

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 2022

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

Fr. Stavros' Message

*And the angel said to them, "Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all people.
Luke 2:10*

Hold on Father!!! Are you going the way of the mall and putting on the Christmas music on November 1? Aren't these the words of the angels to the shepherds from the Nativity? A little early, isn't it?!

YES, these are the words of the angels to the shepherds at the Nativity. However, I have some good news of a great joy this month to share with you, and what a more appropriate way to lead off this article than quoting this joyful message! Here are six pieces of good news to share with you.

1.) The Greek Festival Returns for the First Time in Three Years

Who would have thought in November 2019 that a pandemic would hit the world only four months later and disrupt our lives in the way that it did? As a parish, we closed our doors for nearly three months. Then we went nearly a year gathering in small numbers, celebrating Divine Liturgy on Saturdays and Sundays to accommodate everyone, having people worship in the hall, wow, the things we did. Now, three years later, the community has returned to pre-Covid numbers and pre-Covid activities. And with that, the festival now returns.

We still need some help in terms of volunteers. If

you want to sign up to work a shift of two, please go to:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f094da9ae28a64-2022>

The Festival will be TWO days this year. As we have been discussing for the past couple of months, the decision was made to have the Festival be two days this year. We will open at 4:00-11:00 p.m. on Friday and be open for dinner and later. Saturday, we will have our normal hours of 11:00 a.m.-11:00 p.m.

IT'S GOING TO BE AWESOME TO SEE OUR DANCERS AGAIN—Our Greek dancers have missed the comraderie and performance that is a big part of our Festival. They can't wait to dance and we can't wait to see them. Everyone is super excited about the whole experience of the Festival again and what it does for all of us.

Divine Liturgy will be held each day of the Festival. For those who don't know the backstory, in 2013, the Festival fell on November 8-9-10. November 8 (Archangels) and November 9 (St. Nectarios) are both liturgical days. November 10 was a Sunday that year. We had formed a new

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festival committee and I told them we'd have Divine Liturgy on all the days of the Festival, because the liturgical calendar shouldn't be paused for any reason. We had the services early. We also had a great emphasis on prayer in the festival committee. That year, the Festival broke records financially. (which have since been broken) The committee was quick to give the credit to the Lord, and asked me going forward that Divine Liturgy always be celebrated on our Festival days. Thus, we started a tradition in our parish to celebrate Divine Liturgy on all festival days. We will celebrate Friday, November 4 at 10:00 a.m. (no need for early service because Festival starts in the afternoon) and on Saturday, November 5 at 9:00 a.m.

Sunday, November 6 is going to be a special day at our church. When we were debating whether to even have the Festival this year, in one of our meetings, someone asked "How will we remember those who have passed since our last Festival, the Mary Nenos/Engie Halkias and others who were so material to our Festival? When will we say their names?" That comment was the most profound moment in our Festival discussion. It was decided right there that their names would be said in a memorial service on Sunday, November 6. That we wouldn't have the Festival on that Sunday. That we would encourage everyone to come to church as usual that Sunday. And after church, with all the tents and things still up, we are going to have a community festival day, a day just for our community, to enjoy the fruits of our labor. We can come and eat together. Our dance groups will dance and we can actually enjoy them. We can have our community Kalamatiano inside the hall. And we can all help break down tables and all get home at a reasonable hour. Please plan to come on Sunday, not to work, but to pray, to remember those who are not here with us, and to celebrate, US!

It's going to be a great Festival!

2.) The proceeds of the Greek Festival will be donated to three charities—LifePath, Love, INC. and Hurricane Ian Relief

*When I wrote the last issue of *The Messenger* in mid-September, there was no thought that less than two weeks later a hurricane with devastate a large part of our state. We've had some damage to our church property, and lots of debris everywhere, but that's nothing compared to the humanitarian disaster that has happened down south in Fort Myers, Cape Cor-*

al and Naples. As you know, I'm friends with the priest in Naples. We've spoken many times over the past couple of weeks. He's told me about parishioners who have lost homes and businesses. He's told me about the situation in Fort Myers which is infinitely worse than in Naples. He told me in the early days of the crisis how people needed water to drink, because they didn't have water, the most basic of necessities. Our parish has sent over \$3K in hurricane relief just the first two weeks of the crisis. When I spoke to him most recently, he said the greatest concern now is that they will be forgotten down there. Life continues as normal for us in Tampa, the storm now in the rearview mirror. However, down south, they are going to be recovering and in need of help for months, if not years, to come.



We made the decision several months ago that we would use the proceeds from this Festival to be donated to charitable causes. We identified two charities right in our community that we have supported through past Festivals and decided to give more to them. They are LifePath Hospice—these are the people that take care of those who are dying, to help people die at home, with dignity, and without suffering. Most of us have utilized them or will utilize them at some point. Both my parents passed away under hospice care. They do great work and it's FREE. Then there is Love, INC. Their goal is to get people off the streets with job training, help with housing, and getting people the basics to get back on their feet and be productive members of society. Love Inc. provides a hand up, not a handout.

Then the hurricane happened. And devastated our state. The decision was made to contribute also to hurricane relief. This is going to be done through Agape Charities, which operates under the auspices of St. Katherine Greek Orthodox Church in Naples. They have no overhead. 100% of every dollar given to them will go directly towards hurricane relief, going directly into the hands of people whose lives have been destroyed. If what we offers turns around 5 or 10 families, we've made a great contribution to our neighbor.

There are some skeptics out there who are questioning what we are doing. Especial-

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ly in a bad economy. That's okay. The Apostle Thomas doubted the Resurrection. Peter denied Christ. Matthew left everything and followed. James and John left their father and their business.

We're going to BE the church. The early church in Acts 6 did exactly two things—they preached the word of God and served tables for those who didn't have food to eat. We're going to follow suit. We're opening the doors of our sanctuary again to welcome visitors, and while we are not going to preach at them, we are going to make them aware of who we are. We are going to serve food, to our festival patrons. They (our community of Tampa) are going to bring money to us in exchange for food. But then we are going to take this money and give it right back to the community, providing "food" in the form of support to three charities. We're going to do what the church has always done. And in those early years of the church, when the church concentrated on two things and two things only, it grew 40% per decade. We're going to stand for something. We're going to do the right thing, even though it is a difficult thing. We're going to lead with faith and philanthropy and we'll let the Holy Spirit take care of the rest.

3.) Come and See Dinner—November 29

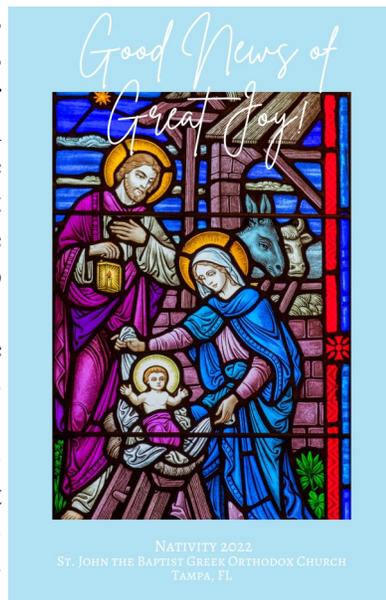
As we grow in spiritual maturity, our community is finding better ways to share our faith. At our Greek Festival, we will again have a welcoming table outside of the church sanctuary, where we not only welcome guests to our festival, but we intentionally welcome and invite them into our church. In addition to our church tours and choir presentation, there is someone in the church at all times to answer questions and offer prayers. We accept prayer request cards that we will pray over in the weeks following the festival. And we again have a dinner called the "Come and See Dinner" which this year will be held on Tuesday, November 29, from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

The "Come and See Dinner" is a chance to invite not just festival patrons but other people to "come and see" our church and enjoy an evening of fellowship with us. Some people who attend will be people who took a tour at the festival and would like to know more about Orthodoxy. And some people who attend are people who didn't come to the festival, but who we would like to invite to see our church. Invite a co-worker, a neighbor, a friend and come with them. If you have people who know you

go to church, it's a chance to invite them to the place you worship. If there are people who don't have a church, this is a chance to invite them to see one. If you know people who would like to see another church, or just enjoy an evening of Christian fellowship, invite them too. Christ invited the disciples to join Him with the words "Come and See." (John 1:39) He didn't tell them come and commit, just to come and see. When we invite people to come and see, we are fulfilling a mandate to spread the Gospel. If they want to come back, or to come and stay, the Holy Spirit will dictate that. We play a role in this. We make the invitation, and the Holy Spirit does the rest. ***I challenge each of us to invite one person to the "Come and See" dinner on November 29.***

4.) The Nativity Fast is Coming

The Nativity Fast (also called Advent) begins for Orthodox Christians on November 15. For the rest of the Christian world, it begins a little later. The Nativity Fast is supposed to be a time of solemn preparation to celebrate the Nativity, to again receive the Lord at His Incarnation. Our society has made the run-up to Christmas anything but solemn. We get so wrapped up in the commercialism of the season—decorating, gift buying, stressing out over what gifts to get, wondering how we are going to pay for the gifts, watching the number of shopping days decrease, etc. that Christmas feels almost empty when it comes. We're exhausted when it gets here, almost relieved that it is over, and we have a hard time finding any great news of great joy in it.



As we've done the past two years, we are going to offer our church family a gift bag this year. It will again contain a journal, and several other things, to help us have a more meaningful time of preparation for the Nativity. The theme this year is "Good News of a Great Joy." At a time when most daily news lacks any joy, we encourage you to approach Christmas a little differently this year. Remember, different is really in in our community. We just

talked about how our festival will be, especially in how it will be carried out and in the radical generosity that will be at its core. If each of us wants to BE the church (more than just belonging), we've got to each invest time in the Word of God and in serving others. The Festival will give us an opportunity to serve others. (There are also opportunities with our community outreach ministry, see later in *The Messenger for them*). *The Nativity journal will give us an opportunity to reflect on the Word of God. There will be one or two verses each day. I encourage you to sit with them for five minutes. Write out a thought or two. Offer a prayer. Keep Christ at the center of your Christmas preparation. And all the other things will fall into place appropriately, and without the usual stress.*

At a recent GOYA lock-in, we had the GOYAns sit in front of various icons in the church. Each was given a different Bible verse to meditate on. Each was then given ten minutes to write on the verse. And each said they thought that was a really good exercise, they liked the verses, they like the opportunity to reflect. The difference between that and the journal exercise is that was a scheduled event. It took place at a certain time when nothing else was going on. The challenge of the journal is to find your own time each day. If you do that, the reward will be the same as it was for the GOYAns, and even better, because there are six weeks of verses, not just ten minutes.

We will be giving out the journals on Sunday, November 13 after church. If you miss that day, you'll be able to pick up journals in the office. If there is anyone outside of our community that can benefit from a journal, we will have extras to give to peo-



ple.

5.) There will be 15 opportunities to receive Holy Communion and 17 opportunities to worship in November.

The most important thing we do in our church community is gather for worship. The most important thing we do in our lives is to receive Christ. I gave a sermon recently about four reasons why we worship.

1. In II Corinthians 17:1, we read, "Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God." In worship, and specifically in receiving Holy Communion, we are able to cleanse ourselves from the defiling things that the world tempts us with, and uniting with Christ in Holy Communion unites us with His holiness, even as we approach with the "fear of God."

2. Worship gives us the opportunity to be with people like us. Most of the world is not like us. It is out doing all kinds of things on Sunday morning. If we were to come to church on a Sunday morning, and no one else was there, it would be discouraging, we might think there is no one like us. When many people are worshipping in church, it is motivating because we realize that there are others like us, who are making the same journey and fighting the same temptations as they make it.

3. Worship is a guided tour of the world through prayer. In other words, many of us don't think of praying for our country, the president, civil authorities and the military. We tend to pray for things and for people who are a little closer to home. Worship is a combination of mystical prayers offered by the priest, hymns that are sung by the faithful, and prompts (in the form of petitions) made by the clergy and responded to by the laity. And in this exchange, the petition is a prompt, and the response is the prayer. The clergy guide the laity through a tour of the world—peace in the world, our country, the president, those in public service, those who are traveling, those who are suffering, and those who are afflicted. There is even a guided tour of our lives, from a perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless day (today) to a Christian end to our lives, and a good defense of them before the awesome judgment seat of Christ. Many of us don't think about the end of our lives at all. This petition works this eventuality into our thoughts each time we worship.

4. Finally, worship is a reminder of who we are. At the aforementioned

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GOYA lock-in, one GOYAn sat in front of the icon of Christ on the icon screen. His reflection on this experience was that the image of Christ dominated the icon. There were no other people, no buildings, no trees, no distractions, and it made him realize that his life needed to be more like that icon, dominated by Christ with less distractions. Worship reminds us of who we are and who we are supposed to be.

The months of November, December and January have the most Divine Liturgies of the Liturgical year, outside of Great Lent. There will be 15 during November. Additionally, there will be Paraklesis and Holy Unction. My spiritual father, during my recent confession (I flew to San Francisco in late September for 36 hours just to do confession) encouraged me to go in front of the altar as often as possible, so that I can be reminded who is in charge of my life. It's not me. It's God. The same advice is appropriate for all of us. The more often we can get ourselves in front of the altar, the more we will be reminded of who is in charge in our lives.

6.) Jesus wants us to live in abundance

In John 10:10, Jesus says to His disciples: *I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. Jesus wants us to live in abundance. We live in a fallen world. That was certainly evidenced by the recent hurricane. We are broken. Whose heart didn't break as they watch the devastation that followed Hurricane Ian? Whose heart doesn't also break with disappointment at those who wrong us. Whose heart doesn't break because of the stupid things we do to ourselves?*

An abundant life in Christ seeks to heal that which has been broken, whether it has been broken by a fallen nature, the bad decision of someone else, or our own bad decision.

- Christ wants us to have an abundance of joy.
- He wants us to offer an abundance of forgiveness.
- He wants to offer us an abundance of redemption.
- He wants us to offer an abundance of repentance.
- He wants us to offer an abundance of generosity.
- He wants to offer us an abundance of hope.
- Ultimately, He wants to offer us the infinite abundance that is eternal life.

- He will offer an abundance of mercy.
- We in return will offer an abundance of sacrifice.

Nothing we can offer will match His mercy or His abundance. And because we cannot match God in anyway, then what we are to offer is effort—an abundance of effort, as much effort as we can offer. We call this effort “stewardship”—what we do with what we’ve been given.

Standing in the way of this abundance are our own sins and the sins of others and how we “steward” those, what kind of effort we make. Do we make an effort for our own personal repentance, to correct our own personal faults? Do we make an effort to



forgive the faults of others?

Our world is conditioning us to not do three things that are critical to the Christian life:

- To ask for forgiveness
- To offer forgiveness
- To receive forgiveness

And yet, these things are crucial things that we must learn to do in abundance. Asking forgiveness frequently should be part of every relationship. No one is perfect. We all need forgiveness. We should all learn to ask for forgiveness when we’ve done something wrong.

Perhaps part of the reason we are hesitant to ask is because there isn't an abundance of forgiveness being offered. Fear of reprisal leads to fear of asking for forgiveness. If we could all learn to be better at offering forgiveness, maybe people would be more confidence and consistent in asking for it.

Even when forgiveness is exchanged between two people, we all have the sin that is between us and God. We know that God forgives abundantly when we ask and when we repent. Asking God for forgiveness is a challenge. Perhaps the greater challenge is receiving forgiveness from God (or from someone else) because we have an abundance of shame associated with our sins. (And maybe even greater than that is the lack of shame over sins—that's another story for another day.) God doesn't want us to live in shame.

When we were each baptized, the Epistle of St. Paul to Romans was read over each of us. In it, St. Paul writes:

For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a Resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. The death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. Romans 6: 5-14

If we are putting on the new life in Christ, this should not only affect our abundance towards others, but also our abundance of accepting Christ within ourselves. Not only should there be no more loathing of others, there should be no more loathing of self. We must give mercy to others. We must also accept mercy from others and from the Lord.

In John 8, we read about a woman who was caught in the act of adultery. Society loathed that sin so much that the penalty for adultery was to be stoned. As this woman was about to be stoned to death, Jesus went to her accusers and said "Let the one without sin cast the first stone." (John 8:7) All the accusers left in shame, so that all who were left were Jesus and the woman. Then Jesus told her, "I do not condemn you; go and sin no more." (John

8:11) He wanted her to have a life of abundance, rather than one of condemnation. However, He called her to an abundance of repentance, not just to fall back into sinful ways. And this is what God calls all of us to. He does not call us to condemnation but to repentance and salvation.

Conclusion

There have been five points of good news of a great joy, and only one of them had to do with Christmas.

1. We are having the Greek Festival again. Let's all enjoy working together again. And on November 6, let's come with joy to celebrate us.
2. We are sharing all of our proceeds with charitable causes. We are going to bring a measure of joy to many people who desperately need it.
3. We are having the "come and see" dinner on November 29. Let's invite others to experience our joy.
4. Let's all dive into some reflection during the upcoming Nativity Fast using a journal that will be provided to everyone at our church, so that when Christmas comes, we can truly celebrate it with spiritual joy that befits this miracle that the Lord did for us.
5. There are 17 opportunities to worship in November, 15 of them are the Divine Liturgy. What great joy it can bring us to worship the Lord and commune with Him so often this coming month.
6. Christ came so that we can have abundance of joy, not abundance of sadness. We are to receive that joy, accept that joy and give that joy to others.

Have a joyful month of November. I hope you feel uplifted reading all of this news of great joy!

With love in the Lord,
+Fr. Stavros

Monthly Message from Vasili Panagopoulos

“I love my Problems”

The following is graphic. Reader’s discretion is advised.

A couple of weeks ago, I attended a birthday party. At social events, and in all areas of my life, I have no issue making conversation and getting to know new people. I practically knew no one there, and it seemed like everyone knew each other, for the most part. I made my way around the house getting to know everyone there, and eventually I came to meet a man named Shawn. The first thing I noticed about Shawn, which was impossible not to see, was the large bandages wrapped around his legs, a cast on his right arm, and his burned flesh all around the visible parts of his body (legs, arms, hands, and neck.) I introduced myself, as did he, and we made small conversation for a couple of minutes until my son Andoni crawled over to me, gesturing for his bottle of milk that I was holding in my hand.

Later in the afternoon when it was time for lunch, we all grabbed our food from the dinner table and sat in different parts of the house, again, chatting with whoever we were sitting next to. I joined a conversation between Shawn and another individual. I don’t remember exactly what they were talking about, but my ears perked up when I heard Shawn say something along the lines of “it just hasn’t been the same since the burn.” The gentleman who he was talking to politely asked, “may I ask what happened?” Shawn wasn’t afraid or offended by the question, and he actually welcomed the conversation.

To summarize, this is Shawn’s story:

Shawn was working on a car in his garage about six months ago. Gasoline had accidentally spilled on him and ignited. Immediately, Shawn dropped and rolled on the ground but realized that the gasoline was going to continue burning despite his efforts. Fortunately, Shawn’s house is on a lake, so he ran over and jumped in to put the fire out. His wife was there with him, helping with the car. She was not harmed in the accident. Immediately, she called 911 and help was on the way. Shawn said that he sat in the lake for 20 minutes, and because of the adrenaline, he didn’t feel any pain. But he recalled seeing his skin floating in the water next to him, and that’s when he knew just how bad his burn was. Once Shawn was picked up by the paramedics via helicopter, he said something around the lines of “and

that was pretty cool. I had never been in a helicopter before, and the view of Tampa Bay, as I was heading to Tampa General Hospital, was just amazing.” The burn was just the beginning of what would be an excruciating road to recovery. Immediately, Shawn had to take a shower when he got to the hospital to clean off any dirt, or lake water that would potentially cause an infection... a shower that was cleaning his bare flesh. Next, Shawn was wrapped from neck to ankle in bandages so the flesh was not exposed. These bandages were frequently exchanged, so as to keep new and fresh ones on. As Shawn said, most patients would need to be “put under” any time they had a bandage change because the pain was so gruesome. Shawn, however, stayed awake for all of it.

Shortly after Shawn was brought to the hospital, the medical staff told his family what exactly happened to Shawn, and what would be the recovery process. Shawn had suffered an over 90% burn, meaning more than 90% of his body was completely burned. Those burns being third or second degree burns (third degree being the worst kind). The only parts of Shawn’s body that were not burned were his head and face, his waist and thighs, and his feet. The medical team continued by saying that they had never received someone with a 90+% burn that survived at TGH. They also said if Shawn were to survive, it would be at least a year until he leaves the hospital, and he may never walk again. Lastly, and probably the worst part about being a doctor, they had to tell the family the worst news: “They told us that I had a less than one percent chance of surviving.”

With that being said, I asked Shawn, “So, how did you do it? How did you survive?” He responded, “There was never a time that I thought I was going to die. I knew I was going to be fine. I knew I would recover.” With chills running down my spine, and tears forming in my eyes, Shawn continued to tell his story.

Over the course of the next four months, Shawn had received twenty-one surgeries, and was placed in a medically induced coma for a month and a half during that four month period. The reason he had to be in a coma was because his skin needed to grow back without Shawn moving around a

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lot. In his own words, as the skin would grow back, they would skin-graph me, stretch the skin, poke holes through it, and place it back on me. This was a new medical practice that they used for the first time on Shawn. On top of that, for nearly the entire time, Shawn had a fever. His body was battling infection after infection. "There was a blanket on me the entire time with tubes filled with ice cold water running through it." Yet, Shawn stayed positive. Fortunately, they ran scans throughout Shawn's body to see what was harmed internally. Miraculously, Shawn was completely fine. All of his internal organs were fine. The only thing internally that was an issue, were his joints. When the human body suffers such a massive burn like Shawn's did, for some reason, the body produces a mass amount of calcium. As the calcium came, and Shawn wasn't moving, his joints became very stiff, very fast. Some of the surgeries that he experienced were to remove the "softball size" clumps of calcium around his knees and elbows.

To the medical team's surprise, Shawn was responding positively to the new medical practice. His skin was growing back at rates they weren't expecting for months. Therefore, physical therapy started earlier than expected, too. "I had to learn how to do everything again. Move, eat, talk, squeeze, walk, everything." Still, Shawn did not give up.

Everyone in the burn section of Tampa General Hospital knows Shawn, and knows about what he went through, and how he recovered. In his words, they are a family now. Because they all witnessed a miracle. The medical team witnessed something that they believed was not possible... they witnessed a miracle. Not only did Shawn leave Tampa General only after four months, he walked out. Four months prior, they were all sure that Shawn was not going to make it, and even the thought of walking was something that would never happen again. But yet, Shawn stayed positive. When I asked Shawn what he felt towards the whole situation, he said something that changed my perspective on life forever. "It could have been worse."

Shawn experienced probably one of the worst things that can happen physically to the human body. He was given the worst odds. Everything was stacked against him. The burn, the shower, the constant bandage changes, the twenty-one surgeries, the coma, the calcium in the joints, the physical therapy. It cannot get much worse than that, but yet Shawn's perspective on this was positive. He saw how he

was more fortunate than everyone else that came before him. "Some guy just last week came in (went to Tampa General) with a 30% burn, but died because of infection."

"It could have been worse."

Today, Shawn is just over six months post-burn. I saw him walking around, talking, laughing, moving, eating, drinking, and living. He is scheduled to have his twenty-second surgery soon on his elbow to increase movement. Shawn still has a way to go to being back to 100%. That day might happen soon, or in a couple of years. But, Shawn believes that he will see that day. He sees how fortunate he is, and he is grateful to be alive and where he is today.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, why do I share this story with you? I do so because of my own weakness. As I reflect on Shawn's experience, I can't help but think about how much I complain when I burn the top of my finger when trying to get something out of the oven. Or, how I complain when I get stuck in traffic, when someone is driving slow in the left lane and they just won't get out of the way (my biggest pet peeve, please move over) when my son wakes up in the middle of the night (sometimes two or three times), or when I complain when things just don't go the way I was expecting. I share this with you to perhaps shed some light on how we can complain less, and appreciate more. How we can be negative less, and positive more.

Shawn had every reason, and every right to complain, to be negative, to curse the world, but yet from the moment he was in the helicopter, admiring the view of Tampa as he was sitting there nearly completely burnt, to the moment he walked out of the hospital, Shawn was nothing but positive.

I leave you with this quote from Helen Keller: "I cried because I had no shoes, until I met a man who had no feet."

With love in Christ,
Vasili

FRIDAY,
NOVEMBER 4th
4:00 pm - 11:00 pm

SATURDAY,
NOVEMBER 5th
11:00 am - 11:00 pm

www.tampagreekfestival.com

Let's get excited to share our faith and our culture with the Tampa Bay area!



FOR 2022 GREEK FESTIVAL UPDATES, TEXT @TPAGRKFEST TO 81010

We are proud to be donating 100% of the profits to benefit LifePath Hospice, Love, INC, and relief efforts for Hurricane Ian



SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER EACH SUNDAY AFTER LITURGY

contact mike xenick at mxenick@gmail.com or 813-340-8737 to find out how you can get involved!



Liturgical Schedule for November

Tuesday, November 1 **Sts. Cosmas and Damian the Unmercenaries**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sts. Cosmas & Damian



Friday, November 4 Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

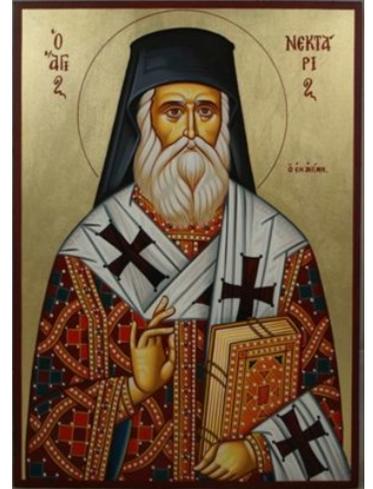
Saturday, November 5 Orthros 8:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:00 a.m.
Note earlier start time for Orthros and Divine Liturgy

Sunday, November 6 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Daylight Savings Time Ends—Set Clocks back one hour

Tuesday, November 8 **Archangels**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, November 9 **St. Nectarios**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
The faithful will be anointed with oil from the tomb of St. Nectarios at the end of the Liturgy

St. Nectarios



Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.

St. John Chrysostom

Sunday, November 13 **St. John Chrysostom**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.



Monday, November 14 **St. Philip the Apostle**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

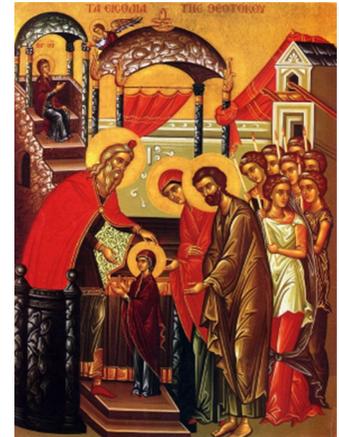
Tuesday, November 15 **Beginning of the Nativity Fast**
Sacrament of Holy Unction 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, November 16 **St. Matthew the Evangelist**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Temple

Sunday, November 20 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Monday, November 21 **Entrance of Virgin Mary into the Temple (Ta Eisodia)**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.



Wednesday, November 23 **Evening Divine Liturgy for Thanksgiving**
Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Friday, November 25 **St. Katherine**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, November 27 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, November 30 **St. Andrew the Apostle**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

St. Porphyrios

Friday, December 2 **St. Porphyrios**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

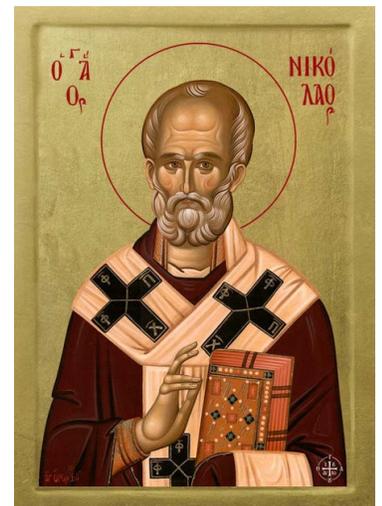


Sunday, December 4 **St. Barbara/St. John of Damascus**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Monday, December 5 **St. Savas the Sanctified**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Tuesday, December 6 **St. Nicholas**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

St. Nicholas



Wednesday, December 7 Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.

Friday, December 9 **St. Anna**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Liturgical Notes for November

Monday, 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).

Friday, November 4 and Saturday, November 5 - Divine Liturgy on BOTH DAYS OF THE FESTIVAL

The Divine Liturgy can be celebrated any day of the year except Good Friday. As we have done in previous years, all days of the Greek Festival begin with the Spiritual Glendi, which is the Divine Liturgy. Before we welcome one guest or serve one meal, we invite the most important guest, the Holy Spirit, down on the most important meal, the Eucharist. The Divine Liturgy on Friday, November 4 will be held at 10:00 a.m. (Orthros 9:00 a.m.) and on Saturday, November 5 at 9:00 a.m. (Orthros 8:00 a.m.). On Sunday, November 6, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy at the regular time, 10:00 a.m. and conclude the service with a memorial service honoring those who have passed away since we last held the Greek Festival.

Tuesday, 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.

Wednesday, 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.

Wednesday, November 9 – Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary – We will continue to offer Paraklesis once a month, so that we can pray for all the members of our community by name, out loud. For November, the Paraklesis will be offered on Wednesday evening, November 9, from 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Sunday, 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.

Monday, 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.

Tuesday, November 15- 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 Tuesday, November 15, at 6:00 p.m. Please bring your Holy Week book as the service will follow the service of Holy Wednesday evening.

Liturgical Notes for November

Wednesday, 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.

Monday, 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 Feastdays of the Orthodox Liturgical Year.

Wednesday, November 23 - 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 23 at 6:00 p.m.

Friday, November 25 - St. Katherine the Great Martyr 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 30 - St. Andrew the Apostle St. Andrew is the first-called of the Apostles. He is also the patron saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Friday, 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. And it important that we begin to remember and celebrate some of the them with a celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

Sunday, 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.

Monday, 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.

Tuesday, 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.

St. John the Baptist Community News

Monday night Bible study with Fr. John—will continue meeting at 6:30 p.m. on most Monday evenings. Join us in person or via zoom for some very informative, lively and interactive discussions on how we apply Biblical principles in our everyday lives. See the Sunday bulletin for specific topics. For November the dates are Tuesday, November 1; Monday, November 7; Monday, November 14; Monday, November 21 and Monday, November 28.

Tuesday morning Bible Study-Our Tuesday morning Bible Study began in September. We are studying the Gospel of John. We meet on most Tuesdays from 10:00-11:30 a.m. either in person or on zoom. For November the dates are Tuesday, November 15 and Tuesday, November 29. On Tuesday, November 1 and Tuesday, November 8, our Bible study members are encouraged to attend the Divine Liturgy.

Recognition of Veterans on Sunday, November 13— On November 13th we will salute all veterans of our parish with a special flag presentation. Join us to honor all those who are and who have served our great nation!

Joy Tweens— We will be volunteering during the festival as a group! Stay tuned for more details! Our November TWEENS Meeting be Friday, November 18, from 6:30-9:00 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. We will be watching a movie on the Nativity. Dinner will be provided.

GOYA—Our November GOYA Meeting will be Sunday, November 13, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

Men's Group-Our men's group will meet on Sunday, November 20, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Any men of our community are welcome to join us for dinner, discussion. Please bring \$20—we will order in for dinner. Please mark down our dates for men's group for this academic year—Sunday, November 20; Sunday, December 11; Sunday, January 29; Sunday, March 26; Sunday, April 30 and Sunday, May 21. *There is also going to be a men's retreat open to any Orthodox men of the Tampa Bay area and any of your friends on Saturday, February 18 from 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Save the date!*

College Student Monthly Luncheon—We invite all college students for lunch after Liturgy on Sunday, November 13. We will have a lunch/discussion in the library. There is no cost.

Love to take photos? Come join our Photo Ministry! It's a fun and creative way to serve and to show the community all the beautiful services and wonderful activities we have here at St. John. All abilities are welcome. Please call or text Karina Findlay at (813) 476-9632.

Come and See Dinner - Tuesday, November 29 — As many of you know, our Welcome Ministry has hosted a “Come and See” Dinner following our Greek Festival. It has been on hold for a few years, and we are thrilled to bring it back this year! Please save the date for our dinner event on **Tuesday, November 29th**.

We want to emphasize this year that this event is not just limited to guests who want to learn more about us after meeting us at the Greek Festival. ***This is a great opportunity for you to invite your friends, coworkers, neighbors, and your family members to enjoy a meal with us and have fellowship in a casual and comfortable church setting.*** We will have postcards available over the next few weeks for you to use as an invitation and we encourage you to go for it and invite someone to join you. You won't regret introducing someone to our church family!

Young Adult Group-We invite the young adults of our parish to an evening discussion with Fr. Stavros on Thursday, November 10 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at the Kourmolis Center. We are going to reinvigorate our young adult program with a twice-a-month discussion/Bible study. The first meeting will be on Thursday, November 10, and we will set the schedule from there. Anyone interested, please contact the church office at office@stjohntpa.org and we will add you to our group text. This is open for anyone ages 18-40, including non-Orthodox and anyone from neighboring parishes.

Parish Registry

Baptism-Penelope Marie Waksman, daughter of Michael and Kristen Waksman, was baptized on Sunday, September 25. Christine Mignogna was Godmother. Na Sas Zisi!

Chrismation-Daniel (Paisios) Rash, was Chrismated on Wednesday, September 14. Vasilios and Moriah Panagopoulos were the sponsors. Congratulations!

Chrismation-Gabrielle (Barbara) Engelman, was Chrismated on Wednesday, September 14. Taylor Stamas was the sponsor. Congratulations!

Wedding-Ronald Douglas and Irene Tataris were married on Saturday, October 1. Irene Jacobs was the Koumbara. Congratulations!

Funeral-John Plarinos passed away on September 13. Funeral services were held on Monday, September 26. May his memory be eternal!

St. John The Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Community Outreach

Hello and WELCOME! **On the 3rd Saturday of each month**, we volunteer 2 1/2 hrs of our time to provide for the needy and homeless of our community in East Tampa. We partner with local charity Matthew 25, Metropolitan Ministries and USF Medical School to serve breakfast, provide clothing and medical needs for our guests.

To Volunteer: Click on our Sign Up Genius below. If you forget to sign up, you can still come!

Place: Tampa Hope @ 3704 E. 3rd Ave. Tampa East

Time: 8:00 AM to 10:30AM

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 8-9AM, Serving 9-10:15AM, Cleanup 10:15-10:30AM.

Matthew 25 founders Peggy & Mike Kanter, as well as Greg & Victoria Melton, are Go To people if you have questions or need direction on where you may be needed when you arrive.

Below find the Sign Up Genius for every upcoming 3rd Saturday of Month. Find the dates that work for you and sign up.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f48a5a62da3f49-community1>
(Or use QR code)

Greg Melton 813-967-2074 gmelt12@gmail.com



Memorial & Kolyva Protocol

1. Memorial Services **MUST** be scheduled through the church office at least two weeks in advance of when you want the service.
2. Memorial services for 40 days and one year will be done on the Sunday closest to the appropriate date. All other memorials will be done on the designated Memorial Sunday each month.
3. Please let the office know when you call or email whether you will be providing your own kolyva or whether you wish for the Philoptochos to provide. If a family chooses to make their own Kolyva(es), the family will be responsible for scooping the Kolyva(es) in the kitchen after the Memorial Service to share with the entire community.
4. If the Philoptochos does the kolyva, there is a \$100 charge for this service-checks may be made payable to "St. John Philoptochos."
5. Also, please send the church office all of the names you wish to have commemorated at the memorial service, and how many pews, if any, you would like reserved for your family.

Our Food Pantry is very active helping people near and far in the Tampa Community.

Here are some special requests we have:

- Pasta
- Spaghetti Sauce
- Tomato sauce/chopped tomatoes etc.
- All kinds of white flour
- Canned Tuna
- Canned Chicken
- Canned fruits and vegetables
- Body Wash
- Gluten Free Foods and Flours
- Cereal
- Whole wheat rice and pasta
- Men's and Women's razors and shaving cream (travel size)
- Toothbrushes
- **Gift cards in any amount for Publix, Walmart or Save-a-lot**



All food items offered are accepted. Thank you for supporting those who need it the most. Please contact our new volunteer, Sheila Vukmer, for any questions (412-719-1005).

Youth Protection Program Reminder:

At this time, many of our Youth Workers' background checks are coming up for renewal, which is done every two years. On or about your two-year mark, Praesidium will automatically send an email to you from backgroundcheck@praesidiuminc.com when a new background check is needed. Please be on the lookout for these emails, as the link for a background check expires after two weeks. Also, the Youth Protection Program administrator will notify you via email when it's time to renew your online training by completing the 2-part/2-quiz Youth Safety module and the 1-part/1-quiz Youth Worker Regulations module.



If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Suzanne Pileggi at smpileggi@gmail.com or (813) 244-5855.

THANK YOU!

The Veterans and First Responders Ministry members thank everyone who participated in the luncheon on September 11th. We honored those who sacrificed their lives that day in defense of our country. Due to your generosity, a total of \$1,500 was donated to the "Tunnel to Towers Foundation." This organization provides mortgage free homes to the nation's catastrophically injured veterans and first responders, and Gold Star and fallen first responder's families with young children. May our Lord and Savior bless all of you for your support!



On November 13th we will salute all veterans of our parish with a special flag presentation. Join us to honor all those who are and who have served our great nation!

Father John

St. John Stewardship Report 2020-2022

| Year to Year Comparison ~ | 2022* | 2021* | 2020* |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Pledged Year to Date | \$435,853 | \$472,793 | \$513,416 |
| Received Year to Date | \$495,524 | \$420,388 | \$438,656 |
| Average Pledge | \$2000 | \$1,300 | \$1,400 |
| Median Pledge | \$1,300 | \$1,100 | \$880 |
| # of Individual/Families Pledged/Giving | 353 | 390 | 397 |
| *YTD as of 10/18/2022, 10/18/2021, 10/18/2020 | | | |

Below find the dates, times, address, and sign up website for St John Greek Orthodox Church volunteers. Anyone from our parish can volunteer by registering on the Metropolitan Ministries website below. First come, first served as the sign up slots fill up fast and our slots will be given to other people if we do not sign up.

Thanksgiving Holiday - November 22 2:00 - 5:30 PM
 Christmas Holiday - December 22 3:00 - 6:30 PM

Let me know if you have any questions or issues.
 Thank you for your support with Community Outreach.

Greg Melton



TWELVE DISCIPLES PROGRAM

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

I Thessalonians 5:16-18

Brief History

What in the world is the *Twelve Disciples Program*? Several years ago, in August 2020, our community of St. John the Baptist began a program to strengthen each of our personal prayer discipline.

“O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”
The Jesus Prayer

The names of all member families of our congregation were compiled into a document (now consisting of 14 pages) with each page listing a group of families. Each participant received one of the pages and was asked to pray for the entire page of names received, once daily. This was best accomplished by incorporating a prayer and the list of names into ones daily private prayer discipline.

Prayer Warriors

Father Stavros regularly prays for all the names on the fourteen pages representing the entire St John the Baptist membership at each service and specifically at each Paraklesis.

Thinking that praying for members of our community should not be the responsibility of the Priest alone, in August 2020, we started a program called “The 12 Disciples program.” The names of all St. John members are sorted onto 12 (now 14) pages. The individual pages are divided and distributed between interested individuals that are referred to as Prayer Warriors (disciples). The idea is for each “disciple” or “warrior” to take one or more page of names and pray for the entire group of people every day.

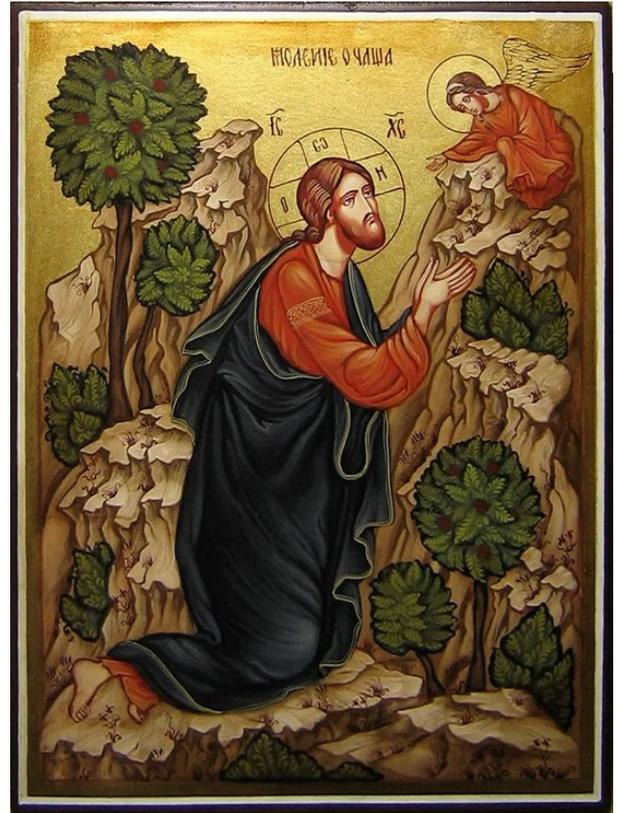
Each page, along with a page that includes the Trisagion prayer, is refreshed with any new names, and redistributed to each Disciple monthly.

We currently have over 40 active “disciples”, meaning that each member of our St. John community is being prayed for by at least three people every day.

Participating requires no special talent, no physical ability, no financial investment but only a desire to offer up prayerful love for your fellow parishioners. As Father Stavros has admonished us in past *Prayer Team* messages, “We (all) need time to be in the presence of the Son of God and share our faith with others.”

I had rather speak five words with my understanding... than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. (I Cor. 14:19)

If you'd like to participate (to add a presence of God!) and receive at least one page of names to pray for, please contact Mathew Balasis, 727-345-4855 (mathewbalasis@verizon.net), Father Stavros, or the St. John the Baptist's Church Office.

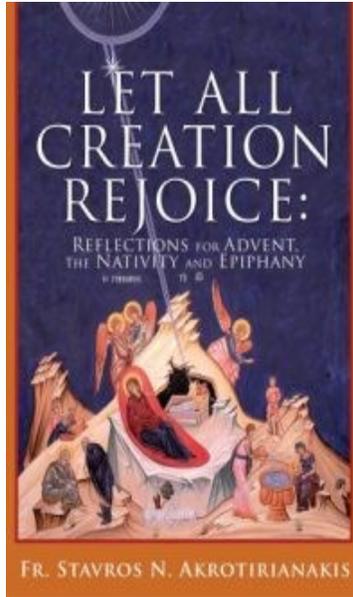


Start Your 2022 Advent Journey with “Let All Creation Rejoice”

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

As we approach the season of Ad-vent, 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 applica-tion are very thought provoking! My hus-band 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 Na-tivity, and what they mean for me! To-day's reading, for example, reflected on the angel telling the shepherds, "Dont be afraid," and following re-flections 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 Christ-mas season. -Amazon Customer

Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 3,718 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 6 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 Vasili at Vasili@stjohntpa.org and ask him to add you. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email Alex 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 prayer-team365@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!**

Father Stavros has authored SIX books that are available both in the bookstore and online. They are entitled:

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

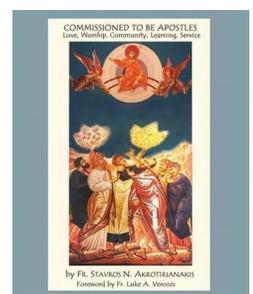
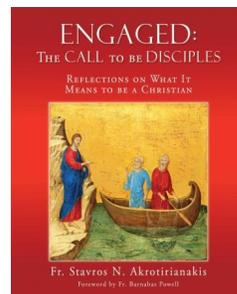
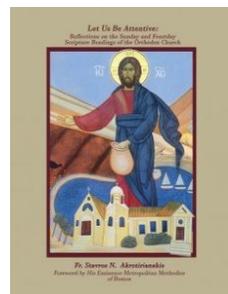
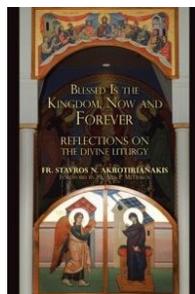
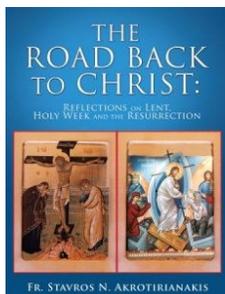
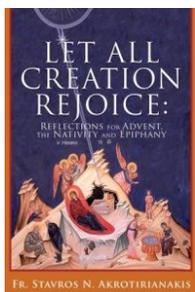
The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection

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

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

ENGAGED: The Call To Be Disciples, Reflections on What it Means to be a Christian

Commissioned to be Apostles: Love, Worship, Community, Learning, Service



Nursing Ministry November 2022 November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month

Lung cancer is by far the leading cause of cancer death, making up almost 25% of all cancer deaths. Each year, more people die of lung cancer than of colon, breast, and prostate cancers combined. Lung cancer cases continue to decrease, partly because people are quitting smoking. Lung cancer is the third most common cancer type and the main cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States. According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), it is most common in males, and in the U.S., Black males are around 12% more likely to develop it than white males.

Lung cancer occurs when cells in the lungs divide uncontrollably, causing tumors to grow. Mutations affects genes in ways that change the natural growth and death cycles of cells, unregulated cell division can result in too many cells. It's like a car when the gas pedal gets stuck or the brakes don't work—the cells just keep dividing with nothing to stop them. Smoking is a major risk factor, although not everyone who develops lung cancer has a history of smoking. According to estimates, about 80% of lung cancer deaths stem from smoking. However, not everyone who has lung cancer smokes, and lung cancer can occur due to several other factors, including:

- Exposure to chemicals such as radon, diesel exhaust, or asbestos
- Environmental factors, such as air pollution
- Inherited or acquired genetic changes
- Exposure to second-hand smoke

Symptoms

Lung cancer typically doesn't cause signs and symptoms in its earliest stages. Signs and symptoms of lung cancer typically occur when the disease is advanced.

- Chest pain or discomfort
- A cough that doesn't go away or gets worse over time
- Frequent chest infections, such as bronchitis or pneumonia
- Trouble breathing
- Wheezing
- Blood in sputum (mucus coughed up from the lungs)
- Hoarseness
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss for no known reason
- Fatigue
- Trouble swallowing
- Swelling in the face and/or veins in the neck
- Bone pain
- Swelling of the lymph nodes in the middle of the chest



Screening

Undergoing regular screening is good practice for people with a high risk of developing lung cancer. Screening is with a low dose CT scan. The American Lung Association recommends screening if a person meets all of the following criteria:

- They are aged 55–80 years.
- They have a history of heavy smoking, meaning 30 pack years, which is one pack per day for 30 years or two packs per day for 15 years.
- They currently smoke or have quit smoking within the past 15 years.

Insurance will often cover this screening if a person is aged 55–80 years and has private health insurance or is aged 55–77 years, has Medicare, and meets all the other criteria.

Outlook

Lung cancer can be fatal, but emerging treatments mean that many people now survive and recover from lung cancer, especially if they receive an early diagnosis. All the treatment options can have adverse effects. A person should consult a healthcare professional about the most suitable choice for them, including the pros and cons of each option. Some factors affecting the likelihood of a positive outcome include:

- a person's overall health
- their age
- the stage of cancer at diagnosis
- the type of cancer they have

Prevention

There's no sure way to prevent lung cancer, but you can reduce your risk if you:

Don't smoke. If you've never smoked, don't start. Talk to your children about not smoking so that they can understand how to avoid this major risk factor for lung cancer. Begin this conversation early so that they know how to react to peer pressure.

Stop smoking. Stop smoking now. Quitting reduces your risk of lung cancer, even if you've smoked for years. Talk to your doctor about strategies and stop-smoking aids that can help you quit. Options include nicotine replacement products, medications and support groups.

Avoid secondhand smoke. If you live or work with a smoker, urge him or her to quit. At the very least, ask him or her to smoke outside. Avoid areas where people smoke, such as bars and restaurants, and seek out smoke-free options.

Test your home for radon. Have the radon levels in your home checked, especially if you live in an area where radon is known to be a problem. For information on radon testing, contact your local department of public health or a local chapter of the American Lung Association.

Avoid carcinogens at work. Take precautions to protect yourself from exposure to toxic chemicals at work. For instance, if you're given a face mask for protection, always wear it. Ask your doctor what more you can do to protect yourself at work.

Eat a diet full of fruits and vegetables. Choose a healthy diet with a variety of fruits and vegetables. Food sources of vitamins and nutrients are best. Avoid taking large doses of vitamins in pill form, as they may be harmful, such as beta carotene supplements. Results showed it actually increased the risk of cancer in smokers.

Exercise most days of the week. If you don't exercise regularly, start out slowly. Try to exercise most days of the week.

Summary

Lung cancer is a potentially fatal type of cancer, but people who receive an early diagnosis often have a good chance of survival. Individuals with a high risk of developing lung cancer may wish to consider undergoing regular screening. This can help detect the early signs and allow for treatment before the cancer spreads.

Take Advantage of the Parish Assistance Program

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is excited to share we will continue to offer the Parish Assistance program together with BayCare Behavioral Health. The 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 that are sensitive to the values and beliefs of those they serve and provide compassionate care to children, adults, parents, and seniors. Parishioners can confidentially contact BayCare directly to request up to three free 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. 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-healthservices> Help is available for life issues including:

Help is available for life issues including:

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

This service is completely confidential between parishioner and a BayCare Christian Therapist



BayCare
Behavioral Health

Beware of Emails or Text Messages 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 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.

Have questions?
Just need to talk?
Worried? Sad? Happy?
We are here for you!



Fr. Stavros
 <813-394-1038



Fr. John
 678-637-4425 >



Vasili
 414-254-5134>

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.

WELCOME TO OUR PARISH

If you are new to the Tampa Bay area or just visiting, we would love to get to know you better.

PLEASE TEXT THE WORD

"WELCOME" TO 813-790-5950

FOLLOW THE PROMPTS TO GIVE US
 YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION AND FROM THERE
 YOU WILL BE DIRECTED TO OUR ONLINE CONNECTION CARD

DO NOT NEGLECT TO SHOW *hospitality* TO STRANGERS.
 FOR THEREBY SOME HAVE ENTERTAINED *angels unawares.*
HEBREWS 13:2

St. John's Bookstore



On November 8th, the Orthodox Church commemorates the Synaxis of the Archangels. We remember, in particular, Archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael as well as the other bodiless and heavenly orders. I thought it appropriate this month to share some photos taken after Hurricane Ian. Passing one of our cemeteries here in Riverview, I noticed this "angel" unscathed and keeping guard over her charges in spite of the fallen tree trunk, limbs, branches, etc.

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL
Demet & Eleni Anagnostiadis - Bethesda, MD
Nicholas & Doris Andreadakis - Lititz, PA
Andy Apostolopoulos—Asheville, NC
George & Maria Andros - Birmingham, AL
Nicholas Anton - Dunedin, FL
Gaby & Alicia Atik - Treasure Island, FL
Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL
Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC
Katherine Beasley - Vero Beach, FL
Christopher & Jaime Brewer - Tampa, FL
Pete & Carol Caldwell - Ringgold, GA
William Camarinos - Alexandria, VA
William & Kanella Jane Chapman - Ellenton, FL
Nicholas & Sondra Chronis - Mt. Pleasant, SC
Emmanuel Chrysakis - Palm Harbor, FL
Victor & Cynthia Cucuz - Tampa, FL
Fr Stratton & Pres. Denise Dorozenski - Sterling Heights, MI
Eric & Artemis Mellen - Longwood, FL
Peter George - Tampa, FL
Ron & Maria Gregory - St. Petersburg, FL
Charlie & Eleftheria Hambos - Orlando, FL
Gabriel Hurst - Largo, FL
Michael Ibrahim - E. Brunswick, NJ

Judith Jogerst
Constantine Kallenekos - Tampa, FL
Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI
Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL
Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL
Demetrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH
John & Cathie Koch - New Port Richey, FL
Tommy Kolouris - Tampa, FL
Sharon Kush - Tallahassee, FL
Evangelos & Helen Liras - Tampa, FL
Fr Michael & Pres Virginia Massouh - Seminole, FL
Kathleen Spanos Mendez - Ponte Verda, FL
Charles Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA
Kay Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA
Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA
John & Deanna Palmer - Greenville, SC
Theodora Pappas Poletis - Nottingham, MD
Luke & Arianna Quinn - Arlington, MA
Nadine Raheb
Pericles & Fotini Stamatiades - Asheville, NC
Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI
Lillian Thomas - Dyer, IN
Wesley & Melisa Thompson - Clearwater, FL
Christopher & Georgette Tsavoussis - Dunedin, FL
William Yotis - La Grange, IL

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

Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

Friend of St. John the Baptist:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

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

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

Sunday School News

We are very grateful for the wonderful start to our 2022-2023 Sunday School year. We would like to thank Fr. Stavros and all our parents for supporting our ministry. All of our Sunday School teachers are committed to providing great lessons about our faith to your children and look forward to seeing your children week after week.

The Sunday School Topics for the month of October were: READING THE BIBLE, THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, MAKING MORAL CHOICES, THE LIGHT OF CHRIST-MAKING FAITH PERSONAL, and SAINTS COSMAS & DAMIAN - SERVING WITH LOVE.

Please stop by our updated SUNDAY SCHOOL BULLETIN BOARD. Our new class photos are up along with our updated Hall of Famers!

Last month's YOUTH SUNDAY took place on October 23rd. We would like to thank our Sunday School students for singing our church hymns so beautifully and our high school student for reading The Epistle for our Youth Sundays. Our music program would not be possible without the guidance and leadership of Maria Xenick. We can't thank her enough.

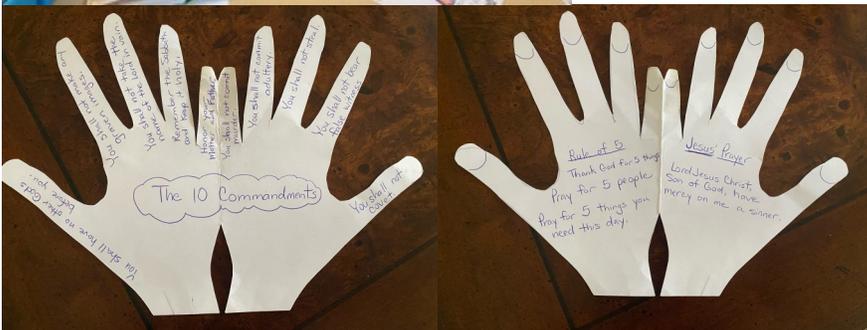
SUNDAY SCHOOL CALENDAR FOR NOVEMBER:

November 6th: Topic: Talents and Gifts

November 13th: Topic:
Communion-Liturgy-Worship
YOUTH SUNDAY

November 20th: Topic: Charity/Thanksgiving

November 27th: No Class-Thanksgiving Break





Visit of Bishop Sevastianos - September 18





**GOYA had their
annual water
balloon event
September 18**





Our first Joy Tweens lunch and lesson with Father Stavros - September 25



**Young Adult
Retreat
October 1**

**Joy Tweens - movie
night on October 7**



**GOYA Senior
Lock-in
October 8**

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

We welcome people of all ages to join us as a member or friend of the YAH

MEETING DATE AND TIME

Our meetings are held once a month from 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., usually at the Kourmolis Hall or a restaurant in place of meetings at the hall. From time to time we may go on fieldtrips.

BIRTHDAYS: On October 17th Christine Scourtes celebrated her 98th birthday



OTHER BIRTHDAYS:

Denise Badrane: 10/15, Carole Fotopoulos: 10/14, Vange Xeroteris: 10/18 Diane Trimis: 10/25, Margaret Halikoytakis: 10/25, Voula Athan: 11/7, Ann Demas: 11/11, Skip Higdon: 11/18, Alexandra Ferarolis: 11/27

CORE VALUES: LOVE, WORSHIP, COMMUNITY, LEARNING, & SERVICE

We continue to reach out to those who are homebound due to illness or are in assisted living facilities as part of our Church's fulfillment of the core values of love and community. The following were contacted Alexandra Ferarolis, John Mitchell, Denise Badrane, Jackie Voulgaris and Jenny Papageorge.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES:

In **September** we held our luncheon at the Village Inn on N. Dale Mabry Blvd. with fourteen members in attendance and we enjoyed our fellowship.

In **October** we met at the Longhorn Steakhouse on N. Westshore Blvd. with 12 in attendance. We sang Happy Birthday to Joanne, Diane, and Margaret.

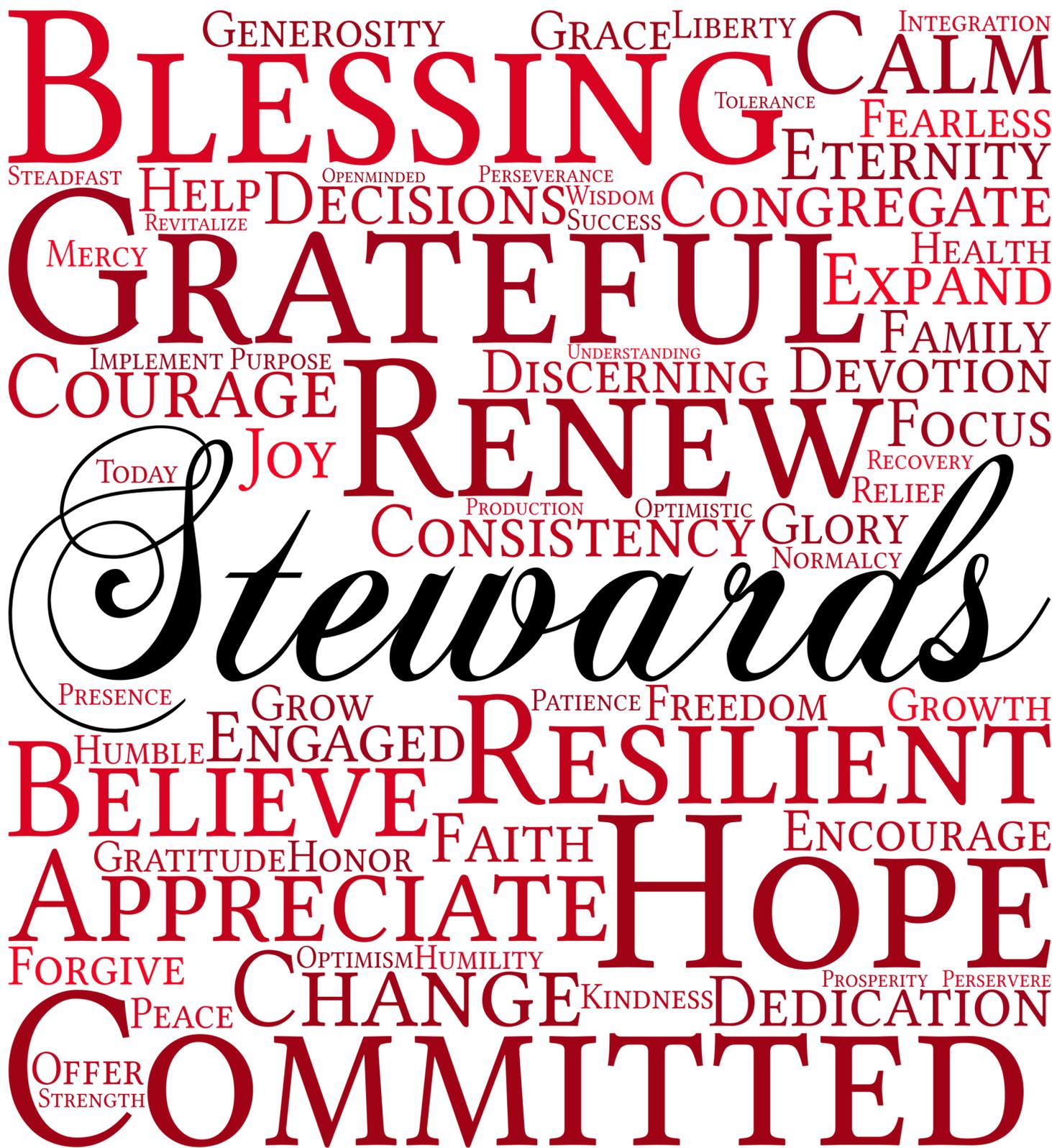


The next two (**November and December**) luncheons will be held at the Kourmolis Center. They will be potluck luncheons. In November we will play trivia pursuit, based on religious topics, and in December we will exchange Christmas gifts.

For more information and to get on our email list, contact: Bill Manikas at wmanikas@gmail.com or 813-716-8185

Dora Morgan at 813-613-3738

Photo of us at Longhorn Steakhouse



Our word for our parish for 2022 is “Stewards”. Here are the words that our parishioners chose to mark their year.

Verse of the Year—I Peter 4:10

As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.

Stewards of God's Grace - Stewards of Our Talents/Gifts

By: Fr Stavros Akrotirianakis

Our word for our parish for 2022 is "stewards." Every month this year, Fr. Stavros will write a short article on one aspect of this word, to keep it at the forefront of our minds as we journey through 2022.

As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. 1 Peter 4:10

As we have said many times this year, a steward is a temporary caretaker. And nothing is more temporary than our possessions. We gain and dispose of possessions our entire lives. Some we have for a longer time, such as a house, maybe even a car. Many things we have for a short period of time, like clothes and electronic devices.

The question is, are we a good caretaker of our possessions? Do we take care of what we have? A good steward is not wasteful. For instance, you can get a decent metal water bottle for \$10-20. If you carry that bottle around and use it every day, hopefully it gets six months of daily use, especially if you are setting it down outside. If you are spending \$40 on water bottles in a year, that works out to \$3 a month for something that is very much used by many of us. That's good stewardship. If you buy a water bottle, use it once and either lose it or break it, that's not good stewardship, even if it's only a \$10 loss. That is wasteful. There are things we buy and we never use. Extra clothes, extra pots and pans, things that sit in our cupboards and closets that we often forget we even have. That's not good stewardship either. Because we've bought things we don't really need. I don't think God expects us to be in need, to not get things we need. I do think that He expects us to use what we have wisely and judiciously, and not waste what we have.



The world is conditioning us to believe that material goods are a sign of success. I remember five years ago, when we evacuated our home because of Hurricane Irma. We took one car and we took the most

valuable things from our house. We didn't take much. In fact, there would have been room for more stuff. If we took all the stuff in our house, it would take a large storage facility to hold all of it. Yet, the things we really valued fit into a Toyota Camry with room to spare.

There is a difference between things we want and things we need. Many times we misclassify needs as actually wants. And we want more than we really need. That doesn't mean it's a sin to be extravagant in some things. I like lawn mowers, I own more than one. I like vestments. I own a lot of them. And I guess God will judge me on my material goods. The things I have, lawn mowers and vestments, I take care of. I also make sure to be generous in giving to the church and other charitable entities. It's a balance. We've already discussed the stewardship of money. And the need to have a sense of gratitude for what we have and not always be wanting more. There needs to be a sense of generosity to those who need and don't have. And certainly possessions we no longer use, if they are in good shape, should be given freely to those who can use them.

Some of our possessions will be disposed of. I don't think there is a great need for used underwear and socks, or used medical supplies—these things need to be given as new. However, a home, even one we "own" is just temporary. At some point the home will be owned by someone else. If we don't keep our homes in good shape, if we destroy utilities and such, we won't be able to sell the home to anyone else when we are done being a steward of it. A good steward takes care of his property, whether it is a physical structure like a home, or something as mundane as a \$10 water bottle.



Good News of Great Joy!

We are so excited to once again offer a parish wide gift to enhance your family's Nativity Fast and help prepare you for the upcoming celebration of the Birth of Christ! Included are some resources to help guide your spiritual path during this season – a guidebook of prayers and daily scripture readings and journaling space. There are seasonal items for you to use in your home – an ornament, a votive candle, a special letter to read on Christmas morning. And there are some useful, fun promotional items for you to proudly show off and use year-round, too – a magnet, pen, post it notes - all with our St. John logo! And don't forget to download the St. John App to access the choir playlist of Christmas hymns and carols.

Our Welcome Ministry is so thankful for the many volunteers and efforts of all our ministry heads to offer this gift from our parish family.

The bags will be available after the Divine Liturgy on **Sunday, November 13th**. You may pick one up as you leave liturgy, or if you are watching online and would like to drive thru, we can bring one straight to your car! The gift bags will also be available in the office during the week.

This year, we are encouraging everyone to take an extra bag to give away. Share one with a family member, friend, neighbor, coworker. Give one to anyone who you think would love to have some **Good News of Great Joy!**

During this season of the Nativity Fast, may we grow in Christ's love, both individually and as a community and experience firsthand the **Good News of Great Joy!**

DO NOT NEGLECT TO SHOW *hospitality* TO STRANGERS,
FOR THEREBY SOME HAVE ENTERTAINED *angels unawares.*

HEBREWS 13:2

Family Calendar for the Nativity Fast 2022

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| <p>November 13 Luke 10:27 St. John Chrysostom Divine Liturgy 10:00 am <i>Light your red candle on your family wreath</i> LOVE</p> | <p>14 Luke 1:30 St. Philip Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</p> | <p>15 Luke 1:31 First Day of Nativity Fast Holy Unction 6:00 pm</p> | <p>16 Luke 1:32 St. Matthew Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</p> | <p>17 Luke 1:35 Thanksgiving</p> | <p>18 Luke 1:37 Send a thanksgiving card to an elderly person</p> | <p>19 Luke 1:38 Make and send a get well card</p> |
| <p>20 1 Timothy 4:4 Divine Liturgy 10:00 am <i>Light your white candle on your family wreath</i> GRATITUDE</p> | <p>21 Matthew 1:18 Birth of the Virgin Mary Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</p> | <p>22 Matthew 1:20 <i>Volunteer with a local charity</i></p> | <p>23 Matthew 1:21 Thanksgiving Eve Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm</p> | <p>24 Psalm 92:1 Thanksgiving</p> | <p>25 Matthew 1:24-25 St. Katherine Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</p> | <p>26 Luke 2:4 Make a Christmas ornament for your tree</p> |
| <p>27 Romans 12:12 Divine Liturgy 10:00 am <i>Light your gold candle on your family wreath</i> HOPE</p> | <p>28 Luke 2:7 Pray for your teachers</p> | <p>29 Luke 2:8 Come and See Dinner</p> | <p>30 Luke 2:9 St. Andrew Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</p> | <p>December 1 Luke 2:10 Let five things you are thankful for</p> | <p>2 Luke 2:11 St. Porphyrios Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</p> | <p>3 Luke 2:12 Make a Christmas ornament for your tree</p> |
| <p>4 11 Corinthians 9:11 St. Barbara Divine Liturgy 10:00 am <i>Light your green candle on your family wreath</i> GENEROSITY</p> | <p>5 Luke 2:13 St. Savaas Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</p> | <p>6 Luke 2:14 St. Nicholas Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</p> | <p>7 Luke 2:15 Farakless 6:00 pm</p> | <p>8 Luke 2:16 Decorate your stockings and hang them in your front windows</p> | <p>9 Luke 2:17 St. Anna Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</p> | <p>10 Luke 2:18 Bake and share some Christmas cookies</p> |
| <p>11 Psalm 35:11 Divine Liturgy 10:00 am <i>Light your blue candle on your family wreath</i> JOY</p> | <p>12 Luke 2:19 St. Spyridon Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</p> | <p>13 Luke 2:20 <i>Take a photo with your Nativity set</i></p> | <p>14 Matthew 2:1 <i>Leave a promise on a neighbor's porch secretly</i></p> | <p>15 Matthew 2:2 St. Euthymos Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</p> | <p>16 Matthew 2:9 Have a slumber party by your Christmas Tree</p> | <p>17 Matthew 2:10 Decorate a gingerbread house</p> |
| <p>18 11 Corinthians 5:7 Sunday Before Nativity Divine Liturgy 10:00 am <i>Light your purple candle on your family wreath</i> FAITH</p> | <p>19 Matthew 2:11 Divine Liturgy 7:30 am Day of Quiet Prayer 6:30 am-6:00 pm Christmas Candle-light Service 6:00 pm <i>Pray for your priest</i></p> | <p>20 Isaiah 7:14 St. Ignatius Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</p> | <p>21 Isaiah 9:6 <i>Decorate your driveway or sidewalk with Christmas messages with sidewalk chalk</i></p> | <p>22 John 1:1 St. Anastasia Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</p> | <p>23 John 1:14 Royal Hours of the Nativity 9-30 am</p> | <p>24 Luke 2:14-20 The Nativity of Christ Vesperal Liturgy 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 7:00 pm</p> |
| <p>25 Matthew 2:1-12 Divine Liturgy 10:00 am Christ is Born! Charity Meal! <i>Open your letter and read the Christmas Gospel</i> PEACE</p> | <p>26 John 3:16 <i>Pray for healthcare workers</i></p> | <p>27 Isaiah 48:10 <i>Mail thank you letters for your Christmas gifts</i></p> | <p>28 John 1:5 <i>Call your Godparents to wish them a Merry Christmas</i></p> | <p>29 Matthew 5:16 <i>Visit someone who lives alone</i></p> | <p>30 11 Corinthians 6:2 St. Anyasia Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</p> | <p>31 Luke 4:18-19 <i>Write a letter to your parents</i></p> |
| <p>January 1 Joshua 24:14 St. Basil Divine Liturgy 10:00 am Think about your work for 2023 SERVE</p> | <p>2 Psalm 100:2 <i>Pray for good things for someone who has been unwell to you</i></p> | <p>3 Romans 12:11 <i>Clean your room without being asked</i></p> | <p>4 Luke 3:4 Royal Hours of Theophany 9-30 am</p> | <p>5 Matthew 3:16 Eve of Theophany Vesperal Liturgy 9:00 am Blessing of the Waters 10:15 am</p> | <p>6 Matthew 3:17 Theophany Great Vespers for St. John the Baptist 6-30 pm</p> | <p>7 John 3:30 St. John the Baptist Divine Liturgy 9:30 am</p> |

Fifty-Two Verses in Fifty-Two Weeks: The Bible Project

By Fr. Stavros

Most of us don't spend enough time in the Bible. Sadly, some of us don't spend any time. Each week since January 2019, we provide in The Messenger and then repeated weekly in the bulletin, a verse or two. I choose verses that are meaningful to me, or well known or ones that have meaning in contemporary times. You are welcome to submit verses via email to me as well, as many of you have. 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, read it, memorize it and contemplate the verse each week. 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. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you through your reflection on Scripture. If you have any favorite verse you'd like me to comment on, please forward it to frstav@gmail.com.

November 6-12

*But now thus says the Lord, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."
Isaiah 43:1*

This was written by the Prophet Isaiah before the people of Israel were about to be exiled, a trying period of history which would last several hundred years. We think a few bad months are hard to endure. How about hundreds of years? Isaiah's beautiful words from the Lord to His people were words of reassurance, that even though they were about to enter into a difficult period, they were not going to

be abandoned by the Lord. We are in a difficult period, we live in a stressful world. God wants us to know the same words that applied to His people hundreds of years before Christ, as they were about to enter into a dark time, apply to us today. He has redeemed us. He knows each of our names. We are His, if we want to be. Even if everything goes wrong from a material standpoint, even from a health standpoint, everything from a spiritual standpoint can remain perfect, because He has redeemed us. We are His. He is our Savior. He is our hope in time of trouble.

November 13-19

*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.
John 10:11*

On Sunday, November 13, we will read the Gospel of the Good Samaritan, a beautiful passage about the importance of loving God and loving our neighbor. November 13 is also the feast of St. John Chrysostom, and when the day does not fall on a Sunday, we read a Gospel passage about Christ being the good shepherd. We not only love Christ because it is a commandment to love God along with our neighbor. We love Christ because we are supposed to see Him as our shepherd, which means that we are His sheep. Sheep are not the smartest of animals. They have to rely on the shepherd to lead them to water sources and to protect them from wolves. Sheep who follow the shepherd have the best chance to live long and safe lives. Sheep who wander from the flock risk injury. Shepherds, on the other hand, were not the upward climbers of society either. They were nomadic. Some were loyal to the sheep and some would run at the first sign of a wolf. Jesus is the good shepherd, the One who lays down His life for the sheep. We sheep are protected by Him. All we need to do is stick by Him until we get to the safety of the sheep pen, which is heaven. Jesus spoke in images that the agrarian society of the day would understand—sheep, wolves, pens and gates. He talked about the narrow gate, and how the sheep needed to get through the narrow gate in order to be safe in the pen. The gate was narrow enough to be protected by one shepherd. Sheep had to get in a straight line in order to enter into the gate. Jesus was the one who would guard the gate, laying down His life in it to protect

the flock. As sheep of the flock, we need to trust our good shepherd. And get to the narrow gate beyond which we can rest safe and secure, forever.

November 20-26

*I will give to the Lord the thanks due to His righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High.
Psalm 7:17*

Thanksgiving is the main thing on everyone's schedule this week. A meaningful feast, ostensibly set up around the concept of giving thanks, has become a feast of food and football and we've forgotten thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is not only offered for family and friends and things. And it's not only offered even to thank God for our food. It should be offered to thank God for our very lives, for everything we are and everything we have. And even more so, it's not about thanking God for what He has done for us, because perhaps this has been a bad year and we are more frustrated than thankful towards Him. This is thanksgiving for His righteousness, which abounds even when we think we have been deprived of it. God's righteousness is everlasting. The consequences of living in a fallen world may at times make us feel that life is not fair or that God is not fair. His ways and our ways, they work differently. Faith is looking towards God as righteous even when life seems unfair. To give thanks for God's righteousness, His awesomeness, this is among the highest types of thanksgiving one can

offer. We've all heard the phrase, "Keep Christ in Christmas." We need to keep thanks in Thanksgiving, especially our thanksgiving to the Lord.

November 27-December 3

*When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the Child was.
Matthew 2:9*

With Thanksgiving over, our thoughts turn to the Nativity. If we haven't gotten a Christmas tree yet, this is the week it probably happens. The countdown of dwindling shopping days is in full effect. We are probably stressing out about how we get it all in by December 25. This verse reminds us to keep our eyes on the star, to remember that we are journeying, not to the tree surrounded by gifts, but to the manger and celebration of THE Gift. The Magi walked for two years, unsure of where they were going or what they would find when they got there. This journey of faith is our journey as well. We follow the "star" in life until it gets to where heaven is.

St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!

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

Live Streaming

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

To access this page

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

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



Like



Making Introductions a Little Less Awkward - by Fr. Elias Villis

This is not a complaint at all but a simple request, I think on behalf of so many- When greeting someone after a long time, assume you are not remembered and say your name and we met at so and so and when. (nothing personal because I do the same - who cares or who knows father Elias) Definitely do not say the following:

"Hi (person's name)! You don't remember me, do you?" or definitely not the following;

"You don't remember do you?" "Ok what's my name?" Ugh! This puts so many people in a bad place and you just do not know what is in the person's head when you are greeting

them. Be humble and assume the humble approach. It spares the person the sadness of saying they don't remember you.



Fr. Elias Villas is the Proistamenos of the Greek Orthodox Church of our Savior in Rye, NY and also the Chancellor of the Direct Archdiocesan District of the Archdiocese.

On the lighter side

American Thanksgiving Dinner—Turkey, gravy, stuffing, cranberry sauce, ham, potatoes and salad. No room for dessert

Greek-American Thanksgiving Dinner—Turkey gravy, roast beef, mom's spanakopites, Thia's spanakopites, Yiayia's spanakopites, mom's tiropites, Thia's tiropites, Yiayia's tiropites, pastitsio, greek salad, Caesar salad, feta, kefalotiri, lots of olives, dolmathes, horta, homemade bread, bread, more bread, break for 20 mins. . .galaktobouriko, baklavadakia, mom's cake, Thia's cake, Yiayia's cake. . .after a few hours. . .Repeat from beginning again!

Inspirational Thoughts

I stopped venting and started praying because I don't need sympathy, I need strength.

You fast, but Satan does not eat. You labor fervently, but Satan never sleeps. The only dimension with which you can outperform Satan is by acquiring humility, for Satan has no humility. ~St. Moses the Ethiopian

Stop looking for the perfect church. Go worship a perfect God today with a congregation of flawed people who need grace as much as you do.

Every situation in life is temporary. So, when life is good, make sure you enjoy and receive it fully. And when life is not good, remember that it will not last forever and better days are on the way.

Mistakes are painful when they happen, but year's later collection of mistakes is called experience, which leads to success.

Nobody's perfect. We make mistakes. We say wrong things. We do wrong things. We fall. We get up. We learn. We grow. We move on. We live.

Imagine this: IF you had \$86,400 in your account and someone stole \$10 from you, would you be upset and throw all of the remaining \$86,390 away in hopes of getting back at the person? Or move on and live? Right, move on and live. We all have 86,400 seconds each day. Don't let someone's negative 10 seconds ruin the remaining 86,390. Don't sweat the small stuff, life is bigger than that.

The practice of staying present will heal you. Obsessing about how the future will turn out creates anxiety. Replaying broken scenarios from the past causes anger or sadness. Stay here, in the moment. ~S. Mcnutt

What Orthodox Christians Believe About Angels Our Faith

Orthodox Belief On Angels

(The Feast of the Archangels is November 8. The following article is about the angels and is included this month because of their feastday.)

"The [guardian] angel will not retreat from us, unless we drive him away by our evil deeds. As the smoke drives bees away, and stench the doves, even so our stinking sin drives away from us the angel who protects our life." - Saint Basil the Great

Created Long before Humans

Saint John of Damascus tells us: "God is Himself the Maker and Creator of the angels; for He brought them out of nothing into being and created them after His own image. They are an incorporeal race, a sort of spirit or immaterial fire, even as the divine David says that ' His angels are spirits , and His ministers a flame of fire (Ps 103:6).

Angels were among the first part of God's creation. In the Creed we say, "I believe in one God...Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. Holy Scripture says, "When the stars were made, all My angels praised Me with a loud voice" (Job 38:7, LXX). The Apostle Paul tells us "By Him all things created that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers" (Col 1:16). Heaven that was created in the very beginning according to Genesis (In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth) is generally understood by the Fathers to be an invisible heaven inhabited with powers on High. They believed that God created the angels long before He created the visible world.

Mankind Knew the Angels

Mankind knew about the existence of angels from their first days in Paradise. From Genesis we know that a Cherubim was placed with a flaming sword at the gates of Paradise after Adam and Eve were expelled. Later, Abraham encouraged his servant Nabor telling him that the Lord would send His angel with him to protect him. (Gen 34:7). Jacob saw angels during his sleep and while awake. (Gen 32:1-2).

In the time of the New Testament an angel informed Zachariah of the conception of the Forerunner and the Virgin Mary the Theotokos of the birth of Jesus. Angels announced the good news to the shepherds at the birth of Jesus and prevented the Magi from

returning to Herod. Angles served Jesus after His temptation in the wilderness and appeared to strengthen Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was angels who informed the Myrrhbearing Women about His Resurrection. Angels informed the Apostles of His second coming as the time of His ascension into heaven. Angels help the apostles. They freed Peter from prison and instructed Cornelius. They told Paul to appear before Caesar. Angels are the foundation of the revelations given by John in his book of the Revelation.



Nature of Angels

Angels are active spirits with intelligence, will and knowledge. They serve God to carry out His will and glorify Him. The angels are bodiless and invisible to our physical eyes. They have no bodily needs or desires and passions, no cares about food, drink, clothes or shelter. Nor do they possess the impulse and cravings for procreation. They neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matt. 22:30). They have no worries about the future either, and no fear of death. For, though God created them before man, they are neither aged nor aging, but unchangingly youthful, beautiful and strong. They have no anxiety about their salvation and no struggle for immortality, being already immortal (Luke 20:36). Unlike men, they are not faltering between good and evil, being already good and holy as when God created them.

Peter informs us that in their might and power they surpass all earthly governments and authorities (II Peter 2:10-11). But as created beings they have limitations. They do not know the depths of the essence of God (I Cor 2:11). They do not know the future that only God knows (Mark 13:32). They do not fully understand the mystery of the Redemption yet

they wish to (I Peter 1:12). They don't know human thoughts (III Kings 8:39). And they cannot by themselves perform miracles without the will of God (Ps 71:19).

"An angel, then, is an intelligent essence, in perpetual motion, with free will, incorporeal, ministering to God, having obtained by grace an immortal nature. The Creator alone knows the form and limitation of the angelic essence; but all that we can understand is that it is incorporeal and immaterial. For all that is compared with God, Who alone is incomparable, we find to be dense and material. For in reality only the Deity is immaterial and incorporeal." Saint John of Damascus.



Number and Ranks of Angels

They are an extraordinary number of angels. In the book of Daniel it says, "thousand thousands ministered unto Him and the thousand times ten thousand stood before Him" (Daniel 7:10). And in Luke it is recorded that "a multitude of the heavenly host" praised our Lord (Luke 2:13).

We can only assume that with such a number there are differing degrees of perfection among their ranks. In Scripture we see some called angels and others archangels (I Thess 4:16; Jude, v 9)

The Tradition of the Orthodox Church teaches us that there is a Heavenly Hierarchy of angels. This was documented earliest by St. Dionysius the Areopagite one of the Seventy Apostles in *On the Heavenly Hierarchy*. He explained the angelic world as divided into nine ranks made up of three hierarchies with three ranks each.

Thrones, Cherubims, and Seraphim - those closest to God.

The Seraphim (Means flaming) are aflame with love for God and kindle others to such love. They are closest to God as the prophet Isaiah saw, saying: "And the seraphim stood around Him, each having six wings" (Isaiah 6:2). They are fire-like, "For our God is a consuming fire." (Heb 12:29); "His throne was a flame of fire" (Dan 7:9), "Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire" (Ps 103:4).

After the seraphim, are the many-eyed Cherubim (Means Great understanding) who are radiant with the knowledge of the mysteries of God and the depths of His Wisdom. Through the cherubim wisdom is sent down to others and spiritual enlightenment is given to see of God and gain knowledge of Him.

Next are the Thrones. On them God intellectually resides. Residing on them in an incomprehensible manner, God makes His righteous judgment, according to the word of David: "Thou hast sat upon a throne, O Thou that judgest righteousness." (Ps 9:4). They serve His justice, glorifying it and pouring out the power of justice onto the thrones of earthly judges, helping kings and masters to bring forthright judgment.

Dominions Virtues and Powers

The Dominions dominate the rest of the angels. They send down power for prudent governing and wise management to authorities on the earth set up by God. Further they teach how to control the senses, how to subdue in oneself dissolute desires and passions, how to enslave the flesh to the spirit, and how to rule over one's will and be above all temptations.

The Virtues (Authorities) work miracles and send down the grace of miracle-working to those worthy of such grace, so they may work miracles. They help people laboring and those overburdened by troubles and they bear the infirmities of the weak. They also strengthen every man in patience.



The Powers have power over the devil, to restrain the demons, to repulse the temptations brought upon people by them. They help those wrestling with passions and vices to cast out evil thoughts

Angels, Archangels, and Principalities - those closest to Man .

The Principalities direct the lower angels. They are entrusted with the management of the universe and the keeping of all the kingdoms and principdoms, of lands and all peoples, races and nations. They raise worthy people to various honorable offices and direct them so that they take power for the sake of spreading and augmenting of God's holy glory, and for the sake of the benefit of their neighbors.

The Archangels are the heralds of good news. They reveal prophecies, knowledge, and understanding of God's will which they receive from the higher orders of angels and announce to the lower order. They Gaabriel strengthen people in faith, enlightening their mind with the light of knowledge of the holy Gospel and revealing the mysteries of devout faith.

The Angels are the lowest of all the orders and the closest to man. They announce the lesser mysteries and intentions of God and teach people to live virtuously and righteously before God. They are appointed to guard each of us who believe.

All of the heavenly orders are also called by the common name "angels". Although they have different names according to their situation and grace given by God (as seraphim, cherubim, thrones and the rest of the orders), yet all in general are called angels, because the word "angel" is not a denomination of essence, but of service, as it is written: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister" Raphael (Heb 1:14). But their service is different and not identical: each order has its own service

This ranking is also found in other early Church documents such as the Apostolic Constitutions, writings of Saint Ignatius, Gregory the Theologian, Saint John Chrysostom, Gregory the Dialogist, John of Damascus and others. These nine ranks can be found in Holy Scripture.

A few archangels are given specific names:

Michael (Means like God) found in Dan 10:13,12:1; Jude 1:9 and Rev 12,8.

Gabriel (Man of God), found in Dan 8:16,9:21, and Lk 1:19-26.

Raphael (The Help of God), Tobit 3:17, 12:15

Uriel (Fire of God) found in 2 Ezdras 4:36, 4:1

Salathiel (Prayer to God), found in 2 Esdras 5:16

Jegudiel (Praise of God),

Barachiel (Blessing of God).

Ministry of the Angels

Angels were created as the most perfect reflections of His grandeur and glory. Angels that are closest in rank to humans are seen in Scripture as heralds of God's will, guides, and servants of an individual's salvation. Some angels are appointed for the governance of the heavens and the world. Others continually glorify God.

Guardian Angel

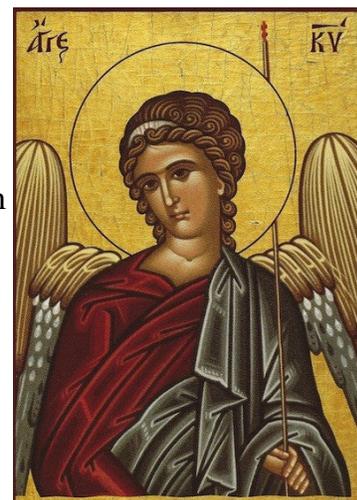
The Orthodox Church believes that each person is assigned a guardian angel. Christ said, "Take heed that ye despise not ye of these little ones, for I say unto you, that their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt 18:10).

It was originally from the Jews that the Church inherited this belief in the ministry of the Guardian Angels. The Psalmist had declared, "The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them" (Psalms 34 [33]:7). And again, "He will give His angels charge over you, to keep Jedudeil you in all your ways" (91 [90]:11)

Most Orthodox believe that you receive a guardian angel when you are baptized.

Prayer to our Guardian Angel:

O angel of God, my holy guardian, given to me from heaven, enlighten me this day, and save me from all evil. Instruct me in doing good deeds, and set me on the path of salvation. Amen.





O angel of Christ, holy guardian and protector of my soul and body, forgive me everything wherein I have offended you every day of my life, and protect me from all influence and Barachiel temptation of the Evil One. May I never again anger God by my sins. Pray for me to the Lord, that He may make me worthy of the grace of the All-Holy Trinity, and of the blessed Mother of God, and of all the saints. Amen.

Cherubic Hymn - the song of the angels

The Cherubic Hymn is the song of the angels, sung during every Divine Liturgy of the year except those of Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday. It occurs after the Gospel reading and is interrupted by the Great Entrance. The Cherubic Hymn was added to the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom by order of the Emperor Justinian near the end of the sixth century. Let's be sure we grasp what this means.

Think of the words to this well known hymn of our Divine Liturgy.

"We, who mystically represent the Cherubim,

And chant the thrice-holy hymn to the Life-giving Trinity,

Let us set aside the cares of life

That we may receive the King of all,

Who comes invisibly escorted by the Divine Hosts."

As we live faithfully the Orthodox way, we draw closer to God and we become more like the angels. It is a great gift of the mercy and love of God for us that we, who are sinful, impure, fallible, weak are allowed to be His servants, as are the angels. It is a

great gift of the mercy and love of God for us that our Lord Jesus Christ became Incarnate – for He identified Himself completely with us by sharing fully in our human nature. He did not do this for the angels!

Fans (rhipidion) Used In Liturgical Services

When we celebrate the Divine Liturgy we gather as the Church triumphant and the Church Militant. This means with those who are still on this earth and all those who are in the heavenly realms. We are joined with the angels as well as the saints. The altar boys represent visibly the angels and carry the fans with the Seraphim and the inscription, "Holy, Holy, Holy. Lord of Sabaoth, the earth is full of your glory. (Is 6:1-3)," the hymn of the angels. The fan at the right is used at Saint George Cathedral.



We know that such fans were used as early as the fourth century in the Church services. According to the Apostolic Constitutions (VIII 12:3-4) two deacons stood by the altar and waved fans. Here is one that was used in Constantinople in the sixth century.

Monday is Dedicated to the Holy Angels

Our Orthodox Church has dedicated Monday to the holy angels. Therefore, every Monday in the church services we are reminded of the holy angels with praise and prayer: "Holy Archangels and Angels, pray to God for us."

November 2022

| ◀ Oct 2022 | November 2022 | | | | | Dec 2022 ▶ |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
| **FAST DAY | | <p>1 Sts. Cosmas and Damian Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.</p> | <p>2 ** Choir Practice</p> | <p>3 Adult Greek School</p> | <p>4 **Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Greek Festival</p> | <p>5 Orthros 8:00 a.m. Liturgy 9:00 a.m. Greek Festival</p> |
| <p>6 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Greek Festival Community Party</p> | <p>7 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.</p> | <p>8 Archangels Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</p> | <p>9 ** St. Nectarios Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. Choir Practice</p> | <p>10 Adult Greek School Young Adult Discussion 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.</p> | <p>11 **</p> | <p>12 Young at Heart</p> |
| <p>13 St. John Chrysostom Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Recognition of Veterans in church Nativity Fast Kick-off day GOYA 5:00 p.m.</p> | <p>14 St. Philip Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.</p> | <p>15 ** Beginning of Nativity Fast Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Sacrament of Holy Unction 6:00 p.m.</p> | <p>16 ** St. Matthew Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</p> | <p>17 ** Adult Greek School</p> | <p>18 ** JOY tween Movie night</p> | <p>19 **</p> |
| <p>20 ** Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Men's Group 5:00 p.m.</p> | <p>21 ** Entrance of the Virgin Mary Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.</p> | <p>22 **</p> | <p>23 ** Thanksgiving Liturgy Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.</p> | <p>24 ** Thanksgiving—Office Closed</p> | <p>25 ** St. Katherine Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</p> | <p>26 **</p> |
| <p>27 ** Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. No Sunday School</p> | <p>28 ** Bible Study 6:30 p.m.</p> | <p>29 ** Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Come and See Dinner</p> | <p>30 ** St. Andrew Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Choir Practice Parish Council Meeting</p> | | | |

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

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St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Timetable of Services

Saturdays: Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. **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) firstav@gmail.com | Buildings & Grounds Euripides Panos 813-352-3972 | Junior Olympics Dwight Forde 727-685-9028 |
| Retired Priest in Residence Rev. Fr. Stratton Dorozenski 813-876-8830 (Office) | Chanter Vasili Panagopoulos 414-254-5134 | MOMS Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862 |
| Retired Priest in Residence Rev. Fr. John Stefero 813-876-8830 (Office) 678-637-4425 (Cell) | Choir Tara Swartzbaugh, Director 813-313-0439 Ruth Losovitz, Organist 727-688-2782 | Men's Fellowship Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038 |
| Pastoral Assistant Vasili Panagopoulos 414-254-5134 (Cell) vasili@stjohntpa.org | College Student Program Vasili Panagopoulos 414-254-5134 | Parish Nursing Ministry Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026 |
| Parish Council John Zelatis, President 813-727-2271 Euripides Panos, Vice President 813-352-3972 Marilyn Sandborn, Secretary 813-855-8678 Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898 Jim Armstrong 954-295-6665 Joanne Dalaklis 813-385-8205 Amin Hanhan 813-846-2957 Nick Katzaras 863-581-2430 Suzanne Pileggi 813-244-5855 Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026 Mike Xenick 813-340-8737 | Community Outreach Greg Melton 813-967-2074 | Oratorical Festival Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374 |
| Office Staff Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper debbie@stjohntpa.org fax:813-443-4899 | Connect Through Christ - Special Needs Ministry for Children Dante and Lindsey Skourellos 813-765-9534 | Photography Ministry Karina Findlay 813-476-9632 |
| Adopt a College Student Kathy Kaburis 813-240-6513 | Dance Groups H XAPA ΜΑΣ, 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 | Philoptochos Melissa Krinos 813-716-9975 |
| Adult Greek School Magda Myer 813-523-5771 | Daughters of Penelope Elena Paras Ketchum 813-229-0144 | Stewardship Chris Kyrus 757-672-1920 George Mitseas 813-748-1220 |
| AHEPA Thomas Sakaris, President 201-819-2319 | Festival Mike Xenick 813-340-8737 | Sunday School Vickie Peckham 813-758-3102 |
| Altar Angels Kalliope Chagaris 813-789-4134 | Finance Committee Gary Ward 813-846-3898 | Usher Pete Trakas 813-505-2193 |
| Altar Boys Fr Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038 | Food Pantry Sheila Vukmer 412-719-1005 | Veterans/1st Responders Fr. John Stefero 813-876-8830 |
| Bookstore Presbyteria Denise Stefero 678-464-4833 | GriefShare Donna Hambos 813-843-8412 | Website / Social Media / APP VOLUNTEER NEEDED! |
| Bible Study-Monday Night Fr. John Stefero 678-637-4425 | Gasparilla Parking VOLUNTEER NEEDED! | Welcoming Ministry Maria Xenick 813-765-3587 |
| Bible Study-Tuesday Morning Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038 | GOYA Michael & Bessie Palios 813-523-0346 | Young Adult Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038 |
| | Hope/Joy George & Zackie Amers 813-245-3813 | Young at Heart Bill Manikas 813-716-8185 Dora Morgan 813-613-3738 |
| | Joy Tweens Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963 | Youth Protection Suzanne Pileggi 813-244-5855 |
| | | 12 Disciples Mathew Balasis 727-421-7376 |

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