

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*

July 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

Pastoral Guidelines related to Covid-19

The Messenger goes to the printer on the 15th of each month for the following month. The calendar of events may or may not be reflective of what we will do in the month of July.

As of this writing, we are permitted to worship in groups of 75 (65 worshippers and 10 workers). Because of this, Divine Liturgies have been scheduled on the Saturdays of July in order to allow people to come to church more often. As long as we are required to social distance, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy on Saturdays. If that changes in the month of July and we can all worship together on a Sunday, the Saturday Divine Liturgies will be cancelled.

We celebrate Paraklesis every Wednesday evening and will continue to do so until we are able to come all together and worship. Again, if this happens during July, the Wednesday evening services will be curtailed. On the Wednesday after we are all able to congregate for the first time, we will celebrate a Holy Unction Service to pray for the continued healing of the world.

Until the pandemic is over and we hear otherwise, we will continue to utilize SignUpGenius in order to attend the Divine Liturgy and other services. We will continue to check temperatures and seat people according to social distancing guidelines. We will continue to ask that people not congregate after services.

We will ask that people only sign up to attend the Divine Liturgy in person every two Sundays, to afford everyone the opportunity to worship on Sundays at least every few weeks. You may sign up to worship at as many non-Sunday services as you wish. Also, if you are able to worship not on a Sunday, please do so, so that we can reserve Sunday for those who can only worship on Sundays. If you sign up and can't make a service, please take your name off the list as soon as you know you can't attend, so make room for others to come. If you check the SignUpGenius the day before a service or even the day of a service and you see openings, please feel free to come, even if it isn't your designated Sunday. We want all services to have as many people as possible, up to 75.

For those who are not able to worship in person, we will continue to live-stream all services. We will also continue to provide Sunday school materials for our children, our teens and our adults on-line until this pandemic is over.

We are only allowed to gather in person for liturgical services. All non-liturgical gatherings will remain virtual. If that should change during the month of July, we will schedule in person meetings.

The latest information will always be available on our website and through constant contact. Both our Metropolis and parish protocols for coming back to church safely are on our website. Thank you for your patience in filtering through all of our constant contacts. It is really the most effective way to communicate news and comments during this time.

Father Stavros' Message

Many Thoughts Pass Through My Mind These Days

As I did last month, my message this month will be a compilation of thoughts that I've had during these difficult and different days that we are going through. This is the first time in my 16 years as your priest that we have published a July Messenger. That is because in other years, I spent July away from Tampa, at summer camp and on vacation and neither is happening this year. It is also because in other years, it is easy in mid-May to write a Messenger and set a calendar that runs through the end of July and this year, with things changing by the day, an additional issue was necessary to keep people more up to date, especially those who do not have a computer and who receive all their information through this medium. So, here are a few thoughts for this month:

Thank you to our community-

My first thought is a thought of thanks for all the work that went into our joyful coming back to church. First, to Charlie Hambos, our pastoral assistant, for all of his work behind the scenes, doing little things like designing the social distancing markers and ordering them, staying on top of our live-streaming technology, coordinating the cleaning and sanitizing of our church, and interfacing with the work crew for every service—nursing ministry, welcoming ministry and ushers—to make sure all is ready to go for each service. I can't tell you the dozens of hours we spent in zoom meetings, writing the protocol that went out to our parish and so many other things that were involved in getting us back to worship and Charlie was at the center of all of them.

Secondly, a word of thanks to Artemis Xenick, Alexandra Patrasciou, Mia Lenardos, Karter Lenardos, Greg Koutroumanis, Jen Papatarios, Ellie Papatarios and Sophia Crassas for making the "Joyful Return to Church" Video that helped everyone understand the protocols for coming back in a video that was both informative and fun. Thank you to Charlie for filming and putting the video together in final form.

Third, thank you to the welcome ministry, nursing ministry, and ushers for stepping up to help facilitate each service. There is a matter of coordinating workers for each service and then at each service, there is a lot of work to do. These are people who are volunteering to come and work and not worship so that others can worship. Thank you also to those who serve in the altar. It takes a team of nearly 10 people to carry off each service, and I am thankful to all these people who are committed to doing this until this time is over.

Fourth, thank you to the welcoming ministry for making many rounds of phone calls to keep our community engaged, together and informed during this pandemic.

Fifth, thank you to the Parish Council, Leadership Team, and Ministry Heads for the many hours of zoom meetings in order to organize everything to come back to worship.

Sixth, and finally, thank you to everyone who has attended worship so far, for being cooperative and understanding of the different protocols we are using in order to safely gather. These things won't be like this forever, but for the time being, they are in place so that we can worship safely in small groups until the time we can worship without safeguards as one community.



What it was like to come back

Over the course of 74 days, there were 51 services behind doors that were locked in our church. Only a few people experienced worship in person during this time. We marked half of Lent, all of Holy Week, and the entire 40 days of the Paschal season with an empty church. It was different for you, worshipping virtually from home, as it was different for me, celebrating the services in front of a camera in an empty church. By its very definition, "Liturgy" means the "work of the people." And the word "Liturgy" presupposes that there will be people in attendance. In fact, the Divine Liturgy cannot be celebrated alone. Even with the church locked, a few people represented the congregation in the Divine Services, sometimes only Charlie and I. With people in the church, even 75 people, the church felt "full" because it was filled with joy. It is wonderful to have people back in church.

Going back to the basics—Worship and Pastoral Care

The Book of Acts recounts the history of the earliest days of the church. In Acts 6: 1-4, we read:

Now in these days when the Disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the body of the Disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word."

This brief passage of scripture shows us that in the early days of the church, the church concerned itself with only two things—preaching the word of God and serving tables in the daily distribution. The daily distribution was the giving of food to widows and those who had no food. When we take the church to its basic function, it is worship/teaching and aid to others. Unfortunately, in many church (including ours at times), the focus has been on fundraising and socializing. There is nothing wrong with either, but when these become almost the exclusive functions of the church, as they are in many churches of all denominations, the church has lost its foundation.

The calendar for our parish for the past few months and for this coming month shows only Divine Services, and opportunities to learn in Bible Study. Throughout this pandemic, we have continued to offer pastoral care in the form of zoom, facetime, phone and in person appointments for confession and counseling. We have continued to open our food pantry to those who are hungry. And we have continued to serve at the monthly

community outreach. I made comments during Holy Week that we marked Holy Week in the same way it was marked 2,000 years ago. A few people were present at the Crucifixion and Resurrection, 2,000 years ago. Only a few were present this year. Two thousand years ago, the church existed to preach the word of God and to render aid to others. And right now, this is all that our church in Tampa is doing—we are following the model of the early church.

And here's the other thing that happened in the early church. In Acts 6: 7, we read that "the Word of God increased; and the number of the Disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem." Perhaps this return to the experience of the early church—the locked doors, fear, minimal activity, etc.—will lead us to the increase in faith and number of Disciples that were experienced 2,000 years ago. Only time will tell on that.

The Importance of Holy Communion

The central act of Christianity and the Orthodox Christian Church is Holy Communion. Holy Communion is the way that we come into a physical oneness with Christ, and is the best tool that paves our way to salvation.

The words of the Divine Liturgy support Holy Communion being a healthy part of the spiritual life. After the Consecration of the Gifts we pray "so that they may be to those who partake of them,

For vigilance of soul

Remission of sins

Communion of Your Holy Spirit

Fullness of the Kingdom of Heaven

Boldness before You

Not for judgment or condemnation." (From the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom)

These are six specific reasons/benefits to receiving Holy Communion. Preparing to receive Holy Communion keeps us vigilant in our souls. It allows us to have a foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven in the present.

In the consecration of the Gifts, ordinary substances, bread and wine, that we can buy or make, become extraordinary substances, the Body and Blood of Christ, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. When we approach to receive them, we, the ordinary people, can become extraordinary and the extraordinary gifts enter our ordinary bodies.

Saint Paul writes on the Eucharist in I Corinthians 11:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that



the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My Body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the New Covenant in My Blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. (I Corinthians 11: 23-26)

The operative word here, in my opinion, is the word "often." We are supposed to receive Holy Communion often, as a way to proclaim the Lord's death, and subsequent Resurrection, until His return.

The Divine Liturgy is the ultimate parable. To the untrained eye or the hardened heart, it is akin to a theatrical production. To the one with the humbled heart, the Divine Liturgy is the Kingdom of heaven manifest on earth in the here and now.

There are those in our community who do not feel safe congregating in large groups right now, and this is understandable. With this in mind, I offer three things—

Attendance at most weekday (non-Sunday) services will be less than on Sundays, so please consider attending one of these.

We will have one Divine Liturgy in July where we will encourage our seniors and at risk population to attend. There will be fewer people at this service. In July, this Liturgy will be Monday, July 20, for the feast of Prophet Elias.

If you don't feel comfortable attending church at all, again this is understandable, I want to suggest making an appointment once a month to receive Holy Communion. This can be done in one of two ways:

Choose a day that the Divine Liturgy is being celebrated, participate virtually in the service, and then drive to church and receive Holy Communion.

Come on a different day, and we will offer a few prayers, and then you can receive Holy Communion.

There are others in our congregation who do not feel comfortable worshipping wearing a mask. That is also understandable. We all miss worship the way that it was. And hopefully we will be returning to worship as we like it in the near future. No one wants to have their temperature taken before church, or enter by the side door, or not light a candle, etc. These things are temporary.

The Divine Liturgy in its substance has not changed. Holy Communion, both in its substance and in its distribution, has not changed. Our need for Holy Communion has not changed. There are a few things around the celebration of the Divine Liturgy—small numbers, masks, signing up on-line, etc.—that have changed temporarily. I have spoken to some of you privately and now address you all through this article, to say that receiving Holy Communion is the most important part of our practice of Christianity. So, please motivate yourself at least once a month, to come to church to receive Holy Communion, despite the temporary inconveniences that are part of the Divine Liturgy.

We are doing out of way to offer additional Divine Liturgies to afford the members of our community an opportunity to receive Holy Communion as often as possible, realizing that all of us receiving on a Sunday morning will not be happening until this pandemic is over.

A siege mentality

The word “siege” is used many times as a military term, to describe when an army surrounds a city or another army and instead of attacking quickly, they lay siege and wait out the enemy until they are either vanquished or until they surrender. For instance, let’s say that an army surrounds an enemy fort, and over the course of time, doesn’t allow any food to get into that fort. Eventually the enemy gives up rather than be starved and the army wins without a single shot being fired. That is a siege.

When sieges begin, no one knows how long they will last or when they will end. They just know that if they hold out long enough, they will be successful.

During this uncertain time, my mentality has been a siege mentality. Initially, I had thought that this time of absence from church would last a few weeks. It ended up lasting 74 days. And during that time, we didn’t just fold up operations. If anything, we ramped up our efforts. We put in an additional service every Wednesday night from the beginning, in order that we could pray for every member of the community by name once a week. In June we celebrated the Divine Liturgy 14 times, to get everyone back to Holy Communion often after our forced absence from it. We have sent out catechism lessons to our Sunday school children and adults each Sunday. We’ve continued most of our ministries via zoom.

As of this writing, we have no idea when we will return to regular worship all together. It may be weeks away or it may be months away. No one knows. Until we are able to come back, we will continue to offer more frequent opportunities to worship and we will continue to offer pastoral care either in person or virtually. We will continue to put out catechism lessons on a weekly basis. And we will continue to hold our ministries together virtually.

There are two things that drive my “siege” mentality. First, there is a genuine concern for your spiritual well-being. Our participation in the life of the church is an important part of all of our lives. And I want to do whatever is needed to meet your needs for worship, learning and pastoral care. Many of us have made worship a part of our weekly lives. And because it is impossible at this time for us to worship as one family on a Sunday, we are offering the extra Divine Liturgies to afford you the opportunity to worship on a weekly basis if you want, even though it won’t be on Sundays.

Second, there is a genuine concern of how this might change our community, not for the good. I wonder if we get used to not worshipping on Sundays, if once we are able to come back as one family, if many of us will have found something else to do with our Sunday mornings. I wonder if we get used to worshipping once every 2-3 weeks, if we’ll continue coming only once every 2-3 weeks. I wonder if we don’t start Sunday school on time in August, if people will not miss it. So, out of love and also out of genuine concern about holding our community together, we will offer more liturgies, continue to offer catechism lessons each week, and other things during this time when we can’t all be together.

I sincerely ask you to join me in this siege mentality, to do whatever you can do in this time to keep our community together and to keep yourself active with the life of the church. You can help in this siege by worshipping often, even if it isn’t on Sundays. You can help by taking the time to reflect on the catechism lesson questions that are sent out each week. And you can help by cementing in your own minds and hearts, that

once we are able to worship and gather again without restriction, that you’ll be here each week and stay involved with the life of the community as you were before this crisis started.

Generosity in this time of pandemic

I have chosen throughout my priesthood to not talk about money often. I’ve never liked the image of the priest as either beggar, arm-twister or fundraiser. Just about everyone knows the three legs of stewardship—time, talent and treasure—and when people hear a sermon or read an article about stewardship, they wait to get waylaid by the “treasure” piece. Stewardship is about generosity. It’s about giving back generously from what God has first given us. God blessed me with time today by allowing me to wake up. What will I do with that time? Will I use that time only to satisfy myself—watching TV, texting friends, even working to make money—or will I give some of that time back to Him, in the form of prayer, or helping someone?

A parish runs on the generosity of her people. Without people giving their time to worship, the churches would be empty. Without a generosity of talent, there would be no one to sing in the choir or teach Sunday school, or in current times, to open a door, take a temperature, or clean the church. Without the generosity of time or talent, there is no church.

Because of your generosity, our parish has a cushion financially. We won’t close our doors if we don’t have a festival this year. The same cannot be said for many parishes in our Archdiocese, sadly. The generosity of your stewardship has made it so that we don’t have to rely on candles, trays and constant fundraisers just to keep the doors open. Your generosity has actually enabled us to give away money to charitable causes. We are committed to this even in this time of pandemic. We are doing our usual mid-year donations to International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) and Matthew 25 (to feed the hungry in Tampa) without hesitation.

We know that there are people who have been very affected financially by the pandemic, people who have lost jobs, and who won’t be able to give as much as last year. We know that there are people who haven’t been affected yet financially by this crisis and we pray that you won’t be. We know that there are people who can do more. Please do what you can—if you can do less, don’t worry. If you can do the same, please do. If you can do more, please do.

The church didn’t close at all during this pandemic. In fact, we ramped up and worked even harder. We all have a limited amount of disposable income. In considering where you will give yours, please remember our parish.

No Pressure, No Diamonds

Do you know how diamonds are created? Don’t worry, until recently I didn’t either. Here is the process, in five easy steps:



Carbon is the substance that's transformed into diamonds.

Carbon must be present deep in the Earth's crust

Heat reaches about 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

Intense pressure of approximately 725,000 pounds per square inch is applied to the carbon.

Diamonds rise to Earth's surface to cool.

Diamonds are among the most beautiful things to look at and to wear. They are extremely valuable. Remember, however, that the carbon from which the diamond comes is extremely dirty, and when breathed in, it is extremely toxic. Something that is dirty and toxic is transformed into something beautiful and valuable by extreme heat and pressure. What starts off looking

dirty and toxic goes through an extreme, intense and uncomfortable process to become a jewel.

My prayer is that after this time of pandemic and with it now civil unrest, that we will come out as a society, and as a church, sparkling like a diamond.

How intense this process will be and how long it will last, I have no idea. Are we closer to the beginning or the end of it? Again, I have no idea. What I do know is that our church is as committed as ever to doing the most important things we do—worshipping God and helping others.

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

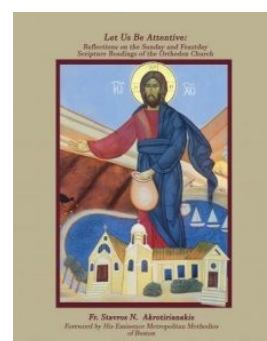
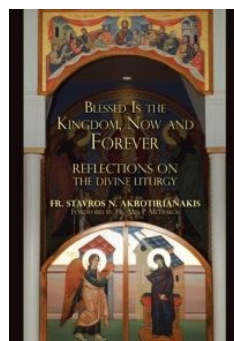
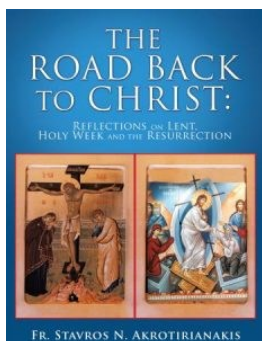
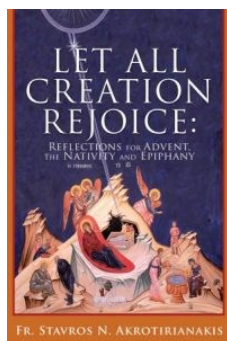
Father Stavros has authored four books that are available both in the bookstore and on-line. They are entitled:

Let All Creation Rejoice: Reflections on Advent, the Nativity and Epiphany

The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection

Blessed is the Kingdom, Now and Forever: Reflections on the Divine Liturgy

Let us Be Attentive: Reflections on the Sunday and Feastday Scripture Readings of the Orthodox Church



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

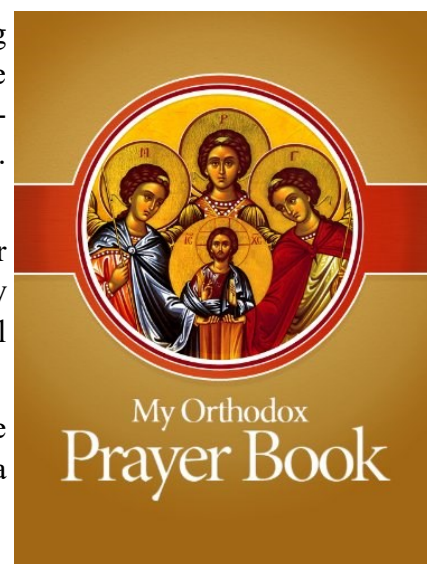
“My Orthodox Prayer Book” by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

This little book contains prayers to sustain you. It has morning prayers; evening prayers; occasional prayers, such as prayers for meals and information about the Jesus Prayer; confessional prayers, including an article about preparing for confession; and communion prayers, including prayers of St. John of Damascus and St. John Chrysostom.

This book is available in the bookstore. You may order through the office or through Brett via email or phone. We would love to hear from you, particularly what you think of this book after reading it and utilizing it to enhance your spiritual life.

P.S. If there is an Orthodox Christian religious item that you would like the bookstore to order, please contact us. We are often able to get a discount as a bookstore.

Brett and Ana Mourer



Need a Mask? We have many!

Through the generous donation of a few parishioners, we have reusable cloth masks available. We are thankful especially to Paula (Sakellaris) Weinburg, who made and mailed many of them from Virginia.

If you need a mask, please contact the church office and we can arrange to get you one. Thank you also to the many parishioners who have made and donated masks to us.

Liturgical Schedule for July 2020

Wednesday, July 1	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
Saturday, July 4	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, July 5	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, July 8	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, July 11	St. Euphemia Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, July 12	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, July 15	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, July 18	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, July 19	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Monday, July 20	Prophet Elias Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m. We encourage our GOYAns to attend this evening Liturgy.
Wednesday, July 22	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, July 25	Dormition of St. Anna Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, July 26	St. Paraskevi Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, July 29	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, August 1	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, August 2	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, August 5	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
Thursday, August 6	Transfiguration of our Savior Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 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 **2671** people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 5 years! Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email Charlie at charlie.hambos@gmail.com and ask him to add you. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email Charlie or follow the link at the bottom of the daily emails to do so. If you want to forward to a friend, please use the "forward to a friend" option. Also, make sure frstav@gmail.com has been added to your contacts so that these emails stay in your Inbox rather than going to the Junk or Spam folders.

Liturgical Notes for July 2020

Divine Liturgy on all the Saturdays of July—In order to facilitate people being able to worship on a weekly basis, we will celebrate Divine Liturgy on all the Saturdays of July. We ask that people only sign up for every other Sunday, so that people have the opportunity to worship on at least 1-2 Sundays of July. Anyone can sign up to worship on the Saturdays.

Paraklesis to be celebrated every Wednesday—We will continue to celebrate Paraklesis every until the end of this crisis, at which point a Holy Unction service will be offered to mark the end of this crisis. On July 1, Paraklesis will be celebrated at 6:00 p.m. On July 8, 15, 22 and 29, Paraklesis will be celebrated at 10:00 a.m.

*****Should the restrictions change in July and allow for all of us to worship together, the Saturday and Wednesday services will be discontinued.***

July 4--Independence Day—While July 4 is not a day that is usually commemorated with a Divine Liturgy, it is a great day to have one. At a time when our country has had so much unrest, first with the Coronavirus and then with the civil unrest, it is a great day to pray for our country, for our citizens, for our first responders, and for our freedom.



July 11-St. Euphemia—St. Euphemia was martyred for her Christian faith in the year 303. At the 4th Ecumenical Council in the year 451 in Chalcedon, there was a dispute over the two natures of Christ. The bishops at the council argued over two doctrines about Christ. They then put each doctrine on a scroll and opening the tomb of St. Euphemia, placed both scrolls in her hands. After three days, the tomb was opened and the scroll of the correct teaching of the two natures of Christ was in her right hand, while the scroll about Christ having only one nature was at her feet.

July 20-Prophet Elias—Prophet Elias (also called Elijah) lived in the 9th century BC and defended the worship of the God of Abraham over the polytheistic god Baal. Elijah was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot, meaning that he did not die. His story is recounted in the Old Testament book of I Kings. Elias appeared with Moses at the Transfiguration of Christ (celebrated August 6). We are asking that this evening Liturgy be attended by our GOYAns.

July 25-Dormition of St. Anna—St. Anna is the mother of the Virgin Mary. She was granted by God to have the Virgin Mary as her daughter at a very old age. She reposed when the Virgin Mary was about three.

July 26-St. Paraskevi—St. Paraskevi lived in the second century. She was orphaned at the age of 20 and was left a large fortune by her parents. She sold all of her possessions to help heal human suffering and remained a virgin her entire life, leading a monastic life. She was strong in eloquence and spoke persuasively to Romans, converting many to Christianity. She was sentenced to be martyred by the emperor Antoninus, by being thrown into a cauldron of oil and tar. When she was put in the cauldron, the material cooled instead of burning her. The emperor approached to see what was going on and the steam from the cauldron blinded him. St. Paraskevi then healed the emperor, who set her free. She was martyred by the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, Antoninus' successor. St. Paraskevi is the patron saint of our eyes, and optometrists.

How it Felt to Come Back to Church

This morning in church I closed my eyes and I listened to the sounds of the congregation! I could hear the singing echoing and I felt as if I were a new Christian, worshiping in hiding. While my eyes were closed, I envisioned myself hiding in the rocky hills of and I hear the singing in the distance and I began praying. The children in the pews, were the children in the village playing, not knowing about the danger of being caught by the Romans and crucified in the Name of Jesus. I am so thankful to be able to worship in the open unlike the New Christians who had to worship in secret and were willing to die in order to spread the Good News. —Elaine Daniels

Kudos to well thought out plan and wonderful morning. Although I am appreciative of the technology that enabled us to stay connected, there is nothing like being in church! I am thankful we can watch at home, but "watching" and "being" are two different things. Our worship experience is so multi sensory, it is difficult to have the full experience without "being". I was surprised at how much I missed the "smell" and "touch" of church. There is no incense in live broadcast, no years of candles, polish and people. The touch of the hard pew vs the comfort of the sofa was welcoming. I was back at my real home. Thank you! — Katherine Sakkis

Legacy Program

*Editor's Note: We started a legacy program here at St. John a couple of years ago, to encourage people to leave a bequest to our parish in their estate. Such "legacies" can be left anonymously, or with a name, so that we can honor that person or family while they are alive. We recently were notified of a large bequest that will eventually come to our parish. **It is for \$100,000.** I asked the party that is offering this bequest to write a short testimonial of what is motivating them to offer this substantial gift. It appears below. We are grateful to this anonymous family for their generous bequest to our church.*

Why Our Legacy Gift?

Some would say: Who cares? Others: What legacy! While others: Tell me more.

For my wife and I, it is a matter of giving back for all we have been given. Oh, yeah: Trite.

No not trite! Think about it, we all have a story, and it all begins with: Thanking God. Many have heard me say that when at war, I never found an atheist in a foxhole! It's true, when the chips are down, we are all looking for His Help, Guidance, Love, and Blessings. We (and I could say all of us) have much to be thankful for during our lives. A few examples:

The time when as teenagers we were almost killed in an auto accident.

The time when a father almost succumbed to tuberculosis.

A wife who recovered from cancer that was discovered by accident.

What about a human-wave attack in Vietnam? Wasn't Somebody watching over us?

These, and many more, are examples of when we were NOT in control, but He, yes God, helped and brought us through. So how do we, mere mortals, try to repay His blessings? The answer:

By Being Part of the St. John Legacy Program

Just volunteer to give a gift to the Church as part of our final wishes in a Trust or Will. We are taught that we should be tithing 10% of our goods to the Church. Many can't do that during these trying times. However, we all can give a gift to the Church as part of our "Legacy". The gift may be anonymous or openly given. The key is to give cheerfully.

For our part, we know that all of our treasures, meager as they may be, were provided through God's Grace, and our Legacy gift to St. John says, in a small way: Thank you Lord for all you have given and all that you will give in the future.

May God Bless all who have read this small paragraph of thanks.

An anonymous Legacy participant.

St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!

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

Live Streaming

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

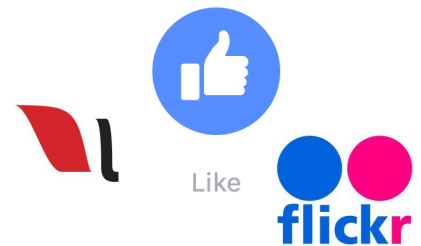
To access this page

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

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

Pictures

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



Stewardship Update ~

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

We are deeply grateful for your gifts to our beloved parish during this unprecedented time. We stayed strong and united (even when apart) to our on-line services, daily prayer, ministries and trust in God. We can't predict the future as 2020 has clearly proven, but we can draw strength from what we do know and what we can control. During the last few months this proved to be caring for ourselves, our families, our neighbors, our community, our businesses and of course our church! God Bless Fr. Stavros, Charlie, John and our entire staff for their hard work as Stewards of our Church.

As Christian Stewards, we have a responsibility to choose wisely with the gifts God has bestowed upon us to care for something of value, something we treasure. Many of us discovered we can get by with less when we were forced to stay at home. We saw giving of all sorts continue even during these challenging times. Giving to others with small acts of kindness, supporting local business and gifts to those in need.

Stewardship is not just about our annual pledge campaign it is much more meaningful and proved to ground us during these anxious times. Yes ... we provide financial updates for transparency and to encourage ongoing annual gifts to our church. Your gifts truly enable us to keep our doors open and have allowed the word of God into our homes without interruption via weekly services and daily prayer messages. We treasure our church and we treasure one another! We put our trust in God and will continue to do so daily knowing HE will provide and show us the way.

Now for a little housekeeping....

We remain with 77 Stewards from last year that have not completed a 2020 pledge form. We understand many things were put on hold and

financial circumstances change. Which is ok and to be expected but please don't wait. Our giving speaks to the state of our heart and now is the time to renew your commitment by completing a Stewardship Pledge Form.

YES – A pledge form is required every year per our current Bylaws to be considered a 'member in good standing' at St. John. (If you are over age 18 and are not a student, you should fill out a pledge form. If you are married, you only need to fill out one stewardship form for your family). Stewardship Payments and General Donations are easy and convenient using Online Banking, PayPal or traditional checks.

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

~Year to Year Comparison ~	2020*	2019*
Pledged Year to Date	\$494,344	\$501,431
Received Year to Date	\$285,636	\$268,040
Average Pledge	\$1,488	\$1,512
Median Pledge	\$700	\$960
#Pledged/Giving	342	344
*YTD as of 6/8/20 & 6/17/19		

Thing I'm most looking forward to about coming back to church is. . .

Editor's Note: We sent out an informal poll via Facebook on what people are most looking forward to when they come. We've printed all the answers so you can see how many people had receiving Holy Communion as their #1 answer. Also, going back to this month's message, people are more concerned about the spiritual aspects of the church rather than just the social ones, and that is really important.

- ♥ Seeing everyone and receiving Communion
- ♥ Worshiping with everyone
- ♥ Seeing everyone and taking part in Holy Communion
- ♥ Seeing and worshipping with parishioners
- ♥ Being able to receive Communion and to kneel down to the icons and pray. . . just to be in church
- ♥ Receiving Holy Communion
- ♥ Receiving Holy Communion
- ♥ Worshiping with my church family, singing hymns during Divine Liturgy, receiving Holy Communion and visiting with my church friends after Liturgy
- ♥ Definitely receiving Holy Communion
- ♥ Singing in the choir and receiving Holy Communion
- ♥ Worshipping in church with my five senses again
- ♥ Worshiping with my five sense and fellowship at coffee hour
- ♥ Receiving Communion and sharing the Liturgy in person with the parish and being able to hug one another without fear.
- ♥ Being in God's house makes prayer more valuable, I pray many times a day, only He knows, but it is a treat to be surrounded by the icons and attending the holy Liturgy
- ♥ Receiving Holy Communion
- ♥ Teaching my Sunday school class
- ♥ To feel peaceful
- ♥ Coming home
- ♥ Worship and seeing everyone
- ♥ Spirituality and Communion. It feels more meaningful, plus seeing my church family.
- ♥ Receiving Holy Communion
- ♥ Finding peace
- ♥ The process of Liturgy. All of the pieces and people that come together that cannot be recreated at home.
- ♥ Holy Communion
- ♥ Choir
- ♥ Communal worship and being with our church family again
- ♥ Receiving Holy Communion and seeing my Sunday School class kiddos
- ♥ Liturgy and choir/hymns
- ♥ Praising the Lord and receiving the Body and Blood of Christ
- ♥ Receiving the sacraments
- ♥ Holy Communion
- ♥ I am so excited to be in Church. It is difficult to not be in church. I love my students as well. I have made many things for me to help them know our Lord
- ♥ Praising the Lord and receiving Communion with my church family
- ♥ Communion—both in the chalice and in the pews
- ♥ Receiving Communion and seeing people—I feel like a bird in a cage
- ♥ Holy Communion
- ♥ Singing

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 July. 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.

July 5-11

Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord, keep watch over the door of my lips! Psalm 141:3

We are currently being encouraged to wear masks in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Hopefully we won’t be doing this for very long. A priest joked with me recently that when I put on my mask to distribute Holy Communion, it is like an extra vestment, and should we offer a prayer, as we do when we put each of our vestments on? If there was a prayer to be said when we put our masks on, whether in church or in public, it should be this verse from Psalm 141:3: “Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord, keep watch over the door of my lips!” Much have been made of the covid-19 pandemic. But this is not the only pandemic from which we are suffering. There is a pandemic of gossip and now one of anger that permeate our entire world. A mask helps prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Watching what comes from our lips is the only way to cure gossip and the best way to cure anger.

July 12-18

God exalted Him at His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sin. Acts 5:31

This week’s verse was requested by a parishioner (If you have a verse you’d like me to write on, please feel free to submit it). It is from the story of Robinson Crusoe, a man marooned by himself on an island, who finds a Bible and opens it to this chapter. Imagine finding yourself on a deserted island. For some of us, we’ve experienced that with the covid-19 quarantine. We’ve felt deserted and cut off from much of life. There are two takeaways from this verse. First, God exalts each of us, since we are created in His image. Whether we work in the public eye or live rather anonymously, it doesn’t matter. God exalts all those who love Him. Secondly, the main work of our life is supposed to be repentance. Again, it doesn’t matter if you live in the public eye or not, our job is to live in a state of repentance, which means focusing ever closer on the Lord and on salvation, on doing works of charity and love, of loving God and loving others.

July 19-25

For I am sure that 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. Romans 8:38-39

In light of the events in our country in 2020, I look at this week’s verses from Romans as the ultimate statement of defiance and protest, against every challenge that comes our way. I have thought of this verse many times during the covid-19 quarantine. It was on my mind a lot during the Holy Week journey that was taken from us in its traditional sense. In fact, it was the concluding line of the Paschal sermon, that nothing is going to separate us from the love of God—not the coronavirus, not the economy, not our absence of church, not riots, nothing can separate us from God.

July 26-August 1

Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

Psalm 34:15

We fill our lives with complex plans and goals. We even make Christianity into more science than practice. This week’s verse is an example of how one simple verse of Scripture can be the motto for an entire day, even an entire life. Our life’s work is to depart from evil and do good, to repent and to find God, to grow towards Him every day. We do this by seeking peace and pursuing it, by being people who promote peace, by being people who calm conflict rather than create it. This is another example of a verse to put on your nightstand or front door or desk at work to refer to often, especially before conversations that involve confrontation. There is a way even in confrontation to do it peacefully and in a way that glorifies God.

St. John the Baptist Community News

Parish Registry

Wedding—John Nenos and Catherine Whatley were married on Sunday, May 24. Vasilios Nenos was the Koumbaro. Congratulations!

Funeral—Charles Eggleston passed away on June 1. His funeral was held on Saturdays, June 9. May his memory be eternal!

Funeral—John Castas passed away on May 22. His funeral was held on Saturday, June 13. May his memory be eternal!

Thank you John Kokenis—John Kokenis, one of our pastoral assistants, will be leaving us on June 15 to move back closer to family in Chicago. We thank John for his service to our parish this year. Though he was only with us ten months, he contributed a lot to the life of our parish, particularly to our youth. He did a great job chanting, with technology, made some significant upgrades to our website, did a great job with our publications and we were definitely blessed to have him with us, even for a short time. We wish John and his wife Dina well in their new ventures.

Interested in serving as an altar boy? Any of our young men who will enter 4th grade in the fall, or who are older and are not serving presently, are welcome to serve in the altar once we get back to worshipping all together. If you are interested in having your son added to an altar team, please contact Fr. Stavros by July 30. The new schedule will not take effect until this crisis period has passed. Until further notice, only two people will serve in the altar at each service that Father will assign. Please do not call and ask about whether you can serve during this crisis. Father will let people know as they are needed.

GOYA—We are asking the GOYAns and parents to attend the Divine Liturgy on Monday, July 20 at 6:00 p.m. We will have a short discussion after the Divine Liturgy. In the event that regulations are changed, we will have an in person meeting on a different date, but July 20 in the evening is the plan at this time.

Monday night Bible study will continue in July via zoom. The Monday night Bible study with Charlie will be held on July 6, 13, and 27 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 and he will add you.

Women's Bible study is on hiatus for the month of July. Depending on the re-opening of school, Women's Bible Study will resume in late August or early September

GriefShare to resume in late Summer—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 Meeting—The men's group will be on hiatus for the month of July. We will resume meeting during the month of August.

Need a Mask? Through the generous donation of a few parishioners, we have reusable cloth masks available. We are thankful especially to Paula (Sakellaris) Weinburg, who made and mailed many of them from Virginia. If you need a mask, please contact the church office and we can arrange to get you one.

Summer Reset Virtual Experience—The Metropolis of Atlanta is sponsoring a "summer reset virtual experience" in lieu of St. Stephen's Camp which was cancelled for this summer. This experience will be from July 13-17. It is free of charge. It is open to all rising 7-th-12th graders. Please see this link [HERE](#) for more information and to sign up.

On the lighter side

Lessons from the minivan—being a mom means never buying the right amount of produce. Either everyone suddenly loves grapes and a week's worth are eaten in one afternoon, or fruit flies are congregating around my rotting bananas. There is no middle ground.

If at first you don't succeed, try doing it the way your wife told you to.

Never argue with children—A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales. The teacher said it was physically im-

possible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal its throat was very small. The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale. Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible. The little girl said, "When I get to heaven I will ask Jonah." The teacher asked, "What if Jonah went to hell?" The little girl replied, "Then you ask him."

Raccoon—the official mascot of 2020. Always wears a mask. Compulsively washes hands. Letters of raccoon rearranged spell "corona."

Youth Worker Registration Begins in July

Attention all youth workers and ministry leaders. July begins the registration period for fall volunteers who wish to work with a children's ministry or participate in certain leadership positions. Many of you already complied with the new GOA guidelines this past fall and will only have to complete online training and reregister. Others will need to register, undergo a background check and complete the online training.

The Youth Protection Committee will e-mail all existing youth workers of their current status and requirements, including the registration form. Within a week or so afterwards, you will receive emails from Praesidium (aka: Armatus Learn to Protect) with links to complete the requirements. Please do so within ten days or the links expire. Thank you, Catherine Mitseas!

Please visit, <http://stjohntpa.org/youth-safety/> for more info.



CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

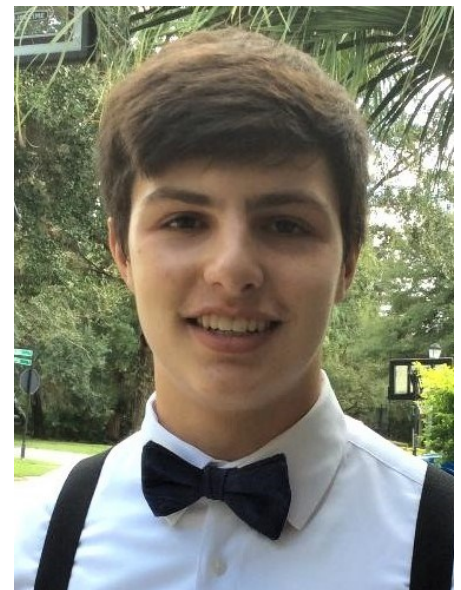
This is a rerun for corrections to the June Messenger.



Imad Hanhan (left) is graduating with a Ph.D. in Aeronautics and Astronautics from Purdue University, Indiana.



Athanasios Owens (right) graduated from Newsome High School and will be attending the University of Florida to study engineering.



Today I Will Make a Difference

By Max Lucado

Today I will make a difference. I will begin by controlling my thoughts. A person is a product of his thoughts. I want to be happy and hopeful. Therefore, I will have thoughts that are happy and hopeful. I refuse to be victimized by my circumstances. I will not let petty inconveniences such as stoplights, long lines and traffic jams be my masters. I will avoid negativity and gossip. Optimism will be my companion, and victory will be my hallmark. Today I will make a difference.

I will be grateful for the twenty-four hours that are before me. Time is a precious commodity. I refuse to allow what little time I have to be contaminated by self-pity, anxiety, or boredom. I will face this day with the joy of a child and the courage of a giant. I will drink each minute as though it was my last. When tomorrow comes, today will be gone forever. While I am here, I will use it for loving and giving. Today I will make a difference.

I will not let past failures haunt me. Even though my life is scarred with mistakes, I refuse to rummage through my trash heap of failures. I will admit them. I will correct them. I will press on. Victoriously. No failure is fatal. It's OK to stumble; I will get up. It's OK to fail; I will rise again. Today I will make a difference.

I will spend time with those I love. My spouse, my children, my family. A man can own the world but be poor for the lack of love. A man can own nothing and yet be wealthy in relationships. Today I will spend at least five minutes with the significant people in my world. Five *quality* minutes of talking or hugging or thanking or listening. Five undiluted minutes with my mate, children and friends.

Today I will make a difference.

(From "On the Anvil" by Max Lucado)

THE CHALICE, THE SPOON, AND OUR FEAR OF DEATH

By Fr. Panayiotis Papageorgiou, Ph.D.

As we are planning the reopening of our churches, and anticipating soon to approach again for Holy Communion, a lot of discussions have arisen as to the method of distribution of the Holy Gifts in the Orthodox Churches. Some people have been talking about the need for using multiple spoons, others are proposing new innovative methods. The underlying feeling of everyone is the fear of death.

These are certainly scary times, as even our scientists don't fully understand how the coronavirus spreads and how to prevent infection, while the doctors do not yet have a good treatment for the sick or any effective preventive measures.

So, justifiably, people are concerned about the danger of the spreading of the disease while in church and even through the reception of Holy Communion.

In order to find reassurance and comfort in the spiritual treasures of our Orthodox Faith, I invite you to listen to the voice of the Holy Fathers coming to us from the depths of time; the voice of those who understood the transformation of the bread and wine to the Body and Blood of Christ as the greatest miracle occurring on the Earth. They saw it as the Source of Power against the demons, the Bread of Life, the Source of Eternal Life, the Medicine of Immortality, the Antidote against death.

St. Ignatius of Antioch (late 1st-early 2nd century) describes the Eucharistic gatherings in this way:

"Make every effort to come together more frequently to give thanks and glory to God. For when you meet together frequently, the powers of Satan are overthrown and his destructiveness is nullified by the unanimity of your faith. There is nothing better than peace, by which all warfare among those in heaven and those on earth is abolished." St. Ignatius' letter to the Ephesians 13:1-2

He also describes the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist as *"the medicine of immortality, the antidote we take in order not to die but to live forever in Jesus Christ"* (St. Ignatius' letter to the Ephesians 20:2).

With this understanding, that Holy Communion is the Bread of Life it is important that we not approach this "antidote against death" lightly, but engage in serious preparation before receiving the Gifts of the Heavenly Banquet to which we have been graciously invited.

Receiving Holy Communion is not an individual "right" that we can claim for ourselves, but a divine privilege offered to us, which we should accept with humility. It is not for us to "take", but for us to "receive" with tears of repentance and a grateful heart.

St. Cyril of Alexandria explains this further:

"The body of Christ is holy and has the power to vanquish every illness. It was and is holy, not merely as flesh with its natural powers, but as the temple of the indwelling divine Logos, who



sanctifies His flesh with His Spirit. This is why Christ vivifies the daughter of the leader of the synagogue not only through His omnipotent command but also with His bodily touch.” — *Αναστασιόν, Doctrina Patrum, σ. 129, 131-32*

But how about the shared Chalice and Spoon? Are they not a threat in the midst of the pandemic? This is a good question that deserves special consideration. Those of us old enough to remember, this issue was raised again some thirty years ago as the threat of AIDS confronted the world at that time. The issue was also raised earlier in modern times in the 1940's and 50's when tuberculosis and leprosy were raging in Greece and Cyprus and other countries. Yet, the Orthodox Church retained the use of the shared Chalice and Spoon as we still have it today. Why?

Here are some thoughts on this issue derived from an article by Fr. Chrysostomos Koutloumousianos (a monk priest and renowned theologian from Mount Athos) **“The Bread, the Wine and the Mode of Being”**:

Fr. Chrysostomos explains that just as Christ suffers as a human being, yet acts as God and rises from the dead, in the same way the consecrated elements (Holy Communion), though subject to ‘suffering’ and corruption themselves, act upon us as uncreated divinity in order to transform and perfect our fallen nature, not to change us from being physically corruptible, but to enable us to become partakers of the divine nature (2Peter 1:4), even in the here and now.

Therefore, to those who receive Holy Communion with faith and true repentance the Lord's body becomes a ‘safeguard’ ‘for strength, healing and health of soul and body’, maintenance and deification of their fallen human nature.(3)

The consecrated elements in the Holy Eucharist operate as the deified body of Jesus. Through corruptible matter, God grants life uncorrupted. And although immortality is an eschatological condition, and we shall all, sooner or later, cross to the other side and receive it in its fullness, yet ‘doses’ of incorruption are given to us in this mortal life according to the measure of each one's faith, his/her longing and godly fear and love. ***We are transformed into a different mode of existence by the touch of Christ's Body and Blood.*** We are sanctified and deified by being united with Him.

The Chalice and Spoon of Holy Communion are also ***changed***

as they come into contact with Christ's Body and Blood. ***They are transformed to a different mode of existence***; they are sanctified. Their nature is not changed, but, rather, ***in the same way as a blade becomes fire when thrown into the fire . . . the Chalice and the Spoon are also changed and sanctified.*** Their ***mode of existence*** is altered so that they may transfer life to us, just as ***his garment heals*** the flow of blood in the woman when she touches it, just as the sea is ***calmed*** by the touch of Christ for the safety of the disciples, just as the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow ***are brought back to life by the touch of Christ.***

The Body and Blood of Christ, along with the sacred vessels (the Chalice and the Spoon) utilized to deliver it to us cannot be a threat to our bodily health if we approach with the “Fear of God with Faith and with Love.” On the contrary, they will lead us to healing of soul and body and eternal life as they deliver to us ***the healing, salvific touch of Christ.***

Hence, as we return to Holy Communion, let us surrender in faith to God's Mercy and Forgiveness and ask that He may restore us again in His good favor, and protect us from disease, calamity and eternal condemnation.

COVID-19 is a tribulation (δοκιμασία), a test to our faith. The only way to overcome tribulations is by surrendering to God's Love and Mercy completely and unconditionally in faith and trust. Holy Communion is the place to do that, even as He is offered to us through the shared Chalice and Spoon.

Let us, then, begin to prepare ourselves properly to come to Holy Communion.

Just as the Parish Council members are working diligently to clean and disinfect the church buildings from the poisonous Coronavirus, which threatens to lead us to sickness and the death of our bodies, let us diligently cleanse and disinfect our hearts and souls from the poisonous sins and sinful vices, which threaten to lead us to eternal death of both soul and body.

As we prepare with prayer, turning with love to God, let us shed our rationalistic secular thoughts and fill our hearts and minds with positive spiritual thoughts of faith and trust in the Lord. He will never fail us!

Fr. Panayiotis Papageorgiou is the Proistamenos of the Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church in Marietta, GA.

From the Holy Fathers On Forgiveness and the Futility of Despair by St. Amphilochios

A certain brother had succumbed to the sin of lust, repeating this sin every day, but every day he would also beseech the Lord's mercy, with tears and prayers. By acting this way, his bad habit always fooled him and he would repeat the sin again; but again, after sinning, he would go to the Church and, upon seeing the holy and venerable icon of our Lord Jesus Christ, would fall to his knees and with bitter tears would say: “Spare me, Lord, and rid of me this tortuous temptation, because it plagues me terribly and harms me with its bitter pleasures. My face is not worthy to look upon Your holy icon, so that my heart might be consoled.”

That was the sort of thing he would say, but whenever he left the Church, he would again fall in the mire. Yet he never lost his hopes for salvation, and immediately after sinning, he would again return to the Church and say the same things, pray-

ing to the benevolent Lord God: “Lord, be my warrantor that from now on I won't sin again; but please, Lord, forgive all of my sins, from the beginning, up to now.” And after making these grandiose promises, he would again return to the same, terrible sin. And one could discern the sweet benevolence and infinite goodness of the Lord, in tolerating and enduring this incorrigible and grave violation and the ingratitude of this man, and how, in His great compassion, the Lord desired the repentance of this man and his definitive return; because this sin was being repeated, not for one, two or three years, but for ten and more.

Brothers, can you see the immeasurable tolerance and infinite benevolence of the Lord? How He shows forbearance and kindness every time, by enduring our gross iniquities and sins? What is more staggering and provokes our wonder with regard



to God's wealth of compassion, is that although our brother kept promising and would agree to desist from that sin, he proved himself a liar.

One day, after our brother had fallen into that sin again, he went running to the Church, mourning and moaning and in tears, beseeching the compassion of the merciful God to spare him and save him from the mire of incontinence. While this brother was begging the benevolent God, the wicked devil, the destruction of our souls, realized that he had achieved nothing, because while he was sewing with sin, the man was fraying it with his repentance. So the devil impudently appeared before him visibly, and, turning his face towards the venerable icon of our Lord Jesus Christ, started to cry out, saying: "What 's it going to be with us two, Jesus Christ? Your infinite sympathy defeats me and degrades me, whenever you accept this lecher, this wanton, who lies to you every day and disregards your authority. Why then don't you burn him? Why are You so forbearing and tolerant towards him? You are supposed to be the one who will judge the adulterous and the licentious and will eliminate all sinners. In fact, You are not a fair judge, because, wherever Your authority considers it befitting, You judge unfairly and You overlook things. With me, because of the small infraction of pride, you cast me down from heaven, whereas with him, who is a liar, a lecher and a prodigal, because he merely knelt before You, You imperturbably grant him Your favor. So, why do they call You a fair judge? From what I can see, You simply give Yourself to people out of Your great

goodness, and You overlook justice." As the devil was saying these, all choked up by his bitterness, flames and smoke came out of his nostrils.

After the devil had finished speaking, he became silent, and immediately, a voice was heard coming out of the altar saying: "You wicked and pestilent dragon, your wickedness wasn't satiated by swallowing the whole world, and now you are trying to grab and swallow this man who found refuge in the infinite mercy of My compassion? Can you present any sins that are heavier than the precious blood which I shed for this man, on the Cross? Mark well, that My crucifixion and My death forgave his sins. Besides, you didn't send him away when he headed towards sin, but you accepted him with joy and you neither abhorred him nor hindered him, because you hoped to win him. Well then, I, Who am so merciful and benevolent, who had instructed my high Apostle Peter to forgive any man who sins daily up to seventy times seven, will I not forgive and spare this man? Yes, I say to you, and because he sought refuge in Me, I will not turn away from him, until I have made him mine. Because I was crucified for the sinners and it was for them that I extended my immaculate arms, so that everyone who wants to be saved, will seek refuge in me and be saved. I do not avoid anyone, nor do I send anyone away, not even if someone sins a thousand times in one day and then comes to Me a thousand times; he won't leave dismayed. Because I did not come to call the righteous to repent, but the sinners."

As soon as these words were heard, the devil stood fixed in place, trembling, unable to escape. And the voice spoke again: "Listen, impostor, with regard to what you said about me being unfair : because I am fair to everyone, and in whichever condition I might find them, I will judge them accordingly. Look at this man, I found him in repentance and returning back, fallen on his knees in front of Me, and your conqueror. I will therefore accept him and save his soul, because he did not despair about his salvation. And you, when seeing the honor that I grant him, will impale yourself out of envy and be put to shame.

And just as the brother lay there, prone and weeping, he gave up his soul; instantly, a fury as great as a fire fell upon the devil, and it consumed him. Therefore my brothers let us learn from this incident of God's immeasurable compassion and philanthropy, what a kind God we have, and that we must never despair or not tend to our salvation.

5 Big Attitude Differences That Separate Growing Churches From Declining Churches

By Carey Nieuwhof

So what's the difference between churches that grow and churches that decline? Well, there are many, but—crisis or no crisis—one of the biggest differences I see is in the attitude of the leaders. The leaders of growing churches almost always share a common attitude. So do the leaders of declining churches. And the attitude has a huge influence over the results each church sees. Attitude may or may not be everything, but it's close.

Here are 5 attitude differences I see again and again in growing churches and declining churches.

1. We Can v. We Can't

Perhaps the biggest difference I see between growing churches and declining churches is the attitude around what's possible.

Growing churches believe they can. Declining churches believe

they can't. They're both right.

One of my all-time favorite quotes is Henry Ford's "Whether you believe you can or believe you can't, you're right." He's correct.

Growing churches make a way when there's no way, which seems to be what God specializes in if you read the Bible.

When you sit around your leadership table, do you come up with 20 ways to make it happen, or 20 reasons why it won't work? That tells you far more about your church than you probably want it to.

Growing churches believe they can. It's that simple. And even if they're wrong, at least they tried.

The mission is important enough to take significant risk.

2. Them v. Us

Declining churches focus on themselves. Growing churches focus on the people they're trying to reach.

If your leadership table conversations are all about the needs and wants of your members, it's a sign that your church is insider focused.

The mission of the church is to reach the world. Growing churches not only know that; they live it. The instability we're living and leading through makes that difference even more pronounced.

Some churches moved immediately into preservation mode. Others moved into mission. The future in all likelihood belongs to those who moved into mission.

Besides, who likes to hang out with selfish people? And ironically, selfish people almost always end up in a very surprising place: alone. Because a life devoted to self ultimately leaves you alone. That's also true for selfish churches. If you're becoming smaller and smaller, is it because you're selfish?

3. Principles v. Preferences

Declining churches focus on their member's preferences.

Todd didn't like the music.

Allison thinks we're not deep enough.

Jon thinks our services are too short.

Bill says he'll never watch online.

And so the leaders respond, trying to please everybody.

Declining churches bend to the preferences of their members. Growing churches don't. Instead, they focus on the principles (even strategies) that will help them reach new people.

It's not that growing churches ignore the needs of their members, it's that they realize the needs of their members are best fulfilled by making their lives about something bigger than their preferences (i.e. the mission). Is your leadership team principle-driven or preference driven? There's a world of difference between the two.

4. Proactive v. Reactive

This is a close cousin of points 2 and 3 above, but the difference is deadly or life-giving depending on where you land.

Growing churches are proactive. They choose their agenda and immediately take action on issues that can impact their future. Declining churches are reactive, letting members determine the agenda and reacting to problems as they arise. In fact, most declining churches are so busy reacting to problems other people raise that they never get around to charting a course for the future.

If you never get around to charting a course for the future, you will have no future. Growing churches have a strong bias for

setting their own agendas, not in the selfish sense, but in a way that determined leaders see what the mission requires and decide to deal with it. The leaders in a growing church simply refuse to yield to the agenda of others that would take them off mission. And as a result, they are far more effective.

5. Today v. Someday

Growing churches act. And they act now. Declining churches don't. Declining churches don't actually say they won't act, they'll just say they'll get to it 'eventually', or someday, or 'when the time is right'—which means never.

By contrast, great leaders and great teams banish the word 'someday' from their vocabulary, because they realize that someday usually equals never.

If you want to be effective, you act. If you want to be ineffective, you don't.

Talk without action has little value. And too many church leaders specialize in talk.

In addition, too many church teams meet for the sake of meeting. If you can't remember the last time you made a major decision that changed the course of your church, your leaders are wasting their time. If you talk about the same issues meeting after meeting with no resolution, you're spinning your wheels.

Does that mean you have to act on everything? Well, yes and no.

If you're not going to act, strike the item off the agenda and move on. If you are going to act, act. Now. Don't get stuck in the no man's land of believing the lie that talking about things solves things.

Action produces traction. So act.

By the way, this simple framework will help you break the habit of talking with no action for good.



Random Sayings

Those who spend their time looking for the faults in others, usually spend no time to correct their own.

Forgive people in your life, even those who are not sorry for their actions. Holding on to anger only hurts you, not them.

A hermit was asked, "What is humility?" He said, "It is if you forgive a brother who has wronged you before he is sorry."

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

MEETING DATE AND TIME: **First Thursday of Each Month at 11:30 AM (unless otherwise posted)**

LOCATION: **Currently via ZOOM until we are able to meet again in person.**

Everyone is welcome.

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

We were surprise and want to give very special thank you to St John's Sunday School for sending cards to our YAH members.

OUR ACTIVITIES ARE BASED ON OUR ST JOHN'S CHURCH CORE VALUES

LOVE: We check on our Church family wellness by frequently communicating with them especially during this Easter period. We share happiness events in our lives. We celebrate birthdays and have humor time during our meetings

WORSHIP: Attended computerized Church live stream services at St John and from many other services around the country and around the world.

COMMUNITY: We donate to the Church's food pantry.

LEARNING: Our seniors have learned how to celebrate our services using Live Streaming and video conferencing for our meetings with Zoom.

SERVICE: We check on our members to see if they need assistance or food. We circulated where to get free testing for the Coronavirus in Hillsborough County.

OUR NEXT EVENT IS: July 2 at 11:30 am YAH Meeting using Zoom Video Conferencing and telephone

For more information, contact

Michael Trimis, President, 813-784-4872 (vm/t) TrimisM@gmail.com

Mary Nenos, Vice President 813-508-5553 MaryNenos@gmail.com

What is Loving My Neighbor Supposed to Look Like?

By Dr. Derwin Gray

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." Matthew 5:7 (NIV)

Do you ever feel like the injustice, intimidation and violence in our world will never stop? Jesus' world was not that much different from ours. The Roman Empire was not merciful either.

Even the Jewish leaders had serious issues with mercy too. So the common people were caught between the merciless, oppressive Roman Empire and the merciless, compromised religious establishment.

So mercy Himself came to show us a better way to be human. Jesus knew we could never give mercy until we experienced divine mercy. If you do not possess it, you cannot give it away. Jesus, the One who is the endless fountain of mercy, was sent to earth so humanity could come and drink the life-giving waters of His mercy.

As He extended mercy, Jesus also taught us how to be merciful. In Matthew 5:7, He said *"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."*

According to Jesus, merciful people love their neighbors. But this isn't a sentimental love; this is a kind of mercy that looks like the cross of Jesus.

Jesus told a story about an unlikely neighbor who displayed mercy to an unlikely recipient. We know it now as the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus pointed out that as a man lay on the side of the road, clinging to life, a Jewish priest and a Levite came down from Jerusalem, saw him, and didn't offer to help.

The equivalent in our culture would be going to Sunday worship and hearing the preaching of the gospel, singing songs, receiving the Lord's Supper, fellowshiping and baptizing new believers and then *walking right past a person in dire need*. Yet we are guilty of doing exactly that!

What we miss is that our relationship with God should always cause us to *extend mercy to our neighbors in need*. Love is not walking past pain. Love is when mercy meets human pain and suffering.

What Jesus says next would have floored His Jewish audience. He informs them that a hated Samaritan, an enemy of the Jewish people, was journeying on the same road. He saw the beaten, bloodied Jewish man and had compassion for him.

The Samaritan teaches us a lot about mercy.

First, *mercy isn't afraid to touch human suffering*. The Samaritan didn't avoid the bloodied, beaten man. Rather, he entered his suffering, resulting from sin that was perpetrated against him.

Second, *mercy isn't afraid to cross ethnic, cultural and religious barriers*. The very thought of a Samaritan being the hero of the story would have insulted Jewish hearers as there was a great deal of fear and suspicion between the groups. Just like in today's world, a lack of proximity to each other created fear and distrust.

Third, *mercy costs us something*. Helping those in need isn't free. The merciful Samaritan wrapped the beaten man's wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. Then he put the man on his animal and paid for him to stay at an inn and have the innkeeper take care of him. In all, he spent *"two denarii"* to help an injured Jewish man. Moved by compassion, the Samaritan spent 14 days' worth of wages on room and board for a man who was supposed to be an enemy.

For so long in circles of Christians, I have sensed that we think if only we believe the right doctrines, we are following Jesus. But doctrine is meant to be lived, not simply studied or talked about.

Loving your brothers and sisters in Christ across cultural, ethnic and generational lines and loving your enemies are the ultimate signposts that God's Kingdom has come. That is living the good life in full.

Can you imagine how different the world would be if we did just that?

Dr. Derwin L. Gray is the founding and lead pastor of [Transformation Church](#), a multiethnic, multigenerational, mission-shaped community located in Indian Land, South Carolina, just south of Charlotte, North Carolina. He is also African-American.

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 Toulaiatos 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

Faith Care Nursing – Dementia

Edie Kavouklis, RN-BSN, RRT, CDP

What is Dementia?

Dementia is a catchall term used to describe diseases and conditions characterized by a decline in memory, language, problem-solving and other thinking skills that affect a person's ability to perform everyday activities. Dementia ranges in severity from the mildest stage, when it is just beginning to affect a person's memory and functioning, to the most severe stage, when the person is completely dependent on others for basic activities of living.

There are over 80 types of dementia with Alzheimer's disease making up 60 - 70% of all cases. Dementia is more common as people age; up to half of all people age 85 or older may have some form of dementia (Alzheimer's Association, 2016), but it is not a normal part of aging. Many people live well into their 90s and beyond without any signs of dementia.

Symptoms of Dementia?

Dementia results when healthy nerve cells in the brain stop working, lose connections with other brain cells, and die. Signs and symptoms linked to dementia can be understood in three stages.

Early stage – this stage is often overlooked, because the onset is gradual.

Common symptoms include-

- ☐ forgetfulness
- ☐ losing track of the time
- ☐ becoming lost in familiar places

Middle stage - as dementia progresses to the middle stage, the signs and symptoms become

clearer and more restricting-

- ☐ becoming forgetful of recent events and people's names
- ☐ becoming lost at home
- ☐ having increasing difficulty with communication
- ☐ needing help with personal care
- ☐ behavior changes, including wandering and repeated questioning

Late stage: the late stage of dementia is one of dependence and inactivity. Memory disturbances are serious, and the physical signs and symptoms more obvious-

- ☐ becoming unaware of the time and place
- ☐ having difficulty recognizing relatives and friends
- ☐ having an increasing need for assisted self-care
- ☐ having difficulty walking
- ☐ experiencing behavior changes that may escalate and include aggression

Types of Dementia

Some dementia disorders cause progressive and irreversible loss of nerves and brain functioning; researchers are working diligently towards finding curative treatments. These types of dementia include Alzheimer's disease, frontotemporal disorders and Lewy body dementia. Some medical conditions can cause

serious memory problems that resemble dementia. These problems should go away once the conditions are treated.

Some examples include – medication side effects, vitamin deficiencies, infections, blood clots, head injuries, normal pressure hydrocephalus, thyroid or liver problems and more.

It is also common for people to have mixed dementia - a combination of two or more types of dementia. The overlapping symptoms with many types of dementia can make it hard to get an accurate diagnosis. But early diagnosis is key to get the right treatment. Seek help from your primary care doctor who will, if needed, connect you with a doctor who specializes in disorders of the brain and nervous system.

What Can Be Done to Prevent Dementia?

Consult your physician regarding concerns about dementia and to assure you are healthy enough to make any diet or exercise changes to your routine. Healthy habits may help ward off dementia and prevent other diseases. Consider the following steps from Dr. Marshall from Harvard Medical School (Harvard Health, 2017) to help prevent dementia diseases.

Exercise - The recommendation is 30 minutes of aerobic exercise, three to four days per week.

Eat a Mediterranean diet - This has been proven to help prevent or slow dementia progression. Eat fresh vegetables and fruits, whole grains, olive oil, nuts, legumes, fish, moderate amounts of poultry, eggs, and dairy, red wine and very little red meat.

Sleep - Growing evidence suggests that improved sleep can help prevent Alzheimer's and other dementias and is linked to greater amyloid clearance from the brain. Set a goal for seven to eight hours per night.

Learn new things - Brain stimulating activities may be helpful in preventing dementia.

Participating in a small group ministry at St. John's is an opportunity to learn and socialize.

Connect socially - Greater social interactions may help prevent and slow dementia and as an added bonus improves the quality of life. Attending Liturgy is a great place to connect socially.

If you have concerns about yourself or a loved one, please contact your primary care physician or medical professional.

For More Information About Dementia

NIA Alzheimer's and related Dementias Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center, 1-800-438-4380 (toll-free) adear@nia.nih.gov www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers

Alzheimer's Association, 1-800-272-3900 <https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia>

COVID-19 not only affects your health, it can also affect your finances. Hillsborough County and other community partners are offering resources to help you and your family get through this. This resource guide includes information regarding financial assistance, mental health assistance and food assistance among other things.

Emotional Support Call Line

For those finding it difficult to cope or adapt to the pandemic, there is a free emotional support call line operating 7 days/week from 8 AM—8 PM. Call Line: 727-524-4464 (Ext. 1001)

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, July 18 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

Demitrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH

Bessie Bliziotis - Palm Cost, FL

Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL

Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL

William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL

Lillian Thomas - Highland, IN

Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL

Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD

Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA

Nicholas & Vaso Anton - Dunedin, FL

Kay Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA

Katherine Beasley - Vero Beach, FL

Artemis & Eric Mellen - Longwood, FL

Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL

Charles Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA

Pete & Carol Caldwell - Ringgold, GA

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.

A JOYFUL RETURN!



~ July 2020 ~					
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
			1 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	2 Young at Heart 11:30 a.m.	3 **
					4 Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
5 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	6 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	7	8 ** Paraklesis 10:00 a.m.	9	10
					11 St. Euphemia Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
12 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	13 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	14	15 ** Paraklesis 10:00 a.m.	16	17 **
					18 Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
19 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	20 Prophet Elias Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m. (GOYAns are asked to attend)	21	22 ** Paraklesis 10:00 a.m.	23	24 **
					25 St. Anna Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
26 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	27 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	28	29 ** Paraklesis 10:00 a.m.	30	31 **

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

Office: (813) 876-8830 Fax: (813) 443-4899

office@stjohntpa.org

www.stjohntpa.org

NONPROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

TAMPA, FL

PERMIT NO. 461

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Timetable of Services

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

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

Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

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

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

Pastoral Assistant Charlie Hambos
813-876-8830 (Office) 813-843-8471 (Cell)
chambos@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
IIAPEA, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
IIANHITYPI, 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 10th 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.