

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*

August 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 August. As we have been doing each month, we lead off *The Messenger* with some pastoral guidelines relate to Covid-19.

We have determined that it is safe for 75 worshippers plus 10 workers to be in the church at one time and still be social distancing. Because the number of worshippers has exceeded 75 each weekend, we will continue to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on Saturdays and Sundays. If the rule on social distancing should change during the month of August, the Saturday Divine Liturgies will be cancelled (save for August 15 and August 29, which are Feast Days when we would celebrate the Divine Liturgy in any case).

We celebrate Paraklesis every Wednesday (sometimes in the evening, and other times in the morning) and will continue to do so until we are able to come all together and worship. Because we have been offering Paraklesis every Wednesday for several months, we will not offer Paraklesis every other day as is the custom during the Dormition Fast, but we will continue to offer it on Wednesdays until we can all come together and worship. If this happens during August, the Wednesday Paraklesis 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.

Also, the crew who helps outside at the check-in table will leave the outside table to worship at 10:15 a.m. We ask that if you are attending the Divine Liturgy, that you please be courteous and arrive on time. If you arrive after 10:15 a.m., please knock on the side door and someone will come outside to assist you. However, no one will be admitted to the church during the Gospel and the sermon as this is disruptive. This is approximately 10:20-10:30 a.m. Thank you for your cooperation on this.

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.

Pastoral Guidelines continued...

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 August, 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.

Finally, a big thank you for the large crew of volunteers who assist in order to make sure we are safe at every service—the nursing ministry, the welcome ministry, the ushers, the altar servers, and the guest chanters. Everyone has done a great job coming together to make sure we can offer regular worship, as well as these extra services in a way that is safe.

Father Stavros' Message

The Twelve Disciples Project

During this period of the covid-19 pandemic, I have committed once a week to offer a Paraklesis service of supplication to the Virgin Mary. During this service, we pray for all the stewards of our church by name. So that, whether you attend church in a given week or not, your name is heard within its four walls. The purpose of Paraklesis is to ask the Virgin Mary, together with the saints, to intercede before Christ for the people being prayed for at the Paraklesis. Intercessory prayer has a great value, in that among other things, it lets us know that we are not alone, that others are caring about our well-being. We know that Christ cares for us. We know that the saints care for us. And we are supposed to care for one another.

For the month of August, we are introducing the Twelve Disciples Project. We know that Jesus had twelve disciples. We know that these disciples helped establish the Christian church. Coincidentally, the list of our stewards that we pray for at the weekly Paraklesis is twelve pages long.

What we are looking for are twelve people who will volunteer, for the month of August, to pray for the names on one page of these twelve pages. The goal is for the name of every parishioner—those who we see often and those who we don't; those who are attending services in person and those who are attending virtually; that every parishioner will be remembered in prayer on a daily basis throughout the month of August. If more than 12 parishioners are interested, then we will send each page of stewards to more than one person. If 24 parishioners are interested, everyone will be prayed for by two people each day. If 36 parishioners are interested, everyone will be prayed for by three people a day, and so on. If you are interested in being part of the Twelve Disciples Project, please email the office at office@stjohntpa.org by August 1, and we will email you your one page of parishioners to pray for, as well as a prayer to offer for them.

Additionally, during the month of August, Father Stavros will send an email of encouragement to all the "Disciples," as well as offer their names in prayer each day of August.

What: The Twelve Disciples Project

When: August 1-31

Why: To make sure every parishioner is remembered in prayer during the month of August

How: Send an email to the church office, receive a one-page list of our parishioners (1/12 of our parish population) and commit to pray for them every day from August 1-31

Who: Everyone is welcome to participate!

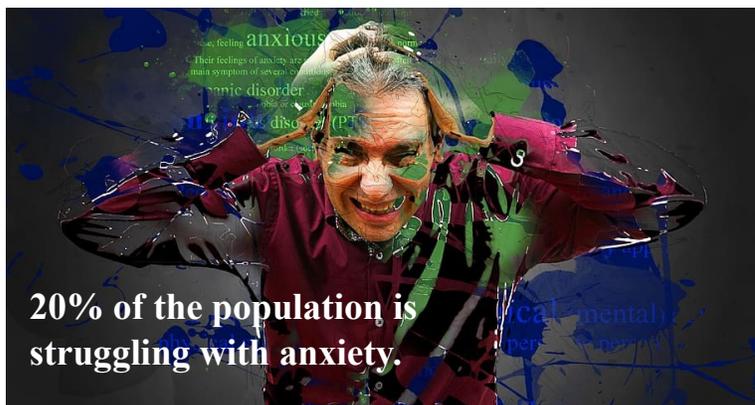
The Dog Days of Summer

In a normal year, the major league baseball season lasts 162 games over the course of six months. The season normally begins at the start of April and lasts until the end of September (not so in 2020). The month of August has traditionally been referred to as the "dog days of summer." It's hot. The grind of the season seems as if it will never end. Many teams are already out of playoff contention and are just playing out the string. For those who are in the playoff hunt, there isn't the same urgency that there will be in September. Yet, as any smart baseball player knows, the games count just as much in April as they do in August, as they do in September. And so the smart player presses on through the dog days of summer, taking each game one at a time, not getting too elated over a win (but still celebrating it) and not getting into too much despair over a loss (after all, there is a game to be played the next day).

We began the quarantine and coronavirus crisis in mid-March, in the midst of spring training. We are now 4.5 months in. However, unlike the baseball season, we have no idea when this "season" is going to end, and when life will get back to any kind of "normal." Using the baseball analogy, we don't know whether we are early in the season, half-way done, or in the dog days. Regardless of where we are in relation to the duration of this crisis, we have definitely reached the dog days of summer.

Like the baseball players, we are tired. No one is functioning at 100%. Between added stress, anxiety, uncertainty, and frustration, no one is functioning at their fullest capacity. Imagine one is pushing a large stone up a hill. The stone is as large as a person. As we push higher and higher on the hill, we become more and more tired. There are three choices—keep pushing, even in our tired state; step aside and let the stone roll down the hill; or try to sit with our back against the stone above us on the hill. There is a problem with each scenario. Stepping aside and letting the stone roll down the hill negates all the work we've done to this point in pushing the stone up the hill. If we compare this example of the stone with life, stopping and letting the stone roll away is like throwing in the towel on a marriage, family, business or faith. No matter how tired we get, we can't throw in the towel on these things. The problem with sitting with our back against the stone is that the stone will roll back over us and crush us. So that isn't really a solution. Which leads us to the conclusion that the only thing we can do is keep plowing forward, even though we are not 100%.

How do we do this? Here are a few helpful hints:



20% of the population is struggling with anxiety.

Focus on Today

One of my favorite Bible verses is Matthew 6:34: *Therefore, do not be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day.* This verse follows several verses where Jesus teaches us about anxiety. I read recently that on any given day, at least 20% of the population is struggling with anxiety. That doesn't mean affected by anxiety—we are all affected by anxiety to one degree or another. That's 20% who are really struggling with anxiety on a given day. Jesus teaches us in Matthew 6:25-33:

Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.

There are three take-aways here. First, anxiety and stress will not add any more length to our lives. On the contrary, it will shorten them. Second, if God takes care of flower and grass which are easily destroyed, He will take care of us even more. Third, we are to seek Him first and the other things will be ours as well. Seeking God first will help mitigate anxiety. It will help us realize what is really important and necessary and what isn't. We can lessen stress by not focusing past today. That doesn't mean not to give tomorrow a second thought. It means just not to obsess about it. I remember last October, someone mentioned something that could happen this July that was anxiety inducing. I remember having this tension in my mind wondering what was going to happen nine months later. Then I decided not to worry about July from the previous October. And boy am I glad I didn't worry—because the thing I was worried about got cancelled by the pandemic and didn't happen anyway. Had I been nervous, or had I spoken up negatively about this issue, it would have led potentially to a negative out-

come for me, and now, as it turns out, would have been for no reason. Am I worried that life won't be back to normal until 2021? Does my worrying change anything? No. So, then I won't worry. I'll just try to take things as they come, a day at a time. As I'm writing this message in mid-July, school is scheduled to resume on August 13—will that happen? Will the start of the school year be delayed? Again, I can't be anxious about that today. Let's see where we are at as we get closer. Again, as Jesus says, sufficient for today is its own worries.

We have to keep our community together

I confess I actually do get a little anxious when I think about how long our community has been apart. Even if we were to restart Sunday School and GOYA and choir and other things in August, we've been away from all of this for at least five months. And if we go for several more months without these things, will they restart once this pandemic is over, or will they have to be rebuilt? Will people again flock to the church every Sunday or has our absence from church allowed us to plug other things into our Sunday mornings? Time will tell what the answers are to these questions. We are determined to do whatever we can to hold our community together, which has included offering more opportunities to worship, zoom meetings for our ministries, and more frequent contact via social media and email.

We also must continue to "be" the church and to "do" the work of the church. This work includes charitable giving. I am pleased that our Community Outreach program has continued even during this pandemic. We continue to provide the manpower for the Matthew 25 ministry every third Saturday of the month and have done so without interruption. We continue to have a food pantry that is open for those in our immediate area, as well as parishioners, who need food. We continue to have parishioners who donate food to our food pantry.

Two Wins for our Community

Most significant, during the latter part of June, we raised over \$5,000 that was sent to Matthew 25 in order to purchase food for hungry people in the Tampa area. We had asked parishioners to consider donating \$5 per family, or about \$2,000 for our church in order to send a message that even in a time when we don't have as much disposable income and many people are out of work, we are still going to be generous in our charitable giving and outreach to our local community. We asked for \$2,000 and you responded with \$5,000. That's a great win for our community.

There was one more win for our community along the same lines. Every year, we commit a percentage of our budget to charitable giving. This year, the amount is nearly \$30,000. Some of those checks are dispersed at the mid-way point of the



year. We went ahead and give our usual contributions to Matthew 25 (on top of the \$5,000), Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) and International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC). This is possible through YOUR generosity and stewardship. Despite the fact that the economy has been rocky and people have lost jobs, we have kept up almost identical to last year's stewardship pace, which set a record last year. Thank you for your stewardship.

Other ways we can "be" the church include the new "Twelve Disciples" program that was introduced at the beginning of this issue. We can call and check up on one another. We can call and offer words of encouragement to one another. We need more volunteers to serve as ushers and greeters. New people have stepped forward to help which is great, but we can use more help there as well.

I saw a quote the other day—"Sin and addiction thrive in isolation; recovery and repentance happen in community." This is very true. This is why each of us needs to stay connected to the community as much as possible. Because we all sin and we all need repentance, and when we are present in the church community, even "virtually" in worship, we are still part of community, and community still can help us in our repentance.

The Centrality of the Eucharist

The most central thing we do in our church is celebrate and receive the Holy Eucharist. From a personal standpoint, with the extra Saturday Liturgies, I have celebrated the Eucharist more in the first six months of this year than in any other prior



year of my ministry. However, this is not the case with any of you. Some of you haven't received Holy Communion in months, for a variety of reasons. If you are in the group of people who would come to church but are annoyed that we have to wear a mask in church, I encourage you to come once a month, wear the mask, and be able to receive Holy Communion. Receiving Holy Communion is central to what we do and it's something that you need to do, especially if it has been several months since you've received. If you are in the group of people that is high risk, or who feel at risk attending the Divine Liturgy, even with smaller numbers of people who are social distancing, I encourage you to make a private appointment, to stop by the church for 10 minutes, with your family, once a month, to receive the Eucharist. Please call me on my cell phone at 813-394-1038 and I'd be happy to arrange for a time when you can do this.

Attendance at services remains relatively low. Weekday Paraklesis service attendance is in the single digits. Saturday attendance does not exceed forty. If you are concerned about too many people being in church, services outside of Sundays

are sparsely attended. You can also look at the SignUpGenius online and see how many people are signed up for a service.

For those who are not attending services right now, there is no judgment, only encouragement to participate in on-line worship via livestream or Facebook live.

"Doubters" are Welcome

One of the most comforting Bible verses is also one that is unknown by most people. Matthew 28:16-17 reads: "Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him but some doubted." Now, many people are familiar with the verses which follow, where Christ sends the Disciples out to baptize all nations, which is also known as the Great Commission. Here is why verses 16-17 are so important. They have to do with the mindset of the disciples. Jesus directed them to go to a mountain. They were all obedient. They were all faithful. They did as they were directed. When they saw Jesus, they worshipped Him. Again, they all did the expected thing. However, they each went to the mountain with a different mindset. Because, as we are told in 28:17, "some doubted." Some doubted and some were probably confident. But here is the thing—they all showed up, regardless of their mindset. They all showed up to worship. And their mindset, even the ones who were doubting, did not lower their place in the eyes of Jesus, who commissioned them all just the same—the confident ones and the doubters He honored the same, because ALL were there.

Many of us have had our minds filled with more doubts than usual these days. Will we get sick? Are we in a financial crisis that we can recover from? Will we lose jobs? Will school be safe? Will we all get back to church eventually? Will life return to normal? Will there be some kind of new normal? And where is God in all of this?

We are all called to show up, even if we have doubts. It's okay to have doubts. By showing up, we mean showing up either in person or virtually to worship, and hopefully soon, all of us returning in person. Christ doesn't require a certain mindset as a prerequisite to worshipping or belonging. If we are honest, no one is confident in their faith at all times. At times we all doubt. I've had times when I've worshipped with doubts. But there has never been a time I didn't worship (save for about a two-month period early in college). I have always shown up. I haven't always shown up with confidence. Plenty of times I show up with doubts, with questions, with anxiety and even with disappointment in God. But I show up.

For some of you, 2020 has been a faith building year and for others, you're trying to hold on to faith during these crazy times. Whatever category you fall into, as far as faith, keep showing up—in person or virtually for worship, privately in prayer, with daily acts of service, with daily commitment to live the Christian faith and a life of Christian virtue, regardless of how you feel.

As an aside, the highest truth cannot be our feelings, because our feelings change. And certain feelings dominate our thoughts at times—for instance the feeling of hunger or fatigue can trump the feeling of love. When one is starving, the top priority is eating, not loving, not joy, not anything else. Which is why faith can't be based on feeling—confidence and doubtful are feelings that sometimes trump our other feelings. Faith is not a feeling, but a commitment. The disciples in Matthew 28 had enough faith to show up on that mountain. They had

faith. They also had human feelings of doubt. Doubt is okay, but doubt is a feeling. And we can't let doubt trump faith, because faith is a commitment and an identity, which shouldn't be defeated by feeling.

Keep showing up. This alone will build faith.

What's Behind Your Mask?

Our Welcoming Ministry thoughtfully made signs for our volunteers who help get everyone into church safely which say "There is a smile behind this mask." Masks are being worn now as a safety measure, just like they are worn for this reason all the time by medical personnel. There are, however, other reasons why masks are worn.

A mask is worn to conceal identity. Bank robbers wear masks, so that their identity won't be known. Wearing a mask in this way is sinister.

A mask is worn when one is trying to be something that they aren't. For instance, people wear masks at Halloween, and can pretend to be a super hero, or a villain, or the President, or an animal or any number of other possibilities. Taking on the identity of someone that we aren't, getting into character, pretending to be someone else in this instance can be fun.

There is another mask which can be even more sinister than the masks that the robbers wear. And this is the mask of being disingenuous and untruthful. And to some extent, we all wear one of these a lot of time. We pretend to be happy when we are really sad. We pretend to be successful when we have failed. We pretend to be confident when we are filled with doubt. We pretend I think for two reasons. Either we are ashamed to admit the truth to others or to ourselves. Or we are afraid that if the truth was known, we'd lose a job, or a friend, or someone's respect.

Many people complain about the masks that the government has asked us to wear. I hope when this crisis is over, that people will complain about the masks that society forces us to wear—to look a certain way, to not show weakness, to never be able to safely admit we're wrong. We mask a culture where it is not safe to be honest many times, or where we can't open a conversation without provoking an argument, where we want to be heard and at the same time aren't good at listening.

If we all took our "masks" off, what would we find behind them? Probably a lot of people who are hurting, who want to do better at something, and just need some help, or even just some patience and grace to get there. Not all of us are counselors or therapists, which is why not everyone should try to counsel other people. There are some significant problems that are best handled by professionals. But we ALL have the ability to extend patience and grace to others. We all, therefore, have the ability to help others remove their masks and be themselves.

It's weird when I preach a sermon in church these days because I can't see the looks on people's faces behind their masks—are they into what I'm saying? Or bored? I can't tell the difference. Sometimes when I get close enough to someone, I can tell if there is a smile or a frown behind their masks. However, for most of us, whether we are wearing a mask for coronavirus protection or not, most of us wear masks that conceal at least part of who we truly are.

We will all be happy when we don't have to wear the coronavirus masks any more. How much happier could we all be if we could remove the other masks as well. As we hope for a

day soon when we can worship and gather without wearing the coronavirus masks, let us all work for a day when we can take off our masks of dishonesty as well, so that there is a smile behind every mask.

Stand a Post

One of my favorite movies is "A Few Good Men." It's about two Marines who are on trial for murder. One of the main characters, a colonel played by Jack Nicholson, asks the main character, the trial lawyer played by Tom Cruise, if he has ever stood a post. Standing a post is what soldiers do at their bases. Certainly soldiers are on guard at all times. The base is guarded around the clock. So that those who are asleep, can sleep secure in the knowledge that they are safe, they are being watched over by those who are standing post. The soldiers take turns standing the posts so that all soldiers can have time to sleep.

During this time of pandemic, we are like the soldiers in the fort who are under attack. The enemy is an insidious disease, coupled now with national unrest, that threatens our way of life. Our way of life has certainly changed that past few months. During this time of attack, we all need to take a turn standing a post in order to safeguard our church community. This can obviously be done in a number of ways.

- ~Attending services in person
- ~Attending services on line
- ~In particular, attending in person or virtually the Paraklesis service
- ~Participating in the 12 Disciples program
- ~Calling and checking up on your fellow parishioners

Will you stand a post with me?

I challenge everyone in our parish to attend ONE Paraklesis a month, either in person or virtually, in order to "stand a post" while the people of our parish are being remembered in prayer. I see it as not only a joy, but a duty, to stand post in our church once a week to pray for all the people of the community. And I invite you to join me, at least once a month, either in person or virtually. So that all of our "soldiers" of Christ, our parishioners may be protected through prayer, until the attack is over and it is safe to return.

Yes, despite the pandemic and how it has curtailed many of our in-person activities, there is still a lot going on at St. John, and there is still an opportunity to participate in the life of our parish in many ways that don't require us to be on the church property.

As we are in the "dog days" of August, as we continue to deal with the uncertainty of the "season," it is a time to be more vigilant in prayer for one another.

Normally in the month of August, we are kicking off GOYA and Sunday School. As of press time in the middle of July, we do not know what those programs will look like, only that we are making plans to offer them virtually as needed until they can be offered in person. So, please stay tuned for more information, and please stay connected to worship, either in person or virtually.

I continue to remember all of you in prayer, and I humbly ask for your prayers as well. This is uncharted territory for all of us, so let us continue to be patient with one another as we travel this road together.

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

Liturgical Schedule for August 2020

Saturday, August 1	No divine services
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.
Saturday, August 8	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, August 9	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, August 12	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
Friday, August 14	Great Vespers for the Dormition of the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
Saturday, August 15	Dormition of the Virgin Mary Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, August 16	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, August 19	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
Saturday, August 22	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, August 23	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, August 26	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
Saturday, August 29	Beheading of St. John the Baptist Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, August 30	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Tuesday, September 1	Beginning of Ecclesiastical Year (The Indiction) Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, September 2	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
Saturday, September 5	St. Zacharias and St. Elizabeth, Parents of St. John the Baptist Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, September 6	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Opt-in on *The 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 2712 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.

**The Prayer Team has a new dedicated website: PrayerTeam365.com
Check it out! Search by topic and grow in your faith today!**

Liturgical Notes for August 2020

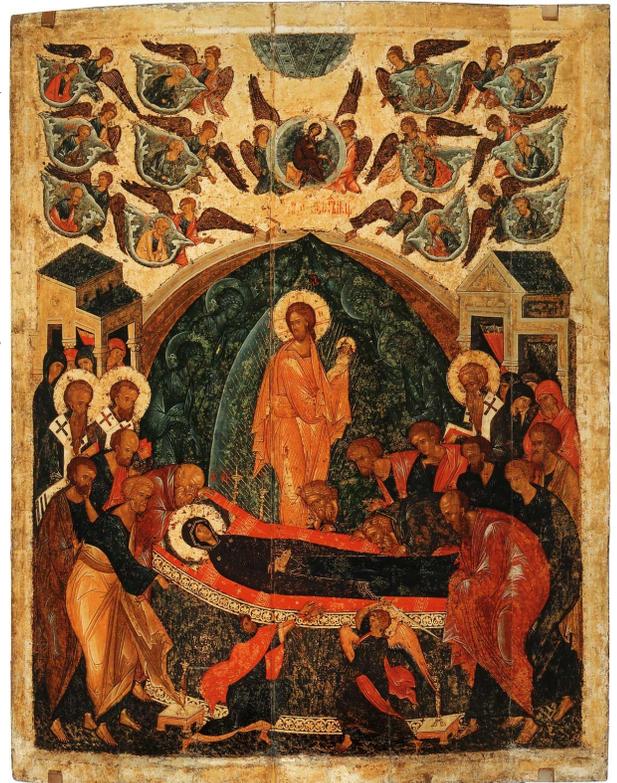
Divine Liturgy on all the Saturdays of August, except August 1 - In order to facilitate people being able to worship on a weekly basis, we will celebrate Divine Liturgy on all the Saturdays of August, except August 1. We ask that people only sign up for every other Sunday, so that people who wish to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

Paraklesis to be celebrated every Wednesday - We will continue to celebrate Paraklesis every Wednesday until the end of this crisis, at which point a Holy Unction service will be offered to mark the end of this crisis. In August, Paraklesis will be offered on Wednesdays, August 5, 12, 19 and 26, all at 6:00 p.m. Because we are offering Paraklesis on a weekly basis, we will not have the many Paraklesis services from August 1-14, just on the two Wednesdays of that period.

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

Thursday, August 6 - Transfiguration of our Savior We read in the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke, how Jesus was Transfigured on Mount Tabor in the presence of His Disciples. Matthew 17:2 says, “His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light.” Jesus was shown in the fullness of His glory as God, and standing beside Him were Moses and Elijah, the two greatest prophets of the Old Testament. This showed the Disciples that the man Jesus was indeed God as well, and pre-figured His glory at the Resurrection and Ascension.

Friday, August 14 - Great Vespers for the Feast of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary—In the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church, the day begins with the setting of the sun. On August 15, we celebrate the Dormition of the Virgin Mary. But the actual feast begins with the setting of the sun on the evening of August 14. An evening service, called Vespers, announces each new day. In most parishes, Vespers is only offered a few times a year. For instance, in Tampa, we do Vespers on January 6 in the evening, as the prelude of the feast of St. John the Baptist on January 7. There are a few others times of the year we offer this service as well. This year, we will begin a tradition of celebrating Great Vespers on August 14. There is a tradition of an “Epitaphios” of the Virgin Mary. Most of us know the term “Epitaphios” as it relates to Christ in the tomb. In fact, the word “Epitaphios” literally means “in the tomb.” On Good Friday, we lay the “Epitaphios” of Christ into the Kouvouklion, the tomb of Christ. There is a tradition of doing the same thing on August 14, laying an “Epitaphios” (icon of the Virgin Mary in the tomb) in a Kouvouklion. I’ve personally thought that the Kouvouklion should be used once a year, only for the Body of Christ, which is why we have not done this service previously. However, because of the pandemic, Felix, our maintenance man, built us a small Kouvouklion because we did not use the regular one this year. So, now we have two Kouvouklia, the regular large one and now a smaller one. We have also acquired a beautiful Epitaphios of the Virgin Mary. On August 14, this year and every year going forward, we will use the Epitaphios of the Virgin Mary and place it in the small Kouvouklion. And on Good Friday, we will utilize the large Kouvouklion for the Epitaphios of Christ. Great Vespers on August 14 will be at 6:00 p.m. We will display the Epitaphios of the Virgin Mary and the Kouvouklion from August 14-23 (which is the leave-taking of the Dormition).



Saturday, August 15 - Dormition of the Virgin Mary—This is one of the Twelve Major Feastdays of the Church Year, and commemorates the Falling Asleep of the Virgin Mary. When the Virgin Mary died, all the disciples were present, save for Thomas, who could not get there in time for the funeral. When Thomas arrived, they opened the tomb for him to pay his respects to the Virgin Mary. The tomb was found empty, save for the belt of the Virgin Mary. Her body, along with her soul, had been assumed into heaven. This shows us that those who are righteous will be taken to heaven. It is not just Christ who went to heaven, but all of us can go. The Virgin Mary was not God—she was one of us, and shows to us, in the most excellent example, of what it means to live a life of obedience to God. We honor her above every person, even every angel, as we chant, “Greater in honor than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim (Cherubim and Seraphim are two order of angels, the ones who stand closest to God), you without corruption gave birth to God the Word, and are truly Theotokos, you do we magnify.”

Liturgical Notes for August continued...



Saturday, August 29 - Beheading of St. John the Baptist St. John the Baptist, according to the Gospel accounts, was beheaded in prison. St. John had spoken out against Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. This man had a lawful wife, the daughter of Arethas, the King of Arabia. Without any cause, and against every commandment of the Law, he put her away and took to himself Herodias, the wife of his deceased brother Philip, to whom Herodias had borne a daughter, Salome. He would not desist from this unlawful union even when John, the preacher of repentance, the bold and austere accuser of the lawless, censured him and told him, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark 6: 18). Thus Herod, besides his other unholy acts, added yet this, that he apprehended John and shut him in prison; and perhaps he would have killed him straightway, had he not feared the people, who had extreme reverence for John. When Salome, Herodias' daughter, had danced in order to please him and those who were supping with him, he promised her -- with an oath more foolish than any foolishness -- that he would give her anything she asked, even unto the half of his kingdom. And she, consulting with her mother, straightway asked for the head of John the Baptist in a charger. Hence this transgressor of the Law, preferring his lawless oath above the precepts of the Law, fulfilled this godless promise and filled his loathsome banquet with the blood of the Prophet. So it was that that all-venerable head, revered by the Angels, was given as a prize for an abominable dance, and became the plaything of the dissolute daughter of a debauched mother. As for the body of the divine Baptist, it was taken up by his disciples and placed in a tomb (Mark 6:21 - 29). We commemorate this event each year on August 29, which is also a strict fast day. As St. John the Baptist is the patron saint of our parish, we honor this feast day, and we pray for his intercessions over each of us and our parish.

Tuesday, September 1 - New Ecclesiastical Year/Day of the Environment - His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, declared many years ago that September 1, the day on which we begin the New Ecclesiastical (Church) Year, also be set aside to pray for our environment. Not only do we thank God for His blessings of the past church year, and ask for Him to bless us in the new year, but we also offer prayers for our environment, which are needed more and more in the world where our environment is threatened as time passes.



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.

On the lighter side

The shopping cart is the ultimate litmus test for whether a person is capable of self-governing. To return the shopping cart is an easy, convenient task and one which we all recognize a the correct, appropriate thing to do. To return the shopping cart is objectively right. There are no situations other than dire emergencies in which a person is not able to return their cart. Simultaneously, it is not illegal to abandon your shopping cart. Therefore, the shopping cart presents itself as the apex example of whether a person will do what is right without being forced to do it. No one will punish you for not returning the shopping cart, no one will fine you or kill you for not returning the shopping art, you gain nothing by returning the shopping cart. You must return the shopping cart out of the goodness of your own heart. You must return the shopping cart because it is the right thing to do. Because it is correct. A person who is unable to do this is not better than an animal, an absolute savage who can only be made to do what is right by threatening them with a law and the force that stands behind it. The shopping cart is what determines whether a person is a good or bad member of society—Glenn Danzig



My kids asked me what it was like growing up in the 80s. . .So I took away their phones and turned the internet off

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

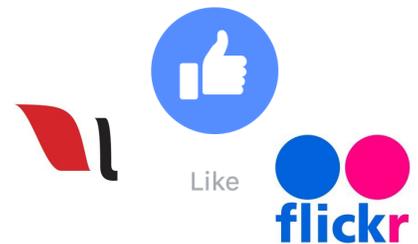
All of our services are being video recorded and are available on our Livestream page.

To access this page

1. Go to our Church's website: stjohntpa.org,
2. Scroll the mouse over the "Multimedia" tab on the menu bar,
3. Click "View Liturgy,"
4. Then click on the link where it says, "Check out our live stream of the Divine Liturgy here <http://new.livestream.com/accounts/2454446>. **All of the services are available to watch at anytime.**

Pictures

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



~August 2020 Stewardship Update ~

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

With grateful hearts, considering the circumstances, we acknowledge our loyal Stewards of St. John the Baptist. Your sacrificial giving supports the Vision of our Church to Love God, Love your neighbor and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ as an Orthodox Christian community!

We know this summer has been longer than usual and we look forward to “new” opportunities to be involved in our thriving church community. We continue to be here for you and we hope that you will continue to be here for us.

Without the commitment of our parishioners dedicating of their time, talent and treasure our church would not be sustainable. ***The Stewardship Committee expresses sincere appreciation and thanks.***

- If you have not completed a Pledge Form in 2020 please take time to do so today. It is never too late – We are called as Christians to give back and our beautiful church in Tampa would not flourish without our cheerful givers and faithful servants of Christ. When you give to God, you discover what God gives to you!
- Individual/Family Stewardship Summary statements were mailed in late July, please call the church office with any questions.
- We will publish a list of ‘Stewards’ at St. John the Baptist in the October Messenger as we prepare for our Fall General Assembly and Parish Council Nominations and Elections.

	2020*	2019*
Pledged Year to Date	\$500,329	\$506,464
Received Year to Date	\$307,645	\$299,934
Average Pledge	\$1,445	\$1,483
Median Pledge	700	\$900
# of Indiv/Families Pledged/Giving	361	353
*YTD as of 7/10/20 & 7/17/19		

- On Line Pledge Forms and General Donations are up and running on our website. Many of our Stewards have taken advantage of submitting their pledge form on line and setting up systematic payments for Stewardship. And don't forget online banking as an easy and convenient option for automatic payments if you chose not to use paypal.
- We love hearing from our parishioners, If you would like to share something regarding your calling to Stewardship, 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!
- Keep an eye out for the new church application which will have a lot of new information and ways to stay connected to our church community.

“Why did you spill the coffee?”

“Because someone bumped into me!!!”
Wrong answer.

You spilled the coffee because there was coffee in your cup. Had there been tea in the cup, you would have spilled tea.

“Whatever is inside the cup is what will spill out.”

Therefore, when life comes along and shakes you (which WILL happen), whatever is inside you will come out. It's easy to fake it until you get rattled.

So we have to ask ourselves, “what's in my cup?”

When life gets tough, what spills over?

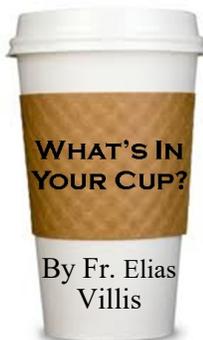
Joy, gratefulness, peace and humility?

Anger, bitterness, harsh words and reactions?

Life provides the cup, YOU choose how to fill it.

Today let's work toward filling our cups with gratitude, forgiveness, joy, words of affirmation; and kindness, gentleness and love for others.

From a sermon by Fr. Elias Villis, Proistamenos of Greek Orthodox Church of our Savior, Rye, New York



Choices

You did NOT choose your:

1. birthplace
2. skin color
3. birth parents, family
4. birth gender
5. birth language
6. birth name
7. ethnicity
8. born abilities

You CAN choose to be:

1. kind
2. generous
3. honest
4. grateful
5. respectful
6. optimistic
7. humble
8. teachable
9. faithful
10. happy
- (Unknown)



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 August. 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.

August 2-8

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

James 1:2-4

Trials, testing, faith and patience. These words probably come to our minds a lot these days. The Covid-19 pandemic has done a number on our world this year. First, it is a disease that people are getting sick and dying from. So, it’s scary. Second, it has become an issue that is politically and emotionally charged, which is unfortunate. I can’t think of any other medical affliction—heart disease, cancer, diabetes, etc.—which is a political issue. We deal with every medical condition in a scientifically objective way. Everyone seems charged up and angry about everything these days. It takes a great deal of patience and restraint to stay patient and even-keel. And this experience has also tested our faith—in ourselves, in one another, in relationships, in politics, in medicine and also in God. Regardless of how long this lasts and how it ends, it has certainly been a trial for us this year. Saint Paul tells us that we should count it as a joy when we have trials, knowing that the testing of our faith produces patience. What a

thing it would be to rejoice in our situation right now, what a sign of mature faith. I guess we all can grow in that area. It is appropriate to evaluate ourselves as regards to faith, and it is certainly okay to ask questions regarding faith as well. In his Epistle, St. James tells us that patience is part of our path to perfection.

August 9-15

My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Luke 1:47

As we prepare to celebrate the feast of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, this week’s verse refers to a song of Mary known as the Magnificat, which begins with these words, “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” We discussed this verse in a previous issue of *The Messenger*, when I challenged people to fill in the blanks: “My soul _____ the Lord and my spirit _____ in God my Savior.” In the midst of the pandemic, how are our souls and spirits in relationship to the Lord? Have our souls “forgotten” about our Lord, are our spirits “frustrated” at God our Savior? How we fill in these blanks is important both in good times and in bad ones. We are all going to remember the year 2020 as long as we live. Will we remember this as a year that our souls magnified the Lord, when they rejoiced in God our Savior? It is possible to do these things, even in the midst of crisis? The simple answer is, YES!

August 16-22

For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel. Ezra 7:10

School is going to begin in some form or fashion as we reach the end of August. We will again get into the school routine. What the “routine” will look like no one knows. Will it be in person school or on-line school? No one knows. We do know that going to start school and that this will change the routine. No one wants their student to miss a year of study. I don’t think anyone is advocating for summer to last forever. Students have to get back to studying because that’s what they do. The small, obscure and often overlooked Old Testament book of Ezra provides our Bible quote for this week. Ezra was a good student, in that he set his heart on studying the Law of the Lord and teaching it to others. While our children focus on learning as they return to school, we and they have to remember that there is a need to study Christianity, right along with reading, writing and arithmetic. We’re not just talking about the basic tenets of Christianity, but how to live a life of faith, and how to share that faith with others. As we begin a new routine for the school year, encourage your students to read the Bible daily, to pray as a family, to attend Sunday school, however that is going to be offered, so that as they learn more about worldly things, they also learn about spiritual things, so that as they pre-

Fifty-Two Verses in Fifty-Two Weeks continued...

pare to do their life's work, they are also preparing themselves for eternal life. And if you don't have students in your house, this verse still applies to you. We are all life-long students of something. We are all still constantly learning and improving. Make spiritual growth part of your learning plan this fall and beyond.

August 23-29

Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men. Colossians 3:23

Everyone has tasks to do. Cooking is a task. So is shopping and cleaning. These things are constants, even in a time of pandemic and uncertainty. Perhaps school will have changed, the way we do our jobs may have changed, lots of things about life have changed. But the fact that there are tasks to do hasn't changed. There are, and always will be, tasks to do. How do we approach our tasks? With joy? With obligation? With frustration? Colossians 3:23 offers some great advice, that whatever task we are working at, to do it heartily, and to do it as if we are serving the Lord and not serving others. Can you imagine if you fixed every meal, as if you were fixing it for the Lord? Or if you vacuumed your house as if you were doing it for the Lord? Can you imagine what it would be like if we treated every conversation as if we were conversing with the Lord? Colossians 3:23 is potentially a game changer for every life, for the way that we approach even the most simple things like conversations and basic tasks.

August 30-September 5

*I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord.
Psalm 130: 5-6*

Everyone's patience is wearing thin. The wait for the Covid-19 pandemic to pass seems like it is taking a long time. Where is our hope? Is it in Fox News? CNN? The outcome of the election? Inevitably, anywhere we put our hope except in God is ultimately going to lead to disappointment. There are two takeaways from this verse. First, the concept of waiting is becoming more foreign to us. If we can't get on a website in two seconds, we are annoyed. We don't have to wait to have cash in our wallets, we can pay now on credit and figure out how to pay later. We live in an instant gratification society. And when we aren't gratified immediately, we become impatient. When we become impatient, we get angry. When we get angry, we act without our full faculties or with reason. And when we act without reason or our full faculties, we make mistakes. A little bit of patience can go a long way. Secondly, what are we waiting for? Ultimately, we are waiting for the kingdom of God, we are waiting to go to heaven. Of course, we are not supposed to do nothing with our lives. We are supposed to spend the waiting period of our lives preparing ourselves by experiencing God, sharing Him with others, staying obedient to the commandments and serving others. If we obsessed with waiting for material things, like buying a house or retiring or getting married, or seeing our children go to college, how will we react when those things don't happen for whatever reason? The primary "wait" has to be for the Lord. And our primary hope has to be in Him as well. Why? Because in our human condition, when we wait for each other, we inevitably are disappointed because we are all imperfect. We wait for and hope in the perfect God, but surviving and serving the imperfect man in the imperfect world.

Random Sayings

At my lowest: God is my hope

At my darkest: God is my light

At my weakest: God is my strength

At my saddest: God is my comforter

Remember, you don't need a certain number of friends, just a number of friends you can be certain of.

Don't social distance from me, I'm essential. ~Jesus

If you see your glass as half empty, pour it into a small glass and stop whining.

People who use other people as stepping stones will one day lose their balance.

The secret to a happy life is giving God the first part of your day, the first priority to every decision and the first place in your heart.

Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and can't, and the other half who have nothing to say and keep on saying it. ~Robert Frost

St. John the Baptist Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism—Sebastian Gabriel Calamunci, daughter of Alex and Sarah Calamunci, was baptized on Sunday, June 28. Say and Sarah Sengsouvana were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Wedding—Noah Menendez and Sara Barrett were married on Saturday, June 27. Arista Georgiou was the Koumbara. Congratulations!

Funeral—Alena Frey passed away on Friday, June 19. Her funeral was held on Monday, June 29. May her memory be eternal!

Condolences to Andreas Katsaros, on the passing of his grandmother, Andriana (Moschouris) Hill. May her memory be eternal!

Condolences to Greg Dimas, on the passing of his mother, Katie Peros Dimas. May her memory be eternal!

Meeting of Ministry Heads—Normally in August, we gather as ministry heads to plot out the calendar for the year. Obviously, this is not going to happen as scheduled. Once the pandemic is over and we resume normal gatherings at the church, this meeting will convene quickly (and will be via zoom, whenever it happens). We will have a regular meeting of ministry heads on Monday, August 17 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Zoom Meetings of Other Ministries to be scheduled—We will be contacting other ministries, with the goal of having a zoom meeting once a month during this pandemic, just to check in with everyone. Fr. Stavros will be contacting groups like the Choir, Welcoming Ministry, Philoptochos, etc. in order to schedule short meetings just to check in and afford everyone the opportunity to say hello to one another.

Prayer for School Students—Once we know when school is going to commence, on the Sunday before, we will pray for all of our school students and teachers, most likely August 16.

Prayer for College Students—We will offer a prayer for all college students at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, August 9.

GOYA—We will have the August GOYA Meeting on Sunday, August 23 at 5:00 p.m. At press time, it is not known whether it will be in person or virtual. Stay tuned for details.

Altar Boys—Until the end of the pandemic, we will not be having altar boy groups. We will reconstitute all the groups at the end of the pandemic.

College student addresses—If you have college students or are a college student, please send your school address, phone number and email to the church office by the end of August.

Adopt a college student—We started an adopt a college student program last year. We will be contacting all those who had college students they “adopted” last year and making sure you want to continue, as well as reorganizing which students are still in college, who is new to college, who has graduated college, etc. If you would like to participate and adopt a college student, please send your name to Father Stavros and Charlie by August 15. If you were part of this program last year, you don’t have to contact us, we will be contacting you. Only people who are new to the program need to contact us.

Parish Assembly—Sunday, August 16—If you have any questions regarding your pledge payments or membership status, please contact the church office. All members in good standing shall have the right to participate and vote at meeting if they are current in pledge payment 30 days prior to the date of the parish assembly. This is the rescheduled meeting from the spring one that was postponed due to Covid-19. We will set this up via Zoom, and members in good standing will receive a zoom invite prior to August 16.

Thank you Carole Fotopoulos—We are thankful to Carole Fotopoulos, who is leaving the Parish Council after serving on an interim basis for several months this year. We thank you Carole for your help on the PC for many years now!

Men’s Group—The Men’s Group will meet on Sunday, August 30, at 5:00 p.m. We do not know if it will be virtual or face to face at this time. Stay tuned for details. All men of the community are welcome to participate.

GriefShare to begin again on Tuesday, September 1—It may be hard for you to feel optimistic about the future right now. If you’ve lost a spouse, child, family member, or friend, you’ve probably found there are not many people who understand the deep hurt you feel. This can be a confusing time when you feel isolated and have many questions. “Going to GriefShare feels like having warm arms wrapped around you when you’re shivering.” GriefShare groups meet weekly to help you face these challenges and move toward rebuilding your life. Each GriefShare session has three distinct elements: Video seminar with experts, support group discussion with focus and personal study and reflection. We will meet from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. initially via zoom on Tuesdays beginning September 1, for 13 weeks, ending on Tuesday, December 15. For more information please contact Donna Hambos at 813-843-8412 or dhambos@msn.com. Books for the program will be provided. Donation for the book suggested but not required. Open to all family and friends. *Griefshare remains open enrollment with support towards healing and hope. You*

can begin at any time. If you attended last semester and missed a day or two, you can come for those days or repeat the whole thing.

Women's Bible Study will begin again on Tuesday, September 15.

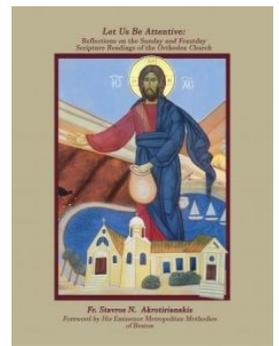
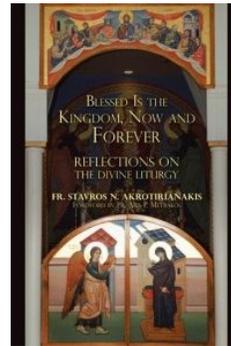
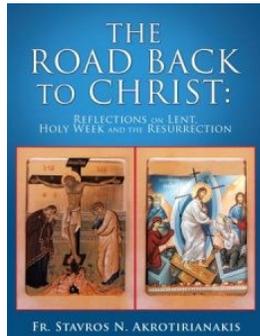
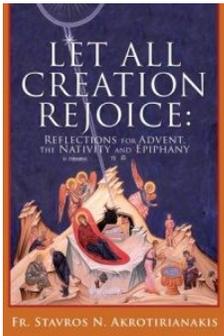
Monday Night Bible Study will continue in August via zoom. The Monday night Bible study with Charlie will be held August 3, 10, 24 and 31 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. If you are not currently part of the Monday night Bible study and would like to join in, please contact Charlie at chambos@stjohntpa.org and he will add you.

Youth Worker Registration Continues in August - 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.

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

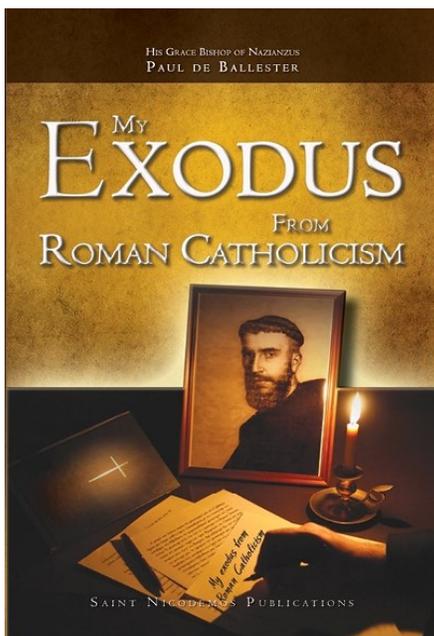
Let All Creation Rejoice: Reflections on Advent, the Nativity and Epiphany
The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection
Blessed is the Kingdom, Now and Forever: Reflections on the Divine Liturgy

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 Exodus from Roman Catholicism” by His Grace Bishop of Nazianzus Paul de Ballester



The author of this book, Bishop Paul de Ballester, is a former Roman Catholic monk of Spanish descent. This is the narrative of his personal experiences--his own road to Damascus--that ultimately led him to Orthodox Christianity. His acquaintance with Orthodoxy led him to the Truth, which is none other than Jesus Christ Himself. By coming to know Christ—or rather, through being known by Christ—he recognized the shortcomings of Roman Catholicism and its departure from God. This is precisely what made him turn to the Orthodoxy of the East—the Orthodoxy of Byzantium and Tradition. Initially published in 1954, the book also describes the spiritual struggle that led to his conversion.

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

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

Brett and Ana Mourer

The World in Which We Live

By Fr. Steve Dalber

Editor's Note: This article was written by Fr. Steve Dalber in April, before the civil unrest began at the end of May in our country. While it may seem to be a reaction to events at the end of May, it was published in a bulletin in April, which is why I found it so profound, that it speaks of what has been building in our country for years. This article is not political in any way.

The world within which we live is coming unraveled. For the last few years we have seen society change in bizarre ways. These changes have been slowly coming for a long time and now have begun bearing fruit. The name of the fruit is progress and its nature is anarchy. Society has been so obsessed with "progress" that it has not taken time to consider what we are progressing towards. We are slowly throwing out all the things that keep a society together and unified and are progressing towards a society-less existence. Common morality and laws are being exchanged for the notion that "what I believe" is moral and laws should be built around "my" morality. "I" will abandon social norms and will adhere to others who also refuse to comply with social norms. We will call this progress and destroy the "old" ways and set up a new and "progressive" society that will conform to "my" ideas. The problem with this line of thinking is that, even though, "we" all agree to change society "we" will never be able to agree on how it must be changed because "we" each have "our own" idea of how it should be changed. Therefore "we" will always seek to destroy that which is not "our own." This creates a primitive, barbaric culture where the strongest rule and the rest are forced to conform to "their will."

A free society cannot exist unless all who are a part of it accept a common morality and laws that apply to all equally. We cannot allow everyone to have their own laws based on their own sense of morality. We must have a common morality/ authority to which we all agree to abide. All are allowed to express their freedom in their own way as long as these expressions do not infringe on the freedoms of others and are within the order of law.

The common morality of a free society must come from a Higher Power. A Power that can be trusted but cannot be challenged. Our very freedom comes from accepting these instructions. If we reject these instructions from the Higher Power then we revert back to the strong rule the weak.

Historically many have attempted to claim the power from the Source and lord it over others. Monarchs declare themselves to be "God crowned." Roman Popes claim infallibility as God's only vicar on Earth. Western Christians have all become popes claiming their authority by their individual interpretation of Christian Scripture.

Saint Paul teaches us (1 Cor. 12:27) that "we together" in cooperation with the Holy Spirit are the body of Christ. "We together" have authority, not to lord it over others, but to teach the world His instructions and to bring all humanity to one body, one flock, one society. A society built on freedom for all, respect of others and love for each other. This is a society which emulated the coming society of our Lord's Kingdom. We must learn here so that we can enter there.

Despite what many might say, the United States was founded

upon Christian principles. The preamble of our constitution states "We the people." Our constitution defines "we together" under the instructions of a Higher Power have the power and authority over our society, not any individual or even group of individuals, can take the power away from the whole because the whole is conforming the instructions given by God.

The unraveling chaos which we are experiencing in this world comes out of a rebellion against God. It is a disregard of His instructions. We see a continuous removal of His instructions from our society. From this we see a continuous degrading of our society. The constitution which is based on God's laws is being trampled under by those who seek monarchical power over the masses. They want to destroy God's laws and the constitution based upon them. They want anarchy so that the powerful can conquer, enslave and control the weak.

I'm sure that we can all identify powerful, wealthy people that are behind this rebellion against God. In reality though, they are merely puppets dancing on the strings of the original rebel against God. They are being used (useful idiots) by the great deceiver, the father of all lies, the fallen angel and archenemy of our Lord.

Those that support "progress" are supporting progress away from God and towards anarchy. In response to anarchy will come a cry for order, "a new world order." The rebellious powers and principalities of this world will finally prevail against humanity. Humanity will be enslaved and destroyed. The remaining faithful during this time will be the target of persecution and death. The puppets will rejoice at the demise of the faithful.

When the Enemy of our Lord, the Antichrist, finally perceives His victory as complete, our Lord will intercede and take the world and all the faithful to Himself. The enemy along with his powers and principalities will be taken away from the world and all faithful nations remaining will be ruled by the Son of God. He will be a gracious and merciful ruler, a true good shepherd, the Good Shepherd that gave up His life for the world.

All human beings have been given freewill. Most of what we use our will for to this point has been of no real consequence. Now however, we must decide, are we truly of the faithful or are we part of the rebellion against God? Each of us must decide either to be obedient to God's instructions or to rebel against them. We cannot control the coming worldly events. We cannot change or delay them. The rebellion is coming and even now is upon us. We can't stop it. We can and must however choose which side we're on. I pray that we all choose wisely.

"Arise O God, judge the world. Take all nations as your inheritance." (Hymn from Holy Saturday.)

Fr. Steve Dalber is the Proistamenos of St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church in Charlotte, NC.

The Emotional Challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic

By Fr. Dean Kouldoukis

Together with the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, we also recently celebrated the Feast of the Twelve Holy Apostles. In thinking about the Apostles and the challenges they faced as they worked to establish the Church, I am struck by their response after our Lord's crucifixion. Saint John's Gospel teaches us that the Apostles were behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. (St. John 20:19) I suppose their fear was justified. After all Jesus had just been crucified, and as followers of Jesus, perhaps they thought their execution was eminent. The apostles did not yet understand what had happened. For them, death was still death, and their despair and fear loomed in their hearts deeper than ever. Yet in their fear, and in the depths of their despair, our Lord and Savior came and stood among them and offered them the greeting, "**Peace be with you.**" His resurrection totally transformed their lives! Saint Peter went from being fearful and denying our Lord to preaching with boldness to his Jewish brethren. Three thousand were baptized that very day! (Acts 2:41)

Fear, uncertainty, anxiety, worry. We may have felt, to one degree or another, all, or some of these emotions in the face of this COVID pandemic. One thing I think we all have in common is the fact that, to one degree or another, this Coronavirus pandemic has changed the rhythm of our lives. Being sheltered in place, we are spending more time at home. In conjunction with spending more time at home, we are spending less time with family and with one another. We are more isolated now than at any other time in our society. This heightened isolation is accompanied with so many questions. When will things be back to "normal"? Will this pandemic permanently change our society? Will my livelihood be in-tact in the future? With the recent uptick in the number of COVID cases, will we experience a regression in our journey increasing our isolation? How long will this virus affect our lives? This uncertainty of what the future will look like, coupled with all the questions that accompany it, can lead us to this place of experiencing a heightened sense of anxiety and fear.

Fear is not necessarily a bad thing. It does have its place. If for example, if we did not fear a dangerous situation, we could unintentionally make decisions compromising our health and even our life. This type of fear is life preserving and is necessary for our survival. Our Lord gave us the emotion of fear to protect us.

Fear does have its place. But like every other emotion, the devil can use fear to undermine our faith. Fear, then becomes a sin when it causes us to doubt our Lord's promise that He is always

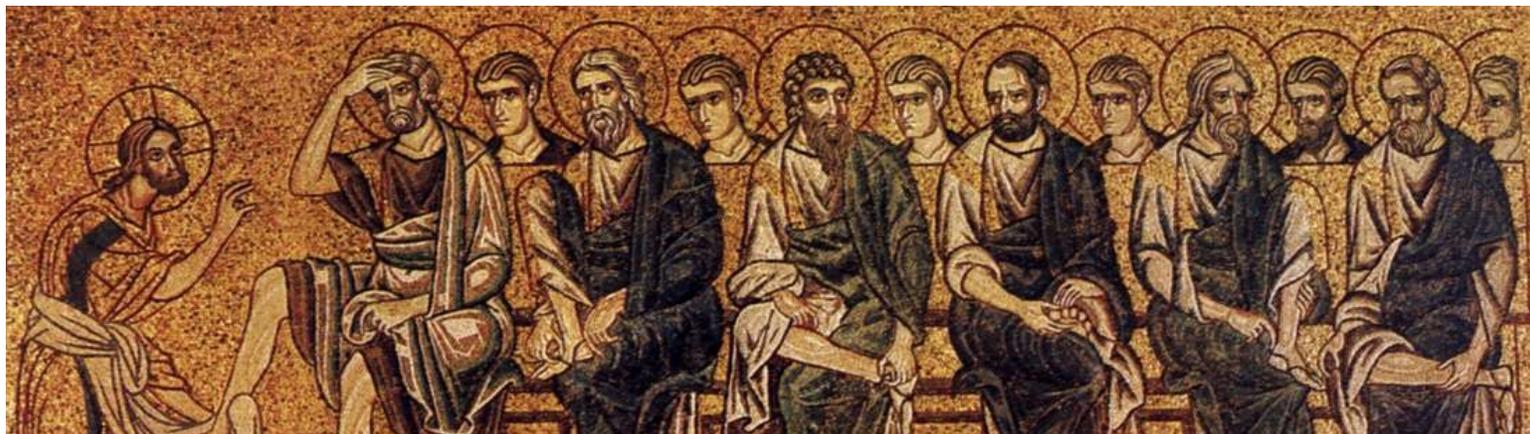
with us leading us to a place of disbelief. This is what happened to the people of Israel. After Moses led them to freedom from the bondage of the Egyptians, they wondered in the desert for forty years simply because they gave into their fear and refused to obey the Lord. They allowed fear to paralyze them and as a result the generation of Moses missed the Lord's promise of the blessings of the promised land.

Because people are made in the image and likeness of God, being an icon of our Lord, we as human beings want peace in our lives more than anything else. In fact, in preparing this reflection, I realized in my own private prayers, I ask for peace daily. In addition, we ask for peace at the start of every Liturgy, as peace is the theme of the first three petitions. God created us, not for fear, but for peace, because through peace we come to know God. No wonder our risen Lord's first greeting to the Apostles after His resurrection was, "**Peace be with you.**" So how do we keep a peaceful heart in the face of this pandemic uncertainty that at times may be overwhelming?

The answer is simple, we must always remind ourselves in the promise of our Lord, to His apostles and to us, that he will be with us always. The letter of the Hebrews reminds us of our Lord's promise, "**Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.**" (Hebrews 13:5) Jesus reminds us in Saint Matthew's Gospel, "**Surely I am with you always, to very end of the age.**" (Matthew 28:20) In addition, Saint Peter reminds us "**Cast all of your anxiety on Him because he cares for you**" (1 Peter 5:7). Our Orthodox Christian faith reminds us that our fears and problems, which may feel so very real, do not have the final word! Yes, fear can undermine faith, but fear can also strengthen faith, when our trust and hope is in the Lord. Fear then become a powerful teacher inviting us to focus beyond our problems, on the promise of our Lord, that He will always be with us, that His peace He gives us.

As the Twelve Holy Apostles learned as they walked their life journey, yes, the crosses in life will always be with us. However, as the life of the Apostles also taught us, our hope and life's anchor is in our faith in our Lord and trust in His promise. While acknowledging our challenges, our focus on our Lord and our trust and faith in Him, as the Apostles witnessed, will strengthen our faith, bring peace to our hearts, and will show us the way of victory over the challenges of the world.

Fr. Dean Kouldoukis is the Proistamenos of Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Seattle, Washington.



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: **ZOOM Video Conference or Zaharias Room in the Kourmolis Hall** at St John Greek Church

Everyone is welcome.

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

Our YAH meetings on Zoom video: This allows us to see many of us on the screen that we haven't seen in a while since we are quarantined from the Coronavirus.

Our YAH July Meeting on Zoom was a visit to the 1960s: We read about important News, Events, Technology, Fashion, Popular Culture, Toys, Cars, Homes, Cost Of Living, Sports and Music

The Sixties were dominated by the Vietnam War, Civil Rights Protests. The 60s also saw the assassinations of US President John F Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Cuban Missile Crisis, and finally ended on two good notes when the first man is landed on the moon and the NY Mets won the World Series.

ST JOHN'S CHURCH CORE VALUES

Every meeting we discuss how we respond to our Church Core Values. This month we were blessed to hear Dora Morgan give her thoughts on what the Core Values mean.

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

As presented to the YAH meeting of July 2, 2020 by Dora Morgan

LOVE: The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us to love one another as we love ourselves and He loves us.

WORSHIP: We worship our heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ not only individually behind our closed door but as a group, as a community by going regularly to Church to receive the Body and Blood of Christ to remind us the sacrifices He endured for us. He died so we can live. It is extremely important for every Christian orthodox to remember it.

COMMUNITY: We need to be harmonious and united as a community. In difficult and challenging times as well as at peaceful days, we need to practice our duties as Christian Orthodox, as individuals and as a community to show Christian fellowship, love, assistance and willingness in our community and at large.

LEARNING: We need to enrich our knowledge at any age because it is a wonderful thing and very rewarding. You enrich your knowledge about a subject that you think you knew. It is a wonderful enhancement when a church father translates the gospel or a hymn or a dismissal hymn. You learn so much from a good speaker as well as from Orthodox ecclesiastical book(s).

SERVICE: We need to exercise the practice of service. We have an obligation to help one another by giving whatever we can even if it is just being there. We must always demonstrate willingness for any occasion and try to help in any capacity of the arising circumstance, if it is possible. Some of us are more blessed than others. Why not try to share a slight fraction of your blessings towards a poor family, an orphan child, a struggling charity or Church.

A good deed is always a wonderful feeling. After all, our blessings come from the Lord and we should offer praise and thanks to the all might God. Let's not forget we will be judged on day according to our good deeds (Revelation 20:12-13).

* * *

OUR COMING EVENTS

August 5 **WEDNESDAY** at 11:30 am YAH Meeting using Zoom Video Conferencing and telephone

PASSED ACTIVITIES

July 2, 2020 – Revisited 60 years ago in the years 1960 to 1969

March 5, 2020 - Visited St Michael Greek Orthodox Shrine in Tarpon Springs

January 2, 2020 – Lunch at the new Psomi Bakery and Restaurant

December 7, 2019 - Trip to the Show Palace Dinner Theatre featuring Elf the Musical

October 5, 2019 - Ybor City Museum State Park and lunch at the Soup Stone Grill

For more information, contact

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

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

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

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

ABC PIZZA

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

Accustar Accounting Inc.

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

AlexRoyEvents Music Entertainment.

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

Bavaros

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

Bradenton Flower Shop

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

Peggy Bradshaw

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

George S. Chagaris, CPA, P.A.

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

John Demas - Classical Guitarist - Greek Bouzouki

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

EVOS South Tampa

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

Alexandra Fitos

Weichert Yates and Associates

Cell phone 813-943-6464

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

JoAnn Hartung

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

Markissia Touliatos Portraits and Other Fine Art

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

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

Qvita Health and Wellness

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

Retina Vitreous Associates of Florida

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

Robinson Essentials -Young Living Essential Oils

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

The Sakkis Group / KW Tampa Properties

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

South Tampa Sugar Mama

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

True Life Wealth Management (Owned by Alex Skijus)

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

Zomesa, LLC

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

Advance Directives..... making your voice heard when you can no longer communicate

What are Advance Directives?

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

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

Why do I need Advance Directives?

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

How do I get an Advance Directives?

Most States have specific forms for you to fill out. You can get a form by contacting Marcelle Triantafilou at 612-396-5026 or by email marcelletrianta@gmail.com. You do not need an attorney to create an advance directive. Talk with your doctor and review your wishes once you have completed your form. Most doctors will honor an advance directive from another state. Your advance directive is not valid until it has been signed by you **AND** at least one witness, depending on the state. Your advanced directive will not go into effect until you are deemed incapacitated and incompetent by at least one doctor.

Things to consider:

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

If you wish to be resuscitated or not if you stop breathing or your heart stops beating. You may need a DNR order (Do Not Resuscitate) from your physician for this. This is a topic that needs discussion with your physician.

If you want any or all life support treatments to prolong your life or not

If you would accept blood transfusion

If you want to receive dialysis treatments

If you wish to donate any of your organs after you pass

If you should undergo any surgery to potentially prolong your life

For more information on Advance Directives please ask one of your Nursing Ministry Nurses
Marcelle Triantafilou, RN-BC, BSN

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.

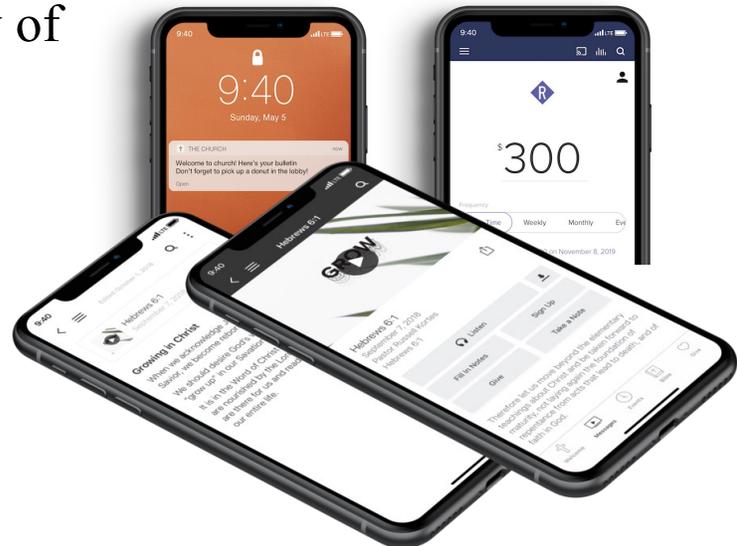
Emotional Support Call Line

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)

Keep an eye out for our New Church APP for iPhone and Android

Our app will connect you to a variety of resources, including sermons, info, events and is the best way to stay connected with our church.

We are still working on it and it should be up and running by the middle of August.



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, August 15

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.

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



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>

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 Bliziotes - Palm Cost, FL

Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL

Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL

William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL

Lillian Thomas - Highland, IN

Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL

Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD

Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA

Nicholas & Vaso Anton - Dunedin, FL

Kay Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA

Katherine Beasley - Vero Beach, FL

Artemis & Eric Mellen - Longwood, FL

Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL

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.

Those born in 1900 endured a LOT

By Fr. Christopher Metropulos

Keep your chin up and marshall on folks. Only God knows what is in store for us in this world. We must have faith in the one thing that doesn't change and that is our Lord. Please read this email that was recently sent to me to get a good prospective on life.

For a small amount of perspective at this moment, imagine you were born in 1900. On your 14th birthday, World War I starts, and ends when you are 18. Later in the year, a Spanish Flu epidemic hits the planet and runs until your 20th birthday. On your 29th birthday, the Great Depression begins. Unemployment hits 25%, the World GDP drops 27%. That runs until you are 33. The country nearly collapses along with the world economy. When you turn 39, World War II starts. You aren't even over the hill yet. And don't try to catch your breath. On your 41st birthday, the United States is fully pulled into WWII until you are 45. At 50, the Korean War starts. At 55 the Vietnam War begins. When you are 62 the Cuban Missile Crisis threatens to end life on our planet as we know it. When you turn 75, the Vietnam War finally ends.

Perspective is amazing. Yes, we are in a challenging time nowadays. Try to remember everything that those born in 1900 endured and accomplished, and have faith that we will endure as well. Let's be smart, and help each other out - we will get through all of this.

Fr. Chris Metropulos is the Executive Director of Orthodox Christian Network (OCN) and former President of Hellenic College/ Holy Cross School of Theology.

~Stay Tuned~



We are continuing to monitor the rise in COVID-19 cases in our area. Our top priority is everyone's health and safety. As we know it takes several months to begin to prepare for our festival so we need to make a decision. Stay tuned for an announcement from the Parish Council. By press time, no decision had been made.

For any questions or concerns, please feel free to call the office or contact a member of the Parish Council.

Thank you for your understanding!

~ August 2020 ~

~ August 2020 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 No Services
2 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	3 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	4	5 ** YAH Zoom Meeting 11:30 a.m. Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	6 Transfiguration Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	7 **	8 Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
9 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Prayer for college students	10 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	11	12 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	13	14 ** Great Vespers 6:00 p.m.	15 Dormition Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
16 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Prayer for school students Parish Assembly via zoom--noon	17 Meeting of Ministry Heads 6:30 p.m.	18	19 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	20	21 **	22 Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
23 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m.	24 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	25	26 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	27	28 **	29 ** Beheading of St. John the Baptist Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
30 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	31 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.					

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

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St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Timetable of Services

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

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

Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis
813-876-8830 (Office) 813-394-1038 (Cell)
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
Demosthenes Mekras 786-417-7256
George Chagaris 727-420-1920
Amin Hanhan 813-846-2957
Nick Kataras 863-581-2430
Eddie 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 Katsamakis 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 MAΣ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668
Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963
ΠΑΡΕΑ, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

Daughters of Penelope
Nicole Leontsinis, President 703-585-7490

Finance Committee
Gary Ward 813-846-3898

Food Pantry
Anetta Alexander 813-758-2689

GriefShare
Donna Hambos 813-843-8412

Gasparilla Parking
John Kokkas 727-992-4165

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

Hope/Joy
George & Zackie Ameres 813-245-3813

Junior Olympics
Dwight Forde 727-685-9028

Men's Basketball
Perry Katsamakis 516-403-3118

Men's Fellowship
Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038

MOMS
Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862
Lindsey Skourellos 813-503-7845

Parish Nursing Ministry
Marcelle 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

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“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.