

# THE MESSENGER

## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

*"Behold I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.  
The voice of one crying in the wilderness; Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight." Mark 1:2-3*

# May 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

## *Χριστός Ανέστη! Christ is Risen!*

### Father Stavros' Message

We've had a month like no other in the history of St. John. As of the writing of this message on Bright Monday, we haven't had a public service at St. John in over a month. We just finished a Holy Week where only few were able to be in the church and participate in the services, with everyone else participating virtually.

It was an experience that no doubt left many of us saddened, frustrated and challenged. I attended all the services and I was saddened at times, frustrated and challenged, so I can only imagine what it must have been like at home. It is my hope and prayer that we will never experience another Holy Week like this in our lives. It is my hope and prayer that next year we will again gather for the Holy Week journey and make it as we have in years past, with everyone participating.

Having served as a priest for twenty-two years, I have consistently encouraged people to come to church. It is quite odd to encourage people to stay home.

I debated whether or not to even offer a May Messenger since the schedule is still in flux because of the coronavirus. I do not know by the time you get this on May 1 if our restrictions will be more strict or more relaxed. I hesitate to put much on the calendar other than liturgical services.

Until we are able to resume normal operations, we will observe the following:

1. All Divine Services will be held as scheduled with participation only from chanters and altar servers. They will all continue to be broadcast on Livestream.

2. Every Sunday, there will be a Sunday school lesson for children (emailed Friday) and one for adults and teenagers (emailed on Saturday)
3. We will continue to have ministries meet via zoom. Ministries that meet weekly like Bible study on Monday evening and Tuesday morning will continue to meet at those times via zoom. All other ministries that may wish to meet must contact the office in order to set up a zoom meeting using the church's account.
4. The Parish Assembly meeting previously scheduled for May 3 will be postponed until this crisis is over.
5. We will offer a Paraklesis Service every Wednesday evening until this crisis has passed at 6:00 p.m., praying for all the members of our community by name. I encourage you to participate each week.
6. We will continue to follow guidelines as they are made known to us. Thank you for abiding by the guidelines we've used as a parish.
7. Regarding visitations, I will come and visit only in a life-and-death situation. All other contact should be via phone or facetime. Most hospitals are not letting anyone visit, so I cannot visit a hospital without permission from the hospital.
8. The office remains closed to the public. We do, however, continue to work from the office on most days.
9. Because the volume of calls/emails/texts to me are very high, please be patient if it takes me a while to get back to

you.

10. It's very hard to invite certain people to come to church to fill a need—like a reader or an altar server—knowing that I can't invite everyone. Thank you for respecting difficult decisions I have had to make in this crisis. I'm trying to have a good presentation of our services while staying within the guidelines I have received from local government as well as His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios.

Once this crisis has passed, we will observe the following:

1. On the first Sunday we are all able to return, we will have a special service of thanksgiving.
2. On the Wednesday after that first Sunday, we will have the service of Holy Unction that we missed during Holy Week.
3. We will put out a mini-Messenger with a calendar of activities that will be added before the next Messenger comes out. If there is an opportunity to add in person meetings before the end of May, we will certainly put do that.
4. Some of the events previously on the calendar will undoubtedly have their dates changed.
5. We will have a special time to recognize our graduates and altar boys.
6. In the event that we are allowed to come back in smaller numbers, let's say 50 at a time, we will schedule additional Divine Liturgies in order to accommodate everyone coming at least every three weeks until we are all able to come together. We would do this via sign-up genius, asking that people only sign up for one liturgy until everyone who wants to has been able to attend one.

Regarding stewardship, we know that some people have lost jobs. We also know that many of us remain working. We understand that some of you may not be able to support the church financially as you would have liked. We hope that others who are still working will offer additional support, as the expenses of our church are ongoing.

I would like to offer some thanks for the Holy Week journey we have just completed:

1. Thank you to everyone who watched the services via livestream—We have received many comments from people who enjoyed the virtual experience, and actually “attended” more services than ever before.
2. Thanks to all those who participated in the services—specifically the readers and the altar servers, the small choir on Good Friday night and the Myrrh-bearers on Holy Saturday night.
3. Thank you to Zackie Ameres (our JOY/HOPE advisor), Vickie Peckham (our Sunday school director) and many of our teachers, for putting together the virtual Good Friday retreat.
4. Thank you to Jenivieve Elly for putting together two awesome videos for Palm Sunday and for Pascha, and to everyone who send in video clips of their children and families.
5. Thank you to Engie Halkias and Kalliope Chagaris for still having our church decorated.
6. Thank you to Felix Ramirez, our maintenance man, for building us a small tomb of Christ.
7. Thank you for all the letters of encouragement you sent to us during this difficult time.

8. Thank you to John Kokenis for chanting early in the week and for all of his help with constant contact, our website and so many other things behind the scenes.

9. The biggest thanks goes to Charlie Hambos, who worked so hard all week to make sure our livestream was going well, for setting the mood with the lighting, for working the camera, even while chanting, for setting up the virtual vigil, and for chanting at every service during Holy Week. If there is an MVP for Holy Week most certainly it's Charlie. Without the livestream, there would



have been no presentation of Holy Week. I am also thankful to Charlie for helping several other parishes get up to speed with live-stream. He not only helped us but helped a lot of people in other parishes. You'll never know how much work went into this Holy Week. Thank you Charlie for carrying so much of it on your back. There is a saying in sports, “leaving it all on the field.” When a team loses but has “left it all on the field,” the loss doesn't sting as much as it would when a team knows it could have played better. While our presentation of Holy Week was not what anyone would have chosen, we really gave it our all and I'm so proud that we “left it all on the field.”

This issue of the Messenger will contain a few things:

1. A reflection about the corona-virus and lessons we can learn from it.
2. The Paschal sermon from Holy Saturday night
3. Pictures from Holy Week, as well as pictures of people worshipping at home.
4. A personal reflection on Holy Week
5. A few reflections on what it was like to have Holy Week at home.
6. A reflection on the life of Michael Philips
7. Regular community news
8. An important stewardship message
9. The Weekly Bible verses that come out each month
10. The usual couple of relevant articles
11. Some levity as well

Please know that I miss all of you. It's not the same without you. As I said in my remarks on Palm Sunday, the chalice each Divine Liturgy is heavier because of what's NOT in it. I hope that will change very soon. I look forward to welcoming you back to church, and until that happens, staying in touch with you virtually.

Please know that if you have any pastoral needs, our pastoral team is here to minister to you.

Christos Anesti! Alithos Anesti!

With love in the Risen Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

# Reflections on Being Church during the Coronavirus

By Fr. Stavros

I was listening to a podcast the week before Holy Week about leading through crisis. It had many good points. In addition, throughout Holy Week, I had many thoughts about being the church, even when we can't come to church. Here are a few reflections:

1. Crisis creates clarity. It brings into focus many things that have been cloudy. It helps us (individually, as a parish, and personally as a priest) figure out what is really important. It certainly has made some things very clear about our parish, how we are doing, what we are doing well, and where we can improve.
2. Leaders will make mistakes in crisis. I've never led through a crisis like this. If you asked me or anyone else a year ago, do you think there will ever be a scenario where we celebrate the entire Holy Week virtually, none of us would have ever believed that. I'm doing my best. Some initial decisions I made, I changed. I had to make certain very difficult decisions to invite certain people to the church who could play certain roles. Please know that it was painful to ask some to come while expecting more others to stay home.
3. Crisis brings our Christianity into focus. One person who was able to come to church during Holy Week, who hadn't received Holy Communion in a month, told me that they were so happy to be receiving Communion, that many times before we were all forced into our homes, they would receive almost mechanically. Now they appreciate it more, since they had not been able to receive in so long. I hope once we return to the church from this crisis, we won't be complacent about the privilege we have to receive Communion or even merely attend the Divine Liturgy. Hopefully we will approach both with more respect, more joy, and more desire to attend more often.
4. The unit of time to look at in our lives is the day. Jesus says in Matthew 6:34, "Sufficient for today is its own worries," and Psalm 118:24 reads, "This is the DAY that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." This crisis at one point was changing our lives on a daily if not an hourly basis. More changes are still ahead. We can't plan too far ahead, regarding vacations, graduations or even school resuming in the fall. There are relative of at least two people in our community who have died in other states from the coronavirus. I'm sure they weren't thinking last Christmas that they would be dead before Pascha. The truth is, all any of us has is today.
5. Church is about people. Without people, our church is nothing more than a beautiful museum. It's the people of the church who do the work of the church. Because of technology, some of the work of the church has been able to continue. Zoom Bible studies, ministry meetings, and of course worship all continue. We had beautiful services in our church for Holy Week, and even though there were more people on-line watching our services than would have generally been here in person, it is still not the same as having people here in person.
6. The Divine Liturgy will never be able to be fully experienced virtually. That is because the centerpiece of the Divine Liturgy is our partaking on the Eucharist. We are welcome to receive Christ in the Eucharist. In order to do that, one must be physically present. The live stream is not a substitute for worshipping in person. It is a concession for the times and circumstances when we cannot. When we resume services for everyone, I hope people will choose to be present, rather than by virtual means.
7. Worship is work—everyone had to work hard to make the Holy Week journey relevant in our homes. People were creative in their ideas, as you will see in some pictures. If we worked hard to make sure our Holy Week experience had some meaning, I hope we will take the same energy when we return to church to worship correctly, which is that everyone sings the responses, not just the choir.
8. We've done some very good things at St. John. Lots of things were in place at St. John long before this crisis. We've had live-stream for almost 7 years. A big thank you to Young-At-Heart for purchasing our first live-stream equipment. Thank you the Charlie to doing such a great job operating it. Over the years, we've changed cameras and improved our technique and this paid off as we were very ready to go virtual with worship.
9. Regarding our stewardship—We've done an incredible job over the past many years in raising our stewardship, to the point where we don't pass trays or charge for candles. So, losing Holy Week from a revenue standpoint was not as severe as it was in most parishes. Secondly, our stewardship has allowed us to rely less and less on the Greek Festival for operating income. In the event we can't have one this year, we will feel it but it won't be crippling. Finally, we've been able to pay ahead on the mortgage so if we need to cut back somewhere, we have the flexibility to cut back there.
10. Having said this, there are two important comments. First, we need to continue to send in our stewardship offerings, as the church continues to have its usual expenses. Second, we need to get the Greek Festival entirely out of our operating budget. That doesn't mean don't have it. It means have it but don't have to count on any money from the Festival going into our operating budget. That way, if a crisis ever did cause us to not have a festival, it would not be financially detrimental to our operations. Please know that in many areas of our country, some churches lost upwards of \$50K on Holy Week trays and candles and will lose \$100K on spring festivals. Those parishes will be in jeopardy of not being financially viable. THAT would have described our parish many years ago. Thankfully, it does not today. Let's work hard to keep it that way.
11. Security is an illusion. Faith is all we can really rely on. It is all that we can take with us. So as we stockpile toilet paper and worry about our stock portfolio, the only thing we can insulate as truly secure is our faith.
12. Many are now putting God in the front row, because we are anxious, not only in our community, but in our country. Will He still be there after this is over, or are we only Christians of crisis? As I mentioned in a sermon during Holy Week, everyone will come to church on the first Sunday we are allowed to come. But will everyone come on the second Sunday? Many people have told me how much

they miss coming to church and receiving Communion. Will we remember these feelings long after this crisis has passed? I hope so.

13. This crisis will test of sense of generosity. When we have plenty, it is easy to be generous. Are we generous when we have less?
14. We are creative. God made us this way. If God is the Creator, and we are created in His image and likeness, He has given us the ability to create. Whether that was creating a place to worship during Holy Week, creating meaningful nuances to the services that could be appreciated virtually, whether that means home-schooling our children, or having our ministries function on Zoom, we are creative and our creativity does a lot to fill the gaps for what we have lost.
15. Social distancing is the wrong name—it's physical distancing. I'm not sure who coined the term "social distancing." Staying physically separated from others is physical distancing. We are social people. We are meant to be in contact with other people. Social distancing is not the right

idea—in this time of isolation we need to be more socially close. We may have to be physically distant, but we need to remain socially close.

Being a Christian is more like climbing Mount Everest than sitting on a beach. No one has ever accomplished anything besides relaxation at the beach. Accomplishments come when we've climb a mountain. We've just climbed a mountain for how to have a meaningful Holy Week. In some ways, this Holy Week was more fulfilling because the journey was so much more difficult and intentional.

And now we face the next mountain, life. This mountain is getting harder because of this crisis and all of the collateral damage it has done. A mountain is climbed one step at a time. Even one step on Mount Everest is painful and there is a sense of accomplishment with even one step. This is how we need to be in our life, one step at a time, one day at a time, leaning on God and trusting in Him with each step, allowing ourselves to rejoice at small victories and not getting too down about small setbacks.

## Reflections on Celebrating Holy Week Virtually

Having finished the Holy Week journey, there was definitely a lot to reflect on. Here are some highlights, and some positive that we can take away, both you who were at home, and some profound moments that were experienced in the church.

We often confuse form for substance. While there are certain rituals we have in our church, especially during Holy Week, we do not worship the rituals. Just because you didn't get a palm on Palm Sunday or a flower from the tomb, that doesn't make Christ any less resurrected, or give life less meaning, or make you less likely to attain salvation. In fact, a year away from these rituals might have been a good thing, to make us focus on the substance of Who we worship, rather than the trappings of worship.

In that vein, the services were very peaceful. Oftentimes, during Holy Week, I feel a tension in the church, whether it is the sense that people want to hurry up and get home, or people crushing in to get a seat on Good Friday night. I definitely did not miss the "circus" atmosphere of Good Friday night, the going outside for the procession while everyone is chattering and checking their phones. People commented that watching on the screen, they saw reverence and quiet. With just nine of us in church that night, there was a real feeling of reverence as well as togetherness, as everyone assumed a role in the singing and movements of the procession.

On Holy Thursday night, at the moment we put up the cross in front of the church, there was total silence in the church. We often experience quiet (or maybe not) in our lives. We can quietly read a book or work in our office, but there are sounds of life around—birds, traffic, wind, rustling of clothing as we shift in our chairs. But that moment on Holy Thursday night was profound because there was no sound at all. With the church darkened, it felt like we were at the crucifixion.

We celebrated Holy Week in a way that was more historically accurate. There were not hundreds of people at the burial of Christ, or at the Resurrection. There were only a few. These events were small and private. Yes, we missed the crowds on Palm Sunday, that would have been historically accurate, but the rest of the week, the absence of crowds actually made it more historically accurate.

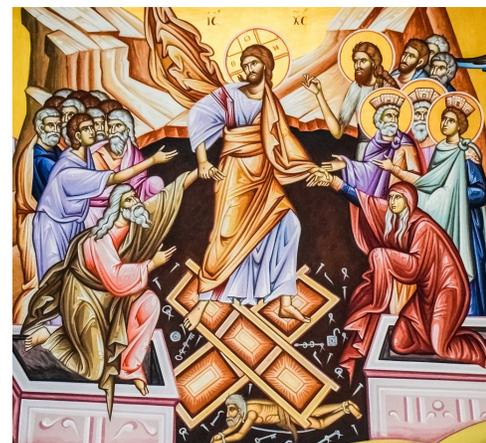
We've all read in books and heard the stories of the church being underground during periods of persecution and occupation. We've all heard of the churches operating behind locked doors, when people weren't free to come and worship. Now, for once (and hopefully only once) in our lives, we can say we experienced the same thing, absence from church and worship as we know it. We experienced what the church was like during its first three centuries (and later during the Ottoman oppression). And during those first three centuries, the

church grew at a rate of 10 percent per decade. This crisis could be a seminal moment for our church, and for Christianity, propelling it on an upward trajectory, just as the early church was on a constant upward trajectory. Of course, once life returns to normal, with all of its distractions, we could again become complacent. I, for one, have not missed the hustle and bustle of life's distractions. I haven't missed sports. And when they come back on TV, I will watch, but I will watch less. There is so much more to do with life than spend it on the couch.

Many more people watched our services than would have attended them. With less to do, several people told me that they watched every night. Several told me that next year they plan to attend more services. We did two additional services this year, the Vespers of Palm Sunday and the entire Bridegroom service of Holy Wednesday. We plan to keep those.

God uses even bad for good. My heart sank when the power dropped for a moment at midnight at the Resurrection. I couldn't believe we had a power failure at the most important moment of the week. Because of this, we sent out my Paschal sermon on several platforms and more people read it and shared it than ever would have had we not had that power failure. I would not have put it our publicly. So, God used even something negative for something positive.

I hope we will remember this year's Holy Week next year and in the years to come, that we won't take it for granted as maybe we have in the past, and that we will put in the same preparation and same passion we had for worshipping at home to worshipping in our church.



## Fr. Stavros' Paschal Sermon

It seems almost disingenuous to invite you to “come and receive the Light” when you are not standing in the church, able to hold a candle to receive a flame from the Holy Altar. And yet, “virtual” or not, this is exactly what we are going to sing in a few minutes. Since the beginning of my priesthood, I have offered a few words in the dark, and then emerged from the Holy Altar with the Light of Christ, and in a few minutes, the entire church is bathed with the warm glow of lit candles. This year, I have been contemplating this short homily for a few weeks, stumped at what I could say, knowing that this year, the light will be shared with only a few people, and the church will remain largely darkened. Yesterday afternoon, I had a moment of clarity about the Light of Christ. The Light of Christ is not a flame that ignites a candle. One can hold a lit candle and still be filled with darkness. The Light of Christ is a grace that ignites our souls, whether we are holding a lit candle or not. And so tonight, we are not going to light candles in our church, but the flame of our souls can still be kindled with the Light of Christ, as we proclaim His Resurrection, and reaffirm not only our faith, but how this faith affects our lives. During the Divine Liturgy tonight, we will read from the Gospel of John, how no darkness can overtake the Light of Christ—not a virus, not a recession, not a loss of vacation or graduation, not the death of a family member—nothing can overtake the Light of Christ, nothing can put out His flame in your soul. The whole point of the Holy Week journey, and the reason it culminates in the giving of the Paschal Light is so that we can strengthen our souls. It's not about getting the “fos” to our homes. It's about kindling our souls. So that if the flame in your soul feels like it is going out, tonight in the Resurrection, you can light it anew. If it is flickering, you can strengthen it. And if it is already burning brightly, it can burn even more brightly.

Many times during this Lenten season, we have offered the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, during which a candle is raised with the

and to keep our resolve even stronger, once this crisis has passed, to remember in our hearts, what it was like to yearn for Christ in the Eucharist.

The Light of Christ is a light that shines in darkness and no darkness can overtake it. The light of a candle is not the Light of Christ. Blow on a candle and it goes out. Walk in the wind and the candle blows out. The Light of Christ cannot be put out by a blow of a crisis, or by the wind of change.

The peace of Christ is a peace that passes all understanding, a peace that can come even in the midst of conflict. No crisis can take away Christ's peace. It can take away financial peace, but not Christ's peace.

The love of Christ is a love that knows no boundaries. Even the worst sinner can still be loved by Christ. No crisis changes that either.

So tonight, receive the Light of Christ, not as a physical flame to light a candle, but as a spiritual flame to ignite your soul. Receive the peace of Christ and use it as a comfort in this time of uncertainty. Receive the love of Christ, and wherever you are in your life, accept His love. We also have the power to give Christ-like love—we can love even the least of our brethren, we can forgive those who have wronged us, we can make a new start with ourselves or with others. This is what Christ's love is all about, and it's very much on the table tonight as well.

The light that burns on the altar table from which the Paschal candle is lit has remained lit for my entire ministry at St. John. The light never gets extinguished, it just gets transferred to a new candle every few days. If anyone is concerned that they won't get the Paschal light this year, when we all return to our church, I'd be happy to light a candle from the altar candle at any time. We have the Paschal Light burning at all times on the Holy Altar table.

I close this Lent with a prayer that we will make the journey next year, as we are used to making it. When I reflect on this Holy Week, I will do so with thanksgiving for what was, and not what wasn't. I will focus on the good that came out of it, and will hopefully still come out of it long after we complete this journey.

And I will have joy, based on a hymn we will sing tonight—O Divine, O Beloved, O sweetest voice, You promised that You would be with us until the close of the age. With this as our anchor of hope, we rejoice.

God is always with us. And with this as our anchor of hope, we can rejoice, even tonight, even as we mark the Resurrection like this. The truth of the Resurrection and the promise of salvation are unaffected by our present crisis. In fact, the present crisis will hopefully motivate and inspire us to hold fast to that truth and place our hope in that promise. As St. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.” We have gotten through this week with Him. We will get through this crisis with Him.

A stay at home order has separated us from the church tonight, but as we read in Romans 8:38-39, “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”



words “The Light of Christ illumines all people.” Anyone who wants to know Christ will be illumined by His light. We pray tonight for illumination—to navigate our way through crisis and a return to life as we know it; to keep our faith strong in this time of isolation, until we can return to our community;

# The Goal of Orthodox Christianity

By John Kokenis

Χριστός Ανέστη! As we have now entered into the Paschal season, we are reminded with hymns of our great Lord and Savior's conquering of death through death. Since Christ has risen, what is our goal now as Christians? It may, perhaps, be stated that the primary purpose, τέλος, of an Orthodox Christian is communion with God, theosis. This particular end may be achieved through the process of communion not only with Christ Jesus but also with the Church as a whole. Furthermore, this concept may be derived from the Trinitarian Theology of God, the Eucharistic Tradition, and even from ecclesiastical authority.

The basic definition of communion must be understood in both secular and ecclesial terminology. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, communion is defined as "the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially on a mental or spiritual level". The very notion of κοινωμία is perhaps much more abstract in regards to Orthodox Christianity. In other words, this noun is more thought of as an action in which all the faithful gather for the glorification of God thus becoming one body of believers which may be seen in the writings of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many." (1 Corinthians 12:13-14). This sense of communion, which may be taken from the understanding of the "one body of believers", continues on from the basic theological concept of the Trinity to the very essence of the Eucharist which is arguably the most important sacrament in the Orthodox Church.

According to John Zizioulas in his address to the World Council of Churches, the understanding of koinonia in regard to ecclesiology has shifted from basic terms of Christology, as supported by Lausanne and Edinburgh, to later include the Holy Trinity. Furthermore, the overall concept of communion was seemingly adopted by the World Council of Churches after the second Vatican Council which has thus taken center stage in the ecumenical dialogues. Why has the notion of koinonia become such an important concept with the Church and throughout the ecumenical dialogues? Zizioulas offers a pertinent answer to this question:

*Koinonia derives not from sociological experience, nor from ethics, but from faith. We are not called to koinonia because it is "good" for us and for the Church, but because we believe in a God who is in His very being Koinonia. If we believe in a God who is primarily an individual, who first is and then relates, we are not far from a sociological understanding of koinonia; the Church in this case is not in her being communion, but only secondarily, i.e. for the sake of her bene esse. The doctrine of the Trinity acquires in this case a decisive significance: God is Trinitarian; He is a relational being by definition; a non-trinitarian God is not koinonia in his very being.*

Taken from this statement, it is to be understood that the Orthodox Theology is definitively based on the existence and faith of the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three Persons of the Holy Trinity make up the ONE God and are of one essence yet distinct from one another. Therefore, such a perfect being which is of three Persons yet entirely distinct and at the same time completely unified is the basis of koinonia. In other words, the Holy Trinity is the example of communion which the Church is supposed to emulate for the benefit of the faithful. Furthermore, the Church itself is not in its being the essence of koinonia. Instead, communion is a goal which the Or-

thodox Christian sets to achieve through the celebration of the Eucharist.

Regarding the Holy Trinity more generally, it is stated that "Christians believe in a complex God, in whom the three persons and their unique relations subsist in a single κοινωμία. God is this communion in difference". This intricate notion of a Triune God who is one of three may be rather confusing but it sets the basis for the Trinitarian theology and subsequently the communal theology of the Church. The last part of this quotation must be underlined: "communion in difference". The Trinity consists of God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each person making up one person of the Triune Godhead.

How can koinonia be achieved through the Eucharist and why is this concept relevant? The Eucharist of the Orthodox Church has evolved throughout the past two millennia and continues to evolve to the present day. From the beginning, the faithful gathered together in order to celebrate Holy Communion, also known as the Eucharistic Assembly. Plainly stated, the idea of koinonia, from the beginning, was more than an idea or concept, it was an action of the Church Body. The term εκκλησία was quite literally applied in the everyday life of the Christian. This word, Church, comes from the two words εκ and καλέω. The first means out and the second means call. Therefore, the entire term εκκλησία means to call out. Thus, to be part of the Church was to literally be called out of oneself in order to live the faith. Holy Communion may therefore be understood as faith in action as it was an example of true faith and communion of fellowship between believers.

In regards to the authority of the Church, Zizioulas describes it as "relational". He explains that ecclesial authority is not derived simply from one's office or own person, but rather from communion which is proffered by the Holy Spirit. This truth is exemplified in the thinking and theology of the Church in regards to the Ecumenical Councils which too derive their authority and guidance from the Holy Spirit. Thus, all things done in the Church are done only by the grace of God and under the authority of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the understanding of the ecclesial authority is directly in line with the main ideas of koinonia theology.

Beyond being the primary purpose of an Orthodox Christian, communion is too, perhaps, the main mission of the modern Church. In the document concerning the Orthodox Church's relations to the rest of the Christian World from the Council of Crete, it is stated that "the responsibility of the Orthodox Church for unity as well as her ecumenical mission were articulated by the Ecumenical Councils. These stressed most especially the indissoluble bond between true faith and sacramental communion" In addition to this, it is stated that "participation in the movement to restore unity with other Christians in the One, Holy, and Apostolic Church is in no way foreign to the nature and history of the Orthodox Church". These statements affirm that it is one of the primary missions of the Church to achieve unity for all the Christians of the World and it is affirmed that "all Christians work together so that the day may soon come when the Lord will fulfill the hope of the Orthodox Churches and there will be 'one flock and one shepherd' (John 10:16).

# Liturgical Schedule for May 2020

<b>Sunday, May 3</b>	<b>Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearers</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, May 6	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
<b>Friday, May 8</b>	<b>St. John the Theologian/St. Arsenios</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
<b>Sunday, May 10</b>	<b>Sunday of the Paralytic</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
<b>Wednesday, May 13</b>	<b>Mid-Pentecost</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
<b>Friday, May 15</b>	<b>Fr. Stavros' Anniversary of Ordination to the Priesthood</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
<b>Sunday, May 17</b>	<b>Sunday of the Samaritan Woman</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, May 20	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
<b>Thursday, May 21</b>	<b>Sts. Constantine and Helen</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
<b>Sunday, May 24</b>	<b>Sunday of the Blind Man</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
<b>Tuesday, May 26</b>	<b>Apodosis (Leave-Taking) of Pascha (Evening Divine Liturgy)</b> Orthros 5:15 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday, May 27	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
<b>Thursday, May 28</b>	<b>Ascension</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
<b>Sunday, May 31</b>	<b>Sunday of the Holy Fathers</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, June 3	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
<b>Saturday, June 6</b>	<b>Saturday of the Souls</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
<b>Sunday, June 7</b>	<b>Pentecost</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit 11:00 a.m.

## 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.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

# Liturgical Notes for May 2020

**Paraklesis Service of Supplication to be celebrated every Wednesday until the end of the Coronavirus Crisis**—There is a service called the Paraklesis Service of Supplication the Virgin Mary which is celebrated during the first 14 days of August, and also in times of sorrow, distress and necessity. During this time of crisis, where people are sick and people are anxious, where life is more in isolation and our community is dispersed, we will offer this service every Wednesday at 6:00 p.m., praying for our community by name, until this crisis is over. On the first Wednesday after we are ALL able to return to church, we will celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Unction on that Wednesday at 6:00 p.m.

**The Pentecostarion - The 50 Days After Pascha** The period of 50 days between Pascha & Pentecost is referred to as the “Pentecostarion.” The period of forty days between Pascha Sunday and the day of the Ascension is known as the period of Pascha (or Easter). It is a period set aside by the Church for the specific celebration of Christ’s glorious resurrection. It is a celebration of “rebirth”. . . .The rebirth of God’s creation which surrounds us, and the rebirth of the spirit within each and every one of us! This period is not merely a ritualistic celebration but a celebration which can be seen, felt, heard and talked about. It is a very REAL celebration which CAN make our entire being jump with JOY. It is a celebration which offers us HOPE. It is a celebration which offers us the TRUE FREEDOM found only in Jesus Christ! During the 40 days of Pascha, we are to greet each other with the greeting “Christ is Risen” or “Χριστός Ανέστη!,” to which the response is “Truly He is Risen” or “Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!”



**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’ll 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 28 is on the Feast of Pentecost 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.”

**Sunday, May 3 - Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women** They came to anoint Jesus’ body, but found an EMPTY tomb. We also commemorate Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

**Friday, May 8 - Feast of St. John the Theologian and St. Arsenios** On May 8, we celebrate the feast days of St. John the Theologian, the author of the fourth Gospel, as well as the Epistles of St. John and the book of Revelation, and also celebrate the feast of St. Arsenios, a monk of the 5th Century.

**Sunday, May 10 - Sunday of the Paralytic** The healing of the paralytic who was afflicted for many years. This event bears witness to Christ’s authority over the human body: He who can overcome death in His own body has power over all human flesh.

**Wednesday, May 13 – Feast of Mid-Pentecost**

The icon depicts Christ the teacher, foreshadows the teaching to the Samaritan Woman, celebrated the following Sunday, and it is the feast day of teachers. About the middle of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus went up again to the Temple and taught. The Jews, marveling at the wisdom of His words, said, “How does this man know letters having never learned?” But Christ first reproached their unbelief and lawlessness, then proved to them by the Law that they sought to slay Him unjustly, supposedly as a despiser of the Law, since He had healed the paralytic on the Sabbath. This feast is held mid-way between Pascha and Pentecost.



**Friday, May 15 - Feast of St. Pachomios—Fr. Stavros’ Anniversary of Ordination** - Fr. Stavros was ordained to the Holy Priesthood of the Greek Orthodox Church on May 15, 1998. This will mark his 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. Every year, Fr. Stavros marks this anniversary by celebrating Divine Liturgy in thanksgiving for the gift of priestly ministry.

**Sunday, May 17 - Sunday of the Samaritan Woman** Christ talks about the water of eternal life which will never make us thirst again. The woman here is St. Photini.

**Thursday, May 21 - Sts. Constantine and Helen** May 21 commemorates the feast of Sts. Constantine and Helen. St. Constantine was the emperor of the Roman Empire who decided to make Christianity the official religion of the empire. For the first time in history, the Christian church would not fall under persecution. St. Constantine also moved the capital of the Empire from Rome to Constantinople (present day Istanbul, Turkey), where he inaugurated the Byzantine Empire which flourished from 325 until 1453. He also convened the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in the year 325, which inaugurated what is known as the “golden age of Orthodoxy,” and resulted in the writing of the Nicene Creed (edited to its current version in the year 381). St. Helen, the mother of St. Constantine, is recognized as being the person who found the true cross of Christ in Jerusalem. She went on a pilgrimage to the Holy City and searched diligently for the Cross, finding it under a patch of Basil (Vasiliko) on the Mountain of Golgotha. Sts. Constantine and Helen have the title *Isapostolou*, “Equal to the Apostles” because of the tremendous contributions they made to the Orthodox Christian Church.



## Sunday, May 24 - Sunday of the Blind Man

The theme of LIGHT! Commemoration of the healing of the blind man which leads us to the reality of the healing of our own spiritual blindness.

**Tuesday, May 26 - Apodosis (Leave-Taking) of Pascha** -This marks the end of the Paschal Season. It is a repeat of the Resurrection Service and Liturgy of Pascha and is the last time of the Liturgical year that we sing Χριστός Ανέστη. We will celebrate this feast on Tuesday, June 4, with an evening Liturgy at 6:00 p.m. (Orthros will begin at 5:15 p.m. and is a replication of the Resurrection Service from Pascha).

## Thursday, May 28 - Ascension

This marks the feast where Christ ascended to heaven, 40 days after the Resurrection, thus completing His earthly ministry.

**Sunday, May 31 - Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council** We pay homage to the collective triumph of the Church over false doctrine. The first Ecumenical Council authored the Creed. It took place in Nicaea in the year 325. This is why we call the Creed "The Nicene Creed." This Council also established the date of Pascha and decided on which books would comprise the Bible.



# Archangel Michael Winners

*And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. -2 Corinthians 8:5*

The Archangel Michael Feast was prayerfully conceived by His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios upon arriving in Atlanta, as the annual double feast of the Metropolis family. Since 1998, the Metropolis family comes together in Atlanta on the weekend of, prior to or following the November 8 Feast day of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel.

It is to honor and celebrate the Patron Saint of our Metropolis and the lives of two people from each parish, who are living examples of the Orthodox Christian life and journey to Theosis. By extension, this special Metropolis feast also serves as the annual Metropolis celebration and thanksgiving for all devout stewards of the faith, giving their time and talent.

**This year's award winners are Alkis Crassas and Catherine Mitseas  
Congratulations Alkis and Catherine!**

## Stewardship Update

**April 23, 2020 Total families pledged 337 Total pledged \$459,170 Total collected \$240,555**

*April 23, 2019 Total families pledged 331 Total pledged \$481,691 Total collected \$211,831*

As you can see, we are ahead of last year in terms of how much has been collected. We are behind as far as families and total pledged. If you haven't submitted a pledge form yet, please do so today. If you are able to increase your pledge, please prayerfully consider doing so. If you are unable to fulfill your pledge because your job situation has changed, please let us know as well.

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

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

### Live Streaming

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

To access this page

1. Go to our Church's website: [greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com](http://greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com),
2. Scroll the mouse over the "Multimedia" tab on the menu bar,
3. Click "View Liturgy,"
4. Then click on the link where it says, "Check out our live stream of the

Divine Liturgy here <http://new.livestream.com/accounts/2454446>. **All of the services are available to watch at anytime.**

### Pictures

Go to Flickr.com and search "St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church" or go to [www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoctampa](http://www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoctampa)



# 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 May. 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.

## May 3-9

*He determines the number of the stars, He give to all of them their names. Psalm 147:4*

I remember first becoming aware of this verse of the Psalms the day that the space shuttle Columbia exploded over Texas in February 2003. I remember that President Bush quoted it in his address to the nation that afternoon. It really struck me that he would quote this verse in the time of a national tragedy. Even in the time of national sorrow, there was a sense that God is still in charge, and still great. If can know the number of stars, which is infinite, and know the name of each, how much more can He know us, who are a finite number of people. In this time of crisis, it is comforting to know that God knows each of our names, and our needs, just like He knows the names of each of the stars.

## May 10-16

*Lead Thou me to the rock that is higher than I. Psalm 61:2*

We are a society that likes to climb. We see an opportunity to achieve or conquer and we go for it. Many times, we get to what we think is the top, only to find there are higher rocks to climb. This can leave us almost perpetually unsatisfied as well as exhausted. When we put our trust in the Lord, we focus on the “rock” of our salvation, which is higher than the rock of career or social achievement. Because many of us have had to cut back on work, or approach work differently, or are merely trying to hold on to our jobs, this is not a month of career achievement. Because we are isolated, there is no social movement either. The rock of salvation is still there to be scaled. This is a great time, without the usual distractions, to climb higher on God’s rock. This verse also asks God to lead us to Him, rather than leading us to secular achievement. And in the area of secular achievement, even there, it asks God for Him to use us for His purposes in all that we do,

rather than just our own purposes.

## May 17-23

*I love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in Whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalm 18:1-2*

How do we fill in the blank of this statement—“I love You, O Lord, my \_\_\_\_\_” There are lots of things we can fill in there. I love You Lord, my insurance policy (I don’t think of you much but I think of you enough in case you are real); or I love You Lord, when it is convenient (when everyone else is honoring God, it is certainly easier); or I love You Lord a couple of times a year (because everyone thinks of the Lord on Christmas and Pascha); or I love You Lord when things are going well (but when things don’t go well You are the first to get blamed). Ideally, we see the Lord as our strength, our rock, our fortress. A fortress is something that protects us. So, in seeing God this way, we see Him are our protector. And in times of crisis (and non-crisis), He is the one we go to for our strength.

## May 24-30

*My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. Psalm 121:2*

In this time of crisis, people are looking for help from various sources. Some are glued to the TV news cycle. Others are looking for financial assistance from the government. Everyone has an opinion on how everything is going. Many of us are entrenched in camps as either we are over-reacting, or under-reacting or not sure how to react. Many of us wonder how long the crisis is going to last and what society will look like on the other side. Many are sad at how quickly our normal lives just fell apart. This Psalm verse reminds us that our best source, our most consistent source, and our never wavering source of help is from the Lord. Many of us are quick to turn on the news each day. May we be as quick to get on our knees and pray for divine help.

## May 31-June 6

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress; my God in Whom I trust.” Psalm 91:1-2*

The images portrayed in the Psalms are very powerful. As I read this verse, I imagine a tent pitched on a hillside overlooking a busy city. Except that the tent is God Himself, shielding and sheltering me. Sometimes when I’m in church, especially in the winter when it’s dark, I sit in the empty pews, with just the votive lights on the icon screen illuminated. I can barely see the icon of Christ in the dome of the church, but He is there, hovering over everything, bringing a sense of peace even in the darkness. As we are still in some darkness over the coronavirus and where it is taking our society, we can be at peace knowing that the Lord hovers above everything. We sit in His shadow. If we perceive darkness and don’t look up, we might think we are dark and isolated. But if we look up to Christ, we will realize that we are in His shadow.

# St. John the Baptist Community News

## Parish Registry

**Trisagion**-Eleonora Yotis passed away on April 16. A Trisagion was held on Monday, April 20. May her memory be eternal!

**Funeral**-Effie Sorolis passed away on April 16. Her funeral was held on Tuesday, April 21. May her memory be eternal!

Condolences to the following people:

-Mary Nenos, on the death of her sister Eleni Benetos, who passed away on March 20.

-Anna De Jesus and Irene Caban, on the death of their father, Thomas Tataris, on March 29.

-Jon and Pam Irwin, on the death of her father, William Botner, on March 24.

-John Zelatis, on the death of his father, Panos, on April 10.

-Karen Clay, on the death of her son, Michael Philips, on March 25.

-Roberto Rodriguez, on the death of his brother Nektarios, who passed away on March 30.

*May their memories be eternal!*

**GOYA**-There will be a GOYA Zoom meeting on Sunday, May 3 at 5:00 p.m. Details will come via constant contact email.

**Recognizing Aris Rogers**—In the “count the wins” category for our parish, we’d like to congratulate Aris Rogers, our head altar captain, as well as aspiring actor, on his recent guest appearance on the season finale of Chicago PD. Congratulations Aris! Great job!

**Monday night Bible study** will continue in May via zoom. The Monday night Bible study with Charlie will be held on May 4, 11 and 18 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. If you are not currently part of the Monday night Bible study and would like to join in, please contact Charlie at [chambos@stjohntpa.org](mailto:chambos@stjohntpa.org) and he will add you.

**Women’s Bible study** will also continue in May via zoom. The women’s Bible study will meet from 10:00-11:30 a.m. on Tuesdays, May 5, 12, 19 and 26. If you are currently not part of the women’s Bible study and would like to join in, please contact Fr. Stavros at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com) and he will add you.

**GriefShare** to resume in August—Thank you to Donna Hambos for finishing our second semester of GriefShare, our small group ministry dedicated to people who have lost loved ones. This group will resume either in later August or early September with another 13-week program. We know that there have been several people this spring who have lost loved ones. Please keep this very beneficial program in mind over the summer so that you can participate in the fall.

**MEN'S**  
GROUP

**Men’s Group** - The Men’s group will meet on Sunday, May 17 at 5:00 p.m. for our monthly meeting. A zoom invitation will be sent to all current group members. If you’d like to participate and haven’t previously, please contact Fr. Stavros at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com) and I’ll add you to the zoom invitation.

## Congratulations to our Graduates!

If you have a student who is graduating, please email all information to the church office by Friday, May 15 so we can include graduates in the June/July issue of *The Messenger*! **Please provide:** Name and Picture of the graduate, the institution graduating from, any degree, in the case of a college graduate, and what college the person plans to attend, in the case of the high school graduate.

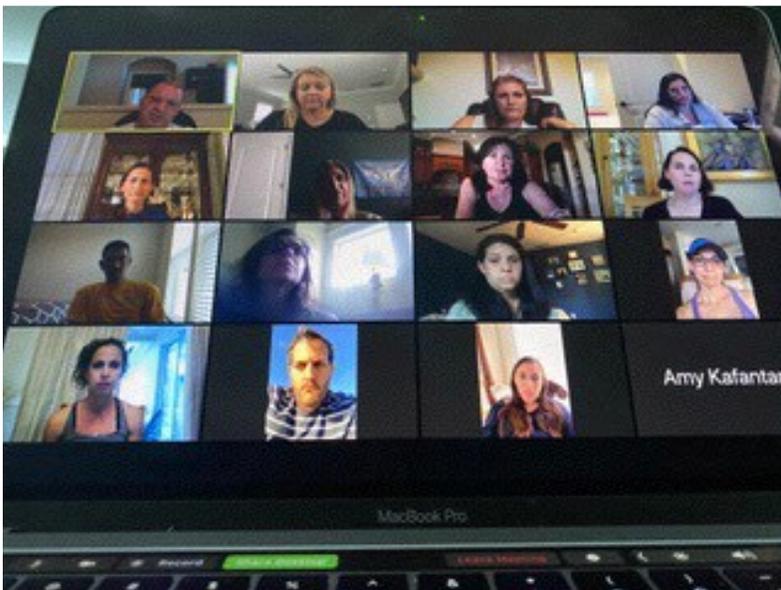
# Parish Ministry ZOOM Meetings



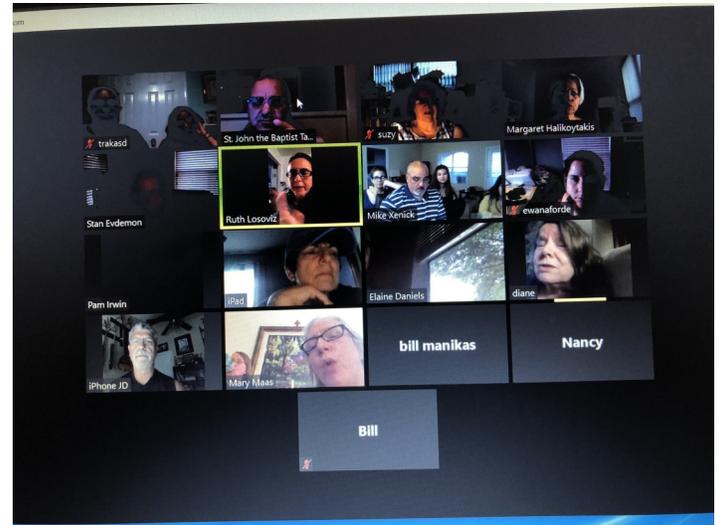
General GOYA Meeting



Senor GOYA Meeting



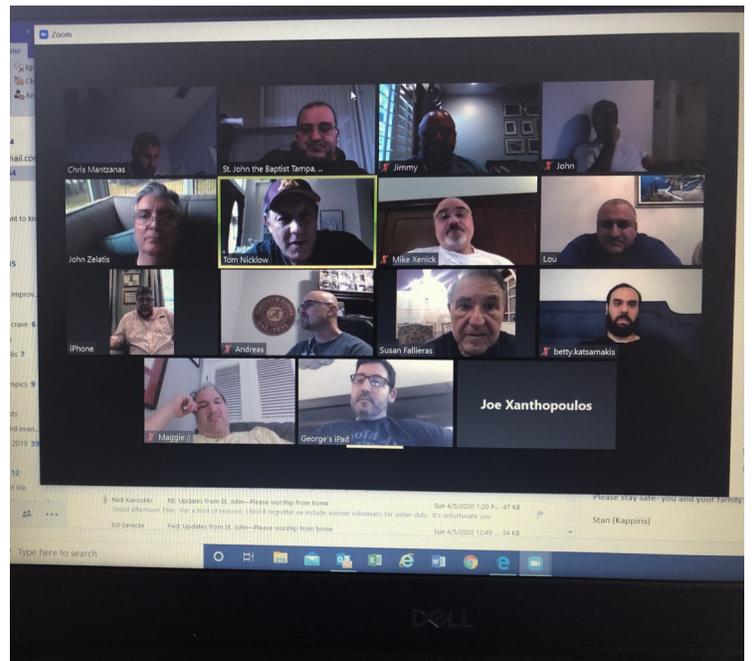
Sunday School Teacher Meeting



Choir Meeting



Young at Heart Meeting



Men's Group Meeting

**Please do your best to support local businesses in general, and of our parishioners in particular.**

***Below, please find a list of small business owned and/or operated by our parishioners.***

**ABC PIZZA**

(Owned by Anthony and Carole Fotopoulos)  
1242 WEST HILLSBOROUGH AVE. TAMPA  
(813) 237-3324 Take Out Only

**Accustar Accounting Inc.**

Fran Prokos, Founder and CEO  
Tax Preparation, Business and Personal  
Accounting, CFO services, Business Consulting, Business  
Start Ups. Working from Home Office during Covid 19  
Direct: 727-510-7378  
Office: 813-886-4644  
Fax: 813-888-8097  
AccustarTax@gmail.com/AccustarTax@aol.com

AlexRoyEvents Music Entertainment.

Email alexroyevents@gmail.com  
Ph. 813-455-2461 Website:www.djalexroy.com  
Facebook: Alexandros Roy  
Instagram : @djalexroy  
Live Streams on Facebook and Instagram daily.

**Bavaros**

514 N Franklin St Downtown Tampa  
813-868-4440 Bavarospizza.com  
Tues-Sat 11-9pm  
We offer Uber and Bitesquad for delivery and curbside pickup  
with call ahead ordering/payment.

**Bradenton Flower Shop**

(Owned by Maria Geis)  
5262 East St Rd 64  
Bradenton FL, 34208  
941-727-4111 www.bradentonflowershop.com  
bradentonflowers@gmail.com  
We are taking online and phone orders for curb side pickup and  
no contact delivery.

**Peggy Bradshaw**

https://peggybradshaw.floify.com/  
(727) 244-1374  
Branch Manager of Van Dyk Mortgage South Tampa  
3502 Henderson Blvd. Tampa, FL

**George S. Chagaris, CPA, P.A.**

2901 W. Busch Blvd., Ste. 405  
Tampa, FL 33618-4582  
(p): (813) 282-1990 e-mail: GChagarisCPA@aol.com

**John Demas - Classical Guitarist - Greek Bouzouki**

813.240.5199  
https://sites.google.com/site/livemusicintampa/  
Instagram:https://www.instagram.com/john.demas.music/  
https://sites.google.com/site/johndemastheomegaproject/

**EVOS South Tampa**

For other locations near you visit evos.com  
Open 7 days for lunch and dinner  
Order Delivery: UberEats-EVOS or evos.com  
Order Takeout: EVOS/Toast app or evos.com  
Text/email an EVOS gift card: EVOS eGift Cards  
EVOS is locally owned and operated by the Crassas family.

**Alexandra Fitos**

Weichert Yates and Associates

Cell phone 813-943-6464

I am a realtor specializing in residential and commercial sales  
in Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco counties. I am currently  
working remotely Via virtual consulting and appointments.

**JoAnn Hartung**

Realtor with Fazzini Group at REMAX Realtec  
Residential agent specializing in Pinellas County  
727-432-0228

**Markissia Touliatos Portraits and Other Fine Art**

www.markissia.com  
markissiat@gmail.com  
727-560-8161

I am a freelance artist working from home in my own studio. I  
specialize in corporate and private original oil painted por-  
traits. I do art restoration as well. I work from photographs that  
can be emailed to me.

**Qvita Health and Wellness**

Primary Care and Cosmetic Services  
Peggy Demetriou, FNP, APRN-BC  
2734 Windguard Circle, suite 101  
Wesley Chapel, FL 33544  
813-501-4130 www.qvitahealthandwellness.com

**Retina Vitreous Associates of Florida**

(Dr. Karina Findlay)  
multiple offices throughout Tampa Bay  
retinavitreous.com  
(813)987-2000  
Open 8:00-5:00 M-F with on call physicians nights and week-  
ends Retinal care and urgent ocular needs

**Robinson Essentials -Young Living Essential Oils**

text: 813-278-7450  
www.TanyaRobinsonEssentials.com  
Products for immune support, emotional support, and various  
other things

**The Sakkis Group / KW Tampa Properties**

Full service real estate with over 30 years experience  
813-309-1073 ksakkis@sakkisgroup.com sakkisgroup.kw.com/

**South Tampa Sugar Mama**

Home baking business owned by Maria Xenick.  
Custom homemade, hand-decorated cookies for holidays and  
special events. I operate under the Cottage Food Law of Flori-  
da, and during this time, I am also offering free delivery for  
contactless transactions.  
maria@southatmpasugarmama.com  
https://www.facebook.com/southtampasugarmama/

**True Life Wealth Management** (Owned by Alex Skijus)

www.TrueLifeWealthManagement.com  
We are a financial services business that specializes in reducing  
unnecessary taxes for individuals and business owners for their  
retirement.

**Zomesa, LLC**

John P. Zelatis  
Accounting, Bookkeeping, Payroll, Taxes Back Office Support  
15459 Martinmeadow Drive. Lithia, FL 33547  
P: (813) 654-5144 F: (813) 433-2516 C:(813) 727-2271  
zelatis@zomesa.com www.zomesa.com

## **Announcing the Parish Assistance Program (PAP)**

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is excited to share that, beginning May 1st, we will be offering a Parish Assistance Program, PAP, with BayCare Behavioral Health. The PAP program will provide our parishioners access to free and confidential counseling services - offering additional support when life's challenges become overwhelming. The PAP utilizes a network of faith-based providers and are sensitive to the values and beliefs of those they serve and provide compassionate care to children, adults, parents, and seniors.

Parishioners can contact BayCare to request up to three free and confidential counseling sessions from a licensed mental health professional. The BayCare helpline, 800-878-5470, is answered 24/7 by mental health professionals. Many BayCare therapists are also offering telephonic and virtual counseling sessions to help parishioners maintain their emotional wellbeing during these trying times.

**Through BayCare Behavioral Health, your parish has access to help for those suffering from the emotional turmoil that results from the challenges of everyday life. These challenges span a lifetime.**

**BayCare Behavioral Health understands the importance of compassionate care. Our network providers are sensitive to the values and beliefs of those they serve.**

**Help is available for life issues including:**

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Family discord
- Marital problems
- Substance abuse issues
- Behavioral issues

**Services offered:**

- Toll-free confidential helpline available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year
- Problem identification
- Assessment
- Referral to face-to-face counseling
- Referral to community resources

**For more information: (800) 878-5470**



# Community Outreach Saturday, May 16 We Want You to Serve with Us!

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

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

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

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

### Volunteer Check-In Process:

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

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

**Here is the URL for the Sign Up Genius** for every upcoming 3rd Saturday of Month. Find the dates that work for you and sign up.  
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f48a5a62da3f49-community>



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

## Thank You to all of Our Friends!

George & Maria Andros - Birmingham, AL

Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA

William J Camarinos - Alexandria, VA

Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC

Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL

Gabriel & Irene Hurst - Tampa, FL

Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL

Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI

John & Cathie Koch - Tarpon Springs, FL

Perry & Fay Stamatiades - Asheville, NC

Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI

Wesley & Melissa Thompson - Clearwater, FL

Demetrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH

Bessie Bliziotis - Palm Cost, FL

Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL

Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL

William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL

Lillan Thomas - Highland, IN

Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL

Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD

Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA

Nicholas & Vaso Anton - Dunedin, FL

Kay Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA

Katherine Beasley - Vero Beach, FL

Artemis & Eric Mellen - Longwood, FL

Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL

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

### Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

Friend of St. John the Baptist:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$200 \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Please mail this form and check to: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church 2418 W. Swann Ave Tampa, FL 33609.

# SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

We hope and pray that your Lenten Journey, Holy Week, and the Resurrection of Christ has been as uplifting as it possible, considering how the pandemic has effected all of us. Thank you Fr. Stavros, Charlie, and John for making this journey as beautiful as can be expected using livestream technology. We are all so blessed to have you as our spiritual leaders.

We truly miss our Sunday School students. Jenivieve Elly, one of our 1st Grade teachers, volunteered to create Sunday School lessons for our students each week during this crisis. We can't thank her enough for her commitment to our children. Jenivieve did lessons for the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of Lent as well as Palm Sunday and Holy Week.

THANK YOU ALL for sending us your two second video of your children waving their palms. It was so joyful to see our children's smiling faces at the end of the Palm Sunday Service.

We also held a VIRTUAL Holy Friday Retreat coordinated by our Hope and Joy Director, Zackie Ameres. For this retreat several of our teachers came together to record video lessons about The Bridegroom Services, The Last Supper, The Betrayal and Trial, The Crucifixion, The Burial, and The Resurrection. The Virtual Retreat included Icons, Scripture, discussion questions, and a craft for each topic. The purpose of the three Holy Friday services and this retreat was to try to keep the day as Holy as we could from our homes, while still being "one" in spirit.

Huge shout out to Ms. Zackie Ameres, Ms. Vickie Peckham, Ms. Maria Xenick for their video lessons, Charlie Hambos, as cameraman, and a very big shout out to Ms. Jenivieve Elly for putting the whole thing together.

Our teachers even had a ZOOM Sunday School Meeting to

## Nursing Ministry Report: *Understanding Diabetes*

The purpose of this article is to help you better understand the two types of diabetes, know the signs and symptoms to look for, and to learn some ways to keep the disease under control to prevent complications. There is no cure for diabetes, but it can be managed to prevent health complications.

Insulin is one of the main hormones that regulates blood sugar levels (the amount of sugar in your bloodstream) and allows the body to use the sugar from the foods you eat. Diabetes is a disease that occurs when the body cannot make insulin (type 1 diabetes) or by the body not responding well to the effects of the insulin it makes (type 2 diabetes).

**Type 1 Diabetes**, previously known as juvenile diabetes, is a form of diabetes in which very little or no insulin is produced by the body. For some unknown reason, the body has an autoimmune problem where it fights against and loses the cells that produce insulin. Lack of this important hormone means the body is unable to regulate sugar in the bloodstream, which is very important in keeping the body and all its functions healthy and working properly. Because of this, people with Type I Diabetes usually have to take insulin in the form of injections for their entire lifespan.

**Type 2 Diabetes** is a chronic condition that affects the way your body metabolizes sugar. Type 2 diabetes develops when the body becomes resistant to insulin or when the body is unable to produce enough insulin to regulate blood sugar levels. Exactly why this happens is unknown, but genetics and environmental factors, such as being overweight and inactive, seem

plan and prepare for this VIRTUAL SUNDAY SCHOOL!

We also asked our parents to continue their children's religious education program at home with the following ideas:

- + Watch St. John's Live Stream together and discuss what is happening and why.
- + Read the Bible together and have a family discussion.
- + Read other Christian children's books together.
- + Read the daily Prayer Team written by Fr. Stavros with your children.
- + Watch and discuss the Lord's Prayer workshop Father is conducting after the Pre-Sanctified Wednesday services.
- + Help you children to memorize The Lord's Prayer and The Creed.
- + Search the Internet for Christian projects and activities you can do at home. There are thousands of ideas.
- + DO GOOD DEEDS together. Help others in need, clean the environment, write cards and draw pictures for the elderly in nursing homes that you could drop off at the door. These are just a few examples of things that you could do to help others.
- + The most important: PRAY, PRAY, PRAY.

The Sunday School Staff is praying that you are all well during this very trying time in our society. Please keep the faith that this too will pass and we will all be together again soon. Joshua 1: 9 "Behold, I have commanded you. Be strong and courageous. Do not be cowardly or fearful, for the Lord your God is with you in all things, wherever you go."

**Please note that we will continue to send Sunday School lessons through the Summer for your edification.**

to be contributing factors. Today, more children are being diagnosed with the disorder due to the rise in childhood obesity and sedentary lifestyles. Type 2 Diabetes is treated with lifestyle changes, oral medications, and sometimes insulin injections.

### The classic symptoms of diabetes are:

- Frequent urination
- Excessive thirst
- Increased appetite
- Dry mouth
- Unexplained weight loss
- Blurry vision
- Tiredness

**Prevention- Type 1 Diabetes**, as mentioned earlier, cannot be prevented. However, health problems as a result of Type 1 Diabetes can be prevented by keeping blood sugars within normal limits, maintaining a healthy diet and a normal body weight, regular physical exercise, and avoiding tobacco use.

**Prevention- Type 2 Diabetes** can be prevented in many cases by following these healthy behaviors and lifestyle changes:

- Eat a balanced diet, and cut sugar and refined carbs from your diet
- Exercise regularly – even low or moderate intensity exercise can make a big difference
- Drink water instead of soda or sugary drinks
- Lose weight if you are overweight or obese
- Quit smoking
- Watch your portion sizes, or start to measure out healthy

amounts of food for each meal  
-Avoid sedentary behaviors  
-Eat a diet that is high in fiber  
-Optimize your Vitamin D levels  
-Stay educated about preventing diabetes. New information comes out often, and your best defense is to learn and know

how to prevent it and keep yourself healthy.

If you have questions or need more information on living your best life with Diabetes, please ask one of your ministry nurses.

Marcelle Triantafilou, RN-BC, BSN

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# In Memory of Michael Phillips

Michael Phillips passed away on March 26. He was 39. He had a lifelong disease called Spinal Muscular Atrophy or SMA. Most people with SMA live only a few years. Michael made it to 39. For his last 12 years of life, he had to live with a tracheotomy, which meant he could no longer speak, after he coded and had to be resuscitated in January 2008. Through modern technology, he found his voice again through the computer. In 2008, he appeared on Showtime's "This American Life" hosted by Ira Glass. The episode was titled "Escape" and it chronicled Mike's early life living with a trach. Johnny Depp played his voice during the show, which won 2 Emmys. He was an avid photographer in his early life and had a passion for writing during his entire life. Mike had a blog that was followed by many people. He was also active in political causes, particularly advocating for people with disabilities. Something else about Michael.

He was an Orthodox Christian. When he was born, the doctors didn't give him long to live and so he was baptized by a Serbian Orthodox priest in the hospital. He grew up Catholic, as his family is Catholic. And a chance encounter with his mom and one of our parishioners brought him back to our church. He would come to church a few times a year—many of you may remember him because he came in on a stretcher, with machines hooked up to him and a computer over his head. I had the privilege to hear his confession, an encounter where no words were said, only written. He could move only his eyes and with them could spell out about ten words a minute on his computer. He was also able to receive Holy Communion, by having the residue of the spoon touched to his lips, the only thing that ever touched them. We write about the "wins" in our community, and most of us know the people we lose. Most of us might remember Michael Phillips from his occasional church attendance and his attendance at the Festival. It's important to note that Michael struggled his entire life with illness, that he contributed many things to this world, and that he was one of us, an Orthodox Christian. *May his memory be eternal!*



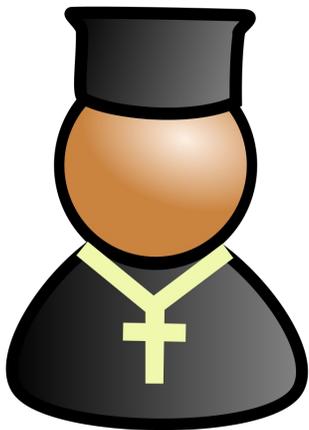
# What Is the Value of Serving the Divine Liturgy with Only a Few People Present?

By Fr. Stavros

I had a memorable conversation years ago with Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware), who shared a story with me about a time he celebrated a Paraklesis service in Oxford, where he lives and teaches, in a small Orthodox chapel. He told me that there were only two people in attendance, and himself. All three held candles. Sometime after the service ended, two visitors stopped by the chapel, and asked the Metropolitan what was going on in the chapel earlier in the evening. The Metropolitan told them that there was a Paraklesis service with two people present. The visitors said that they didn't come in, because when they looked in the window, the whole church was ablaze with candlelight, they thought it was full of people. The Metropolitan said there were only three people in attendance, the other candles must have come from the angels and saints who were also there praying. His Eminence then told me that when I offer incense around the church, especially on occasions when the church has only a few people in it, to cense all the pews, because the angels fill the pews when the people do not. I've never forgotten that.

In a time when the church is empty for every service, save for a few essential personnel and now a video camera, I remember what His Eminence said. There is also a value in celebrating the Divine Liturgy because at the consecration, the priest prays for the Lord to "send down Your Holy Spirit upon US, and upon these gifts here presented." Even when you are at the Liturgy and do not receive Holy Communion, there is a benefit, because we all receive the grace of the Holy Spirit when we are present, in person or virtually, whether or not we partake of the Eucharist. Virtual worship will never replace being present for worship, because worship is a corporate activity, to be done by the entire community together, and because we cannot receive a virtual Eucharist. However, in this time of pandemic where the churches are closed, we remain vigilant in offering the Divine Liturgy because there is still benefit to attending virtually, as there is benefit to the few who are in attendance. It is important to keep the liturgical cycle going and to not suspend it for any reason. Thus the Divine Liturgy will continue to be offered according to the liturgical calendar, throughout the month of May.

## The Priest Who Did Not Want to Serve the Divine Liturgy



There was once a priest who did not want to serve the liturgy because it was a cold winter day.

The temperature was 10 degrees below zero and the priest knew that the only person who was likely to come to the service was the chanter. The priest had no idea about the Church's teaching on the presence of the Triumphant Church and how the Divine Liturgy benefits the living and the departed. With difficulty he forced himself to go to church. On the way to church he kept wishing that the chanter would not come so that he would not have to serve and go home. However, the chanter did come.

The priest did the Prothesis (or Proskomedia, the service of preparing the holy gifts) in a hurry and began the Divine Liturgy. Shortly after, some bishops, priests, monks and nuns and some lay people arrived. Most of them sat in the choir section and began to chant so beautifully that the priest forgot about how cold and lonely he was earlier. His whole body was warm and his whole being was all a flame.... When he did the small entrance he noticed that the church was full of people – most of them familiar – he did not pay much attention and just continued with the Divine Liturgy.

When the time came for the Sanctification of the Holy Gifts he saw three bishops, brightly clothed and radiant entering the Holy Altar. They knelt with him and prayed. The priest then stood up very carefully with fear, took the censer and in a loud voice said, 'Especially our All Holy, Immaculate, Most Blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary...'. The soul

of the priest was amazed and filled with divine joy. Peace and heavenly stillness, hesychia, dominated his inner self. When the time came for the elevation and dividing of the Host (Lamb) the whole church filled with the sweetest melodies. The whole multitude of people who were present along with the monks, priests and bishops chanted not only once but many times, 'One is Holy, One is Lord: Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen'. Next they chanted the Holy Communion hymn, 'Taste and see that the Lord is good, Alleluia.'

The priest was wandering what to do. Should he partake of the Holy Communion first or step aside for the three bishops who were present. Just as he was thinking this, one of the bishops nodded to him indicating that he should receive Holy Communion and then to Unify and Place the remaining of the portions of the Lamb into the Chalice along with the portions in memory of the Holy Theotokos and the Saints. Having completed this the priest then opened the Beautiful Gate ... and saw no one in the Church... he turned and looked back into the holy altar, he looked to the right, looked to the left, the bishops had disappeared, he stood there speechless, amazed. He slowly opened his mouth and chanted the next petition, 'With the fear of God and faith and love, draw near ...,' and the chanter slowly drew near to take Holy Communion. The priest was still amazed, still wondering! The whole Triumphant Church was present. All those present in the church were persons familiar to him, they were persons that had departed from this life and he would from time to time commemorate their names during each liturgy: 'that's why they were present, that's why they all seemed so familiar', he thought. As for the bishops in the altar they were the Three Hierarchs: Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Basil the Great and Saint Gregory the Theologian.

So many years of study at university, so much research and so many sleepless nights he spent studying and these efforts were not able to give him not even one drop of the sweetness and divine knowledge that this one Divine Liturgy gave him.

*Source: Experiences During the Divine Liturgy p451-453*

## A Reflection from Fr. Steve Dalber, Proistamenos of St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church in Charlotte, NC

It is amazing how one of God's smallest of creatures (COVID-19) can bring the world and the most powerful nation the world has ever known to its knees.

This should be a time of contemplation and prayer for all Americans. It should be a time of repentance and humility. Just as God sent Jonah to the great city of Nineveh to warn them of eminent disaster, we should also look at this disease as a warning of worse things to come. This relatively mild disease is infecting thousands around the world. 80% of those who contract it will have mild to no symptoms. 3.6%, thus far have resulted in fatalities. What will happen when a really devastating disease similar to the plague where whoever contracts it will die? 100% fatalities. At a time in history where international travel is so abundant, the world population could be virtually wiped out. Wiped out by the tiniest of creatures.

Nineveh took Jonah's warning seriously. They repented. They looked to God for salvation and were spared destruction. In this modern world where the hubris of technology has lulled humanity into thinking we can fix or cure anything. We think that technology can replace God. In essence we are creating a god from our own achievements. We who have all but rejected the God who created us to serve Him, now believe that we have created a god (technology) to serve us. We have created an idol and worship it. When disaster strikes we pray to this idol and expect to be redeemed by it. Sometimes this works. But, there is a day coming where it will not. That day may not be that far off.

As Orthodox Christians our Church has designated certain times of year where we reflect on and remember that God is our

only savior. Especially during Lenten season this is made evident in the hymns that we chant. The Great Compline "Lord of the powers" and the Salutations "Most holy Theotokos" are examples of our dependence on God for all things. He is the one we look to for salvation. Every year we renew our faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In Nineveh they fasted, wore sackcloth and poured ashes over their heads as a show of repentance. Today we (Orthodox Christians) fast, pray and give alms to show our repentance and dependence on God.

While others are praying and depending on a false, man created, god, we are praying and depending on the God that is the creator of all. A God that can create a tiny creature that has the capability to wipe out humanity is the same God that can save us from it.

During these days of uncertainty and world fear we as Orthodox Christians must on faith and repentance. Fasting and prayer is our life model, never forgetting who the true Ruler of all is. My prayers are with all of you during these days of uncertainty not in a spirit of despair, but rather in a spirit of hope and faith in our Lord. A Lord who was tortured, crucified, died and resurrected as a witness to His love for us. This is the season of remembrance of this extreme love. It is a time when we should rejoice that our God is so loving of His creatures He became man so that men can be forever united to Him as His children in His Kingdom. It is the time of year that we joyfully remember His Resurrection with the triumphal hymn:

Christ is risen from the dead, conquering death by death, and granting life to those in the tomb.

### ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

*With apologies to Dr. Seuss*

I do not like this quarantine  
I do not like this quiet scene  
It seems so very harsh and mean  
To have to keep this quarantine  
Can I go out to the park?  
Can I go out after dark?  
No you can't go to the park  
No you can't go after dark  
Can I go out to the gym?  
Can I work out to get slim?  
No you mustn't be so dim  
Of course you can't go to the gym!  
Nor can you go out to the park  
Even if it's after dark  
Can't I just go out to eat?  
Or to buy an ice cream treat?  
No you can't go out to eat  
Nor to buy an ice cream treat  
And you can't go to the gym  
Not to bulk up or to slim

No you can't go to the park  
Even if it's after dark  
Even if it's harsh and mean  
You have to stay in quarantine!  
I can't! I can't! I'll lose my mind!  
No walks or trips of any kind?  
No walks or trips of any kind  
No great loss if you lose your mind  
So even if you kick and scream  
You have to stay in quarantine!  
Why must I follow this dumb rule  
It seems ridiculous and cruel  
it seems so very harsh and mean  
To be stuck in this quarantine!  
We're doing this to stop the spread  
So no more people end up dead  
This will protect the elderly  
By acting extra cautiously  
If we all do our part, and fast!  
All this will soon be in the past

So please stop making such a scene  
And just stick to the quarantine!  
Ok I think I get it now  
We must save lives and this is how  
We can't go out with friends to eat  
Or to a picnic or retreat  
We cannot go out to the gym  
(Who'll even see if we are slim?!)  
We cannot go out to the park  
Even if it's after dark  
We cannot go out here and there  
We should not go out anywhere  
I'm sorry for the nudge I've been  
I'm gonna stay in quarantine!



# 20 Prayers to Pray During this Pandemic

Composed by: Jen Pollock Michel



1. For the sick and infected: Lord God, heal and help. Sustain bodies and spirits. Contain the spread of infection.
2. For our vulnerable populations: Lord God, protect our elderly and those suffering from chronic disease. Provide for the poor, especially the uninsured.
3. For the young and the strong: Lord God, give them the necessary caution to keep them from unwittingly spreading this disease. Inspire them to help.
4. For our local, state, and federal governments: Lord God, help our elected officials as they allocate the necessary resources for combatting this pandemic. Help them to provide more tests.
5. For our scientific community, leading the charge to understand the disease and communicate its gravity: Lord God, give them knowledge, wisdom, and a persuasive voice.
6. For the media, committed to providing up-to-date information: Lord God, help them to communicate with appropriate seriousness without causing panic.
7. For consumers of media, looking to be well-informed: Lord God, help us find the most helpful local information to equip us to be good neighbors. Keep us from anxiety and panic, and enable us to implement the recommended strategies, even at a cost to ourselves.
8. For those with mental health challenges who feel isolated, anxious, and helpless: Lord God, provide them every necessary support.
9. For the homeless, unable to practice the protocols of social distancing in the shelter system: Lord God, Protect them from disease, and provide isolation shelters in every city.
10. For international travelers stuck in foreign countries: Lord God, help them return home safely and quickly.
11. For Christian missionaries throughout the world, especially in areas with high rates of infection: Lord God, provide them with words of hope, and equip them to love and serve those around them.
12. For workers in a variety of industries facing layoffs and financial hardship: Lord God, keep them from panic, and inspire your church to generously support them.
13. For families with young children at home for the foreseeable future: Lord God, help mothers and fathers to partner together creatively for the care and flourishing of their children. For single mothers and fathers, grow their networks of support.
14. For parents who cannot stay home from work but must find care for their children: Lord God, present them with creative solutions.
15. For those in need of regular therapies and treatments that must now be postponed: Lord God, help them to stay patient and positive.
16. For business leaders making difficult decisions that affect the lives of their employees: Lord God, give these women and men wisdom, and help them to lead self-sacrificially.
17. For pastors and church leaders faced with the challenges of social distancing: Lord God, help them to creatively imagine how to pastor their congregants and love their cities well.
18. For college and university students, whose courses of study are changing, whose placements are cancelled, whose graduation is uncertain: Lord God, show them that while life is uncertain, their trust is in you.
19. For Christians in every neighborhood, community, and city: Lord God, May your Holy Spirit inspire us to pray, to give, to love, to serve, and to proclaim the gospel, that the name of Jesus Christ might be glorified around the world.
20. For frontline health care workers, we thank you for their vocational call to serve us. We also pray: Lord our God, keep them safe and healthy. Keep their families safe and healthy. Lord our God, help them to be knowledgeable about the diagnosis and treatment of this disease, as well as the changing protocols. Lord our God, help them to stay clear-minded in the midst of the surrounding panic. Lord our God, deliver them from anxiety for their own loved ones (aging parents, children, spouses, roommates). Lord our God, give them compassion for every patient in their care. Lord our God, provide for them financially, especially if they fall ill and are unable to work. Lord our God, help Christians in health care to exhibit extraordinary peace, so that that many would ask about the reason for their hope. Give them opportunities to proclaim the gospel. Lord our God, we trust that You are good and do good. Teach us to be Your faithful people in this time of global crisis. Help us to follow in the footsteps of our faithful shepherd, Jesus Christ Your Eternal Son, who laid down His life for the sake of love. Glorify His name as you equip us with everything needed for doing Your will. Amen.

# Random sayings

Love is made up of three unconditional properties in equal measure: Acceptance, understanding and appreciation. Remove any one of the three and the triangle falls apart.

Be nice to yourself. It's hard to be happy when someone's mean to you all the time.

The razor blade is sharp but can't cut a tree; the axes is strong but can't cut the hair. Everyone is important according to his/her own unique purpose. Never look down on anyone unless you are admiring their shoes.

A boy asked his father, "Dad what is the size of God?" Then the Father looked up at the sky and saw a plane and asked his son, "What is the size of this plane?" The boy replied, "It is very small. I can hardly see it." Then the father took him to the airport and as they approached a plane, he asked, "Now, my son, how big is this plane?" The boy replied, "Wow dad, it's huge!" Then the father told him, "God's size depends on how close or far you are to Him. The closer you are to Him, the greater and greater HE will be in your life!"

To the one soul reading this I know you're tired, you're fed up, you're so close to braking, but there's strength within you even when you feel weak. Keep fighting.

One man asked a priest, "If God is everywhere, why do I go to Church for?" To which the priest replied, "The whole atmosphere is filled with water, but when you want to drink you have to go to a fountain or a well.

## FAITH

Trust in His timing

Rely on His promises.

Wait for His answers.

Believe in His miracles.

Rejoice in His goodness

Relax in His presence.

### Just a Reminder

~WE have all done unforgivable things

~We have all wanted to punch holes in a wall.

~We have all made someone cry.

~We have all let someone down

~We have all had a broken heart.

~We have all told a lie

~We have all wanted to throw our life away.

~We have all stayed up late overthinking

~We are all humans and we are trying to do better today than we did yesterday.

## Where to look in the Bible when you

Need rest and peace-Matthew 11:28-30

Worry Matthew 6: 19-34

Are lonely or fearful Psalm 23

Need peace of mind John 14: 27; Philippians 4: 6-8

Are disappointed by people Psalm 27

Grow bitter or critical I Corinthians 13

Have sinned Psalm 51, I John 1

Are discouraged Psalm 34

Feel God seems far away Psalm 139

Thing the world seems bigger than God Psalm 90

Are sick Psalm 41

Feel sorrowful John 14, Psalm 46

Are in danger Psalm 91

Want courage Joshua 1: 1-9

Need assuranceRomans 8

Forget your blessings Psalm 103

Are looking for joy Colossians 3

Leave home to travel Psalm 121

Think of investments Mark 10: 17-31

Need guidelines for livingMatthew 5-7, Romans 12

## I PRAY WE DON'T GO BACK TO NORMAL

1. I pray that the next time a friend grabs me and pulls me in for a hug, I actually take the time to appreciate the gift of their embrace.

2. I pray that when school resumes and people are dropping kids off, they take the time to thank the staff for the amazing gift that they give to our community.

3. I pray that the next time I'm sitting in a crowded restaurant I take the time to look around at the smiling faces, loud voices and thank God for the gift of community.

4. I pray that the next time I'm standing in church listening to the voices of praise and worship that I take a moment to thank God for the gift of congregation.

5. I pray that the next time I see a person or situation that needs prayer, I hope I pray as passionately and fervently as I have these past few weeks.

6. I pray that when I am at the grocery store that I take a moment to thank God that He provides us with the necessities of life and the amazing people who work so hard to keep us supplied.

7. I pray that I never again take for granted the ability to hop in the car and visit a friend, go to the mall, go to a gathering, etc.

So, truth is, I don't want things to return to the way they once were. I pray that we take the lessons and challenges of the past few weeks and create a new normal.

### **Beautiful insights from Fr. Luke Veronis, pastor of Sts. Constantine & Helen Church, Webster, MA.**

I don't know if you agree, but something invisible came and put everything in its place:

- Suddenly the gasoline went down, pollution went down, people started to have more time - so much time that they do not know what to do with it
- Parents are spending time with their kids as a family, work is no longer a priority, or travel or social life either.
- Suddenly we silently see within ourselves and understand the value of the words "solidarity", "love", "strength", "empathy," "compassion," & "faith".
- In an instant we realized that we are all in the same boat; rich and poor.
- We see the supermarket shelves empty and the hospitals full, and realize how fragile life is
- New cars and old cars stand in the garages, simply because nobody can get out.
- Empty streets, less pollution, clean air, the land also breathes.
- The human returns to his origins, realizing that with or without money, the important thing is to survive, but to survive together! We are in this together!
- Today, health is the main thing, even in spite of wanting to have or possess
- It took only days for the universe to establish the social equality that was said to be impossible.
- Fear invaded everyone. Yet we still hope, for nothing can conquer hope.

My goal is to pray more, love harder and truly appreciate the daily abundance of blessings that were so easily overlooked just a mere few weeks ago.

Be Blessed today ~Anonymus

• We realize how vulnerable we are as human beings. We are not as invincible and mighty as we like to think.  
• Nature is forcing us to clean up the mess we made and respect the creation all around us.  
The gods on whom we put so much of our time and attention have fallen. The gods of

- Money
- Sports
- Fame
- Politics

The coronavirus is reminding us about a few central aspects of life:

- Our best protection: GOD
- Our best refuge: HOME
- Our best company: FAMILY
- Our real time: TODAY

We are not gods, we are not kings, we do not have the power to control everything.

We are part of a whole, fragile, brittle and vulnerable world. Part of a whole something that we wanted to dominate, yet today the world is telling us: Stop, breathe, respect.

Let's go back to the basics, to the essentials. Turn back to the Creator of All, our Lord God, and allow His peace that "transcends all understanding" to dwell richly in us.

We are in His hands. He is in control. Let us find peace in Him.

## **Holy Week at Home Reflections**

### ***Reflection by Jennifer Alastanos***

I never thought I would be turning my 719 square-foot apartment into a home gym and a place of worship, but here we are. This marks my fourth year celebrating Pascha at St. John's and it is one I will never forget. I've never utilized the livestream function until it was my only option and I am grateful for all the hard work and little details that went into making this the most meaningful virtual Holy Week possible. For me, while there were several things missing such as receiving the light from the person in the pew next to me and singing Christos Anesti for all of Swann Avenue to hear, there are a few big highlights that come to mind.

First, once I started listening to the livestream, I couldn't stop. I listened to more of the All-Night Vigil than I ever have, I fell asleep to it and as soon as I woke up, I listened as I got ready for work. Once I was home, I tuned back in and was able to participate via Zoom from my home. My parents and Yiayia in West Virginia got to listen along as I read the Psalms. The second highlight was having my entire family experience Holy Week at St. John's. I have never experienced more meaningful Holy Weeks than those at St. John's, but there is always something missing, my family. At the resurrection service my apartment was dark, I sat by my computer watching the service surrounded by icons and my phone which I was using to FaceTime with my mom, dad, and sister. We sang Christos Anesti together

at midnight for the first time in at least four years.

A third highlight was talking to my Yiayia after the services she was able to watch (thanks to my Dad and Uncle). I tell her about the church often, but she's never been able to visit herself. She couldn't say enough good things about how beautiful the church is, how great Father Stavros speaks, and how wonderful the chanters and readers were. My last highlight was singing the lamentations at home. While I missed being inside the crowded church singing amongst the other parishioners there was a certain sense of peace, I found in singing along from home. This was one of the most unique Holy Week experiences I've had and it gave me a sense of comfort at a time that so many things seem uncertain. I pray for a return to the church very soon and I look forward to experiencing Holy Week 2021 within the four walls of St. John's instead of my home.

### ***Reflection by the Skourellos Family***

Christos Anesti! The Skourellos family had a craft, baking, theatrical, and song filled Holy Week 2020; starting with baking Lazarakia. Dante gave a moving performance in the role of his lifetime, portraying Lazarus as he was resurrected. On Palm Sunday Dante and Lindsey made palm crosses, Kali and Olivia pulled them apart while Zoe ran around with one. Thanks to friends that recently traveled to Jerusalem and gifted us holy oil, we honored the Unction sacrament as a family on Holy

Wednesday. Our children truly enjoyed learning about the last supper and first communion from Kali's Sunday School teacher, Ms. Anastasia via video during Holy Thursday. Our egg carton recreation of the last supper gave the girls an opportunity to feed each disciple bread. Our tiny Myrrbearers decorated our homemade Kouvouklion and Epitaphios with pride on Holy Friday. Sunday morning we sang "Christos Anesti!", cracked eggs, read Olivia a card from her Sunday School teacher, Ms. Debbie, and ate lamb. In the end, this was a different Holy Week journey for us. We miss our St. John's family and look forward to celebrating together as a community next year.

### ***Reflection by the Katsaros Family***

Although it was a Holy Week like no other, our house was full of love, learning and Christ, thanks to all of you. The kids experienced more services than ever before and were able to ask questions and learn as we prayed virtually. Charlie loved following along in the Holy Week book and Zoe even asked, what time is church this morning, Bright Monday. She was disappointed when I said we would have to wait until later in the week :) A very different journey than we are used to, but so wonderful in other ways as well. We are praying we can all be together in church again very soon. We miss you!

### ***Reflection by the Katsamakias Family***

We missed our church family so much and worshiping in the church, but with the amazing technology and services thanks to you all and some creativity, I feel like it was a good week for our family. We were able to do a lot of learning through making. We did a craft everyday, baked prosforo (first time), learned some new songs, and read stories that added to our virtual church experience. Without having to run around so much

(since I'm now working remotely), we were able to slow down and be more thoughtful during the week. Hopefully, no one thinks our pots and pans were irreverent, but we banged them to celebrate the freeing of Hades because we didn't have leaves. The kids were very into that. It was awesome to see the excitement and awe on Julianne's face when she "received the light" at home and we sang Christos Anesti together. I hope that even when we return to church and all of our normal parts of everyday life, we can remember to slow down and also to do a better job at creating a "home church" in our space. Hope you all are doing well and recovering!

### ***Reflection by the Melton Family***

Our Holy Week journey at home was experienced in a different frame of mind! It was very calm, comforting and focused as we were able to listen and absorb Father's words, the chanting, and the hymns much more personally, one on one. We had our candles lit and our icons surrounding our streamlined holy services the whole week! I was able to go to practically every single service which was wonderful! We made palm crosses from the palm fronds in our backyard and mailed them to our family locally and family in Pennsylvania! It was a beautiful Holy Week calming and comforting; it goes without saying we cannot wait to be back at St. John's and worship in our house at St. John's! Father Stavros, Charlie, John and all pastoral assistants were amazing! Our "virtual vigil" at the foot of the cross was truly amazing! Thanks to Charlie for assisting us and using Zoom—we miss our St. John's family! So many blessings during this 2020 virtual Holy Week! We are so very grateful for every bit of it thank you so much! Tonight will be beautiful for the Anastasi, and we will be present, also for Pascha!! Thank you 1 million times!!!!

## **How the Virus Stole Easter By Kristi Bothur (With a nod to Dr. Seuss)**



Twas late in '2019 when the virus began  
 Bringing chaos and fear to all people, each land.  
 People were sick, hospitals full,  
 Doctors overwhelmed, no one in school.  
 As winter gave way to the promise of spring, The virus raged on,  
 touching peasant and king.  
 People hid in their homes from the enemy unseen.

They YouTubed and Zoomed, social-distanced, and cleaned.  
 April approached and churches were closed.  
 "There won't be an Easter," the world supposed.  
 "There won't be church services, and egg hunts are out.  
 No reason for new dresses when we can't go about."  
 Holy Week started, as bleak as the rest.  
 The world was focused on masks and on tests.  
 "Easter can't happen this year," it proclaimed.  
 "Online and at home, it just won't be the same."  
 Monday Thursday, Good Friday, the days came and went.  
 The virus pressed on; it just would not relent.  
 The world woke Sunday and nothing had changed.  
 The virus still menaced, the people, estranged.  
 "Pooh pooh to the saints," the world was grumbling.  
 "They're finding out now that no Easter is coming.  
 "They're just waking up! We know just what they'll do!  
 Their mouths will hang open a minute or two,  
 And then all the saints will all cry boo-hoo.  
 "That noise," said the world, "will be something to hear."  
 So it paused and the world put a hand to its ear.  
 And it did hear a sound coming through all the skies.  
 It started down low, then it started to rise.  
 But the sound wasn't depressed.  
 Why, this sound was triumphant!  
 It couldn't be so!  
 But it grew with abundance!  
 The world stared around, popping its eyes.  
 Then it shook! What it saw was a shocking surprise!

Every saint in every nation, the tall and the small, Was celebrating Jesus in spite of it all!  
 It hadn't stopped Easter from coming! It came!  
 Somehow or other, it came just the same!  
 And the world with its life quite stuck in quarantine Stood puzzling and puzzling.  
 "Just how can it be?"  
 "It came without bonnets, it came without bunnies, It came without egg hunts, cantatas, or money."  
 Then the world thought of something it hadn't before.  
 "Maybe Easter," it thought, "doesn't come from a store.  
 Maybe Easter, perhaps, means a little bit more."  
 And what happened then?  
 Well....the story's not done.  
 What will YOU do?  
 Will you share with that one

Or two or more people needing hope in this night?  
 Will you share the source of your life in this fight?  
 The churches are empty - but so is the tomb, And Jesus is victor over death, doom, and gloom.  
 So this year at Easter, let this be our prayer, As the virus still rages all around, everywhere.  
 May the world see hope when it looks at God's people.  
 May the world see the church is not a building or steeple.  
 May the world find Faith in Jesus' death and resurrection, May the world find Joy in a time of dejection.  
 May 2020 be known as the year of survival, But not only that - As Jesus is so are we ..Healthy Happy and Blest and Free .  
 NO evil shall befall us no calamity overcome near our dwelling  
 We have Seal our homes with the gift of the Holy Spirit!!!!  
 This Pascha /Passover/Easter Rest in His Love!!!and Hear it!

## Why Giving to Your Church Right Now Might Be More Important than Ever

By Erik Cooper

### Keep giving to your local church.

Perhaps I'm the right one to say this as I have no direct personal upside from the conversation. What I do have is a deep belief in God's Word, a love for the mission of God in the world, and a network of dear friends leading this charge in countries across the globe and in local congregations right here in my own community.

While I don't draw a paycheck from a church, I love the local Church and believe it is God's plan to embody and proclaim His Kingdom to the world. We can debate its many forms and expressions, whether its a building, an organization, or just the people, but there's one thing I don't think should be debatable for Christians today: when we honor the Church we're honoring God.

Like all of you, in the midst of this COVID-19 outbreak, I'm incredibly concerned about finances – my personal finances, my business's finances, and quite honestly, the financial position of all of you around me as our economy is complex and intertwined. Those aren't just self-centered wrestlings.

And in the midst of these scary times, we are watching beautiful outpourings of generosity manifest in many different ways – families delivering food to their elderly neighbors, people donating and even making masks for front line medical workers, NBA stars covering the lost salaries of arena workers. It is encouraging to see humans respond to the needs around them in times of crisis.

**But during this unprecedented historical moment full of countless unknowns, I want to encourage *all of us* to continue giving to our local churches.**

I'm going to step out on a limb here and risk sounding like some kind of manipulating televangelist, but the Church is not just some other nice charitable organization amidst a smorgasbord of philanthropic options. Something spiritually unique happens when you give to your church, something that goes far beyond just helping to pay pastors' salaries, building mortgages, and program costs.

**"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have**

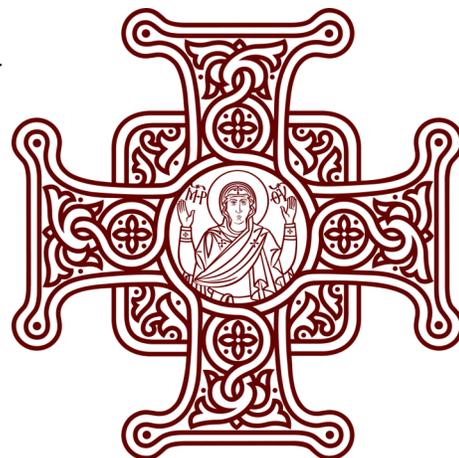
**enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test! Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. "Then all nations will call you blessed, for your land will be such a delight," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies.**  
 –Malachi 3:9-12

Each time I get paid – whether my check is big or small, growing or shrinking – when I give the "first fruits" of that income to God through my local church, I am making a tangible declaration to me and my family that God is my ultimate provider and the foundation of my trust.

I'm not talking about some kind of magic elixir here. Tithes and offerings aren't a snake oil that wards off economic collapse and physical sickness. In fact, suffering is part of the Christian experience. Jesus promised it (John 16:33).

But, if money is a tangible representation of our lives, our work, our contribution to the world, then when I give the first portions of whatever I make to my church, I am declaring boldly that no matter what is going on around me, my *ultimate* hope and trust are rooted in Christ. No matter what happens, I am *under* the shadow of His wings. He is *with* me at all times and in all seasons. That my God will supply *all* my needs according to His riches (Philippians 4:19). When the world is shaking, there is no place I would rather be.

In this terrifying time of uncharted financial waters, I just want to encourage you to keep giving to your local church. It's not magic. It doesn't mean you will be exempt from all the sinful effects of this fallen world. It's not a give to get rich scheme. It's a declaration. Give joyfully as an outward expression of an inward commitment that Jesus is where your trust is firmly rooted in this tumultuous season.

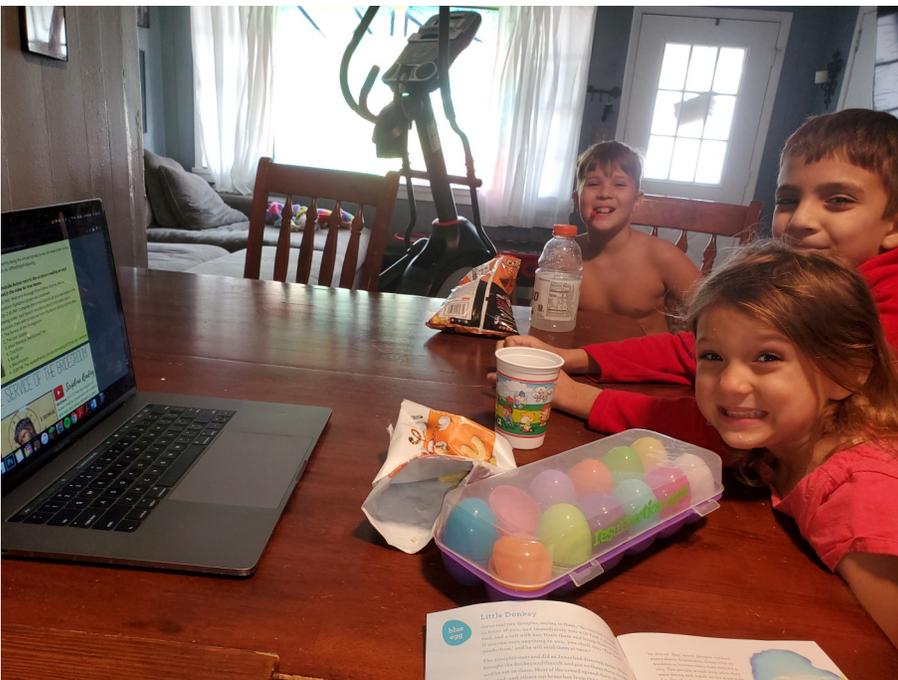


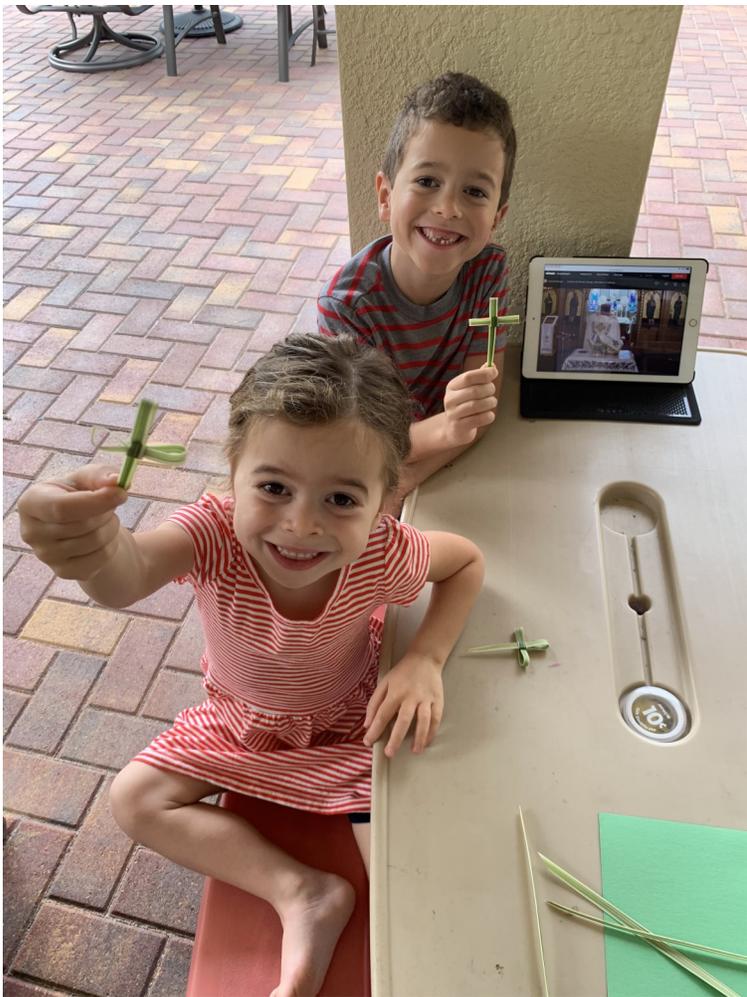
# Holy Week in Pictures

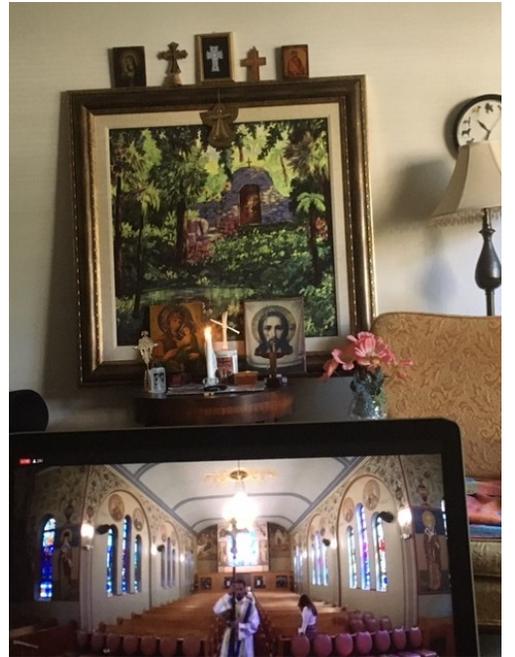
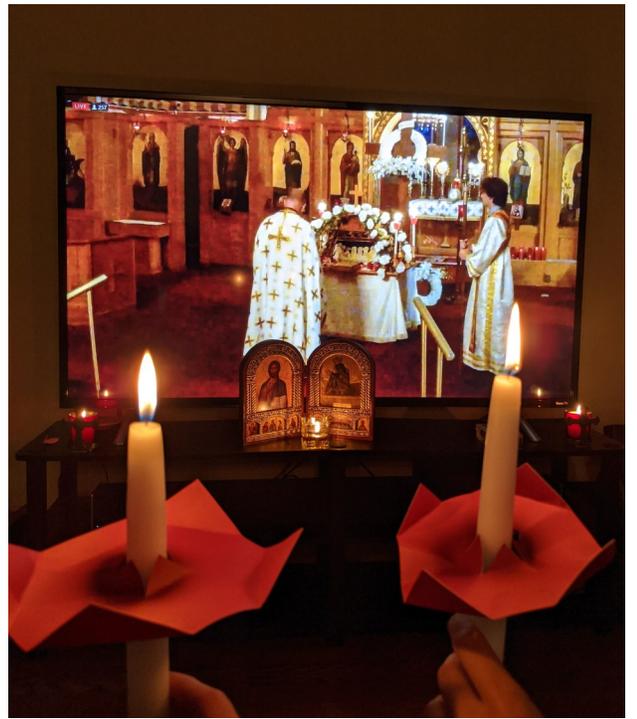
*Additional photographs may be found on our flickr account at [stjohntpa.org](http://stjohntpa.org)*



Dying the Paschal eggs.



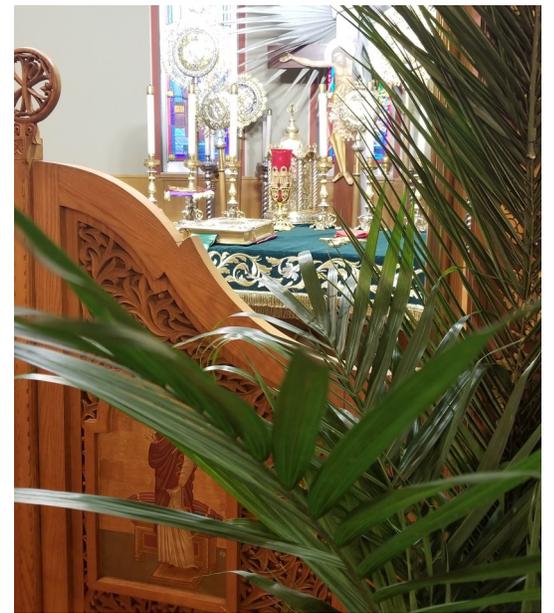






Decorating the Kouvouklion at home.





Thank you for Karina Findlay for the beautiful Pascha photos



A **BIG THANK YOU** to Felix Ramirez, our maintenance man, for building us a mini-kouvouklion.  
Thank you to Engie Halkias and Kalliope Chagaris for decorating our mini kouvouklion.



## ~ May 2020 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					<b>1**</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. <b>GOYA 5:00 p.m. via zoom</b>	<b>4</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>5</b> WBS 10:00 a.m.	<b>6**</b> <b>Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8** St. John the Theologian</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. <b>Mother's Day</b>	<b>11</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m	<b>12</b> WBS 10:00 a.m.	<b>13**</b> <b>Mid-Pentecost</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	<b>14</b>	<b>15 ** Fr. Stavros Anniversary of Ordination</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>16</b> <b>Community Outreach</b>
<b>17</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Men's Group 5:00 p.m. via zoom	<b>18</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m	<b>19</b> WBS 10:00 a.m.	<b>20 **</b> Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	<b>21</b> <b>Ss. Constantine and Helen</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>22 **</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>25</b> <b>Memorial Day-Office Closed</b>	<b>26</b> <b>Leave-Taking of Pascha</b> Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.	<b>27**</b> <b>Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.</b>	<b>28</b> <b>Ascension</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>29 **</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>31</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.						

# St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

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## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

### Timetable of Services

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

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

#### **Parish Priest** Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-394-1038 (Cell)  
fstav@gmail.com

**Retired Priest in Residence** Rev. Fr. Stratton Dorozenski  
813-876-8830 (Office)

**Pastoral Assistant** Charlie Hambos  
813-876-8830 (Office) 813-843-8471 (Cell)  
chambos@stjohntpa.org

**Pastoral Assistant** John Kokenis  
813-876-8830 (Office) 630-306-7716 (Cell)  
jkokenis@stjohntpa.org

#### **Parish Council**

Jim Armstrong, President 954-295-6665  
Euripides Panos, Vice President 813-352-3972  
John Zelatis, Secretary 813-727-2271  
Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898  
Carole Fotopoulos 813-294-1623  
Demosthenes Mekras 786-417-7256  
George Chagaris 727-420-1920  
Amin Hanhan 813-846-2957  
Nick Katzaras 863-581-2430  
Edie 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

#### **AHEPA**

Thomas Sakaris, President 201-819-2319

#### **Altar Angels**

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

#### **Basketball**

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

#### **Bible Study**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### **Bookstore**

Brett Mourer 813-376-9315

#### **Chanter**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### **Choir**

Pauline Spencer, Director 813-390-1782  
Ruth Losovitz, Organist 727-688-2782

#### **Community Outreach**

Greg Melton 813-967-2074

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

Dante and Lindsey Skourellos 813-765-9534

#### **Dance Groups**

H XAPA MAE, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668  
Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347  
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963  
ΠΑΡΕΑ, Marina Choundas 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

#### **Gasparilla Parking**

John Kokkas 727-992-4165

#### **GOYA**

Michael & Bessie Palios 813-523-0346  
goya@stjohntpa.org

#### **Hope/Joy**

George & Zackie Ameres 813-245-3813

#### **Junior Olympics**

Dwight Forde 727-685-9028

#### **Men's Basketball**

Perry Katsamakias 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 Triantafilou 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

#### **Usher**

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 Trimis, President 813-784-4872  
Mary Nenos, Vice President 813-935-2096

#### **Youth Protection**

Catherine Mitseas 813-571-0658

*The Messenger of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is published on a monthly basis. Publication is the first of each month. Deadline for notices and announcements for The Messenger is the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month.*

“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.