

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

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

It is 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 85 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 November, the Saturday Divine Liturgies will be cancelled.

We will celebrate Paraklesis weekly. It will be held on Tuesday, November 3 at 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, November 11 at 6:00 p.m. and Wednesday, November 25 at 10:00 a.m. We will hold Holy Unction on Wednesday, November 18 at 6:00 p.m. to coincide with the beginning of Advent.

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. Our Parish leadership meets on a regular basis to discuss taking the next steps, and proceeding cautiously as we open up "a little more" each month.

You may sign up for any Sunday or any other service where you wish to worship. 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. 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, and until Sunday school in person resumes.

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

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

What are you doing on November 4?

This is a non-political message. I work very hard to keep politics out of my messages. Because Christ did not subscribe to a political party. He ministered to Jews, Gentiles, Samaritans, sinners, everyone. He commissioned for the Gospel to be spread to all nations and said that salvation is for all people. He told us to “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Matthew 22:21) I’m sure that He would frown on some of the political stands that each party takes. And I’m positive He would frown on the anger, vitriol and now violence that are in many pockets of our country. Christ turned over tables in the temple because He said that the money-changers had made a place of prayer into a place of commerce. (Matthew 21:12-13) I can only imagine what He would think of parishes that are more commerce than prayer. Christ never lifted a finger to harm anyone, He never destroyed property to make a point, yet at the same time He didn’t tell people to “stand your ground” but to “offer the other cheek” (Luke 6: 29). Christ was a uniter, not a divider.

It’s no secret that on November 4, half of our country will wake up angry. And if the election hasn’t been decided overnight, it might mean that more than half of the people are angry. And that’s sad. I guarantee somewhere in America on November 4, some person in America is going to be living their last day. It will be their last few hours before a heart attack or a stroke or an accident takes their life. That person might be you. That person might be me. And we wouldn’t even know it until the moment it comes. Would you want to spend November 4 angry? If you knew it was your last day, would you spend it angry? You most certainly wouldn’t! And because NO ONE knows whether November 4 is going to be their last day, why should any of us spend it angry?

What is going to change with the election on November 4? Will taxes go up? Or down? I don’t know. Will it be “the end of the world as we know it” (REM song) as many have prognosticated on either side of the political aisle? It is certainly possible that some aspects of life might change because of the election. Perhaps it will be harder to be a Christian or perhaps it will be easier. History will have to judge that.

I know that regardless of who wins the election on November 4, my purpose in life won’t change. On November 4, I will still be a Christian. My purpose in life—attaining salvation—will still be the same. I will still be married and still be a father, so I will still have a wife and son to take care of and rejoice with. I will still be a priest, and there will still be a ministry to offer.

What are you going to do on November 4? I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. I’m going to love God and I’m going to serve my neighbor. I’m going to do these things no matter what. No matter what happens on November 3, I will still love God on November 4. Nothing is going to change that. And no matter what happens on November 3, on November 4, I will still serve my neighbor, whether he has voted Republican or Democrat. If my neighbor needs a prayer, or a shoulder to cry on, or a sympathetic ear, or some encouragement, I will freely offer these things to any and all my neighbors on November 4, just as I

would on any other day.

People have remarked that Covid-19 is changing the world as we know it. They say the same thing about the election. I strongly disagree. I’m writing this before the election, in fact I’m writing this message on October 8, putting it in writing well before the outcome of the election is known that I don’t plan on my life changing at all on November 4.

What happens one day if the government tells us to take down the cross from our church? What if they take away our tax exempt status? What if they try to outlaw Christianity? I wouldn’t want to see any of those things. And yes, I’d probably say something public to protest against the attack on religious freedom. But even if I lost, life in its essential form will not change. I will still love God and still love my neighbor. Think about the martyred saints of the church,

who were told, “renounce your faith or die.” And they said “We’ll die.” Because they recognized that their purpose was not to live a long time. They didn’t feel entitled to a long life. They recognized that their purpose was to serve God for however long they lived. And they died loving God and serving others.

Many in our society will take to violence, as they have for the past several months. Will they be doing that in love? Saint Paul tells us in I Corinthians 16:14, “Let all that you do be done in love.” And Saint John the Theologian writes in I John 4:18, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out all fear.” In other words fear and love cannot co-exist. Where there is one, the other cannot be. If we are loving, then there should be no sense of fear associated with us.

I don’t know what you are planning on doing November 4. I know what I am going to do. I plan to love God, and to serve my neighbor.

What are you doing November 6-7-8? Unfortunately, not the Greek Festival

On my calendar, I marked off November 6-7-8 to be at the Greek Festival. Unfortunately, due to the Covid pandemic, there is no Greek Festival this year. Hopefully next year there will be a Greek Festival, and the pandemic of this year will be just a bad memory well in the rear-view mirror. Two comments on the Greek Festival:

First, we are committed to giving to charity this year, exactly what we budgeted for. Over the years, we have partnered with LifePath Hospice and Love, Inc. They have provided volunteers for the Greek Festival and we have provided needed funding for these specific groups. LifePath Hospice ministers to those who are at the end of life. Many of our parishioners have utilized their services. Love, Inc. helps those who are trying to get off the streets with a place to live, job training, and job placement. Even though we can’t have a festival this year, they still need our help and we are still committed to helping them.

I rarely ask for money. It’s never been something I’ve felt comfortable doing. I prefer to focus on the message of the

and January provide the most opportunities for us to worship. That's because a disproportionate number of days commemorated with Divine Liturgy fall during these months. During November, depending on the Covid situation, we will have at least 11 Divine Liturgies and possibly as many as 14. The word "Eucharist" in Greek is "Epharistia" which means "thanksgiving." The Holy Eucharist is the "Divine Thanksgiving." By its very name, the Eucharist provides us an opportunity to give thanks to God. It is an expression of our thanks to God. Preparing for Holy Communion involves having faith, having a relationship with the Lord through prayer, following the commandments of God (moral living, repentance, generosity), reconciliation with our fellow man, worship and fasting (self-control). The exercise of doing these things will make our hearts more grateful.

For Those Who Are Nervous About Coming to Church During the Pandemic

For those who are nervous about coming to church during the Pandemic, here are two suggestions: First, keep worshipping virtually. Though it is not the same as worship in person, there are still benefits from setting aside time to be guided through prayer by the Divine Liturgy. Further, when the Holy Spirit is called down upon us and the Gifts we present to God, "us" includes all who are participating, whether in person or virtual.

Second, may I suggest you try coming to a weekday (non-weekend) worship service. On Sundays there are nearly 100 people in church. On Saturdays, there are usually 30-40. Our weekly Paraklesis never has more than ten people and usually five or less. You could come to Paraklesis and have practically the whole church to yourself. The increase weekday Liturgies in November, like St. John Chrysostom (November 13), St. Matthew (November 16) and St. Andrew (November 30) will have less than ten people. Because during a non-covid year they have less than ten people. If you have questions about which services are the safest to attend, please call me and I'll let you know which services will have the fewest people, or look at the sign up genius which is public on our website, and you can see on the day of a liturgy that only a few people are coming and sign up at the last minute.

I Don't Get Anything out of Worship. Let's Change That

I hear this lament frequently, that people don't get much out of worship. I can say certainly we won't get as much out of worship virtually as we do in person, because when we are not in church and are trying to worship from a computer, there is simply too much distraction around.

Worship is many things. It is an opportunity to commune, spe-

cifically at the Divine Liturgy. It is an opportunity to pray with other people. But it is also a sacred time set aside on the calendar. What do I mean? At summer camp, on the schedule each day we have time "alone with God." I don't do that each day when I'm at home. So putting it on the calendar makes sure it gets done. That's one of the great benefits of summer camp. During this time of pandemic, we have been offering a Paraklesis service every Wednesday. One of the reasons I am so committed to this is I want to remember EVERY member of our parish in prayer at least once a week. I may not have time to do this every day or at every Divine Liturgy, as there are nearly 1,300 people associated with our parish. However, I am committed that at least once a week I'm going to do this. It's on the calendar.

How often do you pray for our country? Or our president (whether you like him or not)? Or for good weather? Your own sins? Your salvation? For a good death? The truth is, most of us don't think about these things and many other things we should be praying for. Someone recently told me that they don't get much out of the Liturgy at the church they attend because the service is mostly in Greek. Thankfully, that's not how we are celebrating at St. John. But even if you don't understand the service, in English, or if you don't understand the structure of the service or its purpose (why it is the way it is), the simple idea of being in the church with God and calling to mind the things we should be praying for is something we should all be doing.

The Divine Liturgy is the consummate prayer—it touches all areas of life and all kinds of people who inhabit the earth. If we are attentive to the words of the Divine Liturgy at least once a week, this insures that we are praying for all the facets of life on a regular basis. The calendar provide us, through the Divine Liturgy, at least a weekly (and usually more often, for those who are able) opportunity to pray for our country, the sick, our own sins, for peace in the world, and so much more. The greatest expression of love it to lay down one's life for someone else. The extreme example of this is to die for someone else. The easiest expression of this is to give time to someone else by lifting them up in prayer. Because in the moment we are doing that, we have died to our own selves and have placed someone else and their life and their needs in front of our own.

Writing this message in early October, I have no idea what life will look like when you read it in November. What I do know is that during the month of November, no matter what happens with the election or the coronavirus, I will love God, I will serve my neighbor, I will be grateful, and I will be in church a lot, and I pray that you will join me in doing the same!

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 2799 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 Alex at alex@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 prayerteam365@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!**

From the Mailbag

I get asked all kinds of questions about all kinds of topics related to our faith and its application to life. I've learned that if one person has a question, there are probably many other people who have the same question. This month (and perhaps in future months), I'll address some questions that people have sent to me. The following questions are from a zoom seminar I did with college students from several parishes across the country this past summer. Even though some of these questions are more geared to college students, the answers actually can apply to people of all ages.



Q. What saints do you think we should know as young adults in college, entering the work force, starting families, etc. Who is your favorite saint?

The word “saint” is actually not an Orthodox word. The word in Greek that is translated as “saint” is the word “agios” which means “Holy” or “set apart.” There are all kinds of saints. There are saints for every profession and cause. For instance, St. Ephrosynos the Cook (celebrated September 11) is the patron saint for cooks, bakers, restaurateurs and anyone else who is involved in cooking. St. Nicholas is the patron saint of travelers. St. Basil is the patron saint of orphans. St. Luke for doctors and medical personnel. St. Nektarios for cancer patients. And the list goes on and on. Most of us also have a patron saint. I don't. I'm named for the Holy Cross. Thus, I have an affinity for the cross. Each of us should get to know more about our patron saints, so that we can imitate them. And each of us should find other saints we identify with based on our career, or family, or our unique lives, so that we can pattern ourselves after someone like us. In sports, many baseball pitchers find a role model, and they imitate their windup, their pitches and their mannerisms. Same thing with football quarterbacks. We should find saints that reflect our state in life, learn about their lives and figure out aspects of their lives that we can match to our own.

As for my favorite saints, I have several:

~St. John Chrysostom, who authored the Divine Liturgy, and who was a great orator, and who is also the patron saint of priests.

~St. Basil, because he also authored a Divine Liturgy and his

“anaphora” (a portion of the Liturgy) is the greatest prayer ever written, in my opinion.

~St. John the Theologian, who authored the fourth Gospel, which is also called “The Theological Gospel” because it is my favorite Gospel.

~St. Thomas the Apostle, because he doubted and I sometimes have doubts. But he kept showing up for the Lord and eventually became a saint.

~Sts. Constantine and Helen, because Saint Helen found the precious cross for which I am named.

~St. Nicholas, because it was my father's and is my son's patron saint.

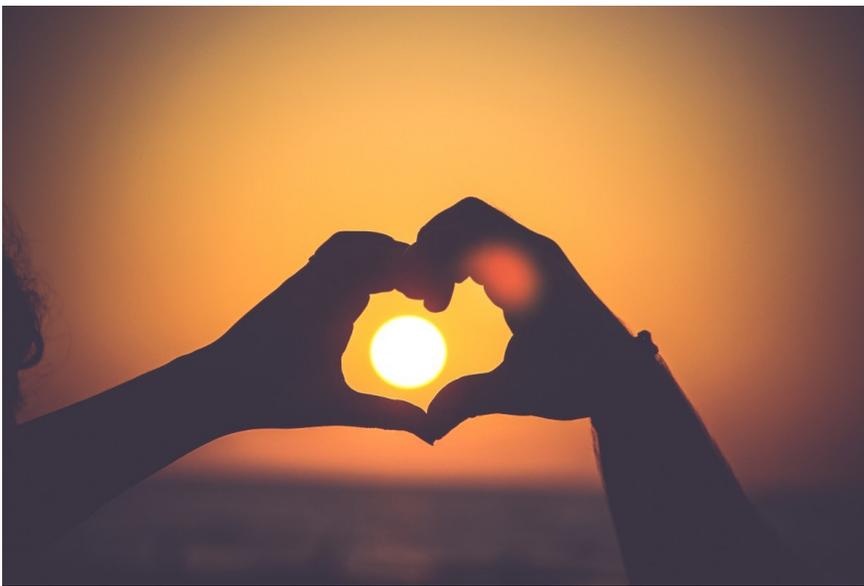
Q. Your input on relationships as Orthodox Christians. Many of us are in relationships and need guidance on how to know when it is healthy. Others of us are currently single and are worried about never finding someone. What advice can you give to us from your experience and also the Orthodox view on relationships?

I could write a book on this subject, or at least a lengthy article. Let me give a few ideas here. How to know a relationship is healthy? There are two things that come to mind. First, is the relationship Christ-centered? Meaning are both people committed to having a relationship that has Christ and salvation as its endpoint, or at least both are committed to having a relationship based on Christian principles. The number one goal of a marriage is mutual salvation. To this end, both parties in a marriage should be committed that this is the end goal. If they are committed that this is the end goal they both wish to attain, then working backwards from there, a couple will be committed to living Christ-centered lives. They will be patient, they will be kind, they will forgive, they will have mutual respect, they will fulfill each other's needs, they will sacrifice for each other. All these things, by the way, are not my ideas. They are all articulated in many places in the Bible. Let's say that a couple is dating and they aren't thinking about sharing a life together, because they just met and they are seeing if they are compatible, then they should live according to Christian principles, especially in the area of sexual purity. This area complicates relationships almost from the get-go. Patience, kindness, and respect should also be the foundation of any relationships, whether it is an old one or a brand new one. As for what to look for in a future spouse, I read once that the number one characteristic of someone who would make a good spouse is that he or she loves the Lord. Because if they love the Lord, they will love the person they are married to. If they are committed to the Lord, they will be committed to the person they are married to.

The second thing that comes to mind when discussing what makes a healthy relationship points us to I John 4:18: “There is no fear in love; perfect love casts out all fear”. Fear and love

More questions on the next page....

cannot co-exist. Where there is fear, there cannot be love. So when one person in the relationship tries to control or manipulate or pressure the other, there is fear and no love. Many people stay in relationships too long because they'd rather have someone than have no one. Relationships based on fear eventually become toxic relationships. If you are fearful in a relationship, you need to talk to your partner about that. If you can't fix things so that there is love and not fear, you need to consider



leaving the relationship. And if you ever feel unsafe, like you are going to be physically hurt or are being emotionally hurt, it is time to leave the relationship. If someone is pressuring you to do something you don't want to do, that is also the sign of an unhealthy relationship. Because love is about sacrifice and joy, not about manipulation, fear, and pressure.

Some people are worried they will never find someone. A couple of thoughts here. First, not everyone is "called" to be married. There are people who will go through life and never be married. There should be no shame or stigma there. Some people will not feel the need to be married, or never find someone they feel compatible enough with to marry. Again, no shame there either. Some people will wait a long time to get married and others will get married relatively young. In Acts 1:7, Jesus tell His disciples, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority." In other words, our time and our desires do not necessarily match God's time and God's desires. Also, there are times when we probably shouldn't be dating, either because school is intense and we can't give a relationship the proper attention, or because we are about to make a major decision (such as where to go to graduate school) and we shouldn't be tied down in a relationship that might color those thoughts. That's not to say that people in these circumstances can't or shouldn't date, only that if you are not dating at one of these times, it is not necessarily a bad thing. A person who has the opportunity for an education or a job that is dating might feel compelled to alter their course because of a relationship. And if the relationship doesn't last, they will feel regret about that choice. For the person who is a senior in college that laments not dating, oftentimes I tell them, "get where you are going next and then think about dating, perhaps God is doing you the favor in you not dating at this stage." And then going back to the verse from Acts 1:7, many times life just doesn't make sense. And when it doesn't, I go back to the idea that God knows the times and the seasons. Sometimes in retrospect, they make sense. And sometimes, even years later, something that did or didn't happen doesn't make sense.

Now to the Orthodox view on relationships. I'm not sure that there is an official view on relationships. The Bible support the idea of being married and also the idea of remaining celibate. The Bible supports loving relationships that are based on kindness, patience, and respect. The primary purpose of dating is to

get a base line for what you are looking for in the person you want to marry. That's why dating in high school when marriage isn't an option seems kind of silly. The second purpose for dating is to practice social skills, like commitment and conflict management. Certainly the Orthodox Church encourages marriage and dating is a necessary precursor to marriage. However, dating to just date, or moving in together without being married is something the church would frown upon.

Finally, let's talk about stages of a relationship, any relationship. The top stage of any relationship is "intimacy," which is a complete acceptance or the ability to be completely vulnerable with someone. Most people confuse intimacy with sex. Sexual expression can be part of intimacy in marriage, but that is not the crux of intimacy. Intimacy is where people can speak with vulnerability, without judgment, with confidentiality, and with acceptance. Ideally, we should each have several people that we are "intimate" with.

Way before one can get to "intimacy" or vulnerability, there has to be other stages which need to be accomplished in a set order. The first stage, the most basic building block to any human relationship, is respect. Two people who don't know each other should operate at a minimal level with respect and safety. No one should be physically or emotionally hurt. This goes for people we don't know, and especially with people we do know. It's very sad how many relationships are physically or emotionally abusive. There can be no intimacy, no trust, no anything if there isn't basic safety.

The second stage is commonality. Once respect and safety are assured, a relationship is built by spending time together and having things in common, building a rapport and seeing if there are common interests that will bring two people together. We're not just talking about marriage or dating, but friendships as well.

The third stage is trust. Once people are building rapport, then trust naturally follows. Trust involves commitment, consistency, and loyalty. It includes keeping confidences.

After trust comes love. This is not sexual love, but rather a desire to be close to someone else. It is an attraction that goes beyond rapport. We can rapport with people we work with, bosses, clients, etc., which doesn't necessarily lead to love.

And hopefully after love comes vulnerability, or perhaps the two are arrived at hand in hand. When a relationship goes in reverse, the stages must be repeated again. For instance, when someone breaches a trust, they can't go right back to vulnerability. They have to establish respect, safety, commonality and then trust and up the ladder.

Have more questions and want to see them answered in future issues of *The Messenger*. Email them to frstav@gmail.com.

When is it “appropriate” to start playing Christmas music?

By Alex Limberatos

So, when is it appropriate to start playing Christmas music?

I realize that being the “new guy” at the parish that it’s probably not wise for me to leap right into such a controversial topic so early on in my ministry. Nonetheless, it is the month of November and I think it prudent that at the very least we address this sticky debate and explore its ramifications of our faith.

I remember growing up hearing groans when radio stations began playing Christmas music somewhere in the middle of November, followed by complaints as to how early radio stations were jumping the gun in celebrating Christmas early. Looking back, it was hard to discern where some of this frustration came from. Is there a disdain for Christmas carols/music in general? Does early Christmas music make us anxious because it reminds us of all the work/shopping “needed” in preparing for Christmas? Is it merely because Jingle Bell Rock is taking away airtime from actual rock music? Or is Christmas that inattentive driver on the highway, carelessly cutting off Thanksgiving and Halloween, just in need of staying in its own lane?

The debate even extends to Christmas decor, as stores like Hobby Lobby often put up Christmas displays as early as September. After doing a bit of research on the topic myself, it seems there are actual “experts” dictating what kind of Christmas ornamentation is acceptable at specific times; for example, did you know plain or fall colored wreaths can be placed on your front door as soon as Halloween and stay there the entire winter, while it is frowned upon to put up Christmas lawn ornaments anytime in November? Personally, these kinds of guidelines seem to me as arbitrary as not being able to wear khakis or white after Labor Day, but then again who am I to criticize having “everything in its due season” when our Church dutifully swaps out altar cloths based on the liturgical season.

Now, I hear and understand the frustration of how the Christmas spirit bulldozes over Thanksgiving, and even over Halloween. But perhaps it’s worth asking, “why not”? Great as it is to dress up for October or enjoy a large family banquet in November, Halloween and Thanksgiving conversely don’t share a lot of room for Christ, His Mother, or His Saints. Don’t get me wrong, my wife and I are excited to do a themed family cos-



tume for our daughter’s first Halloween, and I sincerely appreciate that we have a national holiday dedicated to emphasizing family and towards giving thanks. But an argument can be made that Halloween overshadows saints like St. Demetrios, the Holy Unmercenaries, and the Panagia in her Divine Protection (October 28th), while Thanksgiving overshadows Saint Catherine, Saint Andrew, and above all the Feast of the Theotokos’ Entrance into the Temple. I grew up celebrating Halloween and Thanksgiving, going through those rituals instead of taking time on a weekday to attend the celebration of the aforementioned saints and feasts. So perhaps Christmas is allowed to overshadow some of our not-so-religious festivities and rituals when our Church’s feasts and saints themselves get forgotten in the fall festivities.

But perhaps we still need to take into consideration something important, another flip side to this dilemma: not all Christmas music/decor is Christian or based on the Nativity. This is a fair point. Even if we blanket Christmas over Thanksgiving and Halloween, we may only be showing favoritism to a “season” instead of giving proper focus and attention to the real reason why we celebrate Christmas: Christ’s birth. Maybe Christmas Music sometimes gets under our skin because its lyrics celebrate bells, snow, and reindeer instead of glorifying God. And maybe the subconscious “hype” of Christmas is that childlike excitement we feel, anticipating what waits for us under the



Christmas tree. I mention all this not to tear down the “extra” that we sprinkle into Christmas, but so that we might at least be aware of when we lose focus as to why we celebrate Christmas.

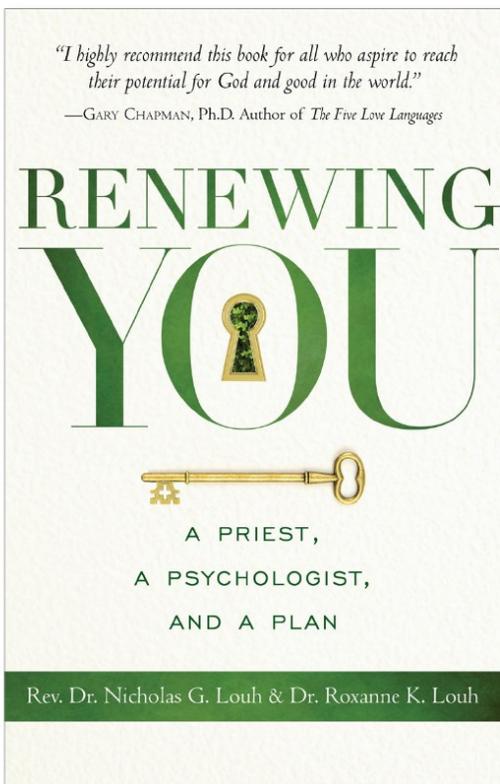
All some very solid arguments to consider, but perhaps we need to invite one more element into this debate: the Church. Two dates come to mind when we consider when might be good starting points to begin our Christmas celebration, and those would be November 15th and November 21st. November 15th is the beginning of the “Nativity Fast”, wherein we are prescribed to go until Christmas without eating meat or dairy--though I’m sure just about all of us gladly accept the dispensation to break the fast on Thanksgiving. And November 21st is when we begin singing new hymns--Katavasia-- in the service of Orthros that mark a transition into the festal period for the Nativity, wherein we sing triumphantly even before Christmas, “Christ is born, glorify Him!” I remember at seminary how the common answer to this debate of when to begin playing Christmas music was, “when the Church begins singing for Christmas is when it’s acceptable for the whole nation to sing for Christmas”.

Having represented the different schools of thought on this eternal debate, I think it’s time we get to the meat of this issue, which is orientation. Fasting--whether it be before Christmas, Pascha, or even Wednesdays and Fridays--should be helping us orient our bodies to Christ, that our hearts and minds follow in this orientation. Paying attention to what we won’t eat helps sharpen our attention towards prayer, that we don’t merely “go through the motions” in life, but pay attention to the season, to

our diet, to our prayer life. The Nativity Fast assists us in this orientation when we eat, the Nativity Hymns assists us when we are in church, and then--perhaps--Christmas Music and Decor orients us when we are at home, at work, at school, or just out and about. Whether your jam is Silent Night or Jingle Bell Rock, perhaps we can use this music to orient us to the joy and gratitude we experience for Christ’s birth and salvation for humanity. Maybe, just as we orient ourselves with what we put on our dinner plate, we can orient ourselves by choosing what we listen to, by turning off our usual secular stations/music for something more wholesome like Christmas carols, faith-based podcasts, or even with a bit of silence for prayer.

So, “when is it appropriate to start playing Christmas music”? That’s a question for each of us to wrestle with. But before we wrestle with it, I believe each of us ought to make a conscious effort to consider how we are planning to orient ourselves towards Christ, towards His Birth and Incarnation. In this orienting, we not only deepen our relationship with Christ, but by facing His glory and brightness, we may hopefully transform ourselves “into his image with ever-increasing glory”, and bring His radiance to our neighbor and to our world. So, whenever you deem it “appropriate” to start listening to Christmas Music, be conscious about the decision, intentional of its spiritual ramifications, and let us together bless our collective approach towards Christmas.

As for when it is socially acceptable to take the Christmas tree down, I leave that question to your spiritual father.



Renewing You

A Priest, A Psychologist, and a Plan

by Rev. Dr. Nicholas G. Louh
AND Dr. Roxanne K. Louh



Rev. Dr. Nicholas Louh is a priest, and Dr. Roxanne Louh is a clinical psychologist. In their book and in their ministry, the Louhs are a marriage of two different worlds and fields of study. Their work unites the seemingly opposing fields of faith and psychology to support the kind of inward reflection that leads to lasting outward transformation. For the last 10 years, Fr. Nicholas and Dr. Roxanne have worked together to help people seek the changes they want most for their lives.

ARE YOU STRUGGLING in your walk with Christ? Do you want to rediscover your reason for living, the person you were created to be? *Renewing You: A Priest, a Psychologist, and a Plan* gives you the keys to unlock areas of your life that hold you back from fully

experiencing the renewal and transformation God has in mind for you. Co-authored by a priest and a psychologist, *Renewing You* combines principles of spiritual growth with psychological tools to help you become your best self, fully connected with God’s purpose for you.

Liturgical Schedule for November 2020

Sunday, November 1	Sts. Cosmas and Damian Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. **Daylight Savings Ends Set your clocks back one hour
Tuesday, November 3	Paraklesis Service of Supplication 6:00 p.m. (Note: Paraklesis will be on Tuesday this week instead of Wednesday)
Saturday, November 7	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, November 8	Feast of the Archangels, Michael and Gabriel Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Monday, November 9	St. Nektarios Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, November 11	Paraklesis Service of Supplication 6:00 p.m.
Friday, November 13	St. John Chrysostom Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, November 14	St. Philip the Apostle Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, November 15	8th Sunday of Luke - Nativity Fast Begins Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Monday, November 16	St. Matthew the Evangelist Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, November 18	Sacrament of Holy Unction for the Beginning of the Nativity Fast 6:00-7:30 p.m.
Saturday, November 21	Entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Temple (Ta Eisodia) Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, November 22	9th Sunday of Luke Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, November 25	Paraklesis Service of Supplication 10:00 a.m. St. Katherine/Thanksgiving (Evening Liturgy) Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Saturday, November 28	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, November 29	13th Sunday of Luke Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Monday, November 30	St. Andrew, First Called of the Apostles Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, December 2	St. Porphyrios Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Paraklesis Service of Supplication 6:00 p.m.
Friday, December 4	St. Barbara/St. John of Damascus Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, December 5	St. Savas the Sanctified Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.



Liturgical Notes for November 2020

Divine Liturgy on all the Saturdays of November - In order to facilitate people being able to worship on a weekly basis, we will celebrate Divine Liturgy on all the Saturdays of November.

Paraklesis to be celebrated every Week - We will continue to celebrate Paraklesis every week until the end of this crisis, at which point a Holy Unction service will be offered to mark the end of this crisis. In November, Paraklesis will be offered as follows: Tuesday, November 3 at 6:30 p.m.; Wednesday, November 11 at 6:00 p.m.; and Wednesday, November 25 at 10:00 a.m. Holy Unction will be held on Wednesday, November 18 at 6:00 p.m.

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

Sunday, November 1 - Sts. Cosmas and Damian, the Unmercenary Healers Sts. Cosmas and Damian are the Patron Saints of the Philoptochos, as they went from place to place healing people and not taking any money for their services. Sts. Cosmas and Damian (called the Agii Anargyri) are also saints we pray to for intercession when we are sick, and are also patron saints of doctors (in addition to St. Luke).

Sunday, November 8 - The Archangels This feast commemorates the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and all of the “bodiless powers” of heaven, all of the angels. There are nine orders of angels—Angels, Archangels, Virtues, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Authorities, Cherubim and Seraphim.

Monday, November 9 - St. Nectarios St. Nectarios is a “modern day” saint, a saint of the 20th Century, (Died in 1920, Canonized as a Saint in 1960), who was a bishop in Greece. St. Nectarios is the patron saint of cancer patients and is considered one of our “healing” saints, meaning that we invoke his intercessions when we are praying for those who are sick. Cancer sufferers and survivors are urged to attend this Divine Liturgy in order to pray for continued healing through the Intercessions of St. Nectarios. Father Stavros has oil from the tomb of St. Nectarios in Aegina, Greece, with which he will anoint the faithful in attendance at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on November 9.

Friday, November 13 - St. John Chrysostom St. John Chrysostom lived in the 4th Century. He was a Bishop of the Church and is recognized as one of the Three Hierarchs (together with St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory the Theologian). He received the title “Chrysostomos,” meaning “the Golden Mouth,” for his great ability to speak. St. John Chrysostom authored the Divine Liturgy that we celebrate on most Sundays. Therefore, we offer the Divine Liturgy on this day in honor of St. John Chrysostom.

Saturday, November 14 –St. Philip the Apostle Each of the Twelve Disciples has their own feastday. They are celebrated collectively on June 30. With Saturday Liturgies being offered during this period of the pandemic, we are celebrating some extra feast days this year, which include the feast of St. Philip, one of the 12 disciples, who is commemorated on November 14.

Monday, November 16 –St. Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist Saint Matthew was one of the 12 Disciples and one of four Evangelists, the authors of the Gospels. St. Matthew did not spend his early life as a holy man. Rather, he was a dishonest tax collector. Once he encountered Christ, his life changed. He became a faithful follower. St. Matthew is one of many examples of prominent saints who turned their life around after an inauspicious beginning. He is a role model for any of us to do the same.

Wednesday, November 18- Holy Unction for the beginning of Advent at 6:00 p.m. The forty-day period of Advent begins on November 15. It is a period of fasting and reflective preparation. In America, Advent is marked by a period of shopping, decorating and parties, none of which really help us prepare spiritually to celebrate the great feast of the Nativity. As we have done in past years, we will hold a Holy Unction Service as we begin the period of Advent—it will be on Wednesday, November 18, at 6:00 p.m. We will not hold Paraklesis this week, but instead will offer Holy Unction. The names of all of our members will be offered in prayer intermittently throughout the service. Please bring your Holy Week book as the service will follow the service of Holy Wednesday evening.

Saturday, November 21 - Entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Temple The Entrance of the Virgin Mary (Ta Eisodia) Commemorates when the Virgin Mary entered into the Temple at age two to begin a life of service to God, in preparation for the awesome role she would play in the history of humanity as the Theotokos. This is one of the 12 Major Feast-days of the Orthodox Liturgical Year.

Wednesday, November 25 - St. Katherine the Great Martyr (Evening Liturgy) St. Katherine was born in Alexandria, Egypt in the third century. She was very wise and eloquent, successfully arguing for Christianity in the face of tyrannical rulers and philosophers. She was martyred in the year 305 and her relics were taken by Angels to Mount Sinai where they were discovered many years later. St. Katherine has the title “Pansophou” the “All-Wise.”

Wednesday, November 25 - Evening Liturgy for Thanksgiving In Greek the word for Thanksgiving is “Eucharistia,” so the Holy Eucharist is the “Holy Thanksgiving.” As we celebrate Thanksgiving with turkey and the Dallas Cowboys on Thursday, set aside Wednesday to receive the Holy Thanksgiving. As is our custom at St. John, we will celebrate Divine Liturgy for Thanksgiving on Wednesday, November 25 at 6:00 p.m.

Liturgical Notes continued...

Monday, November 30 - St. Andrew the Apostle St. Andrew is the first-called of the Apostles. He is also the patron saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Wednesday, December 2 – St. Porphyrios of Kafsokalivia St. Porphyrios was a monk on Mount Athos known for his gifts of spiritual discernment. He lived from 1906-1991, and was canonized in 2013. He was alive in most of our lifetimes. There have been several saints that have been canonized in recent years. As a new practice at St. John, we will celebrate one of these modern saints each year on his or her feastday, and for this year, it will be St. Porphyrios.

Friday, December 4 - St. Barbara and St. John of Damascus We celebrate the feastday of St. Barbara, a martyr for Christ who was martyred by her own father. On the same day, we celebrate the feastday of St. John of Damascus, a hymnographer of the church who also was a strong defender of iconography.

Saturday, December 5 – St. Savas the Sanctified Saint Savas lived from 439-532 and was one of the leading monastics of his era. He founded monasteries, worked miracles, had great discernment, and did extensive writing on monastic rules of life.

Sunday, December 6 - St. Nicholas We celebrate the feast of St. Nicholas, the patron saint of travelers. The tradition of Santa Claus is derived from St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, who was giving gifts to those less fortunate.

Looking for Donations for Five New Feast Day Icons

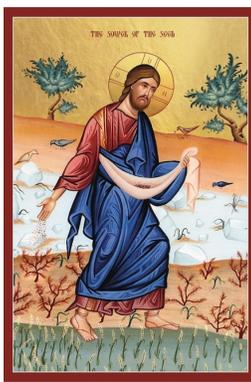
Every day of the calendar years marks the feast of a saint or an event in the life of Christ or the Virgin Mary. We have icons for most of the major saints we commemorate with a Divine Liturgy, and on Sundays we display an icon of the feastdays of Lent and the Paschal season, or the saint or feast closest to the Sunday. We have identified on feast and several Sundays for which we do not have icons. We'd like to purchase these icons to use on their appropriate Sundays/feast days. Each costs \$50.



St. Porphyrios—A modern saint who reposed in 1991. His feastday is December 2 and we will celebrate this feast for the first time this year.



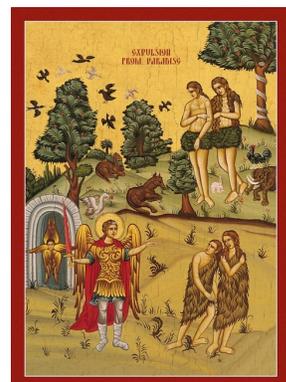
The Sunday of the Last Judgment—Commemorated on Meat Fare Sunday, two Sundays before the beginning of Great Lent.



The Parable of the Sower—A significant parable in the Gospel of Luke.



The Healing of Jairus' Daughter—A miracle told in the Gospel of Luke.



The Fall of Adam—Commemorate on the Sunday before Lent.

If interested in donating any of these, please contact Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com. Thank you.

Looking for donations for a set of red altar cloths

We are ordering some red altar cloths—for the altar table, the sacraments tables and the icon stand. The total cost for these is \$1,500, or you can donate individual pieces of this four piece set. These cloths will be used during advent—roughly from the middle of November through middle December each year and at other times of the year as well. If you are interested in ordering these, please contact Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com.

Beware of Emails Asking for Gift Cards

This is a common and very scary thing that is happening. People who are impersonating as Fr. Stavros have been emailing people and asking them to buy gift cards, scratch off the back to reveal the code, take pictures of the code and email them the pictures. Fr. Stavros would never under any circumstances ask for a gift card via email. If you receive an email like this, please call Fr. Stavros, Charlie or Alex immediately. Many people these days are falling victim to scams like these. Please double check and even triple check any emails or phone calls that ask for money even if it looks real. Any questions? Please contact the office.

St. John the Baptist Community News

Parish Registry

Funeral - John Anastasiou passed away on September 12. His funeral was offered on September 18.
May his memory be eternal!

Funeral - Nicholas Paras passed away on September 13. His funeral was offered on September 23.
May his memory be eternal!

Orthodoxy 101 to be held in early 2021 - Because of the pandemic, we are going to postpone the fall installment of Orthodoxy 101. We will hold the next Orthodoxy 101 class in February, 2021.

GOYA – The GOYA Meeting for November will be Sunday, November 8. We will meet from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. We will be going back to our old format of food, fellowship, fun and learning. Parents are welcome to join us.

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.

Men's Group - The Men's Group will meet on Sunday November 22 at the church at 5:00 p.m. We will walk to a nearby restaurant, eat dinner, then return to the church for discussion, concluding by 7:30 p.m. (We discussed screening a movie at our last meeting, and we may do this, stay tuned for changes in the schedule on this).

GriefShare meets every Thursday via zoom at 6:30 p.m. - 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 Thursdays in November—November 5, 12, and 19. 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 meet on Tuesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. in November—November 3, 10, and 17. We are studying the Epistle of St. James. We meet via ZOOM. Fr. Stavros leads this group. 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 to the Zoom link. At some point, we will be resuming in person, however when we do, there will continue to be a zoom option.

Monday Night Bible Study will continue in November via zoom. The Monday night Bible study with Charlie will be held November 2, 9, 16, and 30 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. If you are not currently part of the Monday night Bible study and would like to join in, please contact Charlie at chambos@stjohntpa.org and he will add you.

12 Disciples Program - In August, we started a program called "The 12 Disciples." There are twelve pages of names that comprise all the members of our parish. Father Stavros prays for all twelve pages of names each week at Paraklesis. The idea for this program is for each "disciple" to take one page of names and pray for that group of people every day. For every twelve "disciples" who sign up, every page of people will be prayed for. We currently have over 60 "disciples" meaning that each person in this community is being prayed for by at least five people every day. If you'd like to join this program and receive a page of people to pray for, please contact either Charlie or Alex.



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!



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.

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 November. 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.

November 1-7

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will tell of all Thy wonderful deeds.
Psalm 9:1

The weekly Bible verses for this month will focus on the theme of thanksgiving and gratitude. This week is going to be very emotionally charged for many people, as the Presidential Election takes place. There will be a temptation to be overly angry or overly jubilant, depending on the outcome you are hoping for. This verse reminds us to be overly thankful, to give not just some token thanks to God but to thank Him with our whole heart. Many of us will spend hours on the phone this week talking about current events. Here is a challenge. Talk to someone about God this week. Most of us will spend time talking about politics. How about talking about faith?!

November 8-14

Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer

to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe. Hebrews 12:28

Acceptable worship and gratitude go hand in hand. When we are grateful to God, we are more motivated to offer worship with reverence and awe. When we offer worship with reverence and awe, then we will better understand gratitude. As for the “kingdom that cannot be shaken,” this of course refers to the Kingdom of heaven, and our potential for going there. Obviously, the kingdoms of earth can be shaken, by disaster, war, etc. Our own material kingdoms can be destroyed by disaster or the economy. The kingdom of our souls, where the seed of Christ has been planted, is an example of a kingdom that cannot be shaken. We should be grateful for this kingdom that the Lord has planted within each of us. And with a recognition that we carry Christ inside each of us, we should offer a life that reflects this, with worship that is filled with reverence and awe, not only when we are in church, but especially when we are outside of church.

November 15-21

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. Psalm 50:14

Many people will dismiss this verse because of the words “pay your vows.” As if God is a salesman to be paid off. That is not what this verse means. God purchased our salvation through His death and Resurrection. When we were baptized, we were joined to God, and the community of His saints, all those alive and those passed on who believe in God. This gift comes with some expectations. These include obedience (to the commandments of God), repentance (correcting our course when we veer off from obedience), faith (trust in God and His promises), love (what we are to offer to our neighbor), generosity (the spirit with which we should love our neighbor), and evangelism (sharing the word of God with others through witness). These are the expectations that God has for us, and when we promised (or our Godparent promised for us) at baptism to unite ourselves to Christ, we made this vow. A sacrifice of thanksgiving is an offering made with joy. I do not pay my taxes with a sacrifice of thanksgiving. That is a sacrifice made begrudgingly. We should offer to God with thanksgiving, and remember the expectations that were laid out for us when we were baptized.

November 22-28

Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise. Psalm 95:2

Thanksgiving week is here! Most of us will have food, family and football on our minds as we mark this holiday. Thanksgiving should also be a “holy-day.” It should be a day that we make a joyful noise to God with songs of

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

praise, thanking Him for the family and food that we will enjoy. We should make Thanksgiving an every day celebration, not from the food and family perspective but from the perspective of gratitude, being thankful to God for all of His gifts which we enjoy every day, not just on this holiday. This week, whether it be Sunday, or Thanksgiving Eve, we should come into God's presence in worship, receiving Christ in the Holy Eucharist. And we should enter our parish for worship each time with grateful hearts, making joyful noise in singing His praises.

November 29 - December 5

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. Colossians 4:2

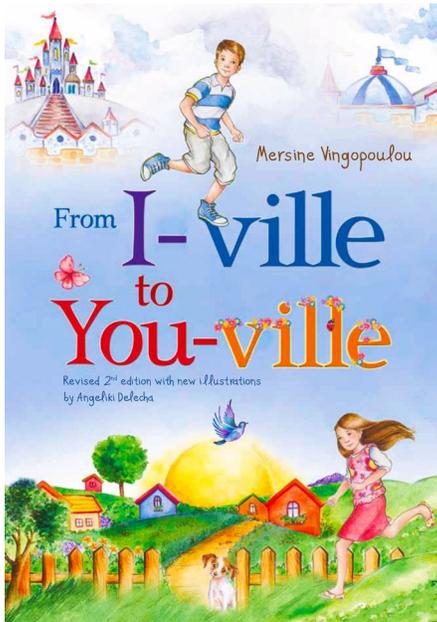
The week after Thanksgiving kicks off a month of distraction. Christmas has become less about celebration and

more about distraction. We are distracted from work, family, friendships, and other things because of the pressure to shop, decorate, cook and other Christmas-related stresses. We become so busy that we miss the centerpiece of the season, Christ Himself, the Creator coming redeem His creation. While the distractions swirl around us, it is important to remember to be steadfast in prayer. As we think of what we want for Christmas, it is important to remember to be thankful for what we already have. Let's be honest, how many of us don't really need anything else. The concept of shopping for presents and the stress of trying to find the perfect gift while wondering how we will pay for it puts the focus on anything but thanksgiving. Let's minimize the commercialism of the season, being grateful for the gift of the Incarnation, which opened the path back to Paradise for all of us.

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, Toulia 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.

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

"From I-ville to You-ville" by Mersine Vingopoulou



I-ville---a Kingdom where pride and selfishness dwell, and where people live by the motto "Me first!"

You-ville---a Kingdom where humility and kindness have their home, and where people put the good of others before their own. This is the story of a young boy named Stubborn as he strives to become the first person of I-ville to make the difficult journey to the beautiful joy-filled Kingdom of You-ville and to become a citizen there.

As we join Stubborn in his adventures, we learn along with him, profound lessons in how to struggle against bad thoughts and feelings. Drawn from the teachings of beloved St. Paisios of Mount Athos (1924-1994), these lessons can be of tremendous spiritual benefit for young and old alike. The journey of young Stubborn is one that all of us must take, and which all of us can accomplish--if only we shrink our "I" and put "You" first!

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

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

Brett and Ana Mourer

~November 2020 Stewardship Message ~

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

We remain humbled by the generosity of our loyal Stewards during this unprecedented year! In a year that upended our lives we relied on our church to remain a constant. In a sea of fear, change and compromise this may have looked a little different but Fr. Stavros, with God’s Grace, steered the ship with the support of our loyal Pastoral Assistants and Staff. Recently it was said, this year will basically consist of January, February, Quarantine and December. Of course, we know during Quarantine many Essential Workers kept things moving along. Our church is essential in our lives and did not fail us this year with your support!

The ultimate essential is our faith and reliance on our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In the beginning of the year we said **‘Let God come into focus in 2020 through your offering of Time, Talents, and Treasure!’** ~ We sure needed this more than ever in 2020 with a safe place to turn for comfort in the chaos.

One thing is for sure, we all need to keep moving forward and control what we can day to day. Fr. Stavros said recently ‘The security of God is like putting on a warm coat in winter. It won’t raise the temperature, but will keep us warm as we walk through the storms of life. That “coat” is Prayer, Scripture, Repentance, Charity, Generosity, Love, Hope, and Faith.’

Year to Year Comparison ~	2020*	2019*
Pledged Year to Date	\$515,880	\$515,752
Received Year to Date	\$435,627	\$388,502
Average Pledge	\$1,437	\$1,450
Median Pledge	\$700	\$900
# of Individual/Families Pledged/Giving	384	370
*YTD as of 10/13/20 & 10/9/19		

This storm shall pass and your Stewardship Committee is looking forward to 2021 and remains dedicated to you and our beloved church. This year will look a little different than our traditional Stewardship Sunday and instead we will have Stewardship Month in December. Please look for your 2021 Stewardship Materials next month and plan carefully to pledge your support once again to our beloved church. Our Stewardship is a reminder that *‘Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.’* James 1:17

Please don’t hesitate to reach out anytime regarding questions or simply to share your thoughts on Stewardship. Email the office at office@stjohntpa.org **We are here for YOU!**

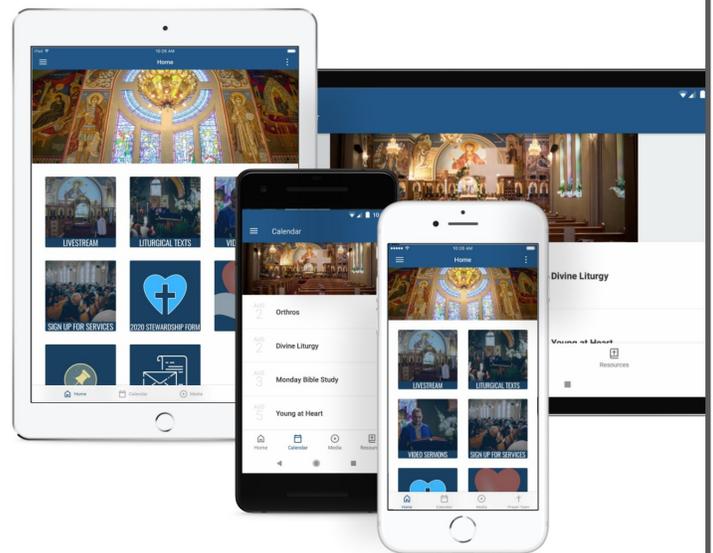
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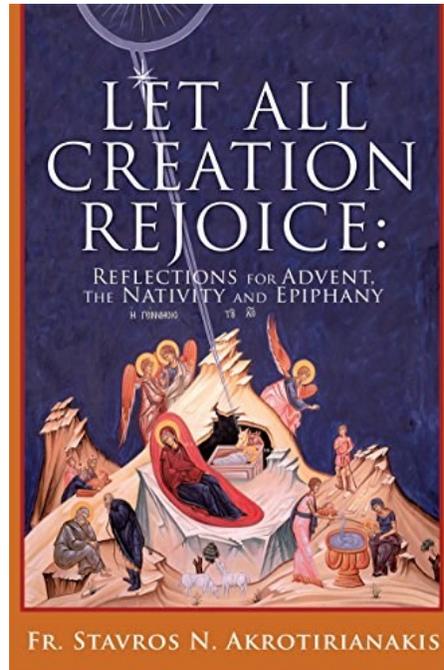


Start Your 2020 Advent Journey with “Let All Creation Rejoice”

Advent every year begins on November 15 and goes until January 7

As we approach the season of Advent, I wanted to share with you a book I have written called, *Let All Creation Rejoice: Reflections for Advent, the Nativity and Epiphany*. The book is approximately 230 pages long. It contains a reflection to be read daily during the period of the Nativity Fast (November 15) through January 7. From November 15 through December 24, one verse of the Gospel accounts of the Nativity is examined in detail each day. It is practical inspiration written to be understood by the average Greek Orthodox Christian.

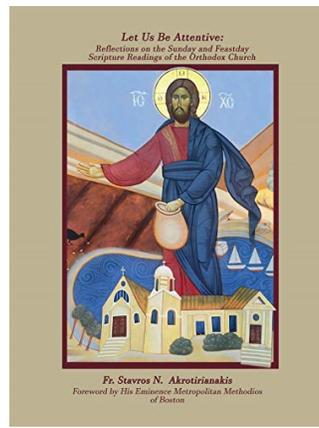
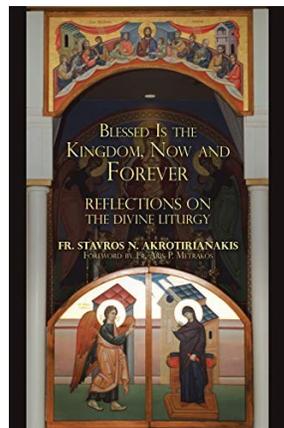
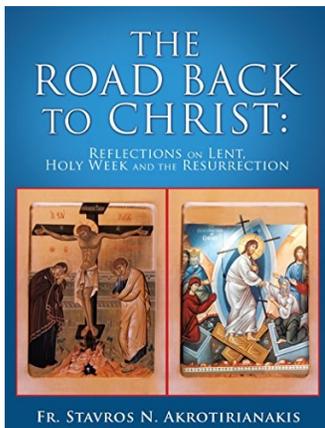
+Fr. Stavros



Although this book is written in an easy to read style - the concepts and application are very thought provoking! My husband and I have been reading it at meal time, as our Advent meditation. Each day's readings help me turn my mind to what's really going on and important this time of year - helping me refocus, and reflect on the events surrounding the Nativity, and what they mean for me! Today's reading, for example, reflected on the angel telling the shepherds, "Don't be afraid," and following reflections on fear in my own life. Excellent book, and now that I am enjoying this one so much, I will be ordering the Lenten reflections, too. -Amazon Customer

A must read for any Christian wishing to renew their spiritual life during the Christmas season. -Amazon Customer

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



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

Attention All Youth Workers and Ministry Leaders

Please be aware that the 2021 renewal registration will begin in November of 2020. Many of you already complied with the new GOA guidelines this past fall 2019 and will only have to complete online training and reregister. Others will need to register, undergo a background check and complete the online training. In November, the Youth Protection Committee will e-mail all existing youth workers of their current status and requirements, including the registration form. Within a week or so afterwards, you will receive emails from Praesidium (aka: Armatus Learn to Protect) with links to complete the requirements. Please do so within ten days or the links expire. Thank you, Catherine Mitseas & Charlie Hambos



Sunday School Classes in October

What a wonderful start to our VIRTUAL SUNDAY SCHOOL year!!! Of course we wish that we were together in person, but we are trying to provide the best program possible under the circumstances. We truly have missed all of our Sunday School families. Let's all pray that this pandemic will end and we will be together again in church and in Sunday School.

We started our Virtual Sunday School on Sept. 13th. Our virtual lessons include a video, a written lesson, a craft, and a project for families to complete. We have asked our parents to send in photos and/or videos of their children doing this project. We share these photos and videos with our families the following week in a montage format. Our topics for September were The Exaltation of the Holy Cross/Making the Sign of the Cross, Prayer, and The Lord's Prayer. In October our topics were The Creed, The Bible, The Fruits of the Spirit, and The Church Building/Sacred Vessels.

We would like to thank Jenivieve Elly for putting our lessons, videos, and family montage videos together and also the many teachers who have offered to videotape a visual lesson. Please remember that we are not professionals and our videos reflect that. We are trying our best though. We also want to thank Charlie and Alex for recording these videos.

We would like to thank Father Stavros for continuing to create several discussion questions each week geared more for our teens and adults. These thought provoking questions relate to the Holy Gospel lesson.

We will continue to have a YOUTH SUNDAY once a month. Fr. Stavros presented a lesson after the Divine Liturgy on Sept. 13th for our students who were present as well as for our live-stream watcher. Charlie Hambos did the children sermon on Oct. 11th.

We would also like to thank Charlie and Alex for conducting lessons for our students in person, every Saturday, during the month of October. The schedule was as followed:

Saturday, October 3rd: Toddler Twos, Pre-K3, Pre-K4, and Kindergarten (Add your pictures)

Saturday, October 10th: 1st Grade, 2nd Grade, and 3rd Grade (Add Alex's pictures)

Saturday, October 17th: 4th Grade, 5th Grade, and 6th Grade

Saturday, October 24th: 7-12th grade

On Sat. October 17th our Sunday School families volunteered at our Community Outreach Program at 1st Presbyterian Church. This is a great way to serve others on a Saturday morning.

Sunday School Calendar

SUNDAY, November 1

TOPIC: SERVING WITH LOVE

Video: Showing St John Parishioners serving at Community Outreach on Oct. 17.

Family Project: Showing Love by sending cards to our elderly parishioners. Send us pictures of you making these cards.

SUNDAY, November 8 - Youth Sunday

TOPIC: ORDER OF THE ANGELS

Video by Maria Xenick

Family Project: Memorize order of angels.

SUNDAY, November 15

TOPIC: BEGINNING OF ADVENT

Video by Debbie Nicklow

Family Project: Make your own Advent Wreath.

SUNDAY, November 22

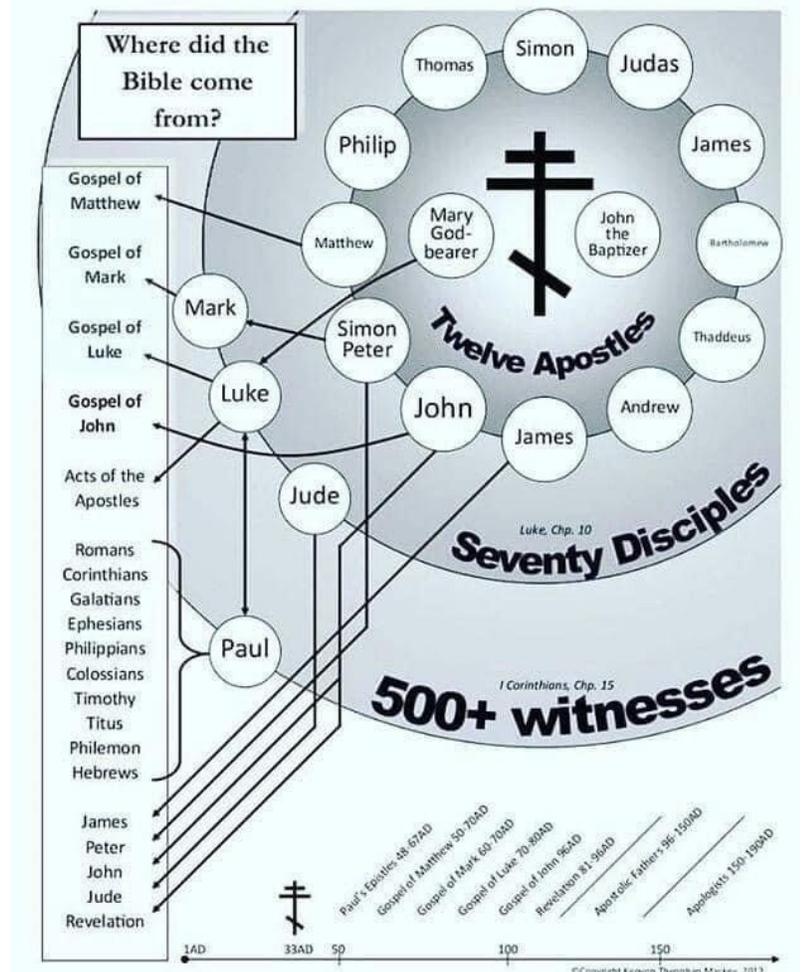
TOPIC: CHARITY/THANKFULNESS

Video by Maria Xenick - Tour of our food pantry and Boxes of Hope

Family Project: Show us what you are donating to the needy.

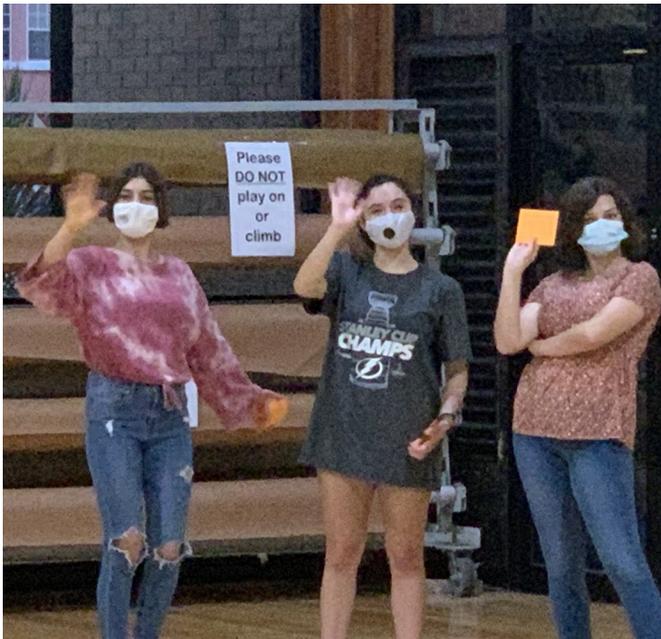
SUNDAY, November 29

No Virtual Sunday School (Thanksgiving)



Physically Distant But Not Socially

GOYA October 2020



Sunday School on Saturday



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

MEETING DATE AND TIME: Our will try to meet on Saturday November 7th at 11:30 AM instead of the 1st Thursday of November. The Saturday special pandemic liturgy from 10 to 11:30 should be over by then.

Please look for announcement.

LOCATION: St John Greek Church in the **Kourmolis Hall** and we will also be on a **ZOOM Video Conference for those whom cannot attend.**

Everyone is welcome.

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

Our recent YAH Meetings on Zoom were our discussions on the **CHURCHES THAT TOUCHED OUR LIVES**. We were asked to prepare a list of Churches where 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. It has been indeed a moving experience.

- Last month we were blessed to have Christine Scourtes share her life's experiences with the Church.
- We will continue with the theme how the "CHURCHES THAT TOUCHED OUR LIVES"

We continue to learn more about our Church Family from the Churches and we attended during our lives.

OUR COMING EVENTS

- We will shift our next YAH meeting to Saturday Nov. 7th 11:30 AM
- We encourage everyone to attend Liturgy Saturday November 7th at 10 AM in Church
- We will then follow with our YAH meeting sitting socially separated with masks in the Church Hall and continue to use Zoon for those who cannot attend our Meeting starting after 11:30 am on SATURDAY.
- For those whom had not spoken, we encourage you to bring your thoughts and blessing on how "CHURCHES TOUCHED OUR LIVES".

PASSED ACTIVITITES

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

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.

Philoptochos Spanakopita and Tiropita Sale

Available for purchase after Liturgy on
December 6, 13 and 20

Spanakopita or Tiropita 28 piece tray

(Appetizer size)

\$30.00

Spanakopita 2 pound tray

\$20.00

There will be a limited number of pitas ordered because of the pandemic and our inability to gauge the demand.

We will also be selling Vasilopita on Dec. 20 & 27 for \$10

For questions and concerns please contact: **Jeanie Nenos**
@ (813) 451-9116 or **Lisa Alsina** @ (813) 728-1094.



On Behalf of St John's Philoptochos we would like to say THANK YOU to our Military and 1st Responders Happy Veterans Day!

Thank you for your continuous service to our country and our communities to ensure we are always safe. Your years of service, sacrifice and dedication will never be forgotten! We truly are home of the free and land of the brave!! GOD BLESS AMERICA!

Happy Birthday!

Leah Celin - November 1
Steve Reisin - November 1
Gregory Hartung - November 2
Amy Voykin - November 3
Elena Gonatos - November 4
Brian Kelly - November 4
David Clipp - November 5
Nicholas Cummings - November 5
John Abramis - November 6
Sophia Meadows - November 6
Maria Zabetakis - November 6
Angelina Krinos - November 7
James Michael Strahan - November 7
Lola Bavaro - November 8
Tammy Christou - November 8
Helen Fentress - November 8
Luisa Mekras - November 8
Roberto Rodriguez - November 8
Yanni Trimikliniotis - November 8
Dee Nicolaou - November 9
Zachary Balntas - November 11
Anna Demas - November 11
Daphne Kane - November 11
John Karamitsanis - November 11
Lukas Karamitsanis - November 11
Mikaela Karamitsanis - November 11
Panayiotia Laliotis - November 11
Brigham Sibley - November 11
Eliana Edquid - November 12
Collin Snyder - November 13
Daniela Cara - November 14
Catherine DeYoung - November 14
Dimitri Karounos - November 14
Calliope Kafantaris - November 15

Sofia Politis - November 15
Linnea Anderson - November 16
Violet Anderson - November 16
Skip Higdon - November 18
Kourtney Doucas - November 18
Alicia Kalojiannis - November 18
Shea Larino - November 18
Demetrios Camene - November 19
Katina Georgas - November 22
Alexandra Hartung - November 22
Nikos Tziotis - November 22
Savvas Ferekides - November 23
George Hambos, Jr. - November 23
Demetrios Valaes - November 23
Jim Westmoreland - November 23
Katherine Freeman - November 24
Sophia Krinos - November 24
Gregory Thomas - November 24
Gina Cardy - November 25
Eleni Kataras - November 26
Alexandra Ferarolis - November 27
Alex Bakirdgi - November 28
Frank Berdos - November 28
Daniyt Berar - November 29
Demetri Passalaris - November 29
Victoria Zervogiannis - November 29
Sofia Camene - November 30
Kathy Kaburis - November 30
Joanna Papaefstathiou - November 30

Call the office and make sure we have your Birthday.
Last month we forgot, Jane Stavropoulos on October 3, Denise Bedran on October 5, Christine Scourtes on October 17 and Diane Trimis on October 25

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

Homeschool Educational Resources & Usborne Books Consultant

Jenivieve Elly Jenivieve@homeschooleducationalresources.com
https://www.homeschooleducationalresources.com/
https://n10680.myubam.com/1753738
My homeschool advocacy website provides encouragement, materials, free lessons plans, and research to empower current and potential homeschooling families. As a former teacher, it's my mission to support those interested in the journey. I also offer homeschool consulting and mentoring services. Usborne Books are quality, engaging, and educational books. They are a favorite in our home and pair well with homeschool education.

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/johndemasthemeoproject/

EVOS South Tampa

For other locations near you visit evos.com
Open 7 days for lunch and dinner
Order Delivery: UberEats-EVOS or evos.com

Order Takeout: EVOS/Toast app or evos.com
Text/email an EVOS gift card: EVOS eGift Cards
EVOS is locally owned and operated by the Crassas family.

Alexandra Fitos

Weichert Yates and Associates
Cell phone 813-943-6464
I am a realtor specializing in residential and commercial sales in Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco counties. I am currently working remotely Via virtual consulting and appointments.

JoAnn Hartung

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

Markissia Touliatos Portraits and Other Fine Art

www.markissia.com
markissiat@gmail.com
727-560-8161
I am a freelance artist working from home in my own studio. I specialize in corporate and private original oil painted portraits. 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 Florida, and during this time, I am also offering free delivery for contactless transactions.
maria@southtampasugarmama.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

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 Chryssakis - 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.

Friend of St. John the Baptist:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

_____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$200 _____ Other

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

Taking This Year Off from Greek Festival

As you know, we had to cancel the Greek Festival this year because of the pandemic. It is not smart or safe to offer it at this time. We look forward to having this again in 2021. With this in mind, obviously, we are not going to get a big piece of income that we receive from the Festival each year. We are encouraging parishioners to give whatever you can to help offset this loss of income. As a suggestion, consider giving what you would have spent at the Festival had you attended this year (what you would have spent on food or a raffle ticket, etc.) and we will use this money to make up for the shortfall. Thank you.



Parish Assembly Meeting – November 1

On November 1, we will have our fall Parish Assembly Meeting. At this time, we are unsure if it will be in person or via Zoom. We did have a successful Parish Assembly via zoom on August 23 and are prepared to do this again on November 1. There are two things that we will do that are critical to our parish for the coming year. The first is to pass a budget. For most of the items on the budget, there is not much to discuss. We are not going to debate whether to pay the electric bill or the sewer bill. These are fixed costs to our church regardless of how many people attend here or how much we spend or save. There are a couple of areas of the budget where there is something to discuss. These include personnel (liturgical assistance once the pandemic is over) and charitable giving. The kind of budget that we pass says a lot about the kind of parish we want to have. And our financial support of our parish through stewardship says a lot about how important spreading the message of Christ is to us individually. While the budget will reflect a certain amount for stewardship, we don't offer stewardship in order to achieve some goal—rather we offer stewardship in a prayerful and personal way which reflects our love for Christ.

Parish Council Elections in the Time of COVID-19

This is revised from what is in the print issue

We originally included information to hold Parish Council nominations. Subsequent to sending *The Messenger* to print, we received this letter (see below) from our Metropolis Chancellor, V. Rev. Fr. George Tsahakis, informing us that there will be no Parish Council Elections held in 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Those who are currently serving will each have a year extended to their term, as well as to their six years of eligibility to serve. Parish Council Elections will be held in fall of 2021. Please review the letter from the Chancellor. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Father Stavros.

September 18, 2020

To the Reverend Clergy, the Parish Council Presidents, and Parish Council Officers of the Metropolis of Atlanta:



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA
METROPOLIS OF ATLANTA

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

I pray that this message finds you well. Out of pastoral love and guidance, His Eminence has made the decision, in concert with the 2020 Clergy-Laity Congress, to forego Parish Council nominations and elections for the coming year (unless otherwise deemed necessary by the Metropolis of Atlanta). This, the Metropolis feels, will allow the current leadership, including officers, to guide their communities through the quickly evolving circumstances of the COVID-19 era. In this way, irrespective of the remainder of the term length, every Parish Council member will serve for an additional year to ensure a smooth transitional process.

Current officers will serve an additional year, and clergy will administer the Oath of Office for all Parish Council members in early January. For the time being, Parish boards of auditors may be nominated and elected during General Parish Assemblies as usual. Additionally, provided the safety precautions are maintained, the number of parishioners needed to convene General Parish Assemblies may be constituted by both those faithful who have chosen to attend church in person, as well as those parishioners who wish to participate from their homes over video-conferencing.

Thank you for your understanding, your willingness to adapt, and your continued service to our parish communities,

Faithfully yours,

+ Very Rev. Fr. George Tsahakis
Chancellor

Inspirational Sayings

Make sure you test positive for faith. Keep distance from doubt, and isolate from fear. Trust God through it all.

Faith is not about finding the reasons for the bad things that happen to people. Faith is when we continue walking even when we can't find a reason. ~Fr. Stavros

While you're sanitizing and wiping everything down, be sure to wipe hatred out of your heart. That's a virus, too.

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.

I have given God a million reasons not to love me. None of them changed His mind.

7 Promises from God

I am your strength.

I will never leave you.

I have plans for you to prosper.

I hear your prayers.

I will fight for you.

I will give you peace

I always love you.

When we are in trouble or despair or have lost hope, we should do what David did: pour out our hearts to God and tell Him of our needs and troubles, just as they are (Psalm 141:2). It is because He can deal with us wisely that we confess to God. He can make our troubles easy to bear, if this is for our benefit, and can save us from dejection. ~St. Hesychius the Priest (c. 432)

Love is rare. Grab it.

Anger is bad. Dump it.

Fear is awful. Face it.

Memories are sweet. Cherish them.

Life is short. Live it.

Tired of the donkey and the elephant? Why not try following the Lamb?

If you are going to believe in everything you read, then start with your Bible.

A young man told the priest:

- Father, I will not come to church again.

The priest asked him what the reason is.

The young man replied to him: Here I see one woman gossiping with another, the person next to me slept, another other one doesn't read well and the chanters fight sometimes. At the time of service someone else is dealing with their phone, not to mention their selfish behavior when they leave the church...

The priest says to him: You're right. But before you finally leave church, please do me a favor. Take this candle and circle the church three times without spilling a single drop of oil. Then you can leave.

"Only that;" Okay, said the young man.

He did the three rounds as requested by the priest.

After it's over, he said: Father, I did it.

The priest asked him: When you walked around the church, did you notice anyone gossiping anymore?

- Nope.

- Did you see someone dealing with their phone?

- Nope.

- Do you know why? You were focused on the candle so you wouldn't spill the oil. So that's how it is in our lives.

When our hearts gather in Christ, we don't have time to look at other people's mistakes.

Those who leave the Church because of their sinner brothers, surely did not enter it for Christ.

How are you to know if you are living according to the will of God? Here is a sign: if you are distressed over anything it means that you have not fully surrendered to God's will, although it may seem to you that you live according to his will. He who lives according to God's will has no material cares. If he has need of something, he offers himself and the thing he wants to God; and if he does not receive it, he remains as unworried as if he had got what he wanted. +St. Silouan the Athonite

Me: Hello God.

God: Hello...

Me: I'm falling apart. Can you put me back together?

God: I'd rather not.

Me: Why?

God: Because you're not a puzzle.

Me: What about all the pieces of my life that fall to the ground?

God: Leave them there for a while. They fell for a reason. Let them be there for a while and then decide if you need to get any of those pieces back.

Me: You don't understand! I'm breaking up!

God: No, you don't understand. You're transcending, evolving.

What you feel are growing pains. You're getting rid of the things and people in your life that are holding you back. The pieces are not falling down. The pieces are putting in place. Relax. Take a deep breath and let those things you no longer need fall down. Stop clinging to pieces that are no longer for you. Let them fall. Let them go.

Me: Once I start doing that, what will I have left?

God: Only the best pieces of yours.

Me: I'm afraid to change.

God: I keep telling you: YOU'RE NOT CHANGING! YOU'RE BECOMING!

Me: Becoming, Who?

God: Becoming who I created you to be! A person of light, love, charity, hope, courage, joy, mercy, grace and compassion.

I made you for so much more than those shallow pieces you decided to adorn yourself with and that you cling to with so much greed and fear. Let those things fall off you. I love you! Don't change! Become! Don't change! Become! Become who I want you to be, who I created. I'm gonna keep telling you this until you remember.

Me: There goes another piece.

God: Yes. Let it be like this.

Me: So... I'm not broken?

God: No, but you're breaking the darkness, like dawn. It's a new day. Become!! Become who you really are!!"

Inspirational saying continued...

I asked God for strength...and God gave me difficulties to make me strong.
I asked God for wisdom...and God gave me problems to solve.
I asked God for prosperity...and God gave me a brain to work.
I asked God for courage...and God gave me danger to overcome.
I asked God for love...and God gave me troubled people to help.
I asked God for favors...and God gave me opportunities.
We receive nothing we "want" but we receive everything we "need".

Beautiful words on marriage

When we speak of the wife obeying the husband, we normally think of obedience in military or political terms: the husband giving orders, and the wife obeying them.
But while this type of obedience may be appropriate in the army, it is ridiculous in the intimate relationship of marriage.

The obedient wife does not wait for orders. Rather, she tries to discern her husband's needs and feelings, and responds in love.
When she sees her husband is weary, she encourages him to rest; when she sees him agitated, she soothes him; when he is ill, she nurses and comforts him; when he is happy and elated, she shares his joy.
Yet such obedience should not be confined to the wife; the husband should be obedient in the same way.
When she is weary, he should relieve her of her work; when she is sad, he should cherish her, holding her gently in his arms; when she is filled with good cheer, he should also share her good cheer.
Thus a good marriage is not a matter of one partner obeying the other, but of both partners obeying each other.
St John Chrysostom

On the Lighter Side

Looking forward to Hallmark's holiday offering "A Very COVID Christmas," when a big city lawyer and a country candle maker accidentally meet when they go to the wrong zoom meeting.

How to eat candy corn-1. Open the Bag 2. Pour candy corn into trash can 3. Eat a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup.

The next time your wife gets angry, drape a towel over her shoulders (like a cap) and say, "Now you are SUPER ANGRY!" Maybe she'll laugh. Maybe you'll die.

Have you ever thought about this?

1. The fact that Kansas and Arkansas are pronounced differently bother me way more than it should.
2. Pronouncing words that end in "ough". Cough, bough, rough, dough, through, though. . .
3. Is the "s" or the "c" in "scent" silent?
4. Why does fridge have a "d" in it, but refrigerator doesn't?
5. Why are "Zoey" and "Zoe" pronounced the same but "Joey" and "Joe" are not?
6. You can drink a drink but you can't food a food.
7. The word "Queue" is just a Q followed by four silent letters.
8. Why is a "w" called a "double-U" when it is clearly a "double-V"?
9. Is an argument between two vegans still called a beef?

If you eat an entire cake without cutting it, you technically only had one piece.

A Beautiful Prayer

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following Your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this You will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust You always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for You are ever with me, and You will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen.

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.

When God Gives You More Than You Can Handle

By Tanya Robinson

My absolute least favorite Christian catch-phrase has to be “God will never give you more than you can handle.” Does anyone actually think it is true? I mean, if you are willing to spout that nonsense to someone, you surely must’ve not encountered much turmoil in your life.

Let’s consider for just a moment that the phrase is true. Would stating it to someone in the middle of a scary diagnosis, a sick child, an ugly divorce (or anything else for that matter) make them feel better? I sincerely doubt it. Even worse, could it cause them to waiver in their faith? I can almost hear the voices in their head saying things like, “I don’t feel like I can handle this, so what’s wrong with me? Maybe God really isn’t good.” I’m imploring you to stop repeating this phrase in times of trouble. Strike it from your vocabulary altogether.

I believe that God often allows things to continue in our lives for our own good. Oh, don’t mishear me. God didn’t make your child ill, make your spouse fall out of love, or give you a scary medical diagnosis. God is good. Period. All of the aforementioned things are a result of a fallen world, our sin nature, and continual litany of terrible choices.

Genesis chapter three tells us that when God kicked Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, He told Adam he would toil all the days of his life. Eve was told that she would suffer in childbirth. (I don’t know about you ladies out there, but I have a little bone to pick with her when I meet her on the other side of the veil over that one.) Life was going to be full of challenges as a result of their choice to disobey God and sin.

When God kicked them out, it was for their own good. No. Really. Stick with me here because it’s about to get good.

What was in the middle of the Garden of Eden? Two trees, right? One was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The other was the Tree of Life. God removed Adam and Eve from the Garden after their eyes were opened to good and evil. Why would He do that? I think He did it out of great love for them. If they would have then eaten from the Tree of Life, they would have been forever separated from God. His great love for them caused Him to banish them from the garden and remove the temptation. I don’t know about you, but that is both deeply reassuring and deeply troubling.

With that background, let’s go back to “God doesn’t give you more than you can handle.” In the case of Adam and Eve (and the entire start of this fallen world we live in) God absolutely handed it out to them. Things snowballed from there. If you are a woman who has birthed a baby, you know a little about pain you don’t think you can bear. If you have lost a loved one, you likely know about a heartbreak that felt like more than you can bear. We, as humans, know turmoil and pain.

How we deal with that pain makes all the difference in the world. Do we grumble, curse, and shake our fist at the sky? If we are being honest, yes, yes we do. Anyone that says they don’t is either Jesus or a liar. But what about after the initial

anger/sadness/despair/heartache passes and we settle into the dull ache? What do we do when there is no end in sight to the situation? What do we do when the crisis is really over, but we are left with pieces of our heart missing? What do we do when we are certain that we’ve either reached the end of our rope or discovered that it’s actually a noose?

What we do next is everything. What we do next is the whole reason I brought up this topic. We have two choices in this space. We can turn our back on God and say, “Since I am suffering without release, there must be no God or at least no loving God.” Or, we can lean in, listen to that still, small voice and trust.

My priest posted a status update on Facebook that has caused me to ponder these things this week. Father Stavros said, “Faith is not about finding the reasons for the bad things that happen to people. Faith is when we continue walking even when we can’t find a reason.”

I’ve had worse weeks than this one for sure, but the stress is there this week just the same. My husband had to make an emergency trip to Ohio and his father passed away (not unexpectedly) Friday evening. A couple of my kids are going through some challenges that Mama can’t swoop in and fix anymore. (Bigger kids = bigger issues.....I’d give just about anything to be bandaging scraped knees again!) Our house is going on the market this coming week. Life is busy and full and there are heartaches. Nothing unexpected or even unusual.....just....STUFF.

All this “stuff” is absolutely more than I can handle. It is. God in His infinite wisdom knows that I’m woefully unequipped to handle all that is being thrown at me. He also knows that NOTHING is too much for Him.

The real statement that we could gently (that word is very important....don’t miss it!) be making to folks as we love on them and minister to them is this:

God will never give you more than you and He can handle together.

We aren’t meant to deal with things alone. Far from it. We are meant to love God and trust Him to walk us through every single challenge we face. When we do just that we find that no matter the outcome of our trial, He is still good and faithful. Our trials are for our sanctification. That is worth believing!

Tanya Robinson is a member of our parish, along with her husband Clay, and their children Corinna, Matthew, Carmen, Harris and Wren.

How Can We Be Thankful in All Circumstances?

By Rick Warren

“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18 NIV).

In both the U.S. and Canada, we celebrate a day of thanksgiving once a year. But God wants us to be intentional about our thankfulness every day. He wants us to develop this spiritual habit, one that is reflected in the life of a radical believer. The more deeply you understand God’s love, the more grateful you’re going to be.

So, what does it mean to be radically grateful?

The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, *“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (NIV).*

That’s radical gratitude. In every circumstance give thanks, because it’s God’s will for your life.

You can thank God in every circumstance because God is in control. He can bring good out of evil. He can turn around the worst mistakes you’ve made. No matter what happens, God isn’t going to stop loving you. You can find a hundred things to be thankful for in any circumstance, even when the circumstance stinks.

Radical gratitude—being thankful in all circumstances—is God’s will because it creates fellowship.

What do I mean by that? Gratitude always builds deeper relationships between you and other people and between you and God.

If you want to get closer to someone, start expressing gratitude to that person. If you’re feeling distant from your spouse, you need to start doing what you did when you were dating: Express gratitude. Write little notes of kindness and encouragement.

Make calls or text during the day, just to tell your spouse that you’re thankful. The reason you’ve lost that lovin’ feeling is because you stopped doing the things that created that lovin’ feeling early on, and you take each other for granted.

Do you want to build your small group? Don’t just go to your gathering. During the week, text or email or call or write the people in your group. Say, “I’m grateful for you, and here’s why.” You’ll find that the more grateful you are for your group, the more your group will bond.

The Bible tells us to “encourage one another and build each other up” (1 Thessalonians 5:11 NIV). As you build others up, you’ll find that God also builds into your life through your deep relationships with him and others.

Have questions?

Just need to talk?

Worried? Sad? Happy?

We are here for you.

Fr. Stavros

813-394-1038

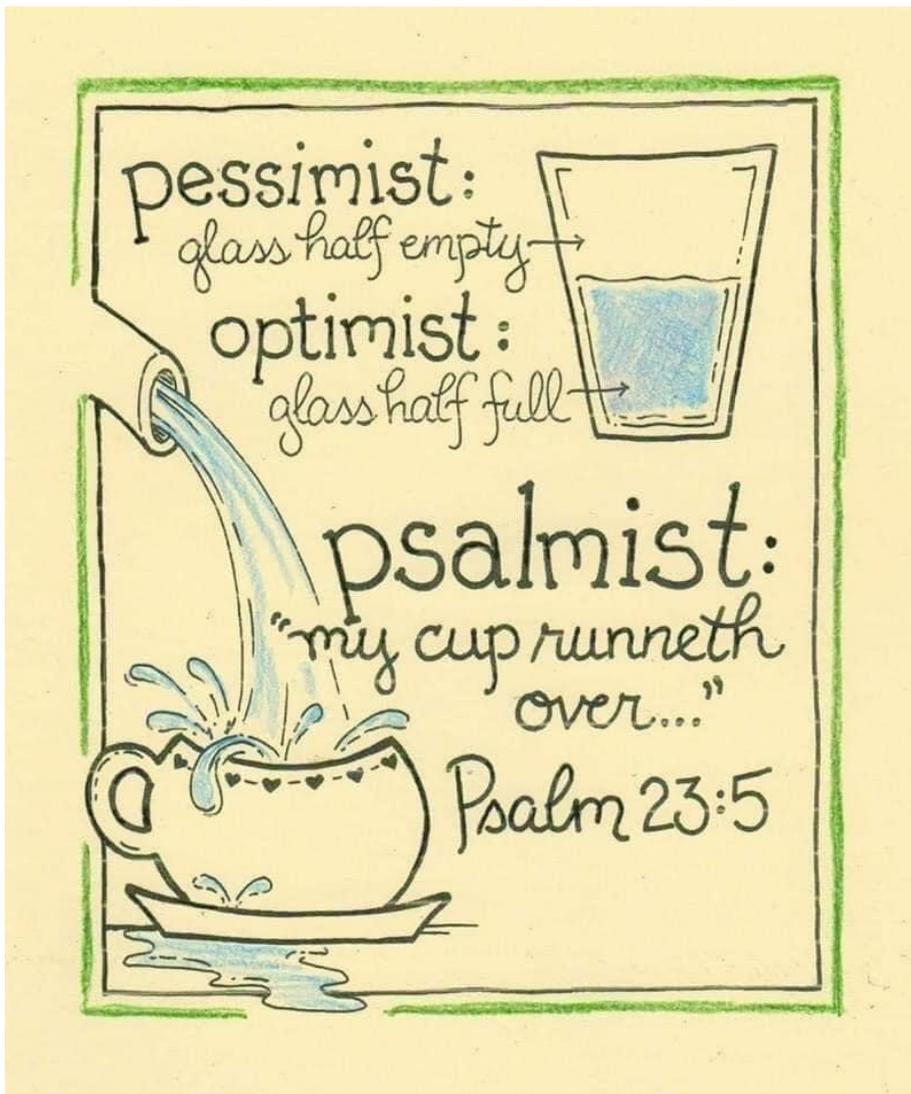
Charlie

813-843-8471

Alex

262-370-0586

We love you and we thank you for all of your support.



Who Are the Most Generous? Not Who You'd Expect.

The secret to becoming a cheerful giver is to remember whom we are giving to.

By John Lee

Where in the US are people the most generous? Based on stereotypes, one might be tempted to think of the South, because of its hospitality culture; or the West Coast with its activist streak; or perhaps the Northeast because of “old money.” However, according to a study by the Barna Group in 2019, the three most charitable cities in America are all in Idaho: Pocatella, Idaho Falls, and Jackson. Christians in these cities give on average \$17,977 to charity annually. Surprisingly, Las Vegas—often called “Sin City”—comes in second with a rate of giving of \$10,410. America’s largest cities do not even make it onto the list of the top 50 most charitable cities in the US. That means that Christians on average in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Phoenix, and Philadelphia give less than \$3,308 per year.

In another study (2017), the Barna Group found that age makes a significant difference in giving. Eighty-four percent of millennials report to giving less than \$50 to charity per annum, even though charitable giving ranks high on their priorities. The most generous generation in the \$500-\$2,500 range is Gen X, and the most generous generation over \$2,500 is comprised of those older than baby boomers. It would be easy to blame our materially obsessed culture, but Christians fare no better when it comes to giving.

According to Nonprofit Source, only 5 percent of church members give regularly. Households that make more than \$75,000 are the least charitable. Nationwide, Christians today give 2.5 percent of their income. For comparison, during the Great Depression, that number was 3.3 percent. Thirty-seven percent of those who consider themselves evangelicals do not give to churches at all. According to a study from the University of Notre Dame cited by Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson in their book, *The Paradox of Generosity*, when it comes to giving away 10 percent of finances, only 2.7 percent of people, religious or nonreligious, fall into this category. Other studies confirm this dismal picture, such as the long-term study by John L. and Sylvia Ronsvalle, *The State of Church Giving Through 2007*.

So, if generosity through tithing is part of our faith and we have good causes to give to, why aren't we Christians more generous? Certainly, we've all heard examples of incredible generosity from believers, but the statistics prove that most of us are rather miserly when we ought to be generous. What might turn us from our tight-fisted approach to finances toward what Paul describes in 2 Corinthians as a “cheerful giver”?

Giving Without Strings

When we give, we experience a split second of loss. At a speed faster than light, we calculate the costs and benefits of giving, and if the latter outweighs, we give. If the latter does not, we hesitate. Rarely do we come to the insight that it is a privilege to give. Every so often, we read of someone giving selflessly, and we are caught off balance. Nathan Hale, a young teacher who joined the Connecticut militia during the Revolutionary War, gave his life for his country with these words: “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.” The English hung him for espionage.

The Macedonian churches offer another picture of the privilege of giving. These churches, according to Paul, were poor. Paul goes as far as to say that they were in extreme poverty (2 Cor. 8:2). The Greek word that he uses, *ptōcheia* (poverty), coupled with the prepositional phrase, *kata bathous* (according to depth), suggests the lowest level of poverty.

When we consider the severity of ancient poverty, Paul's words speak of a brutal reality. Adolf Büchler, a scholar and rabbi in the early 20th century, offers a graphic picture of poverty in the first century in Judea. One day rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai and his disciples found the daughter of one of the wealthiest men of Jerusalem; she was picking barley seeds from horses' dung. When the rabbi asked what happened, she simply replied that the family's wealth was lost after the destruction of Jerusalem. Poverty had reduced her to inhumane levels.

Ramsey MacMullen, the great Roman historian, fills out this picture further. He reminds us of the ancient mindset: Nothing was wasted in the ancient world: not an abandoned baby, not the cloth that kept the ragpicker in business, not the empty fisherman's shack on the beach, not even the grain of barley in horse manure on the streets. There were always people poor enough to fight over another's leavings.

The reality of the Macedonian churches might not have been this dire, but it was close.

Yet these churches begged for the privilege to give. When we consider the racial and social composition of these churches, this point is even more remarkable. Not only were the Macedonians (Gentiles) giving to strangers, but they were also giving to Jews (a peculiar people in the eyes of society). No wonder their generosity took Paul aback. Their generosity broke economic and racial barriers even in their poverty.

The Macedonians gave out of an understanding of grace (2 Cor. 8:1). Grace, when understood, gives, forgets self, turns outward, and works for others. The Philippians (a church in Macedonia) furnish a concrete example. The Philippians supported Paul in his missionary endeavors. In fact, this church might have been the only one to do so, which begs the question: Why did a poor and struggling church support Paul? And why did Paul take money from this church when he knew far wealthier ones who were willing to give?

When finances are exchanged, strings are attached. Marcel Mauss, the great anthropologist, makes this point in his book *The Gift*. According to Mauss, even between husbands and wives, there is no such thing as a free lunch. Giving is recompense for antecedent receiving. If Mauss is correct, Paul did not take finances from certain churches because these groups had a spirit of control; they wanted recompense.

Paul lived in a world dominated by patron/client relationships. Giving was not unconditional. The giver gave to get. To be a man of God, Paul could not be indebted to people because he needed freedom to follow God. He could not, therefore, be a client even to the most benign patrons. Freedom was far more precious.

So, why did Paul take finances from the Philippians? Paul knew the heart of this congregation. He knew that God's grace affect

ed them on the deepest level. The Philippians knew that God who was rich became poor for their sakes so that they might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9). They experienced the gracious sacrifice of their Lord. So, when they gave, they gave not to control, not to boast, not to lord over. They did not give as patrons but as servants of God. They did not even give to Paul, ultimately speaking. They gave to God. It just so happened that Paul stood in the stream of their generous overflow.

Partnerships

We can make the case that one of the poorest churches in the New Testament did the most with its finances because it learned the value and power of partnerships (Phil. 1:5). The Philippians might not have given much, but God honored their giving and multiplied it over a hundredfold when they supported Paul. Paul's labors were theirs in a real way. Therefore, the Philippians impacted Asia Minor, Rome, and beyond. They changed the world more than any other church in the first century, perhaps more than any church in history.

Wealthy congregations like the Laodiceans who had three thriving industries—banking, medicine, and textiles—were poor in God's sight. The Holy Spirit rebuked them and showed them their true spiritual state: They were naked, poor, and blind (Rev. 3:17).

The Philippians, on the other hand, learned the power of partnerships (*koinonia*, from which we derive the word *fellowship*). They learned that even if they lacked resources and experience to make a global impact, they could change the world by laboring with others. By discernment and generosity, they supported Paul not only with finances but also with their own lives. More than anything else, it was their love that encouraged Paul. Epaphroditus, a member of the church, nearly died trying to reach him while he was in prison. Such selflessness moved the apostle's heart forward and inspired him.

In our connected world, gospel partnerships should be the norm. Selfless partnerships born out of love and discernment without a spirit of control will always produce a harvest. We will see the acceleration of God's work. Unfortunately, a spirit of envy and rivalry encroaches and wars against partnerships. The opening chapter of Philippians shows this dirty underbelly of ministry.

When Paul's rivals heard about his imprisonment, they were incentivized to preach more, not to further the mission or to glorify God but to gain greater names for themselves. They were opportunist in the true sense of the word. At that point, partnerships are impossible, and what seems like progress is actually digging deeper into death, and the outcome is a diminished return. The spirit of the Philippians was just the opposite; they supported, loved, and worked with Paul. That partnership lasted and made a lasting difference.

The Spirit of Generosity

Why do we give? If we give to control, then our generosity is vitiated. That is the spirit of the flesh, and it is as old as the serpent in the garden. A Latin sentence expresses this logic in three words: *Do ut des* (I give so that you may give). It is the spirit of control, magic, and false religion. It is manipulation magnified.

Sure, we give, but it is often to control, to boast, or to make strategic statements that are neither strategic nor worth making. The main problem here is that when we take control, control is

not given to the Holy Spirit. Our way may lead to temporary gains, a house, a church perhaps, but these houses fade (Ps. 127). But when we keep in step with the Spirit of God, whatever he establishes lasts forever because it is not made with human hands. This means that human hands cannot destroy it.

After Sunday service, a young banker approached me and said he would like to give his savings toward the work of overseas missions. I said that we should talk first. Over frozen yogurt, we chatted, and I told this young man to take vacations days and go overseas to see the work he wanted to donate to, meet the people, and hear from God. I did not want any regrets. He agreed. He went, saw, and gave. And as the years passed, he gave more.

Since my meeting with this young man (over ten years ago), I see the fruits—new ministries, small businesses, a school, and great encouragement to many missionaries. The most beautiful part is that the recipients have no idea that this man gave. My church made these donations anonymously. Now I run a non-profit, and we operate under the same principle. The only thing that the recipients know is that God provided, which is an accurate picture, because the people who gave gave ultimately to God. The dynamic of generosity is foremost vertical, which means horizontal giving can be pure generosity.

Here we come to the heart of the Christian message. When the Father gave his Son, he gave what we could never repay. The precious blood of Christ outweighs gold and silver. In Christ's sacrifice, we see unconditional love, unadulterated generosity, and thorough self-emptying. The wonder of salvation is that God did not have to save fallen people. He chose to save through his own sacrifice, a father's loss and a son's life. Generosity flows down to us.

Moreover, God did not give to control, but he gave to love, to save, and to redeem. His giving is pure giving. When this love captivates us, we can't help but respond in love. Generosity is love's reflex. Fall in love, and you will be generous and even beg to give. Only then will we begin to understand the logic of the Macedonian churches and their surprising joy of giving.

We are in the midst of a pandemic and protests. The church has an opportunity to show the generosity of God to a world that only knows the cynicism of giving and receiving on account of the cruel weight of mammon that reduces people to dollars, cents, and pawns. To succeed, the church will have to relearn the vertical dimension of giving to God. The proof will be giving without taking credit, without the thought of gain, and without a spirit of control. When the church gives as freely as it has received, pandemics and protest can become portals into a new world where grace is not just preached but is seen, touched, and lived.

John Lee is the head of the Upper School at The Geneva School of Manhattan. He also writes for The Banner, the denominational magazine of the Christian Reformed Church, and leads Ad Fontes Philanthropy, a nonprofit that seeks to support kingdom endeavors.



AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – NOVEMBER 2020

ANNOUNCING THE 2020 AHEPA FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The *AHEPA FAMILY Scholarship* is intended to promote, encourage, and advance education at the high school, college, university, and graduate school level. Scholarships in the amount of \$500 or higher each will be awarded based on the funds available in the AHEPA/DOP Scholarship account for the current year.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants must demonstrate that:

1. They are currently seniors in high school and have been accepted at an accredited college or university as degree seeking students for an associate or bachelor's degree. Those not accepted at an institution may be eligible to receive an award by providing evidence of acceptance prior to the award being granted.
2. They are currently enrolled in an accredited college or university seeking an associate, bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree.
3. They are in good academic standing.
4. They have no criminal record.
5. The applicant OR his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) are stewards in good standing at St. John's Greek Orthodox Church (Tampa, Florida) **and** are current members in good standing of the AHEPA/DOP Tampa chapters.
6. The applicant must also be a current paid up member of the Maids of Athena or Sons of Pericles.

APPLICATIONS

Applications are available via email from AHEPA President Thomas Sakaris, tomsak1234@gmail.com, DOP President Nicole Leontsinis, nicola713@gmail.com, and the Scholarship Chairperson Edie Kavouklis, edie.kavouklis@gmail.com.

FILING THE APPLICATION

All applications must be filed by mail and postmarked no later than November 30, 2020. Please review the application for more information.

Join today - Become a member of AHEPA or the Daughters of Penelope

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](https://www.facebook.com/StJohnGOCTampa).

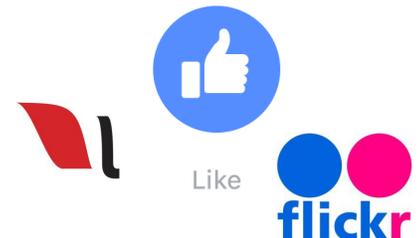
Live Streaming

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



Χρόνια Πολλά! Happy Nameday!

November 1

ANARGYROS, COSMAS, DAMIANOS, DAVID, DIONYSOS

November 2

AKINDINOS, AFTHONIOS, ANEMPODISTOS, ELPIDIFOROS, PIGASOS

November 4

ERMAIOS, IOANIKIOS,

November 5

EPISTIMI, GALAKTION, LINOS, SILVANOS

November 6

LEONARDO

November 7

ATHINODOROS, ERNEST, THEAGENIS, THEMELIOS

November 8

ANGELOS, EFSTRATIA, GABRIEL, GABRIELA, MATINA, METAXIA, MICHAEL, MICHELLE, RAPHAEL, STAMATIA, STAMATIS, STRATIGOS, TAXIARHIS

November 9

THEOKTISTI, ELLADIOS, MAVRA, NEKTARIOS, ARSENIOS

November 10

ARSINOE, ERASTI, ERASTOS, IRODION, MILON, ORESTIS, ORION, RODIOS, SOSIPATROS

November 11

DRAKON, MINAS, MINOS, VICTOR, VINCENT

November 13

DAMASKINOS, HRYSOSTOMOS

November 14

GREGORY, PHILIP, PHIPIA

November 16

IFIGENIA, MATHAIOS

November 17

GENADIOS, HILDA

November 18

PLATO

November 20

DENAHIS

November 21

DESPOINA, LEMONIA, MARY, SOULTANA, VIRGINIA

November 22

CECILIA, PHILIMON, VALERIOS

November 23

AMFILOHIOS, ELENOS

November 25

CATHRINE, MERCURIOS

November 26

KYPARISIA, NIKON, STERGIOS, STILIANOS

November 28

IRINARHOS

November 29

FEDRA, FEDROS, FILOUMENI, FILOUMENOS

November 30

ANDREW

Community Outreach - Holiday Tent

The MetroMin Holiday Tent will be serving 40,000 families this year with an increased need because of Covid-19. This year clients will stay in their car and everyone (clients & volunteers) will follow CDC guidelines (limited occupancy, masks, hand washing stations, etc).

Tuesday, November 24, 3:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. (25 volunteers)

Monday, December 21, 3:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. (25 volunteers)

Keep an eye out for an email with more information. [Click here to sign up](#)

Matthew 25 Community Outreach

Saturday, November 21, 8:00 - 10:30 a.m.

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, <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f48a5a62da3f49-community>

Place: First Presbyterian Church @ 412 Zack Street East, downtown Tampa. The entrance for volunteers is on the Polk Street side of building. **Time:** 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Please don't hesitate to ask any questions.

Thank you and God Bless!

Greg Melton 813-967-2074

gmelt12@gmail.com

Volunteer Check-In Process:

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

~ November 2020 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Sts. Cosmas and Damian Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Parish Assembly	2 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	3 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	4**	5 Griefshare 6:30 p.m.	6**	7 Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. YAH 11:30 a.m.
8 Archangels Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday GOYA 5:00 p.m.	9 St. Nektarios Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	10 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	11** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	12 Griefshare 6:30 p.m.	13 ** St. John Chrysostom Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	14 St. Philip Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
15 ** Beginning of Advent Fast Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	16** St. Matthew Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	17** Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Parish Council 6:30 p.m.	18** Holy Unction 6:00 p.m.	19** Griefshare 6:30 p.m.	20 **	21** Entrance of Virgin Mary in the Temple Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
22 ** Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	23 **	24** Metropolitan Ministries Holiday Tent Volunteering 3:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. Must Sign Up Online	25 ** Paraklesis 10:00 a.m. St. Katherine Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.	26** Thanksgiving-Office Closed	27 **	28** Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
29 ** Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	30** St. Andrew Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.					

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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

office@stjohntpa.org

www.stjohntpa.org

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St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Timetable of Services

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

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

Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

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

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

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

Pastoral Assistant Alex Limberatos
813-876-8830 (Office) 262-370-0586 (Cell)
alex@stjohntpa.org

Parish Council

Jim Armstrong, President 954-295-6665
Euripides Panos, Vice President 813-352-3972
John Zelatis, Secretary 813-727-2271
Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898
Demosthenes Mekras 786-417-7256
George Chagaris 727-420-1920
Amin Hanhan 813-846-2957
Nick Katzaras 863-581-2430
Edie Kavouklis 813-758-0305
Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352
Marilyn Sandborn 813-855-8678

Office Staff

Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper
debbie@stjohntpa.org fax:813-443-4899

Adult Greek School

Magda Myer 813-909-2327

AHEPA

Thomas Sakaris, President 201-819-2319

Altar Angels

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

Basketball

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

Bible Study

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Bookstore

Brett Mourer 813-376-9315

Buildings & Grounds

Euripides Panos 813-352-3972

Chanter

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Choir

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

Community Outreach

Greg Melton 813-967-2074

Connect Through Christ - Special Needs Ministry for Children

Dante and Lindsey Skourellos 813-765-9534

Dance Groups

H XAPA MAΣ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668
Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963
ΠΑΡΕΑ, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

Daughters of Penelope

Nicole Leontsinis, President 703-585-7490

Finance Committee

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

Food Pantry

Anetta Alexander 813-758-2689

GriefShare

Donna Hambos 813-843-8412

Gasparilla Parking

John Kokkas 727-992-4165

GOYA

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

Hope/Joy

George & Zackie Ameres 813-245-3813

Junior Olympics

Dwight Forde 727-685-9028

Men's Fellowship

Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038

Parish Nursing Ministry

Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026

Orthodox Christian Fellowship

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Oratorical Festival

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

Photography Ministry

Karina Findlay 813-476-9632

Philoptochos

Jeanie Nenos 813-451-9116

Stewardship

Pete Trakas 813-505-2193
George Mitseas 813-748-1220
Chris Kyros 757-672-1920

Sunday School

Vickie Peckham 813-758-3102

Usher

Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

Welcoming Ministry

Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

Women's Bible Study

Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038

Young Adult

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Young at Heart

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

Youth Protection

Catherine Mitseas 813-571-0658

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

“May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father and the Communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.” From the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.