

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*

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

It is now safe for 85 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 September, the Saturday Divine Liturgies will be cancelled.

We celebrate Paraklesis every Wednesday (sometimes in the evening, and other times in the morning, and the week of September 7, it will be celebrated on September 11, rather than September 9) and will continue to do so until we are able to come all together and worship. If this happens during September, 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 85. **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.

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 September, we will schedule in person meetings.

The latest information will always be available on our website, through Constant Contact and our church app. Both our Metropolis

Pastoral Guidelines continued...

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

Foundations and Walls, Time and Puzzles, Equality and Being Content

Sunday School We Need Help from Every Parent

Sunday School is going to begin on Sunday, September 13. We have made the decision to offer a “package” online to each Sunday School family. For families that are in pre-school through 6th grade, each Sunday will bring a different topic, and each topic will be presented with a video and a project to do. The videos will be prepared by our Sunday School teachers and our pastoral team. You can watch this video at your convenience. If you went to church in person, you can watch it when you get home. If you worshipped from home, you can watch it after Holy Communion or at the end of the Liturgy.

Topics for September will be as follows:

Sunday, September 13

Lesson with Video: Sign of the Cross

Project: Send in a picture of your hand-made cross and/or a video of you making the sign of the cross correctly.

Sunday, September 20

Lesson with Video: Prayer

Project: Recite your favorite prayer. Write a new prayer to share with us, and/or show us where you pray.

Sunday, September 27

Lesson with Video: The Lord's Prayer

Project: Videos of students reciting the Lord's Prayer

Sunday, October 4

Lesson with Video: The Creed

Project: Reciting the Creed

The “project” for each week will be something for you to do together as a family. Then you can send your pictures and videos to Jenevieve Elly (deadline will be Wednesday of each week) and a montage of the previous week's lesson will be included in each week's video.

There will also be **catechism classes for adults and teens**. These will consist of discussion questions relating the Sunday Gospel or Epistle lesson to life. If you have teens, parents and teens are encouraged to do these discussion questions together. If you don't have children in your house, adults are encouraged to do the discussion questions together. If you live alone, you are encouraged to partner with someone else in our parish to do the discussion questions over the phone, or simply reflect on them on your own.

Both lessons will be made available via email prior to Sunday

each week. The lesson for teens and adults will come with the bulletin (which is sent on Saturdays), a separate Sunday School email will come on Sundays, on our website and on our app.

Once a month, we will have Youth Sunday. On Youth Sunday, there will be a sermon at the end of the Divine Liturgy (approximately 11:15 a.m.) where you will have the opportunity to ask questions via comments on live stream or via text with Father Stavros and Charlie.

The Foundations of Faith Are Built in the Home

For those of you who are parents, we do not leave 100% of our children's education to their schools. That is a fact. We started teaching our children from the day they were born, long before they went to school. Teachers teach students the fine points of academic subjects like math and history. It is parents who teach children about letters and numbers and colors, way before they get to school. Can you imagine if your child was three years old and ready to go to pre-school and knew NOTHING? None of us would agree that's a good thing. Most of us, myself included, are not going to teach our kids about calculus and chemistry. These things we leave for school. But we teach them about manners and values. They learn their work ethic in the home. They learn respect, forgiveness, love and so many other things in the home.

When it comes to religious education, many of us take a vastly different view. Many of us are content to leave ALL the reli-



gious education to the priest, Sunday School and youth workers. Many of us teach our children nothing about the faith. Perhaps that is because we don't know enough about the faith to teach it. Perhaps we don't know much about the faith ourselves. Or perhaps we were raised just to "go along" with the faith rather than learn about it. No shame there. This is an opportunity to learn, and to learn together as a family. The church, the priests and Sunday School teachers ideally build upon what is taught and modeled in the home. **This is something that most people don't understand. The foundation of faith comes from parents. Priests, Sunday School, GOYA and summer camp can help erect the walls. But if there is no foundation, those walls can't stand. This is why Sunday School, GOYA and summer camp aren't as effective as they could or should be. Some might argue they are not effective at all. And that's because without a foundation of faith at home, Sunday, GOYA and summer camp are building walls that will eventually crumble. They cannot stand without a foundation.**

This year, the pandemic has forced us to confront a situation that is not all a bad thing. It provides us an opportunity to learn together about the faith, which is what we should have been doing all along. We should read the Bible with our children. We should discuss what we read. We should discuss how the faith can be applied to our daily lives. This shouldn't be left to a 45 minute lesson each week, any more than our experience of prayer and the Bible shouldn't be limited to the weekly Divine Liturgy.

We just bid farewell to many of our young people heading off to college. We had 11 young adults graduate high school, one of our largest classes ever. How many of those students will be part of the Orthodox Church in four years when they return? How many will never come back? Time will tell. I can say with certainty that as a priest and youth worker, we can do a great job helping people build walls of faith. But we cannot create the foundation—this must come from the home.

Time

Anyone remember our parish “word” for 2020? It is “Time.” Where has the time gone this year? 2020 is now 2/3 over, and probably most of us can’t wait to turn the page to next year, in the hopes that the pandemic and social unrest will leave us in the new year. However, there are two things wrong with that line of thinking. First, no one knows when either the pandemic or civil unrest will leave, and when they do, will they be replaced by some other kind of crisis/irritant? It is true that if we knew how long these things would last, it would be easier to manage our time and our thoughts. Second, there is no guarantee of just about anything in life. There is no guarantee that I don’t die before the end of this crisis, not only from Covid-19, but from a car accident, or some other illness. What I know about time is that I have time today, in this moment I am in, to do something that glorifies God and serves others. There is not



heard from many people who are not comfortable returning to face-to-face worship and continue to tune in on line, and that's great. Dedicating time to worship, as best as we are able, is still a crucial part of our journey to salvation.

As the school year begins and our children begin to spend more time on their studies, it is a good time for each of us to assess how much we know about our faith. Charlie offers a Bible study on Monday evenings for everyone, while Father Stavros leads the Women's Bible Study on Tuesday mornings. Anyone is welcome to join either of these classes at any time. And because they are being offered via zoom, there is no commute time. The Prayer Team and the 12 Disciples program as ways to offer time in prayer and reflection each day.

2020 has been a time of uncertainty and anxiety for sure, but that doesn't mean it can't be a time to grow in faith. In fact, many people take greater strides forward in their faith during times of crisis, because they realize how fragile life is, how

little security we really have, and how the only thing we can really call our own for all time is our faith. I encourage you to take time to glorify God by continuing to worship and pray and learn, and also to take time to serve others, especially in small and easy ways, like conversation and correspondence.

And on the subject of Time, does anyone remember their "word" for 2020? Our words can still be applied, even during this time of pandemic. Even words like "thrive" and "abundance" can still have meaning during this time, even as we struggle and make due with less. I encourage you to revisit your word for 2020 and push to grow with it through the remainder of the year.

Doing a Puzzle Without the Picture is Almost Impossible

During this pandemic, my family and I have spent time working several puzzles together. Some have been extremely difficult, like a picture of a couch in a room where the couch is a repeating pattern and the wall is a solid color. Thankfully, each puzzle had a picture so we could find some nuances and have some clue of how to put it together.

One day, while working a puzzle, I was thinking what it would be like to do the same puzzle but with no picture to go off of. I imagined pouring out a bunch of puzzle pieces, some with a floral pattern and some solid colors. I would have no idea if the floral pattern was a field of flowers, a couch, or wallpaper. The solid colors could be a wall, or the sky, or sand on a beach. I would have no idea. Can you imagine the difference in time it would take for someone to put together a puzzle with a picture to go off of versus having no picture to go off of? The picture to go off of would shave off a lot of time, and frustration. It would probably be the difference between someone sticking with a hard puzzle and someone just giving up. I mean, doing a 1,000 piece puzzle with lots of solid colors and small pieces and having no idea what it would be when finished would be a recipe for quitting.

As I was thinking about this, I realized that this is what a life without God, a spiritual life without guidance, and a world without order looks. A pile of 1,000 puzzle pieces looks chaotic, but with a picture to guide one in putting the puzzle together, it looks hopeful. Because one can arrange colors and patterns, understanding what each means and where on the puzzle each belongs. Without the picture, it just looks like chaos. And arranging the pieces without an understanding of where each might fit would cause one to quickly lose hope.

This is why we need Christ, the church, and law and order. We need Christ because He is the overall picture of what we want to become. Using the puzzle analogy, imagine that the puzzle is an icon of Christ, what we are all supposed to be. We each have been given all the pieces, so that we can put our puzzle of life together and end up hopefully looking like Him. Each puzzle is different. Some are large, some are small, some have large pieces, some have smaller ones, and some have many pieces and some have fewer. Just like each life looks different. Some live longer, and some die young. Some people impact many others through their work, and others affect few. But the outcome of each puzzle can be the same, each of us growing in the image and likeness of Christ, and becoming Christ-like. Just like the puzzle is harder, if not impossible, to put together without a picture, this is why we need the church. The church teaches us what the picture of Christ is supposed to look like. It reassures us that we have all the pieces. It helps us sort out the

pieces. And even helps us when we can't figure out where a piece goes. The church does not put the puzzle together for us, that job rests with each of us. But the church provides the picture of what the puzzle should look like.

We need an encouraging environment where we can work on our "puzzles". If people are more concerned about comparing each other's puzzles, counting the puzzle pieces each has, trying to steal or destroy the puzzles of others, then it will be harder to be successful in anyone getting their "puzzle" put together. This is why we need a sense of law and order, to make sure that there is an environment that allows people to grow in faith, and encourages helping others, rather than hurting them.

The Push for Equality Will Lead to Insanity

In my opinion, there is no such thing as equality. No, this is not a political statement. Other than equally sharing the air we breathe, none of us is equal in any way. The number of hairs on our head is different. Let's start there. The amount of time each of us has been alive is different. Each of us has different talents, which is a good thing.

There is no equality in relationships. Take any friendship you have. One person will talk more and the other will listen more. One will initiate more conversations, one will initiate more texts, one will initiate more emails, one will complain more. Imagine if you were having a conversation with a friend and you tried to count all the words that were said, to make sure that each person got to speak equally. You would go INSANE!!!

There isn't even equality in marriage. One partner will cook more, one will clean more, one will earn more money, one will take more care of the children, one will drive more miles, one will be neater, one will care more about how the yard looks, one will save more, etc. If we try to make all of these things equal, it will lead to insanity.

The operative word in marriages and friendships, in society in general, should be MUTUALITY. What is for the mutual good of a couple, a friendship or society in general. It's to everyone's mutual good that not everyone is a doctor. Why? Because if everyone was a doctor, there would be no farmers. And if there were no farmers, no one would need a doctor because we'd all be dead from starvation. So, why try to make everyone equal? Why not strive for mutuality, which means mutual respect of the doctor and the farmer.

Wait, you might be saying, aren't we all equal in the eyes of God? The answer again, is no. We are of infinite value in the eyes of God. And the equation "infinity equals infinity" is not possible, because there isn't a value on infinity.

Human beings deserve honor and respect, not because of equality, but because of mutuality. We get along better when there is mutual respect, when we care for the mutual good. Again, this is not a political statement but a practical one.

I might ask another priest, "How come I can't be like you?" And the answer would be "because you aren't me, you are you." A parent might ask another parent, "how come I can't have kids like yours?" and the answer is "because you have your kids and I have my kids, and they are different. They have different talents and experiences." That doesn't mean that we shouldn't value all children. It means that every child has infinite value in the eyes of God and for the mutual benefit of society, we should value all children.

The push to make everything equal, in my humble opinion, will lead us to insanity. The push should be for mutuality—mutual respect, understanding and support, for the good of the whole, where everyone has infinite value.

Being Content

The final topic on this month's message is on being content. There are some people who do not know how to be content. They are always wanting more. This might mean that they are always looking for more money to buy more things. That is one example of not being content. There are other people who are not content with themselves. They are always looking at other people—what they have, what they look like, how their kids behave, etc.—and are always looking at what others have rather than being content with what they have. There are people who can't seem to sit still—they are only content when they are moving. As an example, someone is sitting at home watching TV, and they see a picture crooked on the wall, so they get up to fix it and then they see a chip in the paint on the wall, and then decide that the room needs to be painted. There are some people who just can't be satisfied. They can't celebrate a victory because they are always worried about the next potential problem. As the below article says, being content is not a passive state, but an active one.

This year's pandemic has made most of us anxious and far from content. Yet, as we read in Philippians 4:11-12, "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of acing plenty and hunger, abundance and want." It takes work to be content. And this is what we are called to be in our Christian lives—content, joyful, purposeful in whatever situation we find ourselves.

Conclusion

Great job St. John's! We are going on five months of this pandemic. We have a "full" (max 75 parishioners) church each Sunday, many attend the second liturgy on Saturdays, and hundreds of people (ours and others) are watching on-line. This is great!

Our stewardship is holding its own. This is important. Keep up the great work. Those who can give a little more this year, please do, to offset those who are not going to be able to give as much.

Our community has shown generosity, with our support of the Matthew 25 ministry, and so far, we've given more to charitable causes than we ever have.

Over 70 people are participating in the 12 Disciples Program, meaning that everyone in our parish is prayed for by at least 6 people at day.

As we head into September, our challenge turns to the religious education of our children and of ourselves. This month, we are looking for a commitment to learn together.

2020 might not be the greatest year of our lives, but it can certainly be one of the greatest years for our church and for our spiritual lives!

One final note: September 1 marks 16 years we have been privileged to serve this parish. May God continue to bless us for many years to come.

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

Contentment Isn't Passive

By Megan Hill

Most of us know we ought to practice contentment. When difficulty or delay comes our way, we can rattle off Philippians 4:11 like we're still in second grade Sunday School. But we don't always know what contentment is. We assume that it's "just letting go" or painting a happy face on hard circumstances.

In this light, contentment seems like an inadequate response to financial strain or family drama, to cancer or colds, to loneliness or longing. It seems like laying down in the middle of a hurricane. It seems like fiddling while the city burns. It doesn't seem like much of a response at all.

Contentment may seem passive. But it's not.

That familiar verse from Philippians highlights this: "I have learned to be content," writes Paul (4:11 ESV, emphasis added). Contentment isn't a limp virtue. It has to be learned, pursued, practiced, repeated, maintained—it requires action. A few verses later, Paul describes contentment as "do[ing] all things" (Phil. 4:13). Contentment isn't a slow twiddling of spiritual thumbs, it's doing something. It's doing everything. It's active obedience that expresses itself in all areas of our lives.

Consider three things that contentment does:

Contentment Looks Up, Not Down

When we face difficult circumstances, our first inclination is to focus on the situation at hand: How do I pay these bills? When will I get that positive pregnancy test? Where can I find a new job? Why don't I have the life I've always wanted?

Contentment, however shifts our focus. In Jeremiah Burroughs's classic work on contentment, he defines contentment as "that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition."^[1] Contentment recognizes that our circumstances come from a good God, and it causes us to lift our eyes and look trustingly to the Lord.

The secret of contentment is not in having perfect circumstances—enough money or elite status or ideal relationships. Rather, the secret of contentment is placing our ultimate hope in something secure: The Lord will never leave us or forsake us; he is our help, so there is no reason to fear (Heb. 13:5–6). The God who has loved us with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3) will continue to care for us through all the changing circumstances of our fleeting lives. To be content, look up.

Contentment Looks In, Not Out

In C.S. Lewis's novel, *The Horse and His Boy*, the boy Shasta questions Aslan (Lewis's Christ-figure) about circumstances in his friend Aravis's life. Rather than explaining himself, Aslan redirects Shasta's focus: "Child," he replies, "I am telling you your story, not hers. I tell no one any story but his own."^[2]

Difficult circumstances often make us look with longing over the fence into other people's lives: Why is she married and I'm not? Why did he get the promotion I wanted? Why did they buy that house while we're stuck in an apartment? Why is my life so different from theirs?

But contentment refuses to look out at everyone else. Instead, Contentment looks inward, at our own heart, and rejoices in what God is doing there.

Peter reminds us that though difficult times may feel like an

indiscriminate blow from a sledgehammer, we have God's assurance that they are precisely what is "necessary" (1 Pet. 1:6). And though they may feel like they will never end, we have his word that they are only "for a little while" (1 Pet. 1:6). What's more, we can "rejoice" (1 Pet. 1:6) in the story God is writing for us, because he is using our circumstances to strengthen our faith (1 Pet. 1:7). Our story may not look like the stories of our friends and neighbors, but God has specific things he is accomplishing in us. To be content, look in.

Contentment Looks Ahead, Not Behind

In the whirlwind of trials, we can often get distracted by all the steps that led us to our current situation: What if I had never sent that text? What if I hadn't met that guy? What if we hadn't bought this house and had so many children? What if my life could have turned out differently?

Contentment, however, focuses on what is ahead, not what was behind (Phil. 3:13–14). Contentment looks ahead to Christ's glory.

Because we know that God does all things for our good (Rom. 8:28), because we rest secure in his love for us and our union to him (Rom. 8:38–39), and because we have been given the indispensable help of his Holy Spirit (Phil. 2:13), we don't have to be consumed with the past. Instead, in this moment, we can seek to bring glory to God (Phil. 2:14–15).

This truth also equips us to face every unknown situation that awaits us in the future. Paul writes that he "can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13); his contentment for today—and for tomorrow—rests on a God who is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). We don't know what the coming days will hold, but almost certainly we will face disappointments and frustrations and losses. The particular circumstances of our future are unknown to us, but the loving care of our all-powerful God is certain.

In our pursuit of contentment, we look for help from Christ himself (Phil. 4:13), the only perfectly content man. He is the one who was rich and yet became poor—denying himself every comfortable circumstance—so that we could share the lasting riches of his glorious inheritance in eternity (2 Cor. 8:9). To be content, look ahead!

Tomorrow, the sun will come up, the alarm will sound, the calendar will advance, and your life will go on. For some of us, a new day will bring a fresh set of events—new responsibilities, new relationships, new trials, new expectations. For others, this day will be much like the day before and the day before that and the day before that. But whether the Lord brings us unexpected circumstances or asks us to remain faithful in familiar ones, we trust he will bring only what is best.

Ultimately, contentment is not passive because God is not passive. Every day, he is at work. He will accomplish his grand purposes of exalting Christ, bringing sinners to salvation, and making his children more like his Son—and he will do it in all the moments of your days. In this, you can be content.

This post originally appeared at the [blog for Credo Magazine](#).

Notes

¹Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* (1648; repr. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 19.

²C.S. Lewis, *The Horse and His Boy* (1954, repr. New York: Harper Collins, 1982), 165.

Liturgical Schedule for September 2020

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.
Tuesday, September 8	Nativity of the Virgin Mary Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Friday, September 11	Anniversary of 9/11 Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, September 12	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, September 13	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Monday, September 14	Universal Exaltation of the Holy Cross Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Procession of the Holy Cross at the end of the Divine Liturgy
Wednesday, September 16	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
Saturday, September 19	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Procession of the Holy Cross at the end of the Divine Liturgy
Sunday, September 20	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Procession of the Holy Cross at the end of the Divine Liturgy
Wednesday, September 23	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
Saturday, September 26	St. John the Theologian Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, September 27	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, September 30	Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.
Saturday, October 3	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, October 4	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 2757 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 5.5 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 chambos@stjohntpa.org 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 September 2020

Divine Liturgy on all the Saturdays of September - In order to facilitate people being able to worship on a weekly basis, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy on all the Saturdays of September. 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 September. 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 September, Paraklesis will be offered on Wednesday, September 2, 16, 23 and 30, all at 6:00 p.m., as well as on Friday, September 11 at 10:00 a.m.

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

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.

Saturday, September 5 – Sts. Zacharias and Elizabeth – These are the parents of St. John the Baptist, who received their child in old age, through a miracle of God. They were people of faith, who wished their whole lives to have a child and remained steadfast to God. They remain an important piece in the story of salvation.

Tuesday, September 8 - Nativity of the Virgin Mary Placed right after the beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year, this feastday commemorates the birth of the Virgin Mary to her parents, Joachim and Anna. It is one of the 12 Major Feast Days of the Church year.

Monday, September 14 - Exaltation of the Holy Cross - This Major Feast Day commemorates the finding of the Precious Cross of Christ by St. Helen in the year 325. This day is equal in solemnity to Good Friday, as it draws our attention to the supreme sacrifice made by the Lord for us. Connected with September 14 is the Tradition of the Vasiliko. St. Helen went in search of the Precious Cross. In Jerusalem, she found the hill of Golgotha. But she did not know where to search for the cross. Vasiliko (Basil), a sweet scented plant, was found growing on the hillside. She looked beneath the Basil and that's where the cross was found. It is the Tradition of the Church that a Procession is held on September 14, where Basil is placed on a tray along with a cross and it is carried above the heads of the faithful. We will hold this procession on September 14, and also repeat it on Saturday, September 19 and Sunday, September 20.

Saturday, September 26 – St. John the Theologian – St. John was one of the 12 disciples. He was the “beloved” Disciple we read about. He is the author of the Gospel of St. John, the Epistles of St. John and the Book of Revelation. He is the only one of the original 12 disciples to die naturally, reposing on the island of Patmos, where he had lived in exile, in the year 96 A.D. He was the youngest of the disciples and the last one to pass away.

Donations Needed for Vasiliko for the Feast of the Holy Cross

We need Vasiliko (Basil) for the services of the Holy Cross. Please bring Vasiliko for Monday, September 14, Saturday, September 19 and Sunday, September 20. Please bring to the welcome table by 10:00 a.m. on all the days, so we will have time to make up the tray. The Procession for the Holy Cross will be held on Monday, September 14 and repeated on Saturday, September 19 and Sunday, September 20.

Donations Needed for flowers for Feast of the Holy Cross

We need a donation of \$100 for flowers for the tray for the procession of the Holy Cross on September 14, \$100 for flowers for Saturday, September 19 and \$100 for flowers for Sunday, September 20. Please call the office if you are interested.



Welcome Alex Limberatos

On September 15, we will be welcoming Alex Limberatos to our ministry staff, as he will become our second pastoral assistant.

Alex is a Wisconsin native, who moved to Florida three years ago. He graduated from Hellenic College and Holy Cross with a Masters of Divinity in 2017, and during that time at seminary, he participated in mission trips to Albania, Indonesia, and Project Mexico.

Most recently, Alex served as a hospital chaplain at Mease Country-side and Morton Plant, and has completed four units of Clinical Pastoral Education.

Alex and his wife, Alexandra, have been married for two years, have been attending St John since January 2019, and were blessed with a daughter--Anastasia--this past April. Alex is looking forward to serving the parish and the pastoral needs of the community. Welcome to our community, Alex, Alexandra and Anastasia!



Counting the Wins in our Community

We like to celebrate people in our community who are doing wonderful things both inside and outside of our community. If you have had a significant "win" in your life, please let us know so we can share that. We've got some amazing people who do amazing things in our parish.

Alex Findlay was recently awarded the rank of Eagle Scout. Alex is the son of Andrew and Karina Findlay. He served in the altar and is a member of GOYA. Congratulations Alex on this important and significant achievement!

Rick Peckham has served as the play-by-play voice for the Tampa Bay Lightning for the past 24 years. He is retiring this summer. He recently received the Foster Hewitt Memorial Award for his outstanding contributions as a hockey broadcaster. The award, given out by the Professional Hockey Writers' Association, honors "members of the radio and television industry who have made outstanding contributions to their profession and to the game of hockey." Rick will be honored during the 2020 Hockey Hall of Fame Induction Weekend in mid-November in Toronto. He will be recognized by the Hockey Hall of Fame as "Media Honourees" — a separate distinction from individuals inducted as "Honoured Members" who are elected by the Hockey Hall of Fame Selection Committee. Rick is the husband of Vickie Peckham, our Sunday School Director, and father of Alex and Matthew.



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.

Community Outreach - Saturday, September 19

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.

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..

Thank you and God Bless
Greg Melton 813-967-2074
gmelt12@gmail.com



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>

Prayer List: Lord Jesus Christ, Physician of our Souls and Bodies, visit and heal your servants: Kathy & Andrew Bouzinekis; Anastasia; Amanda, Andrew, Colton, Miranda, Charlotte Elizabeth, Nuha, Nabeel, Michael, Amal, John, Elaine, Olga, Virginia Georgiou, Ron Myer, Toulou Tsaros, Fr. Pat Legato, Nellie Pringle, Robert Calbi, Yolanda Webb, Angela Bougas, Tony Ekonomou, Ron, Jason Vickers, Rex Garrison, Tina Chakonas, Ann Demas, Alex Martinez, Adriana Martinez, Aaron Martinez, Christina Noel Kouzes Houck, Evangeline Xeroteris, Nichole Ross, Daniel Ross, Daniella Ross, Ashley Henderson, Natalie Henderson, Chris, Debbie, James, Avery, Lily, Jacob, Jesse, Ann, Rosario, Antonia Caffentzis, Alissa, John, Angela, Joey, Christine Scourtes, Steven, Matthew & Family, Phyllis, John Zelatis, Reagan, Peter Zaharis, Alexandra Ferrarolis, Leon & Despina Botham, Cindy Xenick, Mary Ellen Evdemon, Marie Sofia Panagopoulos, Maria Hursey, Chris Vamvakias, John Myer, Mike Trimis, Robert and Alice Stoccardo, John Alexander, Michael Romero, George Hambos, Dean Kondilis and Family, Bill and Nancy Manikas, Patricia Costello, Anastasia Smyrnakis, Ekaterina & Anna Shushaalykova, Dora Koudouna, Ana Mourer, Debbie Phelps, Mary Voykin, David Voykin, Anne Sakellaris, Denise Badrane, Sia Blankenship, Don Payne, Zhana Temelkova, Stanislava Terzieva, James, Jude and all victims of war, terrorism, crime, natural disaster, and all of whom we are unaware.

Ten Signs You're Doing Well in Life

1. You have a roof over your head.
2. You ate today.
3. You have a good heart.
4. You wish good for others.
5. You have clean water.
6. Someone cares for you.
7. You strive to be better.
8. You have clean clothes.
9. You have a dream.
10. You're Breathing.

Be thankful for the little things, for they are the most important.

~September 2020 Stewardship Update ~

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

Having faith can be difficult. Keeping faith in the face of doubt is the ongoing struggle of every Christian. Thomas the Apostle, though having proven himself one of the bravest apostles, is forever remembered as “Doubting Thomas,” because he doubted the first reports of the Resurrected Christ.

In the Gospel of Mark (9:22 NKJV), we read that when the disciples couldn’t help him, a father brings his epileptic son to Jesus in desperation, saying, “... if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” Jesus replies to the father’s lack of faith, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” The father’s response is a prayer we can pray every day: “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

Faith is our trust in God. Faith is our trust that He watches over us and has a plan for us: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11 NKJV). Living with the uncertainty of our daily lives requires faith. Uncertainty also invites doubt. But doubt does not indicate a lack of faith. As theologian and philosopher Paul Tillich has written, “Doubt is not the opposite of faith; it is one element of faith.”

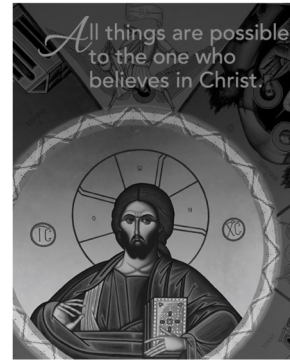
Stewardship of our faith in Jesus Christ calls us to do those things that protect and strengthen the faith that lies within us.

Taking the time to learn about our Orthodox Christian Faith, praying to God for understanding and guidance, and worshiping with others as the Body of Christ – all these things protect and strengthen our faith. As stewards of the faith, Saint Peter instructs us to “...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you....” (1 Peter 3:15 NKJV).

Faith is not a big rule book of “dos and don’ts.” It is about loving and seeing Jesus Christ in the other. Stewardship of our faith in Jesus Christ calls us to do those things that reflect our faith to others, living our faith through our actions. As Jesus tells us, “By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35 NKJV). There is no better way of sharing the faith that lies within us than to see Christ in others and to love and care for them.

Through faith, God’s will is accomplished in the world. Our great example is Mary, the Theotokos, the Mother of our Lord. When Archangel Gabriel came to her at the Annunciation, tradition and hymnology hold that all creation awaited her response. In faith and obedience to the will of God, Mary replied to the angel, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be according to your word” (Luke 1:38 NKJV). Mary responds with faith in order to fulfill God’s will for all the world.

When we believe, stewardship follows.



Stewardship is faith in action;
action motivated by humble gratitude to
God for his blessings in our life.

	2020*	2019*
<i>Pledged Year to Date</i>	\$515,868	\$509,433
Received Year to Date	\$373,167	\$316,955
Average Pledge	\$1,431	\$1,479
Median Pledge	700	\$900
# of Indiv/Families Pledged/Giving	371	356
*YTD as of 8/12/20 & 8/5/19		

Stewardship of our faith calls us to do those things that strengthen and grow our faith. Research has shown that as Christians we seek three things from their church: Transcendence, Significance and Fellowship (Lost in America, Clegg & Bird 2001). Transcendence is to know God and to experience His presence. This we do through prayerful participation in Liturgy and the sacraments. Significance is the desire to have a purpose – to do something meaningful – most often in service to our fellow man. Fellowship is connecting with others through meaningful relationships. The Church offers opportunities for Transcendence, Significance and Fellowship, and in their pursuit, we also serve and support the Church and fully become members of the Body of Christ. To be stewards of the faith we are also called to be stewards of our local church which nurtures our faith and the faith of others.

Stewardship is an act of faith. When we believe, stewardship follows. Stewardship is faith in action; action motivated by humble gratitude to God for his blessings in our life.

As Saint John tells us about all that is written in his Gospel, “...these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31 NKJV).

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 September. 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.

September 6 -12

I AM the door; if anyone enters by Me he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. John 10:9

“What’s behind door number 3?” was a popular question on a game show years ago. Contestants would choose which door to open and behind would be either a prize or a punishment. In our world today, it seems like we stand in front of doors and are unsure of which to open. Do I open the door that says this virus is serious and deadly? Do I open the door that says it is overblown so I’ll go about my business? Do I send my kid to school? Or keep him home? The doors are many. The sense of making the wrong decision is real. The doubts, the head-scratching, the lost sleep. These things are very real. There is one door that is in front of us every day. And that is the door that leads to Christ. Behind His door is love, compassion, kindness, comfort, reassurance, patience, forgiveness and grace. These are the things He offers to us. These are the things we are supposed to offer to each other. When we choose this door, it doesn’t end stress and anxiety. It doesn’t make the decisions any easier, or the challenges any less real. Christ gives us the tools to cope with whatever lies behind each door we will open today. Just like

opening the door to the sheep, which is the analogy behind John 10:9 doesn’t mean that the sheep will never hunger again. It means that the sheep have a means by which to be fed. And following Christ gives us the tools to cope with whatever life is going to throw at us today.

September 13 - 19

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

In a world of information overload, it’s often necessary to keep things simple. The Bible intimidates many people because it is so big. People think that to be a Christian, one must memorize massive amounts of information. One can meditate on even one or two verses of Scripture at a time and receive spiritual nourishment. John 3:16, of all the verses in the Bible, provides a summary of the entire Bible. It unites God with love, which was God’s motivation to both created and redeem the world. The Incarnation of Christ was a gift from God to us, and was necessary because the world required redemption after the Fall. The consequence of the Fall was that everyone “perished” in the sense of being permanently estranged from God upon death. With the Incarnation and Resurrection, those who believe in Christ no longer must face permanent estrangement from God but eternal life with Him.

September 20 - 26

And Jesus answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” Luke 10:27

In last week’s verse, we reflected on John 3:16, which is a summary of the whole Bible. Luke 10:27 provides a consolidating of the entire Old Testament Law into a few words. The Old Testament Law given to Moses on Mt. Sinai consisted of 613 commandments. Of these, ten are considered the Ten Commandments, the great commandments which many of us memorized in Sunday School. No one could memorize 613 commandments, let alone keep them. And many of us, if we are honest, don’t remember all the Ten Commandments either. In Luke 10:27, Jesus summarized all the commandments with two—Love God and love your neighbor. We are to love God completely—with ALL our heart, ALL our soul, ALL our strength and ALL of mind. We are not to love God conveniently, but completely. And we are to love are neighbor, and serve our neighbor in the way we love ourselves, in the way we wish to be served. We don’t cut corners with ourselves, so we shouldn’t cut corners for our neighbor. We pursue the best for ourselves, and we should pursue the best for our neighbors. Whenever we are wondering how we should act, Luke 10:27 is a good reminder to base our decisions on whether they honor God

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

and serve our neighbor. If the answer to both is yes, then we are making a good decision. If the answer to either is no, we are making the wrong decision. The sign of the cross reminds us of these two commandments, as the vertical bar of the cross reminds us to love God and the horizontal bar reminds us to love one another. Each time we make the sign of the cross, it is as if we are saying “Love God, love neighbor.” Try making the sign of the cross before important conversations you have and decisions to make, and as you do, say to yourself “Love God, love neighbor.” Hopefully this exercise will lead you to doing both better.

September 27 - October 3

*I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.
Philippians 4:13*

This is one of my favorite verses of the whole Bible. It is a great motto/mantra to take into “battle” each day of our lives. Whether we are making an important decision, or trying to survive being the victim of someone else’s deci-

sion; whether it is a day of relaxation or a day of anxiety; whether we are confidently climbing a mountain, or struggling or realizing we are on a mountain we cannot conquer, whatever our state in life is, Philippians 4:13 is a crucial verse to have at the forefront of our minds and hearts. It is Christ Who gives us the strength to confront whatever challenges come at us. With Christ, coming through all things is possible. That doesn’t necessary mean coming through them as you wish to come through them, but rather in how He chooses to guide us through our challenges. In locker rooms all across our country, sports teams put up signs that say things like “Play like a champion today.” On the way from the locker room to the field, players will touch the sign, a reminder of how they will play that day. If you want to put a sign next to your door, to touch on the way out of the house each day, it should say Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me,” as a reminder that whatever happens on a given day, when we go with Christ, we will get through whatever the day brings.

Random Sayings

- When “i” is replaced with “we” even illness becomes wellness.
- Your first thought in the morning should be “Thank you.”
- Being right is easy. It does not take any effort and is a sign of weakness and insecurity. Kindness shows great self-discipline and a strong self-esteem. Being kind is not always easy when dealing with rude people. Kindness is a sign of a person who has done a lot of personal work and has come to a great self-understanding and wisdom. Choose to be kind over being right and you’ll be right every time because kindness is a sign of strength.
- Make sure you test positive for Faith. Keep your distance from Doubt, and isolate yourself from Fear. Trust in God through it all.
- Some of the most generous people have very little money.
- Some of the wisest people have no education.
- Some of the kindest people were hurt the most.
- You don’t inspire others by being perfect. You inspire them by how you deal with your imperfections.
- Ships don’t sink because of the water around them; ships sink because of the water that gets in them. Don’t let what’s happening around you get inside you and weigh you down.
- The mark of a great church is not how many people come, but how many people live differently for having been there.
- Everyone you meet always asks if you have a career, are married or own a house as if life was some kind of grocery list. But no one ever asks you if you are happy.
- Jesus forgave a thief dangling on a cross, knowing full well the thief had converted out of plain fear. That thief would never study the Bible, never attend synagogue or church, and never make amends to those he had wronged. He simply said “Jesus, remember me,” and Jesus promised, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” It was another shocking reminder that grace does not depend on what we have done for God but rather what God has done for us. ~Philip Yancey
- You’ve got to be mature enough to understand that you have some toxic traits too. It’s not always the other person.
- God closed the lion’s mouth for Daniel. He parted the Red Sea for Moses. He gave Sarah a baby. He raised Lazarus from the dead. Nothing you’ll face today is out of His control. Trust God.

12 Disciples Project

Just before the beginning of August, we unveiled the 12 Disciples Project, where members of the community signed up to receive one of our 12 pages of member names and commit to praying for them for a month. As of this writing, there are 67 Disciples, which means that every member of this parish was being prayed for by at least 5 people every day during August. This is really awesome. I've asked the "Disciples" to send some testimonials to share with us how this experience has been for them. They are included here. The reason for printing these is not to honor the people who are part of this program. Rather it is for us to hear from our peers, the benefits they are deriving from praying for our community.

It has been very meaningful for me to have a dedicated prayer to read each day, and special to pray for people by name. It's even more special that several of the people I am praying for I don't know at all, but yet have the opportunity to form a connection with them through prayer. Praying for family units all together while knowing that they may be especially in need of prayers is a purposeful practice. In particular, it has been very moving to know that there are at least several people praying consistently for my grandfather, who has been in the hospital again recently. Because of the circumstances, many people (my grandfather included) have to be separated from family for safety reasons while receiving medical care, and I think that this is a very touching initiative to make sure that no member of our community gets left behind.
-Arianna Krinos

When we received the "12 Disciples Prayer," we did a trial run, and were really invigorated. The result: We are religiously praying and getting a lift every afternoon. Angie and I know we are helping the Community, but this process is also helping us. Thank you for starting this "Prayer process." We should do this throughout the year. We really shouldn't need an excuse!
-Thom and Angie Bougas

I have been praying for everyone who is on my list every day. Seemed long the first reading but now it's the opposite, over too fast! I find that I really look forward to reading the prayer before I read the names and am very glad and uplifted by praying for others. I think I may have discovered an entirely new and larger sense of gratitude for all things. Wonderful project, thank you for putting this all together. -Toula Sophia

I am thrilled to be part of the Twelve Disciples prayer team and take comfort in knowing all parishioners are being prayed for daily. -Lisa Alsina

Praying for this prayer request project is the first thing I think of when I wake up. A tremendous sense of well-being for me. I imagine my face against the Lord's hand when I pray. Even when I misread, it's all good. -Mary Ann Rose

Being part of the Twelve Disciples is definitely one of the good things that happened to me during this pandemic. I have told friends and relatives about the weekly Paraklesis and I was asked by several to pray for them also. I have now included them in my daily prayer list. Also I appreciate the opportunity to be able to pray more than usual. -Angelika Labatos

First, I'm so happy to be included in praying for you, Lisa, Nicholas and Charlie! It has always been a prayer practice of mine; but adding the names of the prayer page is rewarding and delightful! First thing in the morning, when I pray the names and prayers, I pray outside, — amongst the trees and blue skies, makes an extra special connection to God for me and those names I'm praying—I know God is listening! It just feels plain old good to say those names and lift them up! Great suggestion! Thank you for always bringing us closer to God in different ways! -Victoria Melton

Being of a protestant background, praying is just a part of my life. But, I really appreciate this idea, especially at this time, to have a list of names to think about and pray for. The page that I got happens to have some of the people I hold dearest including my own family. I still pray for all of our church members and you & your family and Charlie and his family, but I don't know some of the people on my page and I like calling their names and praying that I will get to know them when we can all be together again. -Carole Fotopoulos

It not only brings a smile to my face to pray for the folks on my list but also a sense of duty, calling, and responsibility to be accountable to them. -Alex DeMaio

Thank you, Father, for giving me the opportunity to offer prayers for those in our parish. I especially love the script because it is a blessing to have the familiar words of liturgy when being there isn't an option right now. It is an honor to be able to participate. -Tanya Robinson

We hope you and your family are fine and well. This 12 Disciples Program is a wonderful and uplifting program. I spend a lot of time praying for people and have been daily since I retired. The time of praying for others by name is the greatest part of my day. -Kathy Kaburis

Thank you so much again for allowing me to be part of this wonderful initiative. I have been reading the prayer and names - and I do look forward to this every day - as it has given me a fixed task - and although I don't know the people at all, I hope by the end of the month to begin to feel closer to them in my heart. It may seem strange reading names of people that i have never met before, don't know, or have any relationship to, but as we are part of the one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, it seems a natural thing to do. Thanks so much again for the opportunity! Wishing you well! -*Elsa Aristodemou (who by the way lives in England, and participates virtually in our worship services)*

We find it pleasantly impossible to pray only for the people on our list, because as we go we see in our mind's eye all so many others of our parish and so more & more of our beloved parishioners are lifted up in prayer. God guides so that it is pleasantly impossible also to not think on these whom we are praying for throughout our day. We find that we want to know faces with some names of those we haven't actually met. It's good in so many ways, to also help us think "outside the box" of our own homes and give God thanks for our holy blessed entire beautiful parish. In this pandemic and period of political and economic unrest, we are seeing more clearly than ever the need for

our St. John the Baptist Church, and the micro-church of our own homes. -*Markos and Ekaterini Mangarides*

I'm glad I decided to participate -- I was reluctant at first because I thought I might not be able to keep up, but so far so good! Knowing that additional people are praying for me and my family is helping me to fulfill my commitment. Working on trying to focus on the words and not just read what's on the paper. I have a new appreciation for when you pray for the entire membership of the community, by each name. Thank you for that. I also hope that God is hearing all of our prayers and will keep us healthy and safe. -*Marilyn Sandborn*

Praying for parishioners once a day is an extension of my daily prayers. I usually pray when I get up, before meals and prior to retiring for the evening. I feel content, pleased, joy, hopeful, caring and at peace while praying for my "St. John family". I feel even happier knowing that I am saying prayers for the souls of others and they do not know that I am one of the parishioners who is praying for them. -*Anonymous "Pray-er"*

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the prayer, it gave me the feeling that I can still do something good after I felt useless for many months. -*Nuha Hanania*

Happy Birthday!

This month we will begin publishing those who are celebrating their birthdays. We will continue to do this every month. If you want to make sure we have your birthdate on file, please call the office.

Thomas Karoutsos - September 1
James Katzaras - September 1
Jacob Rodriguez- September 2
Sophia Diniaco - September 2
Andrew Demas - September 3
Demetrios Panopoulos - September 3
Nicky Abramis - September 4
Gennaro Scarfogliero - September 4
Abigaile Tsongranis - September 4
Karina Findlay - September 4
Mary Renaud - September 4
Luke Stonestreet - September 4
Konstantos Orfanakis - September 6
William Rindone - September 6
Larissa Krinos - September 6
Artemis Xenick - September 7
Nicolas Perry - September 11
Paulina Katsouli - September 11
Nicholas Alsina - September 12
Joshua Pyszkowski - September 14
Ryan Rindone - September 14
Sophia Lindiakos - September 14
Chyanne Clements - September 15
Katerina Zabetakis - September 16

Nicholas G. Matassini - September 16
Mihail Kaburis - September 17
Selena Soteriou - September 17
Sophia Smith - September 17
Andrew Choundas Thatcher - September 18
Alexandra Gerecke - September 18
Christina Gerecke - September 18
Elizabeth Kavouklis - September 20
Aidan Tsongranis - September 20
Robert Garrison Mason - September 21
Evelyn Patsavos - September 21
Kelly Westmoreland - September 22
Sofia Stonestreet - September 22
Deborah Papaeconomou - September 24
Sofia Boomgarden - September 26
Spero Renaud - September 26
Addison Schad - September 26
Foti Kwasny - September 27
Demetrios Kolovos - September 28
Nicholas Freeman - September 28
Vasili Sotiropoulos - September 29
Katerina Papaefstathiou - September 30
Ava Spirides - September 30

St. John the Baptist Community News

Parish Registry

Wedding—Biagio Illiano and Vasilgia Argeras were married on Monday, July 20. Panagiotis Toumblares was the Koumbaros. Congratulations!

Funeral—Fr. Sam Kalamaras, former priest of our community in the 1970s, passed away on August 12. His funeral was held on August 24. May his memory be eternal!

Father Stavros and Charlie to attend “virtual” Clergy-Laity Conference September 9-10—Father Stavros and Charlie (as well as Jim Armstrong and Gary Ward) will be attending the “virtual” Clergy-Laity Conference of the Archdiocese on September 9-10. Though they are not actually going anywhere, they will be involved in meetings throughout those two days and will be unavailable in the office.

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.

GOYA—We will have the September GOYA Meeting on Sunday, September 13 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 September 15.

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 September 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.

Men’s Group—The Men’s Group will meet on Sunday, September 22, 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 Thursday, September 3—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 3, for 13 weeks, ending on Thursday, December 10. 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. We will meet on Tuesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. via zoom. Fr. Stavros will again lead this group this year. If you would like to join our women’s Bible study group, please contact Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com and he will add you. Also, each participant will receive a link to purchase a book for this year. We will be studying the Epistle of James.

Monday Night Bible Study will continue in August via zoom. The Monday night Bible study with Charlie will be held September 14, 21 and 28 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@stjohnntpa.org and he will add you.



Using Amazon Smile to Donate to St. John - If you use Amazon Smiles, make sure to choose our church so a donation will be given to our parish every time a purchase is made. So far, since August 2017, we have made **\$864.59**. Every bit helps!

A Prayer

Jesus Christ, my Lord and God, I give You thanks for Your loving kindness and all the blessings You have richly bestowed upon me.

I fall down in worship and adoration before You, the King of glory.

I praise You, I glorify You, I bless You and I give thanks to You for Your great goodness and tender mercy.

To You I come, my sweet Lord and loving Master.

Shine in my heart the light of Your grace.

Enlighten my mind, that I may walk uprightly all my life by keeping Your commandments.

Glorified and exalted is Your holy name, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

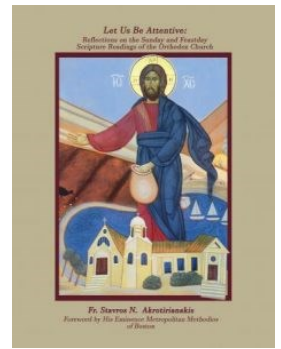
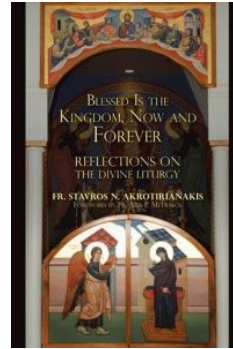
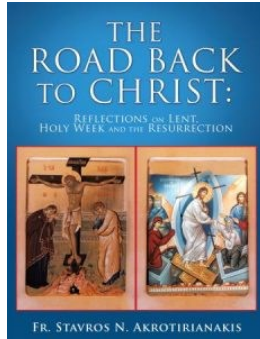
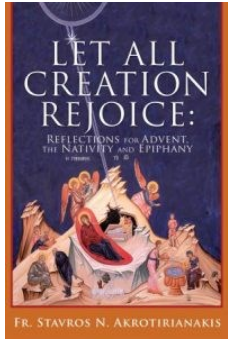
Father Stavros has authored four books that are available both in the bookstore and on-line. They are entitled:

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:

“The Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God” by St. John Maximovitch

The Orthodox Veneration of the **MOTHER OF GOD**



St. John Maximovitch

St. John Maximovitch, Archbishop and Wonderworker of Shanghai and San Francisco (1896-1966), a modern miracle-worker who was in close contact with the Mother of God, authored this wonderful short book about our beloved Theotokos.

A correct, Orthodox understanding of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, is essential for a right understanding of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. When Her image is distorted, the image of Her Son becomes distorted as well.

This concise, little book is a classic composition on how the Orthodox Christian Church has venerated the Mother of God throughout the ages; it also lists the chief errors that have sought to change or undermine this veneration, which include both ancient heresies and recent deviations of Western Christendom. It clearly tells us why the Virgin Mary should truly be called the Mother of God and should be honored by all generations as well as why, at the same time, She cannot be said to have been unable to sin or be considered a Co-Redemptrix along with Jesus Christ, the only Savior of the world.

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

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

Brett and Ana Mourer

Church Versus Sports

This is a very challenging graphic. In our world today, we are constantly bombarded by choices and for parents one of the greatest choices is: sports vs studies vs church vs everything else.

Of the 8,971,362 High School Athletes representing these sports below, only 427,487 will make it to the NCAA... and even less to a Division I School. That is 4.7%!

I am an advocate of sports... I think team work makes our world a better place to live... it keeps these kids physically fit. But are there sacrifices that are made? Studies... faith.... family? Yes there are. The question we have to ask ourselves...is it worth it? 4.7% make it to the NCAA... even less make it to the pros!

We need to re-evaluate our lives... we need to be realistic. If we wait until the kids don't make it to the NCAA to get involved in church, it's too late! They are already lost and off the path. We need to find a balance. We cannot close the door on Christ, on our families, on our studies... all things that will get us along further in life than sports. It's statistically proven.

Remember, only a small percentage of people will play professional sports. 100% of us will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and answer for our faith. 100% of parents will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and answer for how they imparted the faith to their children.

May We Never Forget

On this night... 19 years ago 246 people went to sleep in preparation for their morning flights; 2,606 people went to sleep in preparation for work in the morning; 343 firefighters went to sleep in preparation for their morning shift; 60 police officers went to sleep in preparation for morning patrol. Eight paramedics went to sleep in preparation for the morning shift of saving lives. None of them saw past 10:00am on Sept 11, 2001. In one single moment life would never be the same. As we remember our own Saint Nicholas Church destroyed on that horrific morning, we beseech our Lord to grant eternal rest to both those who perished on that day and to the many rescue workers who have died since trying to help others. Memory Eternal and...May We Never Forget.



Estimated Probability of Competing in College Athletics

	High School Participants	NCAA Participants	Overall % HS to NCAA	% HS to NCAA Division I	% HS to NCAA Division II	% HS to NCAA Division III
Men						
Baseball	487,097	35,460	7.3%	2.2%	2.2%	2.9%
Basketball	551,373	18,816	3.4%	1.0%	1.0%	1.4%
Cross Country	270,095	14,270	5.3%	1.8%	1.4%	2.1%
Football	1,036,842	73,557	7.1%	2.8%	1.8%	2.5%
Golf	144,024	8,609	6.0%	2.0%	1.6%	2.3%
Ice Hockey	35,060	4,229	12.1%	4.8%	0.6%	6.6%
Lacrosse	113,313	14,310	12.6%	3.0%	2.4%	7.2%
Soccer	456,362	25,072	5.5%	1.3%	1.5%	2.7%
Swimming	138,935	9,697	7.0%	2.7%	1.1%	3.2%
Tennis	158,151	7,838	5.0%	1.6%	1.0%	2.3%
Track & Field	600,097	28,698	4.8%	1.9%	1.2%	1.7%
Volleyball	60,976	2,163	3.5%	0.7%	0.6%	2.2%
Water Polo	22,501	1,047	4.7%	2.7%	0.8%	1.2%
Wrestling	245,564	7,239	2.9%	1.0%	0.8%	1.2%
Women						
Basketball	412,407	16,614	4.0%	1.2%	1.2%	1.6%
Cross Country	223,518	15,632	7.0%	2.7%	1.7%	2.6%
Field Hockey	59,856	6,103	10.2%	3.0%	1.4%	5.8%
Golf	78,781	5,375	6.8%	2.8%	2.0%	2.1%
Ice Hockey	9,609	2,400	25.0%	8.9%	1.2%	14.9%
Lacrosse	96,904	12,061	12.4%	3.8%	2.7%	6.0%
Soccer	390,482	27,811	7.1%	2.4%	1.9%	2.8%
Softball	367,861	20,316	5.5%	1.7%	1.6%	2.2%
Swimming	175,594	12,848	7.3%	3.3%	1.2%	2.9%
Tennis	190,768	8,608	4.5%	1.5%	1.0%	2.0%
Track & Field	488,592	30,018	6.1%	2.7%	1.5%	1.9%
Volleyball	446,583	17,471	3.9%	1.2%	1.1%	1.6%
Water Polo	21,054	1,216	5.8%	3.6%	1.0%	1.1%

Sources: High school figures from the [2017-18 High School Athletics Participation Survey](#) conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations; data from [club teams](#) not included. College numbers from the NCAA [2017-18 Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report](#).

Last Updated: April 3, 2019



On the Lighter Side

A husband died. A few years later the wife died. As she got to heaven, she saw her husband and ran up to him with tears in her eyes. "Darling, oh how I've missed you!" The husband extends his arms stopping her from embracing him and says, "Woah there woman. The contact was until death."

Whenever my wife uses the phrase "I was thinking," that means I either have to move, build, paint or buy something.

10 Signs You Grew Up in a Greek House

It took forever to say goodbye to people at parties.

You were as tall as Yiayia by the age of 7.

Yiayia and Pappou always gave you money as a child

We don't believe in small meals.

The wooden spoon was a weapon of destruction.

You have an icon in every room.

There is one family member that has worn black for the last ten years after someone passed away.

No one touches the good towels in the bathroom

Your name is from your grandparents.

No one can pronounce your name correctly.

It's so exciting. My son turned 14, and now he knows everything! Everything! I don't have to tell him anything anymore because he already knows! In fact, he knows more than I do AND more than his dad does! We couldn't be more thrilled. What a joyous time.

No one is full of false hope more than a mom who brings a chair to the beach.

Just call me the little engine that said, "ok, but I need some coffee first."

I don't think anyone expected that when we changed the clocks earlier this year we'd go from standard time to the twilight zone.

On average, the panda feeds for 15 hours a day. This is the same as an adult at home under quarantine, which is why we call it a "pandemic."

Since youngsters of today have their texting codes (LOL, OMG, TTYL, etc.) the oldies decided not to be outdone by these kids, and now have develop our own codes too:

ATD-At the Doctor's

BFF-Best friend's funeral

BTW-Bring the wheelchair

BYOT-Bring your own teeth

FWIW-Forgot where I was

GGPBL-Gotta go, pacemaker battery low

GHA-God heartburn again

TFT-texting from toilet.

Due to Covid-19, "Sweet Caroline" is banned. There will be no: "touching hands, reaching out, touching me, touching you."

The leading cause for injury in old men is them thinking they are still young men.

Do not let them take your temperature going into the store! It's a scam! They're erasing your memory. I went for bread and eggs and came home with Blue Bell Ice Cream and Snickers.

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 were quarantined from the Coronavirus.

Our YAH August Meeting on Zoom was a discussion on the Churches that touched our lives

We were asked to prepare a list of Churches we; 1) Grew up, 2) Married in, 3) Raised Children, 4) Moved to, 5) Vacationed and 6) visited. In addition, we asked people to share any blessing or miracles that had occurred.

I must add this was an enjoyable and religious exercise.

There were many interesting discussions that everyone enjoyed. This month we were only had time to review the list from 4 of our YAH people and the results were:

- They visited 63 Churches in the U.S.
- They visited 39 Churches outside the U.S.
- There were 12 miracles and blessing associated with theses Churches
-

We also had an opportunity to learn more about each other from the Churches and locations we participate during our lives.

OUR COMING EVENTS

September 3rd Thursday at 11:30 am YAH Meeting using Zoom Video Conferencing and telephone.

We will continue our discussions on the CHURCHES THAT TOUCHED OUR LIVES.

PASSED ACTIVITIES

Aug. 5th – We had our first discussion the CHURCHES THAT TOUCHED OUR LIVES.

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

March 5th, 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

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,

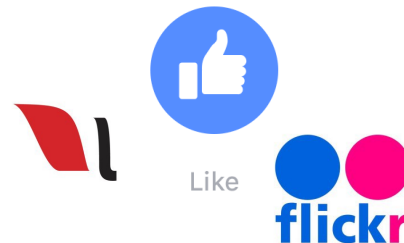
3. Click "View Liturgy,"

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



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

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

ABC PIZZA

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

Accustar Accounting Inc.

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

AlexRoyEvents Music Entertainment.

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

Bavaros

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

Bradenton Flower Shop

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

Peggy Bradshaw

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

George S. Chagaris, CPA, P.A.

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

John Demas - Classical Guitarist - Greek Bouzouki

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

EVOS South Tampa

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

Alexandra Fitos

Weichert Yates and Associates

Cell phone 813-943-6464

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

JoAnn Hartung

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

Markissia Toulaiatos Portraits and Other Fine Art

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

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

Qvita Health and Wellness

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

Retina Vitreous Associates of Florida

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

Robinson Essentials -Young Living Essential Oils

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

The Sakkis Group / KW Tampa Properties

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

South Tampa Sugar Mama

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

True Life Wealth Management (Owned by Alex Skijus)

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

Zomesa, LLC

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

Heart, Stroke Emergencies During the Pandemic

Although COVID-19 has changed the world, it **hasn't** changed the fact that hospitals are the safest place to be if there is a heart attack, stroke or other medical emergencies. Delaying the 911 call that gets you to the hospital can be dangerous and sometimes even deadly. Here are 5 reasons why the coronavirus shouldn't make you hesitate or doubt you need emergency help:

1. Hospitals are following infection control protocols to sanitize, socially distance, and keep infected people away from others.
2. Calling 911 immediately is still your best chance of surviving an emergency.
3. Emergency room employees know what to do, even when things seem chaotic.
4. Year in and year out, heart disease and stroke are the top two killers worldwide.
5. Fast care is the key to survival.

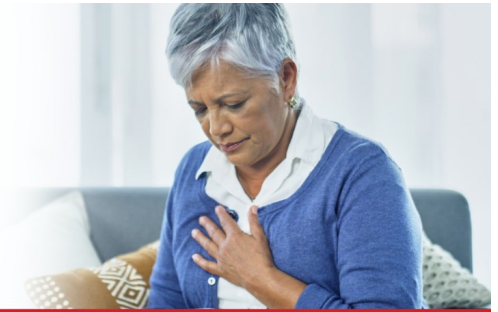
Minutes matter.... people with blocked arteries or clots causing heart attacks or strokes need care quickly. The difference between life and death can be measured in minutes. With so little time to work with, and the extra time needed to ensure coronavirus safety measures, calling 911 quickly for any emergency is more important than ever.

Heart attack warning signs: chest discomfort, discomfort in other areas of the body such as your arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach, shortness of breath and other possible signs, like breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

Stroke symptoms: Face drooping, arm or leg weakness or numbness, speech slurring or difficulty speaking, confusion, blurred vision.

Please, stay safe, wear your mask and in an emergency call 911.

If you have questions of a nursing need, please reach out to your Nursing Ministry.



Heart Attacks and Strokes Don't Stop During Pandemics.

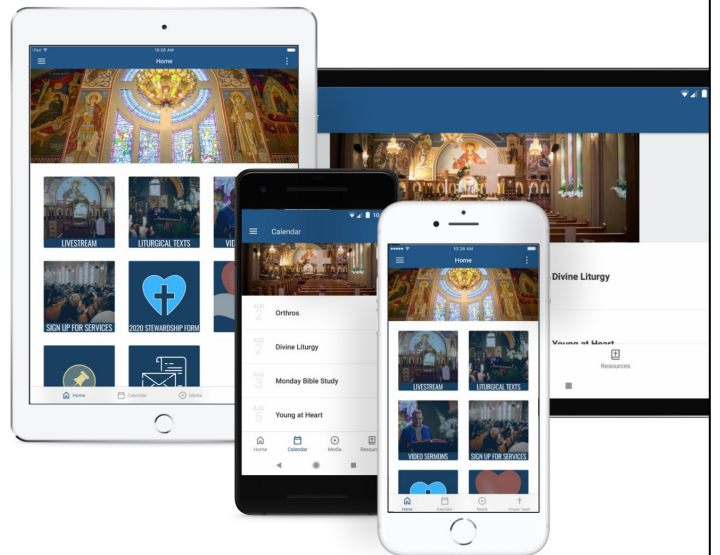
Call 911 right away if you have symptoms.
Even while fighting the coronavirus,
emergency systems stand ready to help.

heart.org



St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

DOWNLOAD NOW



Take Advantage of the Parish Assistance Program

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, parishes enrolled in this program allow access to services for their parishioners who are suffering from emotional turmoil that results from the challenges of everyday life which span a lifetime. The BayCare network of providers understand the importance of compassionate care and are sensitive to the values and beliefs of those they serve.

You can get more information on the BayCare Behavioral Health Community Services Program on their website at: <https://baycare.org/services/behavioral-health/our-specialties/community-health-services>

Help is available for life issues including:

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



BayCare
Behavioral Health

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

George & Maria Andros - Birmingham, AL
Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA
William J Camarinos - Alexandria, VA
Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC
Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL
Gabriel & Irene Hurst - Tampa, FL
Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL
Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI
John & Cathie Koch - Tarpon Springs, FL
Perry & Fay Stamatiades - Asheville, NC
Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI
Wesley & Melissa Thompson - Clearwater, FL
Demitrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH
Bessie Bliziotis - Palm Cost, FL
Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL
Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL
William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL
Lillan Thomas - Highland, IN
Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL

Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD
Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA
Nicholas & Vaso Anton - Dunedin, FL
Kay Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA
Katherine Beasley - Vero Beach, FL
Artemis & Eric Mellen - Longwood, FL
Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL
Charles Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA
Pete & Carol Caldwell - Ringgold, GA
Judith Jogerst
Ms. Nadine Raheb
Victor & Cynthia Cucuz - Tampa, FL
Nicholas & Doris Andreadakis - Lititz, PA
Christopher & Georgette Tsavoussis - Dunedin, FL
Ron & Maria Gregory
John & Deanna Palmer - Greenville, SC
Emmanuel Chrysakis - Palm Harbor, FL
Tommy Koulouris - Tampa, FL
Rev. Fr. Michael Massouh - Seminole, FL

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

Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

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Are We Able to Drink the Cup that He Drinks?

By Fr. Andrew Barakos

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has introduced death, economic loss, lingering health calamities, and disruption to ordinary life. Everyone's experiences have been different, but nobody has been shielded. Within the church, it's also introduced division and factions: Should the church be "closed?" "What is the right way to reopen?" "Should communion be altered?" The list is lengthy, and the questions on it are heavy. Unfortunately, the church is no stranger to schism and faction despite the warnings we've been given by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians.

Is it possible that animosity and division related to positions taken or not taken on COVID-19 could be a consequence of this awful virus that outlives the virus itself? That would actually be quite "on brand" of the devil and the demonic forces fighting to harm the Church.

The way to achieve unity is to search for common understandings, positions of overlap, and the bigger picture that Christ wants us to see in a situation. Therefore, what follows is a search for overlap and unity on some of the topics that are ever-present: the common communion spoon and wearing masks in church.

Advice for those not ready to begin receiving Communion again:

- If you are apprehensive for the time being, it is okay to come to worship and not receive. There is no better place to be other than in worship to pray about it. Although we are grappling with the optimal time and way to resume Sunday liturgy, the church is open.
- Holy Communion is an offering of my entire life to God and in service to others. Let us come to more fully appreciate the awesome nature of partaking in this holy mystery.
- Communion is available by appointment in the church for individuals or families and especially for the elderly and immune compromised individuals.
- No one should be passing judgment on others who choose not to receive.

Communique by Ecumenical Patriarchate on June 25, 2020

In this communication, the Ecumenical Patriarchate affirmed the following:

A) The Mystery of the Divine Eucharist is non-negotiable, because we believe that through it, is transmitted to the faithful the Body and Blood of the Savior Christ "unto the remission of sins and life eternal" and it is impossible that through this Mystery of Mysteries any disease might be communicated to those who partake. For this reason, the Church remains steadfast and immovable in its teaching towards the essence of the Mystery of Holy Communion.

B) As to the mode of distributing the ineffable Mysteries to the faithful, the Church, respecting Holy Tradition...and as the guardian and vigilant watchman of those traditions handed down from the Holy Fathers, finds no need for a change of this mode (i.e. introducing multiple spoon), especially under pressure from external factors.

At the same time, the Mother Church, mindful of the special needs of Her children in the Diaspora, urges the Chief Shepherds who serve in the Diaspora that with a pastoral sensitivity,

responsibility, and consciousness, to temporarily make, by economia, accommodations to problematic situations that arise from local laws of the State for the greater spiritual benefit of the Christian people, always in coordination with the Sacred Center at the Phanar.

Why did the Patriarchate deem it unnecessary to change the mode of distributing Holy Communion? Is the answer that we are guardians of unchanging traditions? Why did the Patriarchate end this message with an olive branch of economia? As your pastor, my concern is addressing the wide spectrum of struggles many are feeling with respect to receiving Communion again.

The short answer as to why we are not changing the mode of distribution of Communion:

- Communion ultimately is an absolute unexplainable mystery whereby the Holy Spirit changes bread and wine, as well as, everyone physically present into the Body and Blood of Christ.

- Everyone and everything that comes into contact with the Body and Blood of Christ becomes One with Him and one another. There are many examples from the life of Christ, most notable when the women with the flow of blood touches the garment of Christ and is healed. Our Lord is the Temple who sanctifies everyone and everything He touches (Matt. 23:17).

- The mode of distributing the Body and Blood of Christ using a Lavida (communion spoon) is sanctified. It is the risen Christ Himself Who distributes the sacrament through the priest. Holy Communion is the fiery coal (Isaiah 6) of the very presence of Christ, God.

What then are we to do? I'll discuss below what the church will do, but what you should do is going to be between you and God. This is not necessarily much different from other decisions such as how much to tithe and how to get involved in the life of the Church. These decisions are made prayerfully as you consider what you feel compelled to do.

Holy Communion, the Big Picture

Holy Communion is essential to my salvation; however, it is not a right, it is the highest privilege bestowed upon a human being and requires a dying to oneself in order to receive it worthily. This is not about spoons and unchangeable traditions, this is about life and death.

There is no better time than the present—when our traditional church schedules and rhythms are restricted—to reconsider what the mystery of the Eucharist represents.

Are We Able to Drink the Cup That He Drinks?

Had we been present and heard Christ's own words as He was relating how His Body would become flesh to chew it would have caused a crisis in our faith. It did cause such a crisis among those seeking to follow Him. "Even as the living Father sent Me forth, and I live because of the Father, also the one who eats Me, even he shall live because of Me. 'This One is the bread, the One having come down out of the heavens—not as your fathers ate the manna, and died. The one who eats this bread shall live forever.'... Many of His disciples, therefore, after they heard this, said, "Hard is this saying; who is able to hear it?...From this time on, many out of His disciples went



away to the things left behind, and no longer walked about with Him [Jn. 6:57-60,66].”

There is only one way the physical body of Christ becomes mystical food that we can eat – His Body must be broken and His blood spilled in order for Himself to become our food and our life (Mt. 20:18,19). Immediately following our Lords’ informing His disciples about His impending death and resurrection, the mother of the sons of Zebedee (James & John) asked for her sons to be granted seats of honor in His kingdom. “She said to Him, ‘Command that these two sons of mine might sit, one on Thy right and one on Thy left, in Thy kingdom.’”

The context of her question is unnerving. Public humiliation, beatings and death was awaiting the Savior and his disciples were contemplating what was in it for them? The twelve had yet to realize that a cross awaited each of them, ‘A servant is not greater than his lord.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you (Jn. 15:20). “Jesus answered and said, “You know not what you ask for yourselves. Are you able to drink the cup which I am about to drink, and to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”

This cannot be a mere historical and rhetorical question: it must somehow relate to our lives and the decisions in front of us. James and John replied to Christ, ‘We are able.’ And He said to them, ‘You shall indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized...whosoever does wish to become great among you shall be your servant and whosoever does wish to be first among you shall be your slave— even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many [Mt. 20:21-28].”

Understanding would only come when the Holy Spirit would give fullness to their reasoning (St. Gregory of Nazianzus).

Faith tests our reasoning. It will always be for each of us the very hard sayings (teachings), those things which seem incomprehensible and impossible to us where a dying to oneself is necessary to journey towards realizing what it means to be a disciple of Christ and a participant in the most Holy Eucharist.

What Are the Implications of This for Understanding of My Discipleship?

The Holy Chalice will always be a moment of truth for each of us, a testing of our faith. It is always given with the same question, Are you able to drink the cup that I drink? Am I able to truly die to myself, have I come to know existentially what that means for me and in my life? Have I become broken by dying to myself, my ego, so that my life may become life or food for others?

Covid19 has become divisive for some within and beyond the church. Our Lord’s prayer for us to be One, even as He is One with His Father is always the criterion of our authenticity as disciples. Every time we approach the chalice, it’s not about spoons: the question in front of us is far deeper and structural about the entirety of our lives. To die to oneself means to allow the Holy Spirit to transform and illumine our understanding and reasoning of all things. This involves a laying aside of everything self-evident and calling upon the Holy Spirit, Who grants understanding. God is not asking us to make His thoughts our thoughts, He is asking us to allow the Holy Spirit to come and guide us and teach us all truth.

We were on this journey before Covid19 showed up and we will be on this journey long after it’s gone. And yet Covid19 provides an opportune motivation to tackle this question openly and forcefully: What does it mean in my life to die to myself and lay everything aside so that I can follow Christ? What ac-

tions must I take to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, who is already inside of me, to illuminate this path? The answers to these questions cut straight to the roles we play—our roles as parents, grandparents, children, friends, bosses, servants. There is no part of our lives that is not immune to this question.

Our Purification Occurs Through Our Preparation and Participation in Holy Communion

When we approach the chalice, we are approaching a mystery of God that is being made known to us through the use of symbols. The church understands the use of symbols not to illustrate something absent, but the opposite, to make something present. The word symbol means to bring-together two things. “We faithful have believed in things which our bodily eyes cannot see. These things are great and frightening and go beyond our nature. Neither reflection nor human reason will be able to discover and explain these things...God has made for us two kinds of eyes: those of the flesh and those of faith (Chrysostom).”

In the context of the meal of the Heavenly Banquet, bread and wine are the symbols used to manifest the unseen reality of the risen Christ who called Himself the Bread of Life. This is the gift of our worship that through the communion of the Holy Spirit in approaching the symbols of bread and wine we encounter the resurrected Christ! The disciples struggled to comprehend the radical notion that his flesh was indeed food to be chewed and his blood being made a drink. Jesus reveals the mechanism by which understanding would be made possible - “It is the spirit that makes alive; the flesh profits nothing. The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life [Jn. 6:63].”

Now the cup should also remind us of how Christ refers to it as a symbol of dying to oneself. Many faithful intuitively venerate the chalice after partaking of Holy Communion; it is a gesture of honoring the vessel which has been sanctified by the presence of Christ. “For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? [Mt. 23:17]. Our Lord is the Temple who sanctifies everyone and everything He touches. Have I sacrificed my life for Christ, have I become food for others? Do I understand that in order for me to partake of His Blood and broken Body, I also must be willing to shed my blood and offer my body as a living sacrifice? Nothing should keep us from making the offering of ones’ life in the house of God – nothing!

But Is It Safe to Participate in Communion?

The question of safety is intentionally toward the end, because the bigger picture here is what the process of the Eucharist represents and the call-to-action it presents to each of us. The theological answer to this question is that Christ is mystically present in the chalice and any mechanism (the spoon) through which his presence is communed with a communicant. The Church has seen in the calling of Isaiah the prophet a vision of Holy Communion and its implications upon those who partake.

Isaiah is called by God in his vision of heavenly worship to be sent as His Prophet. In the presence of God enthroned in heaven, Isaiah is utterly aware of his created nature, in the presence of the living transcendent God. “Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the Seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs (lavidi) from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this has touched my lips; and my iniquity is taken away (Isaiah 6:6-7).”

There is a paradox here which means we are looking at something beyond explanation, a mystery. Why didn’t the angel just grab the fiery coal in the first place from the altar, why did he use tongs (Lavida)? It didn’t burn the angel’s hand after he took it from the tongs and brought it to Isaiah. The communion spoon is commonly referred to in the Greek Orthodox church as the Lavida. The word is borrowed from this passage because of the obvious connection the church made between the Eucharist and Isaiah receiving the fiery coal within his mouth. What happens to Isaiah happens to us every time the priest takes the Communion Spoon from the holy altar and touches it to our lips: What is unclean (me), becomes clean (sanctified); what is created becomes re-created and transformed into the resurrected body of Christ. The priest repeats the words of Isaiah in a silent prayer every time he partakes from the chalice, ‘Behold, this has touched my lips; and my iniquity is taken away.’”

The mode of distributing the Body and Blood of Christ using a Lavida (communion spoon) is sanctified. It is the risen Christ Himself Who distributes the sacrament through the priest. Holy Communion is the fiery coal, of the very presence of Christ, God. This is why we believe the use of a common spoon is not an instrument of death or sickness, but rather, an instrument of life.

Even so, some may feel, “I cannot participate in communion the standard way because I hear health officials imploring me to behave in a certain way—and I want to obediently heed their guidance.” The Church is not here to judge this reasoning; it is here to challenge us to die to ourselves and follow Christ - I believe, help my unbelief.

But Why Masks, isn’t the whole experience of worship sanctified?

If Holy Communion is indeed that which remains untainted, how is it that by our gathering, we still need to take precautions, such as spreading out and dawning face coverings? In the words of Fr. Thomas Hopko, “God is not a magician, a mechanic or a fairy godmother.” Indeed, at the chalice, science ends and faith begins; however, that does not mean we check science at the door of the church. We know from experience that people have become ill in church, have died in church, have spread Covid19 in church gatherings with choirs singing and people not wearing masks. We do not tempt God by declaring that our churches are germ-free, virus-free zones. Even the holiest of saints were subject to illnesses, sins and weaknesses, yet were also at the same time, vessels of the healing Grace of God. We are redeemed, sanctified, and made holy—but this is understood as a freedom from spiritual death which is sin, and no longer living separated from God but united to Life Itself.

Has the devil found a way to use a pandemic to create division in the church? I think he has attacked the very foundation of our unity in Christ which means this is a time to change our direction – to repent. The implications of drinking the same cup that Christ drinks will always remain that which brings us back to unity because it is impossible without humility and a desire to die to myself.

Fr. Andrew Barakos is the Proistamenos of Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos

August 15





Photos by Karina Findlay



By the command of God, the God-bearing Apostles everywhere were transported through the skies on clouds.

And reaching your all-immaculate body, that origin of Life, they kissed it in grand veneration.

The supreme Hosts of heaven arrived with their Master.

Seized with awe, they ushered your inviolate body, which had hosted God. High above the earth, they went before you, and invisibly they shouted to the angelic orders above them,

"Behold, the Queen of all, the Mother of God, has arrived.

"Lift up the gates, and give a formal heavenly reception to the Mother of the everlasting Light

"For the salvation of all humanity came through her. We are unable to gaze on her, and it is impossible to bestow worthy honor on her.

"For her excellence surpasses all understanding."

Therefore, O immaculate Theotokos, as you now live forever with the life-bearing King who is your Son, intercede unceasingly, that He guard us, your children, and that He save us from every hostile assault, since we are under your protection.

And to the ages with splendor we call you blessed.

(Doxastikon of Great Vespers, Dormition of the Theotokos, Trans. by Fr. Seraphim Dedes)

Prayers of Protection from the Coronavirus

www.goarch.org

A Prayer To Be Offered in the Morning

Lord our God, You who are rich in mercy, and with careful wisdom direct our lives, listen to our prayer, receive our repentance for our sins, bring an end to this new infectious disease, this new epidemic, just as you averted the punishment of your people in the time of David the King. You who are the Physician of our souls and bodies, grant restored health to those who have been seized by this illness, raising them from their bed of suffering, so that they might glorify You, O merciful Savior, and preserve in health those who have not been infected. By your grace, Lord, bless, strengthen, and preserve, all those who out of love and sacrifice care for the sick, either in their homes or in the hospitals. Remove all sickness and suffering from your people, and teach us to value life and health as gifts from You. Give us Your peace, O God, and fill our hearts with unflinching faith in Your protection, hope in Your help, and love for You and our neighbor. For Yours it is to have mercy on us and save us, O our God, and to You we ascribe glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever, to the ages of ages. Amen.

A Prayer To Be Offered in the Evening

Lord Jesus Christ our God, You traveled through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” At Your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of this virus, that we may experience Your healing love. Heal those O Lord who are suffering with this pandemic's illness. May they regain their strength and health through medical care. Heal us from our fears, which prevent nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another. Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders. Lord Jesus Christ, healer of all and physician of our souls and bodies, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow. Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with You in Your eternal peace. Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know Your peace. Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know Your protection and peace. Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to choose long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks. May they know Your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth. Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Lord Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us your peace. For You are the Physician of our souls and bodies Christ our God and to You do we offer glory, thanksgiving and worship together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Another Prayer, To Be Offered At Any Time

O Holy Father, God of unknown, uncreated depth, You are beyond all description and expectation. You are the Creator of all worlds, physical and metaphysical. As You are only love, in love You created everything that truly is. Through Your Son, everything has form and purpose, and through Your Spirit, everything lives and moves back toward You. O Father, we are troubled by this scourge that is infecting Your people around the world. From the ancient Fall away from You, there are many consequences that we cannot begin to understand. As traces of this pestilence are being studied in labs, we shiver at its demonic malevolence for destruction, especially of the frail and the elderly. Our hearts are open to You, loving Father; we come to You as children, meek and lowly. We beg You to help the doctors who work to find a cure. We beg You to help our leaders to put away childish things, to forget political advantage, and to be good stewards of their people. We beg You to help us to be wise ourselves and to care for human life in the least of those around us. We cry out to You as One Who did not send this plague. We cry out to You as One Who only heals and redeems. You did not send this, but we know You can destroy it. So Father, cease this plague, and turn it back to the abyss from which it came. Heal Your people, the humanity of this earth, cleanse us and strengthen us toward You. We are weak, but You are strong, and in our weakness Your strength is revealed. Help us, we beg You, in the Name of Your Son, the Great Physician, Who, together with You and our Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Are due all glory and honor, to the ages of ages. Amen.

~ September 2020 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Beginning of Ecclesiastical Year Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	2** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	3 Griefshare starts 6:30 p.m.	4**	5 Sts. Zacharias and Elizabeth Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
6 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	7 Labor Day—Office Closed	8 Nativity of Virgin Mary Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	9** Virtual Clergy Laity All Day	10 Griefshare 6:30 p.m. Virtual Clergy Laity All Day	11** Paraklesis 10:00 a.m.	12 Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
13 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m.	14 ** Holy Cross Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m	15 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	16** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	17 Griefshare 6:30 p.m.	18 **	19 Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
20 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	21 Bible Study 6:30 p.m	22 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	23 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	24 Griefshare 6:30 p.m.	25 **	26 St. John the Theologian Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
27 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	28 Bible Study 6:30 p.m	29 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	30** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	**Denotes Strict Fasting Day		

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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.

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Bookstore
Brett Mourer 813-376-9315

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**Connect Through Christ -
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IIAPEA, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
IIANH'IYPI, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

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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.