April 2020

VISION:
Love God, Love your neighbor and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ as an Orthodox Christian community.

MISSION:
The mission of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is to welcome and serve people with love, truth, joy and peace, and to create an environment that encourages all to seek salvation through Orthodox Christianity.

CORE VALUES:
Love, Worship, Community, Learning, Service

Due to continuing Coronavirus/COVID-19 crisis, some activities in our parish may be changed, postponed or cancelled. As of the writing of this Messenger on March 13, the intention is that we will have the things we have scheduled in this issue. Should this change, we will be sending Constant Contact emails to our parishioners. Please make sure you read all emails from St. John Greek Orthodox Church, so that you are aware of the latest decision to have or to postpone certain activities.

Father Stavros’ Message

Pilate said to Jesus, “What is truth?” John 18:38

Can you imagine the scene. Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. Jesus had become famous in the area—it was well-known that He had healed people, He had given sight to the blind, He had given the lame the ability to walk. He had raised Lazarus from the dead, not one week before. Depending on how one counts, there are between 250-450 prophecies in the Old Testament about a Messiah coming. The Jewish leaders knew this, they knew those prophecies well. And here there were fulfilled in one person. The Jews delivered Jesus to Pilate because they themselves could not condemn Him to death. And they filled Pilate in on all the things Jesus had done and said. Pilate confronted Jesus, and it was with this question, “What is truth?”

We confront truth on a daily basis. We hunt for what is true and what is not true. We evaluate truth and perception of truth. There is a spiritual truth that we will all confront as well. Many Christians believe Christ rose from the dead. Others say He didn’t. What is truth? The bible teaches that at the end of time, Christ will judge every person who has ever lived, and some will be found worthy of heaven and others will be condemned to hell. Others don’t believe in heaven or hell, some believe life on earth is hell and everyone inherits heaven. Some believe that God is as politically correct as we try to be and wouldn’t exclude anyone from heaven. Some believe there is no God, and this life is about getting what we can while we can because once life is over, there is nothing more. What is truth?

At some point in every life, every person will confront the truth of the Gospel. THAT IS TRUTH. This moment might not happen until a person is on their death bed, about to take their last breath, and they will confront a truth—is there more to come or is this it? Others confront this truth at various ages. How we confront this truth, what our response to the message of Christ is, is central to how we live our lives. If we truly believe in Christ, and truly take Him at His Word, if we see His Word as truth, it is going to affect how we live each day. If it’s all true, then we must let love lead, we must forgive as He forgave, we must share the faith, we must serve, we must make life more about Him than about us, and most challenging, we
must pray “Thy will be done” and really mean it.

There is a simple truth—either the message of Christ, as revealed in the Gospels and testified to for two thousand years by people who have lived and died for Christ is all a truth, or it isn’t. If it is not true, then this is greatest fraud ever perpetuated and we are all complicit in it. Those who have dedicated their lives to the service of God are frauds. And those who have died as a witness to Christ are fools. If the message is not true, then these other things are all true.

If the message is true, then that will necessarily affect how we live. It has to. There is no way that we can “live for Christ” and not have a life that is centered around Him.

Here are some other truths:

We can know the energy of Christ but we cannot know His essence. What does that mean? We all have experienced the energy of the sun, felt the warmth of its rays, enjoyed its light, been grateful that it helps plants to grow. However, we can’t handle the energy of the sun. We can’t look at the sun for more than a second. It’s light is too bright to look at. If we flew a spaceship towards the sun, it would burn up, because the sun is too hot. We can’t even be in the rays of the sun for too long without sunscreen. We don’t have to believe in the sun. We can see it. And we can feel it. The truth of the sun is similar to the truth of the Son. We receive Christ by His energy, and not by His essence. His essence cannot be known, at least not in this life.

We partake of Holy Communion in a way that we can handle. If Christ walked into the church building, it would be as if the sun fell to earth. We would all be eviscerated. So Christ gave us Himself in bread and wine, substances we can handle, we can look at, we can touch. These substances become His Body and His Blood by the grace of the Holy Spirit. That is truth. Because if that is not truth, why would come to the church and partake of them so frequently? And if they are THE Body and THE Blood of Christ, if that is true, then we should be a lot more careful with how we behave on days we receive and on days we don’t, because through Holy Communion, we are receiving Christ.

One truth that we promote in our society is that we encourage our children to learn. We encourage our children to go to college. If a child says, “I want to stop going to school in 8th grade,” we would not allow that. We would tell the child, “you have to keep going, you can’t stop with 8th grade, you have to keep going and you’ll figure it out. You have to keep going if you want to figure it (what you want to do with your life) out. By the time you get out of college, you’ll have a better understanding of life and what you want to do with yours.”

In Christian circles, if we encouraged all of our children to stay with the church with the same commitment they stay with school (meaning, they go every time there is church, just like they go every time there is school. And they participate in extra-curricular church activities like GOYA or choir, the same way they participate in extra-curricular school activities like sports and music), if we encouraged all of our children to stay with the church until they were twenty-five, more of them would have a better understanding of Christ and how to live our lives for Him. That is truth!

Sadly, the truth of Christ loses to a societal truth that the future of our children will be affected more by participation in sports than in Sunday school, by playing in the school band rather than attending Sunday school, by playing sports (especially on Sundays) than by worshipping at the Divine Liturgy. That is truth!

There are more truths—being a Christian is hard. Even if everyone around you is a Christian, it is still hard to be a Christian. It is still hard to have faith, to be disciplined to pray, to put Christ first, and to submit to His will when it conflicts with our own. It’s hard to be a Christian when it doesn’t seem that there is tangible reward in this life. We can work harder and get a raise, that is tangible. We can work hard and get a promotion, that is tangible. One can work hard to be a Christian and get what? Peace? Joy? Except that for those who actually have peace and joy, they know that these are things that are more valuable than anything that money can buy. And those who have money to buy anything they want but have no peace or joy, they know that there is a certain emptiness in their hearts and souls, no matter how full their wallets are. This is truth!

The calendar for April says that Holy Week is occurring from April 11-April 19. The Orthodox Liturgical Tradition says that we will celebrate 18 services during that nine-day period. The slow march through the Holy Week book, with its theology expressed through prayers and hymns will again present to us the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the truth of His Resurrection, and the truth of our role in spreading His Gospel through the Church. This is truth!

And the final truth is that each of us will make a choice for how we spend this unique week of the liturgical year. We will either come or stay home. We will come a little or we will come a lot. We will come either to check a box and be counted, or we’ll come with joy and fervor. And we will come either as seekers of a deeper knowledge of the truth, or as spectators who will witness pageantry but whose lives will not be changed at all because of it. This is truth!

Most of us (myself included) struggle to keep Christ as the center of our lives each day. There are just too many other things competing for our attention. And then months go by and in our insane speed, “Life in a blender” as a friend of mine calls our stressful lives, we realize that the truth of the matter is that we haven’t spent enough time pursuing the truth of the message, and we are left with the same confusion that Pontius Pilate had when he stood in front of Christ, the very source of truth, and asked Him: “What is truth?” Did Pilate ask that question more out of curiosity, deep thought or exasperation? The Bible doesn’t say. And no one will ever know, besides you, the posture you come with for Holy Week, as you seek the truth. Will you come with curiosity, deep thought, exasperation, hope, joy, how will you come?

It is truly a wonderful thing that this time has been put there for us. We didn’t have to make a special schedule. The Church in her wisdom has created this beautiful Holy Week journey that we have the opportunity to make each year.

Our word for our parish this year is TIME. Holy Week is the most unique time of the liturgical year, because it gives us a solid week to meditate on the TRUTH of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We relive the events of His Passion and Resurrection. We study again through Scriptures, hymns and sermons, the TRUTH. It is as if there is one week set aside for us to sit in the seat of Pontius Pilate and again ask “What is truth?” And there are 9 days, 18 services and 500 pages of a Holy Week Book to help us delve into this question and come out with an answer.
I’ve often encouraged us to “sit with Scripture.” Which means, to take a passage of scripture, not something necessarily long, and “sit” with it. Read it, reflect on it, and see what kinds of thoughts come to your mind about it. If ten people sit with the same passage of Scripture, undoubtedly, they will have ten separate thoughts about it. Not because one thought is right or one is better, but because God’s Spirit speaks to each of us in different and unique ways. We see or read the same thing, and God’s Spirit speaks it into our hearts in ways that are as unique as we are.

The same thing goes for Holy Week. We won’t only sit with Scripture, but we will sit with Christ. We will sit with Him on the cross and in the tomb. We will sit with hymns and Scripture passages that teach us about Him and help us remember what He did for us.

I am frequently asked “what is the purpose of the Church?” The answer is simple—to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ (the Great Commission) and to help our fellow man (philanthropy). The Church exists for these two reasons and these two reasons only—to spread the Gospel and to help others, in other words to fulfill the two great commandments by loving God (learning and sharing the Gospel) and loving others (charity).

Holy Week is a great opportunity to understand more deeply the message of the Gospel, so that we can spread it. It is an opportunity to understand more deeply what love is, so that we can serve others.

I recently saw a church billboard which said “Lots of things work better when you unplug them for a while, including you.” As we approach Holy Week, I encourage you to unplug for a while so that you can recharge your spiritual batteries. Following this message will be some very practical guidelines and ideas for how to get the most out of your Holy Week experience. I look forward to my 16th Holy Week journey in our parish. I wish all of you a Blessed Holy Week and a Kali Anastasii!

With love in Christ,
+Fr. Stavros

Divine Liturgy to begin at 9:45 on the Sundays of Great Lent - Because 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 9:35 a.m. Also on Palm Sunday, the Doxology will begin at 9:35 a.m. with the Divine Liturgy at 9:45 a.m.

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.

Mondays of Lent - Great Compline The service of Great Compline will be read on the following Mondays of Lent – 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, 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.

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 – 5th 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
A Very Brief Overview of The Passions
By Charlie Hambos

Here’s how a Sunday School class started one day. Try your best to follow along. Okay, everyone, gather around. I want you all to answer a very important question. What are the passions? Yes, you, sir. The passions are hobbies. Yes, but in the spirituality of the church, what are the passions? The Passion of the Christ. Yes, that is The Passion. But what are The Passions?

In the church today, if we asked the same questions to the everyday church goer, the dialogue would be the same. It just goes to show us we don’t talk enough about The Passions and how they damage our soul. After all, isn’t that what the church is about, saving souls? Well, how are we going to save our souls if we don’t know who or what to save them from? Valid question, right?

In order to help us explore this topic, we are going to rely heavily on a book entitled, “Orthodox Spirituality” by Dumitru Staniloae. He is a very important Orthodox Theologian from Romania. As and the title of this article states, we are really only going to scratch the surface of the topic of The Passions and the Virtues. Many theologians and Saints of the church have written extensively on the topics and we just don’t read the writings of those saints (generally, speaking).

According to Staniloae, “The passions represent the lowest level to which human nature can fall. Both their Greek name, pathi, as well as the Latin, passions, show that man is brought by them to a state of passivity, of slavery. In fact, they overcome the will, so that the man of the passions is no longer a man of will; we say that he is a man ruled, enslaved, carried along by the passions.” In other words, the passions can control us or bring us under control. We can becomes slaves to them. Some of us are and we don’t even know it. We need to figure it out before it is too late.

As we spoke about in February, we have this hidden gift inside of us that is yearning for God. The God, whom is beyond understanding and is infinite. Therefore, we have this pending spiritual connection to God but it keeps getting distracted by the passions. Staniloae says, “The human being has a spiritual basis and therefore a tendency toward the infinite which also is manifested in the passions; but in these passions the tendency is turned from the authentic infinite which is of spiritual order, toward the world, which only gives an illusion of the infinite. Man, without being himself infinite, not only is fit, but is also thirsty for the infinite and precisely for this reason is also capable of, and longs for, God, the true and only infinite.” Then a little later he says, “But man didn’t want to be satisfied with his sharing in the infinite; he wanted to become himself the center of the infinite, or he believed that he is such a center.” Go back and read that quote one more time.

Typically speaking the passions are gluttony, unchastity, avarice, anger, dejection, listlessness and pride but there are many more. Gluttony is basically the overindulgence or over consumption of anything. Not necessarily food but mainly food. When we satiate ourselves or over satiate it drives us farther and farther away from God. Lust is a very strong sexual desire or psychological force desiring sex, love, money, power. Again, most people associate lust with sex but it is and it is more than that. Avarice is extreme greed. Wealth is good but too much is not good. Anger is a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure or hostility. We’ve all been there before. Dejection is a sad or depressed state. Yes, sometimes depression is a chemical imbalance but it doesn’t mean it is ok to stay in it. And yes it is hard to free oneself of a depressed state. Listlessness is having or showing little or no interest in anything. Finally, pride is a feeling or deep pleasure of satisfaction of one’s achievements.

Now that we have briefly defined each of these passions we can now reflect and know how we have been affected by each. Perhaps some of us are enslaved by them. The question then is, How does this happen? How do we become slaves of the passions?

Here is how Staniloae describes it, using several other Church Fathers, “In all the Orthodox spiritual writings we find the following sequence as the way in which the passions are aroused in every circumstance: Satan puts a sinful thought into our mind, the so-called attack (proshboli), which we think we can also translate by the word bait. It is the first appearance of the simple thought that we can commit this or that sinful deed. It appears in the mind as a simple possibility. It isn’t yet a sin, because we haven’t yet taken a position in regard to it. It seems to be outside of us; we didn’t create it, and it is still has only a theoretical character, a not very serious possibility, which doesn’t seem to concern us much. We are preoccupied with our whole being with something else. We don’t know where it came from; it seems as though someone were playing and threw it on the side of the road. But we continue to think about it. So it has all the characteristics of a thought discarded by somebody else and therefore the holy Fathers attribute it to Sa-
So there it is. It starts as a thought. Usually a thought we didn’t produce but one that was introduced. Let’s see a little bit more about how it develops even further, according to Staniloae, “When a passion is aroused, though, as an ignited thought, from this attack until the sinful deed, we find numerous steps. St. Hesychios of Sinai numbers four: the provocation, the coupling, the assent, the concrete action. St. John of Damascus numbers seven: the attack, the coupling, the struggle, the passion, the agreement, the actualization, and the enslavement. The decisive moment is when our thought takes a position. If we have rejected the thought at the first moment, we have escaped. If, however, we start to think about it, to relish the sin in our mind, the “coupling” or the mingling of our thoughts with those wicked demons has already happened. Now we have joined ourselves with the evil thought; it has become part of us. It is no longer something foreign in us. By it we have entered the house of Satan for the realization of that fact. Only now does the simple thought materialize in images.” Soon after it becomes an action and then becomes a sin. As we can see and hopefully, we can reflect in our own spiritual life, how this becomes a reality. So even though, it is happening on an individual level, it affects all of humanity. And so, here is one thing that the passions do on a human salvific level or lack there of according to Staniloae, “Thus passions produce and maintain chaos between people. So Christ, founding the Church, seeks by it the reestablishment of human unity and conciliarity. But this isn’t possible without the weakening of the passions.”

So, the only way to prevent the passions is to say no to the initial thought implanted in our head. However, since our human will is weak and often times succumbs to the distractions we often fall to the passions. Therefore we have to decrease their power in our life and we do this not by ourselves but through the community of the church and especially working in harmony with the Grace of the Holy Spirit. By ourselves, we will burn with passion but with Christ we will become passionless. Just like Him.

**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.

**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.

**Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?**

Over 2418 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 5 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. **The exception to this will be Holy Week. We will pass trays on Palm Sunday (2), Holy Wednesday evening, Good Friday evening (2) and Pascha (2) because there are many visitors who will come to our church who are not stewards. This will afford them the opportunity to financially support our parish. Stewards may contribute as they wish.**

**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.
Liturgical Schedule for April 2020

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.

Wednesday, April 8
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.

Saturday, April 11 - Sunday, April 19
Holy Week 2020
See Special Schedule

Thursday, April 23
St. George
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday, April 24
Life-Giving Fountain of the Virgin Mary (Zodochos Peghe)
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, April 26
Thomas Sunday
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains & St. John
Ushers: Nick Kavouklis; Jim Armstrong; Florin Patrasciou
Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Tanya Robinson; Elaine Halkias
Ambassador: Donna Hambos
Coffee Hour: Parish Picnic

Sunday, May 3
Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains & St. Matthew
Ushers: Brett Mourer; John Alexander; Amin Hanhan
Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Maria Xenick
Ambassador: TBD
Coffee Hour: Altar Angels
Bookstore: Andrew and Kathy Bouzinekis

There will be no Community Outreach in April - next one will be Saturday, May 16

It has become customary at St. John to not have any meetings or activities during Great and Holy Week, which lasts from April 11-19 this year, so that we can all spend as much time as possible worshipping and praying. Even a noble cause like Community Outreach is postponed when it conflicts with Holy Week. All organizations of our church are asked to refrain from meetings and activities during this one week of the year. Those who organize Community Outreach at First Presbyterian Church will cover for our absence. We will resume Community Outreach in May.
# Holy Week and Pascha Schedule for 2020

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 11</td>
<td>Saturday of Lazarus</td>
<td>Sunday of Lazarus</td>
<td>Commemoration of the raising of Lazarus from the dead</td>
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<td>Orthros 8:30 a.m.</td>
<td>9:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>Divine Liturgy 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>GOYA and Sunday School students are requested to attend to</td>
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<td>help in preparing the crosses for Palm Sunday, after Liturgy.</td>
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<td>April 12</td>
<td>Palm Sunday - The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem</td>
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<td>Service of the Bridegroom 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Procession of the Icon of the Nymphios</td>
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<td>Theme: Christ as the Bridegroom; watchfulness</td>
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<td>April 15</td>
<td>Holy Monday</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:00-11:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Service of the Bridegroom 6:30-8:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Theme: The Parable of the Talents</td>
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<td>April 18</td>
<td>Holy Saturday</td>
<td>8:30-11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 9:15-11:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Reading of the Holy Passion 6:30-10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Reading of the 12 Gospels, Procession of the Crucified Christ</td>
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<td>Themes: The Betrayal, Trial and Death of Christ, the Passion</td>
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<td>All-Night Vigil will follow the service</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 19</td>
<td>PASCHA</td>
<td>11:00 a.m.-Noon</td>
<td>The Service of the Resurrection of Christ-Midnight</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom 12:30-2:00 a.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Following Liturgy, all are invited to a reception in the Kourmolis Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGAPE</td>
<td>Vespers 11:00 a.m.-Noon</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Gospel is read in numerous languages to indicate the universal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>character of the Christian message</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Easter Egg Hunt for Children at Noon</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Πρόγραμμα Ακολουθίων Της Μεγάλης Εβδομάδος 2020**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Σάββατο, 11 Απριλίου</th>
<th>Σάββατο του Λαζάρου</th>
<th>Ορθρός 8:30 – 9:30 π.μ.</th>
<th>Ακολούθια της Θεία Προσκομιδής 9:30 π.μ. - 10:00 π.μ.</th>
<th>Θεία Λειτουργία 10:00 - 11:30 π.μ.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Κυριακή, 12 Απριλίου</td>
<td>Κυριακή των Βαΐων</td>
<td>Ορθρός 8:30 π.μ.</td>
<td>Θεία Λειτουργία 9:45 π.μ. - 12:00 μ.μ.</td>
<td>Ακολούθια του Νυμφίου 6:30 - 8:00 μ.μ.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Δευτέρα, 13 Απριλίου   
Ενάτη Ώρα 9:00 - 9:30 π.μ.  
Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία 9:30 - 11:00 π.μ.  
Ακολούθια του Νυμφίου 6:30 - 8:00 μ.μ.  

Τρίτη, 14 Απριλίου   
Ενάτη Ώρα 9:00 - 9:30 π.μ.  
Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία 930 - 11:00 π.μ.  
Ακολούθια του Νυμφίου 6:30 - 8:30 μ.μ.  

Τέταρτη, 15 Απριλίου  
Ενάτη Ώρα 9:00 - 9:30 π.μ.  
Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία 930 - 11:00 π.μ.  
Ακολούθια του Ευχέλαιου τα παιδιά 3:00 - 4:00 μ.μ.  
Ακολούθια του Νυμφίου 5:45 - 6:30 μ.μ.  
Ακολούθια του Ευχέλαιου 6:30 - 8:00 μ.μ.  

Πέμπτη, 16 Απριλίου  
Ενάτη Ώρα 9:00 - 11:00 π.μ.  
Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία 930 - 11:00 π.μ.  
Ακολούθια του Ευχέλαιου 6:30 - 8:00 μ.μ.  

Παρασκευή, 17 Απριλίου  
Ενάτη Ώρα 9:00 - 11:00 π.μ.  
Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία 9:00 - 11:00 π.μ.  
Ακολούθια της Αναστάσεως 6:30 - 8:00 μ.μ.  

Πέμπτη, 18 Απριλίου  
Ενάτη Ώρα 9:00 - 11:00 π.μ.  
Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία 9:00 - 11:00 π.μ.  
Ακολούθια της Αναστάσεως 12:30 - 2:00 π.μ.  

Μέγας Κανών  
Ακολούθια της Αναστάσεως, Μεσάνυχτα  
Θεία Λειτουργία της Αναστάσεως 12:30 - 2:00 π.μ.  

Κυριακή, 19 Απριλίου  
Άγιον Πάσχα  
Μέγας Εσπερινός της Αγάπης 11:00 π.μ. - 12:00 μ.μ.
**Liturgical Notes for Great Lent**

**Divine Liturgy to begin at 9:45 on the Sundays of Great Lent** - Because 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 9:35 a.m. Also on Palm Sunday, the Doxology will begin at 9:35 a.m. with the Divine Liturgy at 9:45 a.m.

**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.

**Mondays of Lent - Great Compline** The service of Great Compline will be read on the following Mondays of Lent – 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, 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.

**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 – 5th 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.

**Saturday, April 11 - Saturday of Lazarus, Service of the Proskomide**

Father Stavros has received the blessings of Metropolitan Alexios to celebrate the service of the Proskomide on the solea once a year, on the Saturday of Lazarus. The Proskomide is the service where the bread and wine are prepared to be offered at the Divine Liturgy. On Saturday, April 11, Father Stavros will celebrate this service at 9:30 a.m., on the solea at St. John the Baptist and will explain the service to those who are in attendance. He will also pray for everyone in attendance and offer a piece of bread on each person’s behalf in the preparation of the Holy Communion. Please plan to come to this service to see this important aspect of the Liturgy.
**Holy Week 2020 Guidelines**

**Why are the services at night during Holy Week called Matins Services, even though they are taking place during the evening hours?**

Traditionally, the Matins or Orthros is done in the early morning hours, ending with the sunrise, when the Great Doxology is sung or read. The Orthros or Matins Services of Holy Week are VERY long, lasting almost three and a half hours. During the Middle Ages, the services were transposed ahead several hours, from the early morning hours to the evening of the preceding night. Thus, the Orthros of Good Friday was moved to Holy Thursday evening, the 12 Gospels and the Procession of the Crucified Christ. The Lamentations, which is the Orthros of Holy Saturday was moved from Saturday morning to Friday night. The Vespers services, was moved from Holy Thursday evening to Holy Thursday morning. Our services commemorate events about 12 hours before they happened in real time, with the Last Supper Holy Thursday morning, the Crucifixion Holy Thursday evening, etc. The Descent from the Cross on Friday afternoon remains at its proper time, as a Vespers service, but the interval between the Vespers of Friday afternoon and the Orthros of Holy Saturday does not. The Resurrection Service takes place at the proper time. The schedule of transposing services begins Palm Sunday when we celebrate Orthros and Liturgy in the morning and celebrate the Orthros of Holy Monday on Palm Sunday evening. There is a vespers on Palm Sunday, which has been suppressed in modern usage.

*His Grace Bishop Sebastians to visit our Parish for Holy Tuesday Evening Bridgroom Service* - His Grace Bishop Sebastians will preside at the Service of the Bridgroom on Holy Tuesday evening, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Please come and welcome Bishop Sebastians.

**Holy Unction** - The Mystery of Holy Unction is established upon the words and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ and is a sacrament of the church. This is a sacrament of healing and transformation from a bruised and hurt world to the deliverance from sin and corruption. All sacraments of the church are administered by the priests of the church. In fact, the primary role and identity of the priests of the church is to be the celebrant of the sacraments. Because of this, Holy Unction may not be taken home. If you wish to have this sacrament offered, Father Stavros is happy to offer it at the church, on a day and time of your choosing. For those unable to come to church, Father will be happy to bring it to shut-ins who are unable to come to church. For those who are not Orthodox and cannot receive Holy Unction, as it is a sacrament, Fr. Stavros also has oil from the tomb of St. Nektarios, which can be administered to anyone. The oil will be administered also on Holy Wednesday for those who are not Orthodox, so that they can still receive prayer and anointing.

**Bridgroom Service for the Last Supper** - There is actually a Bridgroom Service which is traditionally celebrated on Holy Wednesday evening. However, this service has been suppressed in most parishes because of the Sacrament of Holy Unction. This service is important because it contains the Gospel lesson of the Last Supper. So, if you are not going to attend church on Holy Thursday morning, and would like to have a complete narrative of Holy Week, please plan to attend. It will be held on Holy Wednesday beginning at 5:45 p.m.

**Holy Thursday Evening - The Service of the Passion**

The service of the 12 Gospels and procession of the crucified Lord is the longest service of the Church year. On Holy Thursday, light and darkness, joy and sorrow are mixed. At the “upper room” and in Gethsemane the light of the kingdom and the darkness of hell come together. The way of life and the way of death converge. However, one cannot truly celebrate the Resurrection if he/she has not stood at the foot of the cross of Christ. As one prayer of the Sunday Orthros states, “Through the Cross, joy has come to all the world.” Without the Crucifixion, there could be no Resurrection. Thus, after the Resurrection Service on Holy Saturday Night, one could argue that Holy Thursday evening is the next most-important service of Holy Week. If you are unable to attend the entire service, then please come from 7:30-8:30 p.m., witness the Procession of the Crucified Lord, venerate His precious Body on the Cross and leave early. But please do not abandon the Lord as He hangs on the Cross. Holy Thursday evening is the most powerful service of Holy Week and the entire church year.

**An All-Night/All Day Vigil at the Cross of Christ**

For the past seven years, we have done an All-Night Vigil at the Cross of Christ. Those who participated found it VERY inspiring. The vigil will begin following the service of the 12 Gospels and will continue until the service of the Lamentations on Good Friday Evening. Thus, beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Holy Thursday, there will be 28 continuous hours of prayer in our church. This way, even those who can’t come out in the middle of the night can participate by taking a shift during the day. The schedule will be as follows:

**Holy Thursday Evening**

- 6:30-10:00 p.m. Service of the 12 Gospels
- 10:00 p.m. - 9:00 a.m. (Fri.) Vigil of Psalm Reading at the Cross

**Good Friday**

- 9:00-11:00 a.m. Service of the Royal Hours
- 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Vigil of Psalm Reading at the Cross
- 3:00-4:30 p.m. The Service of the Un-nailing
- 4:30-7:00 p.m. Vigil of Psalm Reading at the foot of the Cross
- 7:00-10:30 p.m. Service of the Lamentations

We will have a sign-up sheet for people to sign up for an hour or two to stand at the Cross and read from the book of Psalms. Charlie Hambos will again be coordinating this for us. If you are interested in participating at the All-Night/Add-Day Vigil on Holy Thursday, please contact Charlie Hambos.

We know that at the Crucifixion, all but one of the Disciples fled. Only John stayed at the food of the cross. In our world today, many people are abandoning Christ, Christianity, and any sense of Godliness. If Christ gave His life on the cross and did not abandon us, this is one chance, on this special day, to say thank you to Christ and remember what He did by not abandoning Him.

**Good Friday**

**Decoration of the Kouvoiklion** will be done in church following the Royal Hours on Good Friday. All are invited to come and help decorate the tomb of Christ. Please, however, work quietly—this job is meant to be solemn not social. Please remember that the Psalms will be continuously read while the work is being done on the Kouvoiklion.

**Apokathelosis** - The Service of Apokathelosis (the Un-Nailing) re-enacts the narrative of Christ descending from the Cross. The figure of Christ is removed from the cross and wrapped in a new linen cloth, carried into the sanctuary and placed on the altar table. In the same service, a procession with the Epitaphios (embroidery of the dead Christ) is made around the interior of the church, and the Epitaphios is placed in the Kouvoiklion (tomb of Christ).

**The Lamentations and the Epitaphios Procession** - The Lamentations are short, poetic verses lamenting the Passion, Death and Burial of Christ. Interspersed with the Lamentations are Psalm verses from Psalm 119, the same verses we sing at a funeral service, which is appropriate, as the Lamentations are the funeral service for the Lord. The service starts with the Canon, and after the Canon is complete, the priest opens the Royal Doors, the lights are turned up, and the Lamentations begin. Everyone is invited to sing together. This way, even those who can’t come out in the middle of the night can participate by taking a shift during the day. The schedule will be as follows:

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ting the solemnity of this occasion. Please, refrain from talking with others or acting in a way which will bring attention to you instead of the dead Lord. Please sing along with the choir. This is a time to pray, not to text message! Everyone will pass under the Epitaphios, symbolizing the passing from death to life, re-enter the church quietly and await the resumption of the service. Finally, everyone will be given a flower from the Epitaphios as a blessing at the end of the service.

**Holy Saturday**

**Anastasis Service** The service of the Anastasis will begin at 11:00 p.m. on Holy Saturday evening, with the chanting of the Canon. Shortly before midnight, the light of the Resurrected Christ will be given to all the faithful. We will then go outside, weather permitting, to read the Resurrection Gospel and sing the Christos Anesti for the first time. Please proceed outside in an orderly manner so that we can complete this service in a timely manner. We will then proceed back into the church for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. *Please plan to stay for the entirety of the Divine Liturgy on Pascha, the most joyous Liturgy of the year, and to receive Holy Communion. After all, we don’t break our fast with meatballs and cheese, but with Holy Communion.* There will be a reception following the Divine Liturgy for all in attendance, in the Kournolis Center. After making the journey through Holy Week together, what better way to continue our celebration than to sit down as a family and break bread together (and enjoy some meatballs) on the greatest feast day of the church year.

**Blessing of Baskets of Food** - It is the Orthodox Tradition on Pascha that we not only bless eggs but other types of food that will go on the table for the Paschal Banquet. Therefore, if anyone wishes to bring a basket of food to be blessed on Pascha night, they may come and place it beneath or around the table on the Solea where the basket of Easter eggs will be.

**Reading of the Resurrection Gospel at the Agape Vespers** - Those interested in participating in the beautiful Vespers of Agape on Pascha on Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. by reading the Gospel of the Resurrection in a foreign language are encouraged to see Fr. Stavros or call the church office, prior to Holy Week. **DON’T JUST SHOW UP EXPECTING TO READ. WE NEED TO CAREFULLY PLAN THE SERVICES SO THEY ARE DONE PROPERLY.** Please come to the Agape service by 10:45 a.m. to find out where you will stand for the reading of the Gospel. The reading is from the Gospel of John 20:19-25. You may read it in any language you wish, the more the better.

**Holy Communion to be given only during Divine Liturgy** - There are eight opportunities to receive Holy Communion during Holy Week - Saturday of Lazarus, Palm Sunday, Holy Monday morning, Holy Tuesday morning, Holy Wednesday morning, Holy Thursday morning, Holy Saturday morning, and of course, at the Paschal Divine Liturgy. *Please plan to receive Holy Communion through prayer and fasting as at many of these services as possible.* Incidentally, a person may receive Holy Communion each time it is offered. For instance, you can receive Holy Communion on both Holy Saturday morning and at the Anastasis. For those who have kept the entire Lenten fast, you can receive Holy Communion conceivably, all eight times during Holy Week. Since there are so many opportunities to receive Holy Communion during the Divine Liturgies of Holy Week, *Holy Communion will only be given in the context of the Divine Liturgy, not before or after.* (no drive through Communion) Also, even if we receive Holy Communion on Holy Thursday or Holy Saturday, we should not break the fast until the conclusion of the Paschal Liturgy. When receiving Holy Communion, it is important and necessary to have celebrated the entire Liturgy. Please no phone calls about what time is Communion, so you can duck in and out quickly. Come for the entire service. Be there for the invitation to enter the Kingdom, be there for the reading of the Gospel, the reciting of the Creed. And after Communion, don’t just take your Communion and run, as many people will do on Holy Saturday morning, stay the remaining minutes of the services and pray the prayers of Thanksgiving in the back of the Liturgy book.

**A Note on Kneeling and Sitting** - It is the tradition of the church that we kneel or stand for the majority of the services. However, by dispensation, we now have pews in the church and the faithful are allowed to sit at certain points in the services. Because of the long lines for Communion and because the length of the services, **PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO SIT** as you need to during Holy Week, especially during Holy Communion. Also, for those with bad knees, just sit with your head bowed during times we are kneeling, do not attempt to kneel. Our church never seeks our physical hurt in worship, nor do we want people passing out or becoming sick, which will only make us nervous and anxious.

**Holy Week Books are available for sale in the church bookstore.** The Holy Week Book contains the words and hymns of all the Holy Week services and will serve not only as an aid to worship but as a complete theology book, for the services of Holy Week contain all the theology of the Orthodox Church.

**Pascha versus Easter** - In every language except English and German, the feast of the Resurrection is identified with a word whose root is “Pasch.” For instance, in Spanish, the word is “Pasqual.” “Pascha” comes from the Hebrew for “Passover.” The first Passover occurred in the Old Testament book of Exodus. The last of the 10 plagues on the Egyptians was the death of the first born son. The Hebrews were told to slaughter an unblemished lamb outside the city wall on a Friday, not to break any of its bones, and to spread it’s blood over their doorways. Those who had the blood of the lamb on their homes would be spared. The angel of death then came to the Egyptians and killed the first-born son in each home. Passover was a holiday celebrating the deliverance of the Hebrews from the bondage of Pharaoh and his taskmasters. The Crucifixion occurred at the Passover—the Lamb of God was killed outside the city wall on a Friday, none of His bones were broken, and by His blood we are set free from the bondage of sin and death. “Easter” comes from the word “Oeaster” and was actually a Pagan holiday each spring. That’s why in the Orthodox Church, and in our personal lives, we try to use the word “Pascha” to describe the feast of the Resurrection, rather than Easter.

**No Kneeling until Pentecost** It is actually the Tradition in the Orthodox Church that we not kneel on Sundays in honor of the Resurrection of Christ. Because we do not worship on a daily basis in our church communities, priests have encouraged people to kneel on Sundays, the thought being that if we do not kneel on Sundays, that we will never kneel in church. It is a Tradition, that for 50 days after Pascha, we do not kneel in honor of the Resurrection. The next time we will kneel after April 18 is on the Feast of Pentecost (June 7) at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says “Again and again on bended knees let us pray to the Lord.”

**Fast Free the week after Pascha** - Having kept a fast for almost 8 weeks, including the week before Lent, Lent and Holy Week, the church gives us a “week off” from fasting the week after Pascha. During Bright Week, or Renewal Week, as that week is called each day is like a Sunday. Hence, there is no fasting during this celebratory week. Who, then, may receive Communion? Whoever wishes to, providing that they abstain from food the morning they are receiving. So, the Sunday after Pascha, everyone in the congregation may receive. There is no fasting on Wednesday or Friday of renewal week, or any other day of that week either.

**Doing it all** - The experience of attending all of the Holy Week services is rare indeed. But if you are able to do it this is a beautiful experience everyone should try to at least once in their life. How often do you have the opportunity to receive Holy Communion 8 times in 9 days, to be within 12 hours of having received or receiving again for a week! How often do you have the opportunity to attend two services a day for a week! For a very uplifting and unique experience, please consider coming to all the services - priests go to all the services - they know the effort, the fatigue, the pain, but also the joy that only comes when you “do them all.”
Special Altar Boy Schedule for Lent

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

The Holy Week Schedule of Altar Boys will be mailed by the end of March

Photo Ministry Looking for more Photographers  Karina Findlay is the new head of the ministry, which documents the activities of our parish. We are looking for new photographers, especially to help in documenting the upcoming Holy Week Services. If you are interested in participating, please contact Karina at 813-476-9632.

Luminaries for Good Friday and Easter

These are little bags with votive candles inside that line the way of the procession of Christ’s tomb around the church on Good Friday and are lit around the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. On each bag names can be written of loved ones, either for their health and well-being if they are living (Easter), or in memory of someone who has passed away (Good Friday evening). The GOYAns will be selling the luminaries after church on Sundays, April 5 and April 12. This is a wonderful way to honor those who are living, those who passed away, to make our services even more beautiful and to help out our GOYAns.

A gift to our Palm Sunday visitors

We are used to a full church each Sunday and there will be even more people at church on Palm Sunday, which is the highest attended Divine Liturgy of the entire year. Many people will visit our church who normally don’t attend—people visiting family, former parishioners coming home, student returning from school, infrequent worshippers and people who are looking for a place to worship on Palm Sunday. As a gift to our visitors, please consider parking on the soccer field on Sunday, April 12, and giving your parking place to someone else for a day.

PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY MEMBERS IN FRONT OF THE EPITAPHIOS (TOMB OF CHRIST) ON GOOD FRIDAY EVENING

____________________  ___________________  ___________________
____________________  ___________________  ___________________
____________________  ___________________  ___________________

**You only need to list the first name of the person you wish to be commemorated. You may list names of people who are Orthodox or non-Orthodox. Please mail to the office or bring to church by April 13.**
Fifty-Two Verses in Fifty-Two Weeks: The Bible Project
By Fr. Stavros

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 April. 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.

April 5-11

*I will wash my hands in innocence, and stand before Your Holy Altar. I will listen to the voice of Your praise and declare all Your wonders. Lord, I have loved the beauty of Your house, the place where Your glory abides. Destroy not my soul with sinners, nor my life with men of blood, in whose are transgressions, their right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I have walked in innocence. Redeem me, O Lord, and have mercy on me. My foot is set upon the straight path. In the assemblies, O Lord, I shall bless You. Psalm 26: 6-12*

With concerns about COVID-19, there is greater emphasis on handwashing. These are the verses that a priest prays before every Divine Liturgy when he washes his hands. Yes, the church in her wisdom prescribes that a priest washes his hands before celebrating the Divine Liturgy. This prayer is beautiful for two reasons—first, it’s words are beautiful. Second, when you “pray” them “prayerfully” (not quickly), it takes at least 30 seconds to wash your hands. Because few of us wash our hands for as long as we should, here is a suggestion. Put a copy of this prayer near your sinks and pray this prayer each time you wash your hands.

April 12-18

*Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. Isaiah 41:10*

Because I am writing this issue of the Messenger in March, amidst fears of the coronavirus, even though this is Holy Week, I am choosing a message about not having fear. In the petitions of many of the Holy Week services, we ask for God to grant us all that avails for our salvation. For our salvation. For my salvation. Some of the things that will lead to our eventual salvation will be easy. Some will be hard. Some will be painful. Some will be scary. Some will be joyful. If our ultimate destination is salvation, we shouldn’t be upset if there are some negatives on the journey. The mountain climber’s destination is the top of the mountain. Once he reaches the top, he doesn’t think about the skinned knees or the pains in his shoulders. Those are part of the journey. He knows that going in. He focused on what he has achieved. We know that any journey is hard. The journey to salvation is hard. So we shouldn’t be filled with fear all the time. Embrace the hard times, and know that God will help us pass through them.

April 19-25

*For the Law came through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:17*

On Pascha, at the Divine Liturgy, we read the Gospel of John 1:1-17. The Church reminds us that the Resurrection is not an end, but a new beginning, and so the Church immediately takes us to the beginning of the Gospel of John. The Law came through Moses. It was necessary. It gave some order to God’s people. However, the Law became more about checking boxes than about love. So, God sent Jesus Christ into the world not to abolish order, but to compliment it with grace and truth. And from these, love also spawned. In our Christian lives, there has to be a sense of order. This is why we pray every day. This is why we have services in prescribed ways. This is why we have Traditions. But we do not worship prayer, worship or Tradition. We worship the Lord. And we worship Him with confidence that His Word is truth. We worship Him by grace, the mystical quality that He gives that allows us, the imperfect human beings, to interact with our perfect God. The Resurrection is truth. We are reminded that no matter how “good” we are, it is the grace and truth of Jesus Christ, our belief in it, and how we respond to it through loving others, that opens the door for us to attain salvation.

April 26-May 2

*Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”*

On the Sunday after Pascha, we celebrate what is called “Thomas Sunday.” This marks the event in the Gospel of John that occurred on the Sunday after Pascha where Thomas was with the other Disciples and Jesus appeared to them. Thomas had not been with the Disciples when Jesus appeared to them on the evening of Pascha and when they told him that had seen the Lord, he would not believe them. When Jesus appeared to the Disciples, He invited Thomas to touch His hands and His side, and to not be faithless by believing. Thomas then exclaimed “My Lord and my God.” (John 20:28) Then Jesus asked him if he believed only because he had seen. Many times, we are like Thomas. We have enough faith to show up, but we are riddled with doubt, just like he was. We want to SEE a sign. Jesus tells us that faith is believing even when you can’t see something, when you can’t know the outcome. Christianity is an act of faith. We have not seen Christ face to face and yet we believe in Him. We have not been to heaven, and yet we desire to work our way there. As the world becomes more cynical and material, as we tend to “worship” things we can see (material things, as an example), the journey of faith
becomes harder and harder. This is why, like Thomas, we need to continue to show up, even with our doubts. Thomas didn’t know what would happen eight days after Pascha. But he had enough faith to show up and see. And his efforts were indeed rewarded as he saw the Resurrected Christ. This is the end point of our Christian journeys. To see Christ. And it requires faith, and our presence in order to happen.

**Policy for Letters of Recommendation**

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

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

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

**St. John the Baptist Community News**

**Parish Registry**

**Baptism** - Amelia Anastasia Hampton, daughter of Wade and Sasha Hampton (Artzibushev), was baptized on Sunday, February 16. Godparents were Constantin Artzibushev, Forrest Sink and Jana Hampton. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism** - Luke Robert Santana, daughter of Robert and Alexandria Santana, was baptized on Sunday, February 23. Mike and Stephanie Koulianos and Kristian and Adam Klinger were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism** - Helan Grace Karoutsos, daughter of Thomas Karoutsos and Sheena Fitzpatrick, was baptized on Sunday, February 23. George Karoutsos was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

**Triple Baptism** - Chyanne Eleanor (Eleni) Clements, Timothy Michael Clements, and Delilah Rose (Anna) Clements, children of Lonie and Christa Clements, were baptized on Saturday, March 7. Ekaterini Mangarides (Eleni), Brett and Anna Mourer (Timothy) and Anetta Alexander (Anna) were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism** - Mila Sofia Berdos, daughter of Frank and Isabel Berdos, was baptized on Saturday, March 7. Paulina Silber was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

**Wedding** - William Hamann III and Alexandra Fitos were married on Saturday, February 29. Nikos and Julia Papadopoulos were the sponsors. Congratulations!

**Funeral** - Diamond Papadopoulos passed away on February 15. Funeral services were held February 21. May his memory be eternal!

**Condolences** to Tanya Robinson and family, on the passing of her mother Carolyn Sue Stephens. May her memory be eternal!

**Ushers Meeting – April 5** A meeting for all ushers will be held on Sunday, April 5, following Divine Liturgy, in the Zaharias Room. All ushers are requested to attend. Tom Georgas is the Head Usher for our parish and we will be re-organizing the groups as well as going over the procedures for Holy Week. Are you interested in serving as an usher? We are looking for some more people to serve in this capacity. If so, please come to the meeting on April 5. If you are on the list as an usher and do not wish to serve in this capacity, please notify Tom Georgas at Georgas@verizon.net.

**Get Acquainted Sunday, April 5** In an effort to get to know one another better, we are going to continue our “Get Acquainted Sundays” one Sunday of each month. We will have nametags and markers in the entry way of the Kourmolis Center and will ask that each person put one on during coffee hour and introduce yourself to at least one person that you do not know.

**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.

**Men’s Group** - There isn’t an available Sunday in April for a men’s meeting, so our next men’s group meeting will be Sunday, May 17 at 5:00 p.m.
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.

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 Monday, April 13, 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!

SIGN UP LINK: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040B45AAA82BA57-great

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

Students should dress appropriately for Church and for comfort during the retreat.

Meeting of Ministry Heads, April 27- On Monday, April 27, there will be a meeting of ministry heads in the Kourmolis Center from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Each ministry head is requested to attend and other members of each ministry are invited to attend. If the ministry head cannot attend, please ask someone else in your ministry to attend, so that all ministries are represented.

GOYA Meeting-There is no GOYA meeting in April. The next GOYA meeting will be Sunday, May 3.
A Timely Reminder from the Welcome Ministry

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Hebrews 13:2

The Welcome Ministry has been busy at work, updating our welcome packets, greeting visitors and guests as they come to our church. Our mission is to practice hospitality to all who enter our doors. We are not just about welcoming people, but about developing relationships – with each other and with Christ. The most important person for a visitor to talk to in order to feel at home in a new church is you. It is not the priest, or the greeter, but a regular attender. One of the most impressive gestures we can extend to first time visitors is for people with no official position to take the initiative and welcome them.

How can you do this?

- Treat first time visitors as guests of God, not strangers.
- Offer a smile or a handshake with a simple “Good Morning!”
- Rather than saying, “Are you new here?” ask “Have we met before?” and offer your name.
- Take the initiative; don’t wait for visitors to initiate conversation.
- Learn people’s names and remember them.
- Invite visitors to join you at something, anything!
- Never let new people sit alone and introduce them to others.
- Invite people to fill out our church’s connection card.
- Tell people you’re glad they are here.
- As visitors are leaving, make sure to smile and thank them for coming.
- Pray for them throughout your week.

You don’t have to travel to a foreign country, to another state, or even get in your car to do the work of a missionary. The Great Commission of Christ can be fulfilled simply by picking up the phone, speaking to a new person you don’t recognize, sitting with someone who is alone. Can you call a parish member you haven’t seen in a while? A personal invitation to attend church is a great way to reintroduce them to the wonderful things we have going on at St. John.

If you are interested in joining the exciting and rewarding work of the Welcome Ministry, please contact Maria Xenick at mpxenick@gmail.com.

We will see many new faces during the busy weeks ahead. Please make all feel welcome as they join us for worship services!

St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!

Do you Like our Facebook page? Like our page and suggest it to your friends. Announcements are posted frequently so you are up to date with everything going on at St. John the Baptist. You can find our page at StJohnGOCTampa.

Live Streaming

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

To access this page
1. Go to our Church’s website: greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com,
2. Scroll the mouse over the “Multimedia” tab on the menu bar,
3. Click "View Liturgy,"
4. Then click on the link where it says, “Check out our live stream of the Divine Liturgy here http://new.livestream.com/accounts/2454446. All of the services are available to watch at anytime.

Pictures

Go to Flickr.com and search “St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church” or go to www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoctampa
APRIL 2020 SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

March was a very unusual month for the Sunday School. Our 1st Graders through High School participated in our PRE-LENTEN RETREAT on March 1st. This retreat started right after Holy Communion and was a huge success. Fr. Stavros met with our 6th Graders and afterwards everyone, including the parents, went in the church for a lesson and a prayer.

Our Pre-Lenten Retreat Topics were:
- Sundays of Lent taught by Charlie Hambos.
- Forgiveness Sunday and Holy Unction taught by Vickie Peckham.
- Our Lenten Calendar, Lenten Covenant, and the Prayer of St. Ephraim taught by Heidi Borgeas.

March 8th was the first Sunday of Lent and our topic was Icons/Sunday of Orthodoxy. Our students participation in the Procession of the Icon. Other topics this month were Being a Good Friend. (Second Sunday of Lent—The Paralytic), the Holy Cross, and FAITH.

We would like to thank all the families that brought a Lenten dish to the PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY DINNER Sponsored by the Sunday School on March 21st. It was a pleasure to offer this delicious meal to our parishioners after such a spiritually motivating service and before the retreat on The Lord’s Prayer.

Speaking of Lent and Holy Week, our Altar Boys, Myrrh Bearers, and Maiden for the Bridegroom Services are preparing and excited for their roles during this important time in our church. Everyone is also looking forward to our Sunday School Good Friday Retreat on April 17th.

May everyone have a blessed Lent, Holy Week, and a spiritually uplifting Pascha experience.

April 2020 Sunday School Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday, April 5</th>
<th>Sunday, April 12</th>
<th>Sunday, April 19 PASCHA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Holy Week</td>
<td>Topic: Palm Sunday</td>
<td>No Sunday School</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Kokenis: 2nd and 3rd Grade</td>
<td>No Sunday School for High School</td>
<td>Fri. March 27-Sun. March 29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prospora: Kindergarten</td>
<td>Friday, April 17</td>
<td>Topic: St. Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memorials/Kolyva: High School</td>
<td>Good Friday Retreat</td>
<td>Parish Picnic</td>
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<td>GOYA hosts reception</td>
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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 EVENTS
- May 9, 2020 - We are planning on a trip to the Greek Monasteries in Ocala
- April – To Be Announced
- March 5th - Visited St Michael Greek Orthodox Shrine in Tarpon Springs
- 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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUR ACTIVITIES are based on our St John’s Church Core Values</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOVE</td>
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<td>WORSHIP</td>
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<td>LEARNING</td>
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<td>SERVICE</td>
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Beautiful Prayer Service Lead by our own Pastoral Assistant, Charlie Hambos

Thirteen YAH attendees at Mykonos Restaurant
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___________________________________________________________

Philoptochos February and March in Review

February was a busy month, starting with our Philoptochos retreat with Fr. Stavros. There were 25 women that attended, and the topic was Encouragement.

The OCMC luncheon was a delicious, we are able to raise 800 dollars for the Orthodox Christian Missions. Mary Nenos made dresses for the girls in the PCAT program of Ruskin Elementary School. The children and the parents were very grateful to her for the new dresses.

A special thank you Katherine, Lisa, Elaine, Joanne and everyone who assisted with these events while is was gone Lisa Alsina hosted our annual Membership and Mimosa Luncheon in March at her home. A beautiful day was had by all 45 ladies that were in attendance. We collected several items for homeless men in the Tampa Bay area. These items will be donated to our OutReach Ministry.

In April we will be having our Palm Sunday luncheon and Bake sale, Please see the baking schedule.

Kali Sarakosti to each of you as we awaits the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Advance Directives …… making your voice heard when you can no longer communicate.

What are Advance Directives?
This is a written statement of a person’s wishes regarding medical treatment made to ensure those wishes are carried out should the person be unable to communicate them to a doctor. An advance directive is a legal document that explains how you want medical decisions about you to be made if you cannot make the decisions yourself. It allows your health care team and loved ones to know what kind of health care you want, or who you want to make decisions for you when you can't. It may help guide your loved ones and health care team in making clear decisions about your health care when you can't do it yourself.

Advance directives only apply to health care decisions and do not affect financial or money matters. The laws around advance directives are different from state to state. Talk to your health care provider (or your lawyer) about filling out your advance directive when you are still healthy, in case you become too ill or are unable to make medical decisions for yourself in the future.

Why do I need Advance Directives?
What kind of medical care would you want if you were too ill to express your wishes? Advance directives are legal documents that allow you to spell out your decisions about your care ahead of time. They give you a way to tell your wishes to family, friends, and health care professionals and to avoid confusion when you are in a position and unable to make decisions.

How do I get an Advance Directives?
Most States have specific forms for you to fill out. You can get these forms online by going to the AARP website and select your state to download the free form. You do not need an attorney to create an advance directive. Talk with your doctor and review your wishes once you have completed your form. Most doctors will honor an advance directive from another state. Your advance directive is not valid until it has been signed by you AND at least one witness, depending on the state. Your advanced directive will not go into effect until you are deemed incapacitated and incompetent by at least one doctor.

Things to consider:
It may be scary to think about and write down your wishes for end-of-life treatment, but creating and advance directive gives you power and control over your medical treatment when you no longer can make the decisions for yourself. Some decisions you want to think about may include;

- If you wish to be resuscitated or not if you stop breathing or your heart stops beating. You may need a DNR order (Do Not Resuscitate) from your physician for this. This is a topic that needs discussion with your physician.
  - If you want any or all life support treatments to prolong your life or not
  - If you would accept blood transfusion
  - If you want to receive dialysis treatments
  - If you wish to donate any of your organs after you pass
  - If you should undergo any surgery to potentially prolong your life

For more information on Advance Directives please ask one of your Nursing Ministry Nurses

BELOW FIND OUR 2019 TOTAL STATISTICS FROM THE BAYCARE HEALTH SYSTEM

| Number of Monthly Reports Filed | 21 |
| Total Direct Contacts | 757 |
| Total Indirect Contacts | 2687 |
| Total Contacts | 3444 |
| Total Referrals | 50 |
| Total Hours Served | 289 |
| Total Value to community (based on rate of $32/hr) | $9,248 |
APRIL STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Matthew 6:21

On behalf of the Stewardship Committee we wish everyone a blessed Lenten Journey

Our heartfelt thanks to the loyal Stewards of St. John for your gifts to our beloved parish. Our 2020 Stewardship campaign is underway and many answered this calling by completing a 2020 Pledge Form. We are grateful for your sacrificial giving. Stewardship connects us to Christ and your ongoing gifts allow our parish to grow and also provides us with a much-needed sanctuary and safe place to celebrate the Divine Liturgy and connect with one another.

Our Stewardship Committee has been reaching out to our parishioners to just say thanks and encouraging others to renew pledges for this new year. We remain with 117 Stewards from last year that have not completed a pledge form. We understand life gets busy and financial circumstances change. Which is ok and to be expected. But if it’s simply procrastination please don’t wait. Our giving speaks to the state of our heart. And if we aren’t giving to our sacred place of worship we must question our priorities.

YES – A pledge form is required every year per our current Bylaws to be considered a ‘member in good standing’ at St. John. (If you are over age 18 and are not a student, you should fill out a pledge form. If you are married, you only need to fill out one stewardship form for your family). We will publish a list of our Stewards in the May & October Messenger of this year. We make things easy with the option of our online pledge form. Stewardship Payments and General Donations are also easy and convenient using Online Banking, PayPal or traditional checks.

Please feel free to share your thoughts to the office email - office@stjohntpa.org or speak directly with Fr. Stavros or a member of our Stewardship Committee. We are here for YOU!

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<tr>
<th>Year to Year Comparison</th>
<th>2020*</th>
<th>2019*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Received Year to Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>#Individuals/Families</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*YTD as of 3/10/20 &amp; 3/21/19</td>
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Featured Book of the St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Bookstore:

Beliefs and Practices of the Eastern Orthodox Church

by Dr. William T. Manikas

St. John’s very own Bill Manikas authored this book. It is composed of several parts. It primarily highlights the major saints of the Orthodox Church and explains the Orthodox view of the Virgin Mary. There are additional sections on the Church, Holy Friday, Pascha, Pentecost, the Divine Liturgy, Christian symbols, holy images and the significance of death.

The author presents 36 biographical sketches of Saints. Learning about the lives of Saints enriches our lives. Our intimacy with the lives of Saints brings into sharper focus the principal purpose of our existence, which is to follow Jesus Christ! Similarly, there are other topics in this book that will enrich your spiritual journey.

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
A Parent’s Guide to Surviving Holy Week: A Pep Talk

by Khouriye Nicole Damick

First, you can DO this. Tell yourself you ARE going to do this! Wag your finger at the devil, especially when he’s poking all your kids into a ball of bedtime hour crankiness and hiding their last pair of shoes. (They don’t need shoes! They are just gonna try and kick them off when you aren’t looking anyways.)

Bring your kids to as much as they can handle. And they can handle more than you think. My children LOVE LOVE LOVE Holy Week. If you are a member of my parish, you know I have to leave about 18 gazillion times when I make myself bring them to an evening service. That’s ok. My children aren’t remembering my walks of shame, because they have no shame. But they remember “Let My Prayer Arise” and the prostrations to the Prayer of St. Ephraim, receiving Unction and the priest nailing the icon of the crucifixion up on the cross, singing our laments at His tomb and passing under it, banging our spoons as Christ harrows hell on Saturday, the moment we sing “Come Receive the Light from the light” and when we bang on the door (“Who IS the King of Glory!”?), the one week a year it’s perfectly reasonable to show up to church with a blanket in pajamas, celebrating with cracking eggs and chocolate in blessed baskets with their friends IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT!!! I mean, how awesome is Holy Week?! We just spent the week joining Christ in His journey to Hell and back! Ain’t no party like an Orthodox party!

Judgment Warning: If you don’t bring them to anything because they are whiny or tired, you are a thief. The theft is not only the moments of joy in the services. You are robbing them of their right to be a full member of the Body of Christ. You are robbing your fellow parishioners of their presence, as well depriving the ornery among you of some effective spiritual training in minding your inner spiritual life. (Hehehe.) You are robbing your children of the memories they will never have, the training they need to enter into our faith more fully with each passing year. You suck it up to bring them to soccer, to school, to scouts. But you don’t suck it up for Holy Week? Exactly what is more important to you? You just let that simmer for a bit.

Ok! So you’ve decided you are gonna do this thing! But, HOW? How do you survive the 20+ services with small people?

-Don’t make non-church plans this week. When I approach Holy Week, I clear out my calendar from the Friday before Lazarus Saturday until Agape Vespers Sunday. You know what you gotta do. Even I don’t go to all the services, or if we go, maybe we don’t stay. Don’t feel like eyes are judging you, because they aren’t. (If they are, well, we’re all sinners! Ignore it!) The world, and even your parish, doesn’t revolve around you. But most people are probably DELIGHTED to see your kids experiencing the beautiful journey of the Holy Week services. Come to as much as you can, and don’t be discouraged if it isn’t all of it! But don’t fail because of poor planning. You can look up the Holy Week dates for like the next twenty years online now. You can set aside this week literally a year in advance. And you should!

-If you haven’t already started fasting as a family. Start. Now. Like the next meal. Talk to your priest for a fasting rule that works for your family’s circumstances. Breaking the fast on Pascha will mean so much more. As St. John Chrysostom says in his Paschal homily: “If anyone has labored from the first hour, let them today receive the just reward. If anyone has come at the third hour, with thanksgiving let them feast. If anyone has arrived at the sixth hour, let them have no misgivings; for they shall suffer no loss. If anyone has delayed until the ninth hour, let them draw near without hesitation. If anyone has arrived even at the eleventh hour, let them not fear on account of tardiness.”

-Pajamas. Make them eat a good, healthy dinner. Get them ready for bed. Brush their teeth, slip them in their pjs, bring a small blanket, and throw them in the car. Even the ten-year-old, if she needs it.

-Let them lie down, let them sit. Don’t worry about how much room there needs to be for the adults. They are supposed to be standing anyhow! If you got pews, this is actually easy, because they can bunk on or under them. If you don’t, let them curl up at the edges of the nave. It’s really fine. They are tired, but they will be listening, and you can stand nearby and mind your own prayers if they pass out. Every year they’ll sleep a little less of the services. A small stuffed animal can serve as a make-do pillow. Just keep a bag in the car with everything you need that week so you are ready.

-Talk about the services before and after. If you like crafts, by all means break out the glue and scissors. Myself, I’m too busy getting Pascha baskets and the big meal around, so I just have conversations with them. If one bit of that sticks, they’ll get a little more out of the service. Even if you just talk about it on the way over in the car!

-If you’ve got a kid that won’t chuck their crayons through the Holy Doors, bring an Orthodox coloring book or a quiet item that has something to do with the service. I’ve had good results with small boxes with bits having to do the theme with my oldest child, but my two boys are forbidden from all potential projectiles. You know your kid. Don’t bring screens, or items that will divert their mind away from the service. That is going to defeat the purpose of you doing all this good work!

-If they get wiggly, take a quiet walk around the narthex. Light a candle. Have a chat about an icon. (Don’t know anything about the icons in your narthex? Ask your priest! He’ll probably be thrilled that you are interested!) Sing a hymn together. Then bring them in and try again. Rinse, repeat.

-Know when they are just done. Really. Some services you want to stay until the end, like Lamentations, Unction, and Pascha. Some, you can duck out if things are just spiraling into potential madness, or you want to conserve some energy for them. You did a lot just by showing the kids how important it was to show up! My family usually ducks out before the Hymn of Kassiani on Tuesday and after the 15th Antiphon on Holy Thursday. And we skip a couple of the morning presanctifieds and royal hours on Friday. One year I ignored the signs so I could do all the services and everyone ended up puking before Pascha Saturday night. My inability to face the reality that being clergy family doesn’t just magically grant us all infinite energy cost us the climax of the week! I was a little wiser after that year.

-Let them help make your family’s Pascha basket. (And make
A month later, the woman was surprised to see a nice clean wash on the line and said to her husband, "Gethsemane. Every time her neighbor hung her washing out to dry, the young woman made the same comments. That laundry is not very clean; she doesn’t know how to wash correctly. Perhaps she needs better laundry soap."

Her husband looked on, remaining silent. Every race run needs its medal for finishing!

"-NAPS. If you can’t nap everyday (and most of us can’t), at least tuck everyone in for the afternoon on Holy Saturday! You won’t be sorry! And you take that nap too! Trust me, you won’t care about the one thing you forgot to do at 12:30 a.m. when your second wind hasn’t hit you yet!"

-Even if you can’t make ANYTHING the whole week, go to PASCHA. Like seriously, you are gonna miss the BEST PART. If you’ve never experienced the joy of celebrating the Resurrection with your parish family and the hoe-down afterward, you have been missing out! Parents have been bringing their kids to Pascha in the middle of the night for literally THOUSANDS of years. They used to have to WALK, the floors were stone, the heat was almost a joke, and priest didn’t leave out any of the bits like we do! We all have central heat and carpets and such. I have seen 85 year old women who could barely stand do the entire Resurrection service on their feet. A thirty-something with some energy to spare? I mean, really. You got this, supermama. Get yourself a cape!

Role Models—Inspiration
By Max Lucado

The church of Jesus Christ began with a group of frightened men in a second-floor room in Jerusalem. Though trained and taught, they didn’t know what to say. Though they’d marched with Him for three years, they now sat... afraid. They were timid soldiers, reluctant warriors, speechless messenger. Their most courageous act was to get up and lock the door.

Some looked out the window, some looked at the wall, some looked at the floor, but all looked inside themselves. And well they should, for it was an hour of self-examination. All their efforts seemed so futile. Nagging their memories were the promises they’d made but not kept. When the Roman soldiers took Jesus, Jesus’ followers took off. With the very wine of the covenant on their breath and the bread of his sacrifice in their bellies, they fled.

All those boasts of bravado? All those declarations of devotion? They lay broken and shattered at the gate of Gethsemane’s garden.

We don’t know where the disciple went when they fled the garden, but we do know what they took: a memory. They took a heart-stopping memory of a man who called Himself no less than God in the flesh. And they couldn’t get Him out of their minds. Try as they might to lose Him in the crowd, they couldn’t forget Him. If they saw a leper, they thought of His compassion. If they heard a storm, the would remember the day He silenced one. If they saw a child, they would think of the day He held one. And if they saw a lamb being carried to the temple, they would remember His face streaked with blood and His eyes flooded with love.

No, they couldn’t forget Him. As a result, they came back. And, as a result, the church of our Lord began with a group of frightened men in an upper room.

Would familiar? Things haven’t changed much in two thousand years, have they? How many churches (editor’s note: and Christians) today find themselves paralyzed in the upper room? (From Six Hours One Friday by Max Lucado).

Why We Shouldn’t Judge
By Paulo Coelho

A young couple moved into a new neighborhood.

The next morning while they were eating breakfast, the young woman saw her neighbor hanging the washing outside.

“That laundry is not very clean; she doesn’t know how to wash correctly. Perhaps she needs better laundry soap.”

Her husband looked on, remaining silent.

Every time her neighbor hung her washing out to dry, the young woman made the same comments.

A month later, the woman was surprised to see a nice clean wash on the line and said to her husband, “Look, she’s finally learned how to wash correctly. I wonder who taught her this?”

The husband replied, “I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows.”

And so it is with life...

What we see when watching others depends on the clarity of the window through which we look.

So don’t be too quick to judge others, especially if your perspective of life is clouded by anger, jealousy, negativity or unfulfilled desires.

"Judging a person does not define who they are. It defines who you are.”
Words of Wisdom

"STRESS makes you believe that everything has to happen now. FAITH reassures you that everything will happen in God's timing." (Unknown)

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

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

Six Little Stories with lots of Meanings

Once all villagers decided to pray for rain. On the day of prayer, all the people gathered, but only one boy came with an umbrella. That is faith.

When you throw babies in the air, they laugh because they know you will catch them. That is trust.

Every night we go to bed without any assurance of being alive the next morning, but we still set the alarm to wake up. That is hope.

We see the world suffering, but still, we get married and have children. That is love.

On an old man’s shirt was written a sentence “I am not 80 years old; I am sweet 16 with 64 years of experience.”

Have a happy day and live your life like these six stories. Remember—good friends are the rare jewels of life, difficult to find and impossible to replace!!

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

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Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

Friend of St. John the Baptist:

Name: ________________________________________________________________

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I wish to become a Friend of St. John the Baptist. I am enclosing a contribution in the amount of:

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Please mail this form and check to: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church 2418 W. Swann Ave Tampa, FL 33609.
Church Etiquette by Fr. Stavros
As we are in the Lenten and Paschal seasons, many people will be attending church services. It’s always helpful to be reminded of a few basic points of etiquette for our church services. I have expanded on the article I have printed in years past so please reread this one.

Some General Thoughts
At a recent baptism, where the sponsor was chewing gum with his hands in his pockets, made me think that we need some continued commentary on church etiquette. The Orthodox Church is a sacred space. Our society is losing its understanding of sacredness in general, but the Orthodox Church is a sacred place. When you enter the church, you are entering a piece of heaven on earth. There are large icons of the Lord, the Virgin Mary and the Saints, that dominate the church edifice. The smell of incense reminds us of our prayers going to heaven. The Body and Blood of Christ are present at all times in the tabernacle on the Altar Table. So, whether there is a service going on or not, the church is sacred at all times.

When we enter the church for a service, before a service has begun, we should be quiet and reverent. If speaking, it should be in hushed tones. It is frustrating that before a baptism, the volume level in church would be the same as in a restaurant or bar, and that we often have to ask people for their attention to begin the service, or ask them to quiet down. Leaving the church is the same thing—when waiting for Antithoron, please do so quietly, and whisper if you are going to speak.

Cell phones should be turned off during the service. This is a time to disengage from the world and enter into God’s world. The only cell phones that should be on are for doctors who are on call who come to church and these should be on vibrate mode. Also, please don’t give phones to your kids to play on, or text people while in church. I have heard from several people who have been distracted by others who are texting or children who are playing video games. If you want to take a picture or a video of something in church, that’s fine, but other than this, please don’t use the phones in church.

Gum belongs at a ballgame, not at church. Our mouth should be praying and singing in church, not chomping on gum.

Lipstick stains have been left on the icons in the narthex or on the special icons that are on the soles. Please be careful that you do not leave lipstick marks on the icons. You should not wear lipstick on Holy Thursday or Good Friday. These are days of extreme humility and sadness. Do not leave lipstick marks on the body of Christ as it hangs on the Cross. Please refrain from wearing lipstick if you plan to receive Holy Communion.

Hands in pockets are too casual. Our hands should be in our laps or at our sides or folded in front of us, a position of reverence and attention.

Don’t Cross your legs in church because it is too casual. When standing in church, either have your hands on the pews in front of you, cross them in front of you, or hold a liturgy book in front of you. When sitting, place hands in your lap, not around the person next to you. Have your feet flat on the floor, not crossed legs.

Cocktail dresses are too short for church. Low-cut tops are inappropriate for church and really for anywhere. Dress in a manner that befits an encounter with the living God.

Strapless dresses—in monasteries, women must have their heads covered in church. In our church, we only ask for the shoulders. A three inch wide strap is appropriate. Less than that is not.

As a society, we have become altogether immodest. I do not wish to return to the overly dressed gentlemen and ladies of the middle-ages, but it seems that we have taken it to the other extreme. And outside of church, we should consider what kind of statement our clothing makes about us and the Christian values of modesty that we claim to hold.

Arriving at church
Come on time - The time to arrive at church is before the service starts. If you arrive after the Divine Liturgy begins, try to enter the church quietly and observe what is happening. If it is the Small Entrance, the Gospel, the Great Entrance, the Creed or the Consecration (kneeling), then do not enter the church. Wait until these are finished and then quickly find a seat. Do not enter the nave while Father is giving the sermon. Try to not interrupt the Liturgy by your entrance. The best way to avoid this situation is to arrive on time.

Venerating the Gospel During Orthros—Some people arrive during Orthros, before Divine Liturgy, on Sundays. There is a Gospel that is read during Orthros, and afterwards, on most Sundays, the Gospel is offered for veneration by the faithful. If you enter the church during this time, please come up immediately to venerate the Gospel and then go light a candle.

How late can I come and still receive Holy Communion? This is a sad question. If we really believe that Holy Communion is the Body and Blood of Christ, what kind of respect and order does it show for THE BODY and THE BLOOD of Christ if we are arriving only a few minutes before Holy Communion? If we are not there for the Consecration of the Gifts. We really should be at the Divine Liturgy from the beginning if we are to receive. So, what if we are running late? Can we get there by the reading of the Scriptures? If we can’t come on time to hear God’s Word, should really be receiving Holy Communion? Some might argue, I can read the Bible outside of Church, why do I need to be there for that? The most basic requirement for Holy Communion is a confession of faith, the Creed. Thus, if you are arriving after the Creed, it is not appropriate to receive Holy Communion. Please refrain from receiving Holy Communion if you enter the church after the Creed.

Venerating icons - It is customary to venerate icons in the Narthex when you enter into the church. When venerating (kissing) an icon, you are venerating an image of holiness. A Holy Person, or the LORD Himself is depicted in each icon. Pay attention where you kiss. It is not appropriate to kiss one of the saints on the lips. Rather, kiss the hands or feet of the saint, or if the person depicted in the icon is holding a cross, Gospel or scroll, you can venerate that, along with the hand or feet of the person depicted in the icon.

Lighting candles - Lighting candles is an important part of Orthodox worship. We light them along with offering personal prayers. Thus, it is not appropriate to be lighting candles during the Small Entrance, Gospel, Great Entrance, Creed or Consecration.

While in Church
Talk only to the Lord during the services - worship is not an appropriate time to greet your friends and neighbors. Please leave that for the coffee hour.

Leaving the church early - Our Sunday School students go to class after Holy Communion, so that they may receive proper instructions. For those who are not in Sunday School, or when there is no Sunday School, it is expected that everyone will remain in church until the end of the service. To receive Holy Communion and immediately leave is to treat the church like a restaurant where we come and go as we please.

When do I make the sign of the cross? You can make the sign of the cross any time you wish, but please do
it in a reverent way. It is not necessary to cross oneself three times in a row. Once, and reverently, is sufficient. Making the cross sloppily many times makes it look like we are strumming a guitar. There are some times when we should cross ourselves.

These include:
- Anytime you hear the name of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- When you hear the name of the Theotokos/Virgin Mary.
- Before and after venerating an icon, the cross or the Gospel book.
- When you enter and exit the church building.
- When you cross in front of the altar, from one side of the church to the other.
- As the Holy Gifts pass you during the Great Entrance.
- Before and after the Holy Gospel, when saying “Glory to You O Lord, Glory to You.”
- At the phrase “In one, holy, catholic and apostolic church” in the Creed.
- At the words of Institution - “Take, Eat, this is My Body”; and “Drink of this all of you, this is My Blood.”
- Before and after receiving Communion - Make the sign of the cross before it is your turn and after you’ve stepped away so one does not hit the chalice.
- When the priest comes out with Holy Communion and says “With the fear of God, with faith and with love draw near.”
- On any petition or prayer that speaks to your heart.
- When the priest censes you, or blesses you, you can make the sign of the cross, or simply bow your head.

Listen to the words of the service, they tell you what to do!
At the Small Entrance: “Come let us worship and bow down” make a slight bow. “Let us lift up our hearts:” Look upwards to Christ in the dome and lift up your hands. “Let us bow our heads to the Lord:” Pretty self-explanatory, bow your head to the Lord.
Sing with the choir and offer the responses of the Divine Liturgy, this is a work of the people, ALL the people. Recite the Creed and Lord’s Prayer as well.

Kneeling
Put the kneelers up and down quietly.

Kissing the hand of the priest
When greeting a priest, you should kiss his hand as a sign of respect that this is the hand that holds the Holy Communion. This goes for in church, and also outside of the church, for instance when greeting a priest in his office or in the hall. Also, when you kiss the priest’s hand (or the bishop’s) you receive a blessing in return, they offer you a blessing in return.

For Holy Communion:
- Pray the Holy Communion Prayers silently as Father prays aloud.
- As you are waiting in line, pray the Jesus Prayer, “Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner,” or the prayer of the repentant thief “Lord, remember me in Your Kingdom” repeatedly.
- Don’t have your hands in your pockets.
- Girls, wipe off lipstick before receiving.
- When the person before you is receiving, make the sign of the cross.
- When it is your turn to receive, say your Orthodox name to the priest, even if he knows your name.
- Either take the cloth and hold it under your chin or allow the altar boy to do that for you. Come close to the chalice so that Father doesn’t have to reach.
- Open your mouth wide.
- Close your mouth on the spoon. Holy Communion is the Body and Blood of Christ—it cannot communicate disease.
- Wipe your lips.
- As you walk away, make the sign of the cross.
- Take a piece of the blessed bread.
- Pray the post-Communion prayers in the Liturgy book if you are staying in church.

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St. John's is proud to offer a new ministry for families with special needs: Connect Through Christ
According to the US Census, 18.5% of American Children under age 18 are Special Needs Children. That doesn’t mean that they aren’t smart, talented, or capable. Just that they have specific challenges that a “typical” student would not face.

There are four major types of special needs children:
- Physical – muscular dystrophy, chronic asthma, epilepsy, etc.
- Developmental – down syndrome, autism, dyslexia, speech delays, processing disorders
- Behavioral/Emotional – ADD, bi-polar, oppositional defiance disorder, etc.
- Sensory Impaired – Blind, visually impaired, deaf, limited hearing

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

- When you enter and exit the church building.
- When you cross in front of the altar, from one side of the church to the other.
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- Pray the post-Communion prayers in the Liturgy book if you are staying in church.

Holy Communion is the Body and Blood of Christ. There has never been a documented case of disease being transmitted through Holy Communion. Every priest in the Orthodox Church, after distributing Holy Communion to all the faithful (and undoubtedly someone is sick in our church each Sunday when over 250 people are receiving) consumes what remains of the Holy Communion. No priest gets sick from doing this. Father chooses to put a lot of Communion on the spoon, so that you can “taste and see how good the Lord is” (Psalm 34:8).

So please don’t pull away quickly, because it makes him nervous because we do not want the Body and Blood of Christ to end up on the floor. Please approach with not only fear of God, with faith and with love, but also with care. This IS THE Body and THE Blood of Christ, “shed for the life and salvation of the world” (Liturgy of St. Basil) and imparted to us for “the remission of sins and life everlasting.”

Bread at the end of church is called Antithoron which means “instead of the Gifts.” Antithoron is not Holy Communion but needs to be treated with respect and reverence. When you approach to receive Antithoron, cup your hands one inside the other, kiss the hand of the priest as he places the bread in your hand, and then eat the bread carefully so that crumbs don’t fall all over the place. This is holy and blessed bread! When waiting for Antithoron at the end of the service, please do so quietly, and whisper if you are going to speak.

Small Children – We love that there are so many children at St. John the Baptist. Please use discretion and common sense when it comes to taking them out when they become fussy. As the Holy Week services are long and run late, for those who bring small children to the services, please sit near either the side door or in the back and if your child becomes fussy, please take them outside for a few minutes. Our nursery is also open and livestreaming of the services is available both there and in the Kourmolis Center.

Thank you for your cooperation in honoring the sanctity of our Holy Church. Your cooperation will assure that our services will continue to be celebrated with the proper honor and dignity with which they should be afforded and will make our celebration of Holy Week and Pascha truly memorable. These etiquette practices should be observed all year round.
For Those Who Don’t Come to Church Often
Or Who Haven’t Been in A While

As there are in all churches, whether they are Orthodox or not, there is a segment of the congregation that doesn’t come often.

- Some people come sporadically.
- Some come for the occasional wedding, baptism, funeral or memorial service.
- Some come in time of crisis.
- Some come for Christmas and Easter (in Tampa, we call them “Chreasters”).

There are different reasons why people don’t come to church.

- Some are angry at other parishioners.
- Some are angry at something that happened in the community in the past.
- Some are angry at God because their lives haven’t gone well and they blame Him.
- Some work on Sundays.
- Some don’t understand why it is important.
- Some have fallen out of the habit.
- Some choose to do other things.
- And some are just lazy.

Church is important. Why?

- It’s not because God needs our praise—He is God, He doesn’t need anything.
- It’s not so we can brag about how many people come to church—church is about faith, not about counting bodies in the pews.
- It’s not a matter of giving God His due, once in a while, or especially at Easter.
- It’s not a matter of tradition or pride or culture.

Church is important because

- It helps us slow down the hectic pace of our life so we can reflect on what is really important—our salvation.
- It gives us the opportunity to pray for ourselves and our loved ones.
- It gives us the opportunity to receive the prayers of others
- It gives us the opportunity to enjoy fellowship with people like us.
- It gives us the opportunity to pray in a way that is structured so well, that the Divine Liturgy is a complete prayer that touches on every aspect of our life and our World.
- It gives us an opportunity to touch God and for God to touch us, in the sacrament of Holy Communion.
- It unites us with the saints, the holy ones of God; and also with those in our family who have passed away, since we pray for the departed in our services.

It gives us a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven. Why?

- Because heaven won’t be anything like life on earth.
- Heaven will not be a secular experience but a holy, awesome and moving one.
- The central activity in heaven is Communion with God and fellowship with those in God’s kingdom.
- If we don’t learn how to worship, we won’t be ready to enter God’s Kingdom, just like those who do not practice their sport don’t play well on the field, just like those who don’t do well in school do not graduate.

How can you get back in the habit of coming to church?

JUST START COMING!!

When is a good time to come back?

ANY TIME, BUT ESPECIALLY DURING LENT

But what if I’m mad at someone?

It’s a great time to forgive them. After all, if we want God to forgive us, we must forgive one another.

What if I’m totally lost in my faith and don’t know how to start over again?

Make an appointment to meet with Fr. Stavros.

SEE YOU IN CHURCH!!

PLEASE COME BACK!

Wisdom from the Church Fathers

"A man saw a snake being burned to death and decided to take it out of the fire. When he did, the snake bit him causing him excruciating pain. The man dropped the snake and the reptile fell right back into the fire. So the man grabbed a metal pole and lifted the snake out of the fire and saved its life.

Someone who was watching approached the man and said, "That snake bit you. Why are you still trying to save it?" The man replied: "The nature of the snake is to bite, but that is not going change my nature, which is to help." Do not change your nature simply because someone harms you. Do not lose your good heart, only learn to take precautions." Unknown

The 23rd Psalm

A line by line meaning

The Lord is my shepherd—RELATIONSHIP
I shall not want—SOURCE
HE leads me beside still water—REST
He restores my soul—HEALING
He leads me in the paths of Righteousness—DIRECTION
For His name’s sake—PURPOSE
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death—TESTING
I will fear no evil—PROTECTION

For You are with me—FAITHFULNESS
Your rod and Your staff they comfort me—DISCIPLINE AND DIRECTION
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies—HOPE
You anoint my head with oil—CONSECRATION
My cup overflows—ABUNDANCE
Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life—BLESSING
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord—SECURITY
Forever—ETERNITY
13th Annual Parish Picnic

When: Sunday, April 26, 2020
Following the Divine Liturgy

Where: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
2418 W. Swann Ave
Tampa, Florida 33609

Admission is FREE!

We will have sports, games, and activities on the field for all ages. Plus hamburgers, cheeseburgers, and hot dogs for all!

A Paschal Message
By His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios of Boston

Once more, we stand before Christ’s tomb. Darkness covers everything, both around us and inside us. Yet, as God’s words “let there be light” brought the entire creation into being out of nothing, so our Savior, who is the Word (the Logos) of God, rises at this hour out of this darkness, setting the world ablaze by the unwaning light of His resurrection, igniting our souls with the fire of His life.

In his catechetical oration St. John Chrysostom declares, “Let no one grieve over their sins, for forgiveness has dawned from the tomb.” He assures us that forgiveness is offered to everyone without exception. “For the Lord receives the last, even as the first...the poor and the rich, the temperate as well as the immoderate, those who fasted and those who did not...”

Christ’s forgiveness is given unconditionally “in all and for all.” This is the radical message that the Church proclaims to everyone and always, especially on this Easter night.

If the Church continues to be persecuted, it is because this message of radical forgiveness contradicts today’s illusion of a man who has no need of salvation because he has made himself his own savior. Not so with us. We are aware of our faults and failures and we confess our sins. That is why our hearts leap of joy as we receive Christ’s unwaning light. We are the people as the Prophet Isaiah declares, “who sit in darkness and live in the land of death” (cf. Matthew 4:16) and that to us “a great light” has been given. Come then, “receive the light of the unwaning light.” Let us advance fearlessly into the world, armed with the radiant light that emanates from the life-giving tomb. May its glow penetrate the darkness. May it ignite every human life.
## 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>Lent</th>
<th>Wireless Microphones in the Church</th>
<th>Duracell or Energizer AA Batteries</th>
<th>Many</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 3</td>
<td>Akathist Hymn</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Panagia</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 12</td>
<td>Palm Sunday</td>
<td>Palms Strips &amp; Branches</td>
<td>$250 total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Week</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pillar Candles for Windows (20)</td>
<td>$15 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 13</td>
<td>Holy Monday</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bridgroom Service</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom on Solea (2)</td>
<td>$100 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>Holy Wednesday</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Last Supper</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Holy Unction</td>
<td>Olive Oil, Flour, Prosphora (2)</td>
<td>See Fr. Stavros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 16</td>
<td>Holy Thursday</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wreaths for Bottom of Cross (2)</td>
<td>$150 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scattered flowers at base of cross</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Candles for Top of Cross (3)</td>
<td>$15 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 17</td>
<td>Good Friday</td>
<td>8 Bags of Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flowers for Epitaphios</td>
<td>Several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Apokathelosis</td>
<td>$15 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Lamentations</td>
<td>$15 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Icon of Extreme Humility</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 19</td>
<td>Pascha</td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Resurrection</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Silk Flower for Royal Doors</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Easter Lilies</td>
<td>$25 per Lily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Bake Sale Pre Order Form**

**EMAIL THIS FORM TO:**
GREEKSBAKE@YAHOO.COM

**NAME:**

_____________________________

_____________________________

**PHONE:**

_____________________________

_____________________________

**EMAIL:**

_____________________________

Orders will be ready for pick-up on Saturday, April 11 and Sunday, April 12.

Checks, Cash or Credit Cards will be accepted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
<th>SUBTOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TSOUREKI BREAD</td>
<td>$7</td>
<td>Per loaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baklava</td>
<td>$16</td>
<td>12 pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KOULOURAKIA</td>
<td>$6</td>
<td>Per Bag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PAXIMATHIA</td>
<td>$6</td>
<td>Per Bag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPINACH PIE 2LB.</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>TRAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPINACH PIE TRIANGLES</td>
<td>$30</td>
<td>TRAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHEESE TRIANGLES</td>
<td>$30</td>
<td>TRAY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTES:**


**TOTAL:**

_____________________________


*St. John Philoptochos*

*Any questions? Call JoAnn Hartung 727-432-0228*
COMMUNITY LIFE

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

Above: Sunday School Confessions
Below: Saturday of Souls at Cemetery

Above: GOYA Lock-in; BELOW: Wear RED Sunday

Right: Sunday School Retreat.
Bottom Left: Sunday of Orthodoxy
Bottom Right: Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sun</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tue</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thu</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 **</td>
<td>6**</td>
<td>7 **</td>
<td>8 **</td>
<td>9 **</td>
<td>10 **</td>
<td>11 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Orthros 8:30 a.m. **</td>
<td>**Great Compline 5:30 p.m. **</td>
<td>**WBS 10:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>**9th Hour 5:30 p.m. **</td>
<td>**Young at Heart 11:30 a.m. **</td>
<td>**Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m. **</td>
<td>**Saturday of Lazarus **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liturgy 9:45 a.m. **</td>
<td>Bible Study 6:30 p.m. **</td>
<td>Grief Share 6:30 p.m. **</td>
<td>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. **</td>
<td>Greek School 6 – 8:30 p.m. **</td>
<td>Liturgy 8:15 p.m. **</td>
<td>Orthros 8:30 a.m. **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bake Sale **</td>
<td>Oratorical Festival **</td>
<td>AHEPA Family Meetings **</td>
<td>Lenten Dinner **</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>Proskomide 9:30 a.m. **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Palm Sunday **</td>
<td>**Holy Monday **</td>
<td>**Holy Tuesday **</td>
<td>**Holy Wednesday **</td>
<td>**Holy Thursday **</td>
<td>**Good Friday **</td>
<td>**Holy Saturday **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthros 8:15 a.m. **</td>
<td>9th Hour 9:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>9th Hour 9:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>9th Hour 9:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>Vesperal Liturgy 9:15 a.m. **</td>
<td>**Royal Hours 9:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>**Vesperal Liturgy 8:30 a.m. **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liturgy 9:45 a.m. **</td>
<td>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30 a.m. **</td>
<td>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30 a.m. **</td>
<td>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30 a.m. **</td>
<td>**Passion of Christ Service 6:30 p.m. **</td>
<td>Bags of Love **</td>
<td>**Vesperal Liturgy 8:30 a.m. **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Sunday Luncheon **</td>
<td>Bridegroom Service 6:30 p.m. **</td>
<td>Bridegroom Service 6:30 p.m. **</td>
<td>Bridegroom Service 6:30 p.m. **</td>
<td>Unction 3:00 p.m. **</td>
<td>Sunday School Retreat 10:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>**Vesperal Liturgy 8:30 a.m. **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**NO BASKETBALL **</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>All-Night Vigil **</td>
<td>Apokathelosis 3:00 p.m. **</td>
<td>**Vesperal Liturgy 8:30 a.m. **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**PASCHA **</td>
<td>**WBS 10:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>**WBS 10:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>**WBS 10:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>**St. George **</td>
<td>**Life-Giving Fountain **</td>
<td>**Meeting of Ministry Heads 6:30 p.m. **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agape Vespers 11:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>**Monday Night Bible Studies TBD **</td>
<td>**Monday Night Bible Studies TBD **</td>
<td>**Monday Night Bible Studies TBD **</td>
<td>Orthros 9:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>Orthros 9:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>**Meeting of Ministry Heads 6:30 p.m. **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Parish Picnic **</td>
<td>**Greek School 6 – 8:30 p.m. **</td>
<td>**Greek School 6 – 8:30 p.m. **</td>
<td>**Greek School 6 – 8:30 p.m. **</td>
<td>Liturgy 10:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>Liturgy 10:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>**Meeting of Ministry Heads 6:30 p.m. **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 **</td>
<td>27 **</td>
<td>28 **</td>
<td>29 **</td>
<td>30 **</td>
<td>**THIS SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS THE CURRENT COVID-19 PANDEMIC CONTINUES TO EVOLVE. **</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**</td>
<td>**Meeting of Ministry Heads 6:30 p.m. **</td>
<td>**WBS 10:00 a.m. **</td>
<td>**WBS 10:00 a.m. **</td>
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<td>**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Liturgy 10:00 a.m. **</td>
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<td>**</td>
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<tr>
<td>**Parish Picnic **</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</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

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
Timetable of Services
Sundays:  Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.
Weekdays: Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

Parish Priest  Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis
813-876-8830 (Office)  813-394-1038 (Cell)
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)
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 Mekras  786-417-7256
George Chagaris  727-420-1920
Amin Hanhan  813-846-2957
Nick Katzaras  863-581-2430
Eudie Kavouklis  813-758-0305
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
AHPEA
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

Chantor
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 Lindsey Skourellos  813-765-9354
Dance Groups
II XAPTA KELEXI/ 
Alexandra De Maio  813-340-9668
Bessie Palios  813-523-0347
Maraquet Edquid  813-422-8963
ΠΑΡΕΑ/
Marina Choudas  813-877-6136
ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙ/ 
Alexandra De Maio  813-340-9668
Daughters of Penelope
Nicole Leontsinis, President  703-585-7490
Finance Committee
Gary Ward  813-846-3898
Food Pantry
Anetta Alexander  813-758-2689
GriefShare
Donna Hambos  813-843-8412
Gastraria Parking
John Kokkas  727-992-4165
GOYA
Michael & Bessie Palios goya@stjohntpa.org
Hope/Joy
George & Zackie 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 Triantafillou  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
Jeanie Nenos  813-451-9116
Strategic Planning
Gary Ward  813-846-3898
Stewardship
Sandra Pappas  813-785-3747
Pete Trakas  813-505-2193
Sunday School
Vickie Peckham  813-758-3102
Uskher
Tom Georgas  813-985-0236
Welcoming Ministry
Maria Xenick  813-765-3587
Women's Bible Study
Fr. Stavros  813-394-1038
Young Adult
Charlie Hambos  813-843-8471
Young at Heart
Mike Trakas, President  813-784-4872
Mary Nenos, Vice President  813-935-2096
Youth Protection
Catherine Mitneas  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.