diagnosed with a disease. They could also be suffering through a mental illness or just be overwhelmed and can’t help being impatient. Most of the time they are sick or in pain and just want to feel better. I’m sure we can relate to some of these. Wouldn’t we appreciate a little more kindness from the people we come in contact with on a daily basis?

Another area where I am trying to show more kindness is at home during times of stress. Home life can be a challenge when it comes to always being kind to the people you live with (at least for us) because there is a full schedule for all four of us and we seem to be rushed all the time. I tend to forget to be kind when no one is ready on time for school and chores are not done even after my voice has gone up a few decibels. I have to stop and remind myself that everyone is already doing the best they can. If we are kind to each other then maybe my kids will learn to act this way later on and it may help them in stressful situations. Surely being exposed to the opposite environment on a daily basis can’t be helpful in the long run.

Also being kind by giving more encouragement or compliments to my kids or my spouse will let them know that I appreciate them and what they have accomplished. Hopefully they will feel more confident and loved. They could in turn be kinder to one another. So far, this area is proving challenging to remember (especially when we are all getting ready at the same time). Yet I know with a little kindness here and there it will make a difference no matter how small. The effort is what counts.

At work I started giving big smiles to every single person that approaches me at the counter and I say hello. Everyday at least one will comment on how nice it is to see another person smile at them. Also when I’m asked to help someone find a product I not only help them find it but I talk to them for a minute. People are so thankful for that extra time and they let me know. I want them to walk away feeling that they mattered because they do, to me. On the phone I try to give encouragement to other colleagues who may be having a hard day.

Maybe they needed the support at that moment. My hope is that by showing more kindness, whether it’s by being patient, smiling, or offering encouragement that people will walk away with a warmer heart and greater ability to endure. I hope this one word does the same for my family and yours. God bless you and your families with health, happiness and kindness in 2020.

Penny Plakas is married to Lou Christopher, and they have two children, Kris and Kyra.

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,"

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/stjoahngoctampa
As We Begin the Fast

FAST FROM
Fast from judging others
Fast from emphasis on differences
Fast from despair
Fast from thoughts of illness
Fast from words that destroy and pollute
Fast from discontent
Fast from anger
Fast from being negative
Fast from pessimism
Fast from worry
Fast from complaining
Fast from hostility
Fast from bitterness
Fast from constant activity
Fast from disrespect
Fast from lethargy and boredom

FEAST ON
Feast on seeing the best in people
Feast on the unity of life
Feast on hope
Feast on the healing power of God
Feast on words that build and encourage
Feast on gratitude
Feast on patience
Feast on being positive
Feast on optimism
Feast on trust
Feast on appreciation
Feast on peacemaking and non-violence
Feast on forgiveness
Feast on slowing down
Feast on recognizing Jesus in others
Feast on enthusiasm

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

George & Maria Andros - Birmingham, AL
Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA
William J Camarinos - Alexandria, VA
Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC
Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL
Gabriel & Irene Hurst - Tampa, FL
Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL
Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI
John & Cathie Koch - Tarpon Springs, FL
Perry & Fay Stamatides - Asheville, NC
Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI
Wesley & Melissa Thompson - Clearwater, FL
Demitrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH

Bessie Bliziotes - Palm Cost, FL
Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL
Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL
William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL
Lillian Thomas - Highland, IN
Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL
Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD
Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA
Nicholas & Vaso Anton - Dunedin, FL
Kay Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA
Katherine Beasley - Vero Beach, FL
Artemis & Eric Mellen - Longwood, FL
Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL

Friends of St. John the Baptist - Some of you who receive The Messenger do not live in the Tampa Bay area or are members of other Greek Orthodox parishes. We would like to ask for your support of our parish by being a “Friend of St. John the Baptist.” Your contribution as a “Friend” will help offset the cost of mailing The Messenger, among other things. Being a “friend” does not make one a steward of St. John the Baptist or afford membership rights and responsibilities, but gives one who is a member elsewhere, an opportunity to make a gesture of financial support to our parish.

Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

Friend of St. John the Baptist:

Name: 
Address: 
Phone: ______________ Email: 

I wish to become a Friend of St. John the Baptist. I am enclosing a contribution in the amount of: $50 $100 $200 Other

Please mail this form and check to: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church 2418 W. Swann Ave Tampa, FL 33609.
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 discreetly identifying families that Connect Through Christ can serve we hope to assist in providing a lifelong 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

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**GOD CAN USE EVERYONE**

The next time you feel like God can’t use you, just remember...

- Noah was a drunk; Abraham was too old; Isaac was a daydreamer; Jacob was a liar
- Leah was ugly; Joseph was abused; Moses had a stuttering problem; Gideon was afraid
- Samson had long hair and was a womanizer; Rahab was a prostitute; Elijah was suicidal
- Isaiah preached naked; Jonah ran from God; Naomi was a widow; Job went bankrupt
- Peter denied Christ; The disciples fell asleep while praying; Martha worried about everything
- The Samaritan woman was divorced, more than once
- Zacchaeus was too small; Paul was too religious; Timothy had an ulcer; And Lazarus was dead!

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**AHEPA OUTING**

Do you have football withdrawals symptoms? If so, the AHEPA Family of Tampa has a cure for you! Even if football is not your interest, come join us on March 21st when the Vipers take on the Dallas Renegades for a fun-filled day of fellowship at Raymond James Stadium. Please see the below flyer and contact either Tom Sakaris, (tomsak1234@gmail.com) or Karter Lenardos, (k.lenardossop@gmail.com), for more information.
I was once asked what goes through my mind while I’m standing before the holy altar celebrating the Divine Liturgy. It’s been 21 years since my ordination and when asked this question my mind goes back to treatise written by St John Chrysostom “On the Holy Priesthood” - Book 3 -

“Would you also learn from another miracle the exceeding sanctity of this office? Picture Elijah and the vast multitude standing around him, and the sacrifice laid upon the altar of stones, and all the rest of the people hushed into a deep silence while the prophet alone offers up prayer: then the sudden rush of fire from Heaven upon the sacrifice:— these are marvellous things, charged with terror. Now then pass from this scene to the rites which are celebrated in the present day; they are not only marvellous to behold, but transcendent in terror. There stands the priest, not bringing down fire from Heaven, but the Holy Spirit: and he makes prolonged supplication, not that some flame sent down from on high may consume the offerings, but that grace descending on the sacrifice may thereby enlighten the souls of all, and render them more refugent than silver purified by fire. Who can despise this most awful mystery, unless he is stark mad and senseless? Or do you not know that no human soul could have endured that fire in the sacrifice, but all would have been utterly consumed, had not the assistance of God's grace been great.”

In light of the above is it any wonder why the priest says - “let us stand well , let us stand in awe, let us be attentive, that we may present the Holy Anaphora in peace”. I thank you for keeping me in your prayers while I do what I do by the grace of God.

Fr. Elias Drossos is the Proistamenos of the Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church in Hamilton, Ontario.

Words of Wisdom

Do not choose anything above God. For that becomes your God.

A man in this world must solve a problem: To be with Christ, or to be against Him. And every man decides this, whether he wants to or not. He will either be a lover of Christ or a fighter of Christ. There is no third option. St. Justin Popovich

Holding a grudge does not make you strong; it makes you bitter.

Forgiving doesn’t make you weak; it sets you free. ~Dave Wills

Accept what is, let go of what was, and have faith in what will be.

The face that there's a highway to hell and only a stairway to heaven says a lot.

Sometimes you have to let go of the picture of what you thought life would be like and learn to find joy in the story you are living. ~Rachel Marie Martin

You are not too dirty for God to cleanse.
You are not too broken for God to fix.
You are not too far for God to reach.
You are not too guilty for God to forgive.
And you are not too worthless for God to love.

If you rearrange the letters in “Depression,” you’ll get “I pressed on.” Your current situation is NOT your final destination.

If you can trust a puzzle company to make sure every piece is in the box to complete the puzzle, then why can’t you trust God that every piece of your life is there for a reason?

You can’t go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending. ~C.S. Lewis

Never be a prisoner of your past. It was just a lesson, not a life sentence.

The devil knows your name, but he calls you by your sin. God knows your sins, but calls you by name.

The Easiest Way to Make an Impact

A Gift in Your Will or Living Trust

Join the St. John Legacy Society Today!

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

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

If you have additional questions on updating your will or are considering adding a gift to St. John, please contact Fr. Stavr at 813-876-8830 ext. 103 or frstav@gmail.com. Please be sure to seek advice from your financial and legal advisors, and discuss your charitable plans with your family.
Church is hard.
Church is hard for the person walking through the doors, afraid of judgement.
Church is hard for the pastor’s family, under the microscope of an entire body.
Church is hard for the prodigal soul returning home, broken and battered by the world.
Church is hard for the girl who looks like she has it all together, but doesn’t.
Church is hard for the couple who fought the entire ride to service.
Church is hard for the single mom, surrounded by couples holding hands, and seemingly perfect families.
Church is hard for the widow and widower with no invitation to lunch after service.
Church is hard for the deacon with an estranged child.
Church is hard for the person singing worship songs, overwhelmed by the weight of the lyrics.
Church is hard for the man insecure in his role as a leader.
Church is hard for the wife who longs to be led by a righteous man.
Church is hard for the nursery volunteer who desperately longs for a baby to love.
Church is hard for the single woman and single man, praying God brings them a mate.
Church is hard for the teenage girl, wearing a scarlet letter, ashamed of her mistakes.
Church is hard for the sinners.
Church is hard for me.
It’s hard because on the outside it all looks shiny and perfect. Sunday best in behavior and dress.

However, underneath those layers, you find a body of imperfect people, carnal souls, selfish motives.
But, here is the beauty of church—
Church isn’t a building, mentality, or expectation.
Church is a body.
Church is a group of sinners, saved by grace, living in fellowship as saints.
Church is a body of believers bound as brothers and sisters by an eternal love.
Church is a holy ground where sinners stand as equals before the Throne of Grace.
Church is a refuge for broken hearts and a training ground for mighty warriors.
Church is a converging of confrontation and invitation. Where sin is confronted and hearts are invited to seek restoration.
Church is a lesson in faith and trust.
Church is a bearer of burdens and a giver of hope.
Church is a family. A family coming together, setting aside differences, forgetting past mistakes, rejoicing in the smallest of victories.
Church, the body, and the circle of sinners-turned-saints, is where He resides, and if we ask, He is faithful to come.

So even on the hard days at church—
The days when I am at odds with a friend, When I’ve fought with my husband because we’re late once again. When I’ve walked in bearing burdens heavier than my heart can handle, yet masking the pain with a smile on my face. When I’ve worn a scarlet letter, under the microscope. When I’ve longed for a baby to hold, or fought tears as the lyrics were sung. When I’ve walked back in, afraid and broken, after walking away.
I’ll remember, He has never failed to meet me there.

We all say Good morning to others.
Do you know the Meaning of “Good Morning”?

G Get up.
O Open your heart.
O Open your mind.
D Dedicate your day to God.
M Meditate on God’s Word.
O Optimize your faith and hope.
R Rebuke all evils.
N Never doubt God’s love
I Inspire someone.
N Nothing should scare you.
G Go out with joy.

So, I say GOOD MORNING and have a blessed day!
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
IN PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION

I am the Lord your God, and you shall have no other gods before me. Has God been the source, center and hope of my life? Have I put myself, others or things before God? Have I failed to trust in God’s existence, love and mercy? Have I failed to pray to God, to worship Him and to thank Him for His blessings? Have I tried to serve God and keep His commandments faithfully? Have I murmured or complained against God in adversity? Have I praised and glorified God through my words and deeds?

You shall not make for yourself a graven image in order to worship it. Have I valued anyone or anything above God? Have I given to anyone or anything the love, honor and worship that belongs to God alone? Have I made a idol of any person, idea, occupation, or thing?

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. Have I blasphemed God’s holy name in any way? Have I sworn a false oath? Have I broken any solemn vow or promise? Have I entered into an agreement, promise or contract against God’s law? Have I cursed or used foul language? Do I speak of God to other people? Have I spoken negatively about the church or the clergy with others?

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Have I worshiped regularly on Sundays and major feast days and have I helped others to do the same? Do I come regularly late to the holy services? Does my attention wander during church? Have I worked unnecessarily on Sundays or major feast days or caused others to do so? Have I spent the Lord’s Days in a wholesome and edifying ways? Do I use my time wisely or do I waste a lot of it? Have I contributed a sacrificial share of my time, talent and treasure to the church? Have I discouraged others from attending church or participating in the sacraments? Have I kept the prescribed fasts of the church?

Honor your father and mother. Have I loved and respected my parents as I should? Have I neglected them or failed to help them? Have I disobeyed them, deceived them or caused them pain by my words or deeds? Have I treated all my family members with patience and love? Have I neglected my children? Have I disrespected any member of the clergy?

Thou shall not kill. Have I caused the harm, injury or death of anyone? Have I wished my own or anyone’s harm or death? Have I been cruel to animals or destroyed any life unnecessarily? Have I spoke badly about other people or harmed the self-esteem of others? Have I done things that are harmful to my own body such as excessive eating, drinking, smoking, drug abuse? Have I tried to prematurely end my life? Have I had an abortion?

You shall not commit adultery. Have I committed any immoral acts alone or with others? Have I caused others to commit immoral acts? Have I committed immoral acts in my heart? Have I honored my spouse? Have I been faithful to my spouse? Have I read or viewed inappropriate materials?

You shall not steal. Have I taken anything that was not mine from anyone or from anywhere? Have I cheated anyone? Have I caused others to steal or cheat? Have I tried to find the owners of lost things I have found? Have I damaged or destroyed anything that belonged to another? Have I defrauded anyone of rightful wages? Have I paid my debts? Have I given to the poor and to philanthropic causes in proportion to my means?

You shall not bear false witness. Have I given false testimony against anyone? Have I spoken evil, told lies or spread rumors about anyone? Have I disclosed to anyone the sins and faults of another? Have I made careless statements or done anything else to harm the name and reputation of another? Have I engaged in idle gossip?

You shall not covet. Have I looked with envy jealousy or hatred toward the possession talents or achievements of others? Have I desired the downfall or loss of others out of evil intent that I might benefit? Have I grieved that God has bestowed greater blessings on others than on me?

*Please highlight the ones you have done and make a list of the issues that need discussion.*
**Donations Needed for Great Lent and Holy Week**

Great Lent begins March 2. We have many special celebrations during these weeks. We know that many of you would like to contribute to the decorating of our church and icons during this period. For your convenience, below is a list of items needed for the celebration of the Sacred Services of Lent and Holy Week. Please contact the church office to reserve your desired offering for the health of your loved ones or in memory of a deceased loved one.

*Payment may be sent to the church office. Checks should be made payable to “St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church” with “Lenten Flower Donation” on the memo line. Online donations are also accepted, be sure to specify.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Purchased Items</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 6</td>
<td>Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Stanza</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Panagia</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 13</td>
<td>Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Stanza</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Panagia</td>
<td>$100</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 20</td>
<td>Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; Stanza</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Panagia</td>
<td>$100</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 22</td>
<td>Veneration of the Holy Cross</td>
<td>Flowers for Tray for Procession</td>
<td>$400</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 29</td>
<td>Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Stanza</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Panagia</td>
<td>$100</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 3</td>
<td>Akathist Hymn</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Panagia</td>
<td>$100</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 12</td>
<td>Palm Sunday</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Palm Sunday</td>
<td>$100</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Palms Strips &amp; Branches</td>
<td>$250 total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holy Week</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pillar Candles for Windows (20)</td>
<td>$15 each</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 13</td>
<td>Holy Monday</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex</td>
<td>$100</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bridegroom Service</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom on Solea (2)</td>
<td>$100 each</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>Holy Wednesday</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Last Supper</td>
<td>$100</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Holy Uction</td>
<td>Olive Oil, Flour, Prosphora (2)</td>
<td>See Fr. Stavros</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 16</td>
<td>Holy Thursday</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion</td>
<td>$100</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wreath for Top of Cross</td>
<td>$250</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wreaths for Bottom of Cross (2)</td>
<td>$150 each</td>
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<td>Scattered flowers at base of cross</td>
<td>$50</td>
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<td>Candles for Top of Cross (3)</td>
<td>$15 each</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 17</td>
<td>Good Friday</td>
<td>8 Bags of Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers</td>
<td>$50</td>
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<td>Flowers for Epitaphios</td>
<td>Several</td>
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<td>Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Apokathelosis</td>
<td>$15 each</td>
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<td>Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Lamentations</td>
<td>$15 each</td>
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<td>Icon of Extreme Humility</td>
<td>$100</td>
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<td>April 19</td>
<td>Pascha</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Resurrection</td>
<td>$100</td>
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<td>Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb</td>
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<td>Silk Flower for Royal Doors</td>
<td>$100</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Easter Lilies</td>
<td>$25 per Lily</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
COMMUNITY LIFE

Additional photographs may be found on our flickr account at stjohntpa.org

Above: Feeding Children Everywhere; Below: Souper Bowl of Caring; Right: Philoptochos OCMC Luncheon

Below: Prayer for educators in honor of the Three Hierarchs

Below: Young at Heart Pot Luck Lunch
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SUNDAY</strong></th>
<th><strong>MONDAY</strong></th>
<th><strong>TUESDAY</strong></th>
<th><strong>WEDNESDAY</strong></th>
<th><strong>THURSDAY</strong></th>
<th><strong>FRIDAY</strong></th>
<th><strong>SATURDAY</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>March 1</strong></td>
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<td>Cheesefare</td>
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<td>Sunday of Forgiveness</td>
<td>Church and ask forgiveness</td>
<td>Sunday School Retreat</td>
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<td><strong>March 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clean Monday</td>
<td>Great Lent Begins</td>
<td>Canon of St. Andrew Holy Unction Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Screens today</td>
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<td><strong>March 3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Call and wish your Godparents a “Blessed Lent/Kali Sarakost”</td>
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<td><strong>March 4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Say a special prayer for sick children</td>
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<td><strong>March 5</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Make a prosiora bread with your family to bring to church</td>
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<td><strong>March 6</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Salutations to the Virgin Mary Make a list of 5 things you are thankful for</td>
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<td><strong>March 7</strong></td>
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<td>Saturday of the Souls Help a prayer list of those who have died and bring to church</td>
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<td><strong>March 8</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday of Orthodoxy Bring an icon from home for procession Sing Kyrie eleisons</td>
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<td><strong>March 9</strong></td>
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<td>Great Compline Help make your bed, clean up and dust your room</td>
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<td><strong>March 10</strong></td>
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<td>Do something helpful for your mother</td>
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<td><strong>March 11</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Receive Holy Communion / Sunday School Family dinner</td>
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<td><strong>March 12</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Collect some clothing or shoes to donate to a charity special to you</td>
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<td><strong>March 13</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Salutations to the Virgin Mary Read a favorite Bible story with your family</td>
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<td><strong>March 14</strong></td>
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<td>Help your parents in the yard/garden</td>
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<td><strong>March 15</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Gregory of Palamas Say a special prayer for your grandparents</td>
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<td><strong>March 16</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Compline Help set the table and clean up after dinner</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>March 17</strong></td>
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<td>Do something helpful for your father</td>
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<td><strong>March 18</strong></td>
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<td>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Say a special prayer for your priest(s)</td>
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<td>Collect some coins to bring to church on Sunday</td>
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<td>Salutations to the Virgin Mary Pray the Lenten prayer of St. Ephraim together with your family</td>
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<td>Read about the life of a Saint with your family</td>
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<td>Holy Cross Take a flower from the cross</td>
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<td>Great Compline Forgive someone who hurt you</td>
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<td>Do something helpful for your teacher</td>
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<td>Annunciation Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Say a special prayer for your Sunday School teachers</td>
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<td>Buy and donate a food item for our St. John food pantry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salutations to the Virgin Mary Come Bless the icon of Panagia GOYA Lenten Retreat</td>
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<td>Tell someone you hurt that you are sorry</td>
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<td>St John of the Ladder Take 5 minutes of silence to pray about how much God loves you Yeomth Sunday</td>
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<td>Great Compline Play with someone who feels left out</td>
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<td>Draw a picture of your saint or least day by looking at an icon</td>
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<td>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Say a special prayer for your neighbors</td>
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<td>Choose a toy you don’t play with and donate it</td>
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<td>Akathist Hymn/Divine Liturgy Sing Victorious Lady in your prayers one last time</td>
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<td>Ask for God to protect your house</td>
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<td>St Mary of Egypt! Sing Agios O Theos in Church today</td>
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<td>Great Compline Be kind to someone who needs your kindness</td>
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<td>Mail a card to your Godparents wishing them a Blessed Holy Week and Kalo Pascha</td>
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<td>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Say a special prayer for your friends</td>
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<td>Make and bake some Lenten cookies with your family</td>
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<td>Make a list of all living and dead loved ones and bring it to church for the Pronomalides</td>
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<td>Saturday of Lazarus Divine Liturgy Receive Holy Communion Make palm crosses</td>
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<td>Palm Sunday Service of Bridegroom Replace your old crosses and have parents burn any old crosses</td>
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<td>Holy Monday Bridegroom Service Read the story about the prophet Joseph</td>
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<td>Holy Tuesday Bridegroom Service Read the story of Kassian the Hymnographer</td>
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<td>Holy Wednesday Come and receive Holy Unction</td>
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<td>Holy Thursday Divine Liturgy 12 Gospels Service Unmasking from the Cross Laconianas Attend Sunday School retreat</td>
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<td>Holy Friday Royal Hours Liturgy of St. Basil Resurrection Service</td>
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<td>Come to the early Liturgy to see scattering of bay leaves</td>
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<td>Holy Saturday</td>
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<td>PASCHA! Christ is Risen! You have completed Great Lent! Attend Agape vesper to light your candle</td>
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<td>Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Forgiveness Vespers 6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Canon of St. Andrew 10:00 a.m. Holy Unction 6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>WBS 10:00 a.m. Grief Share 6:30 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.</td>
<td>9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner-Choir</td>
<td>Young at Heart 11:30 a.m. Choir 7:15 p.m. Greek School 6 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Salutations 6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Sunday of Orthodoxy Philoptochos Membership Brunch Pan-Orthodox Vespers in Tarpon Springs 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m</td>
<td>WBS 10:00 a.m. Grief Share 6:30 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.</td>
<td>9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner-Sunday School</td>
<td>Choir 7:15 p.m. Greek School 6 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Salutations 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. AHEPA Family Meetings Young Adults 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m</td>
<td>Grief Share 6:30 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.</td>
<td>9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner-AHEPA</td>
<td>Philoptochos Board Meeting Choir 7:15 p.m. Greek School 6 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Salutations 6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Community Outreach</td>
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<td>Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Greek Parade GOYA 4:30 p.m. To Save a Life Movie Screening</td>
<td>Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m</td>
<td>WBS 10:00 a.m. Grief Share 6:30 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Annunciation Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner</td>
<td>Choir 7:15 p.m. Greek School 6 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Salutations 6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>GOYA Lenten Retreat</td>
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<td>Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Youth Sunday Philoptochos General Meeting Men’s group 5:00 pm Miss Saigon – Ladies Only GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY LUNCHEON</td>
<td>Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m</td>
<td>WBS 10:00 a.m. Grief Share 6:30 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.</td>
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</table>
St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
2418 W. Swann Avenue
Tampa, FL 33609-4712
Office: (813) 876-8830  Fax: (813) 443-4899
office@stjohntpa.org
www.stjohntpa.org

Parish Priest  Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis
813-876-8830 (Office)  813-394-1038 (Cell)
frstav@gmail.com
Retired Priest in Residence  Rev. Fr. Stratton Dorozenski
813-876-8830 (Office)
Pastoral Assistant  Charlie Hambos
813-876-8830 (Office)  813-843-8471 (Cell)
chambos@stjohntpa.org
Pastoral Assistant  John Kokenis
813-876-8830 (Office)  630-306-7716 (Cell)
jkokenis@stjohntpa.org
Parish Council
Jim Armstrong, President  954-295-6665
Euripides Panos, Vice President
813-352-3972
John Zelatis, Secretary
813-727-2271
Gary Ward, Treasurer
813-846-3898
Carole Fotopoulos
813-294-1623
Demosthenes Meikras
786-417-7256
George Chagaris
727-420-1920
Amin Hanhan
813-846-2957
Nick Katzaras
863-581-2430
Edie Kavoulakis
813-759-0305
Jimmy Konstas
813-220-7352
Office Staff
Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper
debbie@stjohntpa.org
fax: 813-443-4899
Adult Greek School
Magda Myer
813-909-2327
AHEPA
Thomas Sakaris, President
201-819-2319
Altar Angels
Engie Halkias
813-932-5859
Sia Blankenship
813-968-8855
Basketball
Perry Katsamakis
516-403-3118
Jimmy Konstas
813-220-7352
Bible Study
Charlie Hambos
813-843-8471
Bookstore
Brett Mourer
813-376-9315

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.

Chanter
Charlie Hambos  813-843-8471
Choir
Pauline Spencer, Director
813-390-1782
Ruth Losovitz, Organist
727-688-2782
Community Outreach
Greg Mellos
813-967-2074
Connect Through Christ - Special Needs Ministry for Children
Dante and Lindsay Skourellos
813-765-9354
Dance Groups
II ΧΑΡΤΑ ΜΑΞ: Alexandra De Maio
813-340-9668
Bessie Palios
813-523-0347
Maraquet Equid
813-422-8963
ΠΑΡΕΑ: Marina Choundas
813-877-6136
Anna Maria Bavarco
732-239-9085
ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙ: Alexandra De Maio
813-340-9668
Daughters of Penelope
Nicole Leonitis, President
703-585-7490
Finance Committee
Gary Ward
813-846-3898
Food Pantry
Anetta Alexander
813-758-2689
Grief Share
Donna Hambos
813-843-8412
Gasparilla Parking
John Kokkas
727-992-4165
GOYA
Michael & Bessie Palios
813-523-0346
goya@stjohntpa.org
Hope/Joy
George & Zachie Ameres
813-245-3813
Junior Olympics
Dwight Forde
727-685-9028
Men's Basketball
Perry Katsamakis
516-403-3118
Men's Fellowship
Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis
813-394-1038
MOMS
Mary Ann Konstas
813-215-9862
Lindsey Skourellos
813-503-7845
Parish Nursing Ministry
Marcelle Triantafiliou
612-396-5026
Orthodox Christian Fellowship
Charlie Hambos
813-843-8471
Oratorical Festival
Peggy Bradshaw
727-244-1374
Photography Ministry
Karina Findlay
813-476-9632
Philoptochos
Jeannie Nenos
813-451-9116
Small Group Bible Study
South, John Kokenis
630-306-7716
Women, Fr. Stavros
813-394-1038
Strategic Planning
Gary Ward
813-846-3898
Stewardship
Sandra Pappas
813-785-3747
Petre Trakas
813-505-2193
Sunday School
Vickie Peckham
813-758-3102
Usher
Tom Georgas
813-985-0236
Welcome Ministry
Maria Xenick
813-765-3587
Young Adult
Charlie Hambos
813-843-8471
Young at Heart
Mike Trimmis, President
813-784-4872
Mary Nenos, Vice President
813-935-2096
Youth Protection
Catherine Mincas
813-571-0658

“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.