

ἡ ἀγγελία

# THE MESSENGER

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight -- "

Mark-2:3

April 2023  
The  
Resurrection

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

(813) 876-8830 | WWW.STJOHNTPA.ORG | 2418 W. SWANN AVE. TAMPA, FL 33609



### 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

# St. John's Directory

## 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.

<b>Parish Priest</b> Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-876-8830 (Office) frstav@gmail.com		<b>Bible Study-Tuesday Morning</b> Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis    813-394-1038		<b>Joy Tweens</b> Maraquet Edquid    813-422-8963	
<b>Retired Priest in Residence</b> Rev. Fr. Stratton Dorozenski    813-876-8830 (Office)		<b>Buildings &amp; Grounds</b> Euripides Panos    813-352-3972		<b>Junior Olympics</b> Dwight Forde    561-310-5034	
<b>Retired Priest in Residence</b> Rev. Fr. John Stefero 813-876-8830 (Office)    678-637-4425 (Cell)		<b>Chanter</b> Vasili Panagopoulos    414-254-5134		<b>MOMS</b> Mary Ann Konstas    813-215-9862	
<b>Pastoral Assistant</b> Vasili Panagopoulos vasili@stjohntpa.org    414-254-5134 (Cell)		<b>Choir</b> Tara Swartzbaugh, Director    813-313-0439 Ruth Losovitz, Organist    727-688-2782		<b>Men's Fellowship</b> Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis    813-394-1038	
<b>Parish Council</b> John Zelatis, President    813-727-2271 Euripides Panos, Vice President    813-352-3972 Marilyn Sandborn, Secretary    813-760-6289 Gary Ward, Treasurer    813-846-3898 Jim Armstrong    954-295-6665 Amin Hanhan    813-846-2957 Nick Katzaras    863-581-2430 Suzanne Pileggi    813-244-5855 Alexis Scarfoglio    813-892-1599 Marcelle Triantafilou    612-396-5026 Mike Xenick    813-340-8737		<b>College Student Program</b> Vasili Panagopoulos    414-254-5134		<b>Parish Nursing Ministry</b> Marcelle Triantafilou    612-396-5026	
<b>Office Staff</b> Kim Rojas, Administrative Assistant    813-876-8830 kim@stjohntpa.org Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper debbie@stjohntpa.org    fax:813-443-4899		<b>Community Outreach</b> Greg Melton    813-967-2074		<b>Oratorical Festival</b> Peggy Bradshaw    727-244-1374	
<b>Adopt a College Student</b> Kathy Kaburis    813-240-6513		<b>Connect Through Christ - Special Needs Ministry for Children</b> Dante and Lindsey Skourellos    813-765-9534		<b>Photography Ministry</b> Karina Findlay    813-476-9632	
<b>Adult Greek School</b> Magda Myer    813-523-5771		<b>Dance Groups</b> H XAPA MAΣ, Alexandra De Maio    813-340-9668 Bessie Palios,    813-523-0347 Maraquet Edquid    813-422-8963 HAPEA, Marina Choundas    813-877-6136 IANHIFYPI, Alexandra De Maio    813-340-9668		<b>Philoptochos</b> Melissa Krinos    813-716-9975	
<b>AHEPA</b> Thomas Sakaris, President    201-819-2319		<b>Daughters of Penelope</b> Elena Paras Ketchum    813-229-0144		<b>Stewardship</b> Chris Kyros    757-672-1920 George Mitseas    813-748-1220	
<b>Altar Angels</b> Kalliope Chagaris    813-789-4134		<b>Festival</b> Mike Xenick    813-340-8737		<b>Sunday School</b> Vickie Peckham    813-758-3102	
<b>Altar Boys</b> Fr Stavros Akrotirianakis    813-394-1038		<b>Finance Committee</b> Gary Ward    813-846-3898		<b>Usher</b> Pete Trakas    813-505-2193	
<b>Bookstore</b> Presbyteria Denise Stefero    678-464-4833		<b>Food Pantry</b> Sheila Vukmer    412-719-1005		<b>Veterans/1<sup>st</sup> Responders</b> Fr. John Stefero    813-876-8830	
<b>Bible Study-Monday Night</b> Fr. John Stefero    678-637-4425		<b>GriefShare</b> Donna Hambos    813-843-8412		<b>Website / Social Media / APP VOLUNTEER NEEDED!</b>	
		<b>Gasparilla Parking</b> Alex limberatos    262-370-0586		<b>Welcoming Ministry</b> Maria Xenick    813-765-3587	
		<b>GOYA</b> Michael & Bessie Palios    813-523-0346		<b>Young Adult</b> Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis    813-394-1038	
		<b>Hope/Joy</b> George & Zackie Ameres    813-245-3813		<b>Young at Heart</b> Bill Manikas    813-716-8185 Dora Morgan    813-613-3738	
				<b>Youth Protection</b> Suzanne Pileggi    813-244-5855	
				<b>12 Disciples</b> Mathew Balasis    727-421-7376	



# Fr. Stavros' Message



## We're Having a Revival

The concept a revival is not new to Protestant Christians. A revival is an occasion designed to have increase spiritual interest in the participants and to restore commitment and attachment to God. In the past two hundred years, revivals have taken place in many church communities. A preacher, someone like Billy Graham, would come to a town, set up a tent in many cases, and hold worship services and sermons for a week, designed to infuse spirituality back into a community and call members of the community to a new beginning in Christ.

Asbury University is a private Christian liberal arts college in Kentucky. In February 2023, they held a Christian revival. The revival was announced on February 8, 2023. (Now Asbury University was known for a revival that took place in the 1970s, which led to the growth of what is known as the "Jesus movement.") By the end of the revival on February 24 (yes, the revival lasted 16 days!), over 70,000 visits from 200 academic institutions had descended on the small town of Wilmore, Kentucky, to revive their faith. An average of 15,000 people was attending the daily worship events. What is impressive about this, among other things, is that the majority of the participants were college students, a demographic that most often is seen leaving the church.

I would like to think that the common denominator of these participants was a desire to be transformed. People came as seekers, looking for something to change them, to bring them closer to Christ.

Although the word "revival" is not used in Orthodox circles, we have a "revival" each year, even though we don't call it that.

We have a week of services and sermons designed to infuse spirituality into us and call us to a new beginning in Christ. That revival is planned, it's on the calendar each year. And it's called Holy Week.

## Information Versus Transformation

Holy Week is a period of 9 days, which begins on the Saturday of Lazarus (April 8 this year) through Pascha (which this year is April 16). At St. John, we will celebrate 20 services in this nine-day period, including 8 opportunities to receive Holy Communion and 2 opportunities to receive Holy Unction. We don't create something new each year for our Holy Week journey. Our "revival" is the same each year in terms of the services. The intention of the journey is also the same, the transform the "traveler". Even though the information will be the same, the transformation can be different, and this is based on how we approach the journey. If we come as attendees, who just sit in the pews and listen to the information, or we come as seekers, who come to absorb information and who allow it to transform them in some way.

## It's More Than a Feeling

One of the most famous classic rock songs is by a band named Boston and is entitled "More Than a Feeling." The popular refrain to the song has these words *"It's more than a feeling, when I hear that old song they used to play, I begin dreaming."*



I LOOKED OUT THIS MORNING AND THE SUN WAS GONE  
TURNED ON SOME MUSIC TO START MY DAY  
I LOST MYSELF IN A FAMILIAR SONG  
I CLOSED MY EYES AND I SLIPPED AWAY  
IT'S MORE THAN A FEELING (MORE THAN A FEELING)  
WHEN I HEAR THAT OLD SONG THEY USED TO PLAY  
(MORE THAN A FEELING)  
AND I BEGIN DREAMING (MORE THAN A FEELING)  
'TIL I SEE MARIANNE WALK AWAY  
I SEE MY MARIANNE WALKIN' AWAY

*In trying to think of something meaningful to say as we begin our Holy Week journey, my mind has isolated on these words from this song—It's more than a feeling.*

We can't lead with feelings in our lives, because feelings are constantly changing. I feel hungry, and then I eat and I'm full. I feel tired, and then I sleep and I feel rested. I feel happy and then something brings down my day and I feel sad. Feelings are all over the place. Look at Palm Sunday, two thousand years ago. It was a good feeling in Jerusalem that day. Thousands of visitors overwhelmed the city. It was time for Passover, and everyone had made the yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem for a week of worship, and also a week of fellowship. Without phones or internet or cars, this was a rare chance to see extended family and friends all gathered together in one place. People had heard about Jesus. That's why they gathered by the thousands when it was heard that He was going to enter Jerusalem. They cut down branches from palm trees, so they could have something to wave at Him. They threw down their clothes so He could pass over them. They shouted "Hosanna" with great gusto, just like we did a few moments ago.

And what happened to these feelings? Five days later, the same thousands of people were angry. They were so angry that they demanded that this same Man who they were cheering for five days earlier be put to death in the most painful and humiliating way possible. Feelings of euphoria changed to feelings of murder in five days, talk about a change. This is one example of why we can't live life leading with feelings.

### Feelings Change

When I was a little kid, I loved We got to stay up late, we got to get out of school on Good Friday, we got to hold candles, everyone sang a song—we knew the words in Greek, didn't really know what they meant, and even when we started singing them in English, we still didn't really know what they meant—but it felt good.

Over time, feelings have changed—we are so busy and so tired and so stressed that to worship to some people feels like a drag, even an imposition. Couple that with the pandemic and everyone's opinion on how the church handled that, many people feel frustrated or distracted and simply didn't or haven't yet come back. For many, feelings about Holy Week, and worship overall have changed.

I was reading excerpts from the book "The Purpose Driven Life" recently and one chapter was entitled "When God Seems Distant." The author begins the chapter with a very simple sentence "God is real, no matter how you feel." He goes on to write "The deepest level of worship is praising God in spite of pain, thanking God during a trial, trusting Him when tempted, surrendering while suffering, and loving Him when He seems distant." In other words, the deepest level of worshipping God is showing up even when we don't feel like it.

He writes further, "The most common mistake Christians make in worship today is seeking an experience rather than seeking God. They look for a feeling, and if it happens, they conclude they have worshipped. Wrong! . . . Seeking a feeling, even the feeling of closeness to Christ, is not worship." And just because we may feel that God is distant doesn't mean that He actually is. This is why we can't come to Holy Week for a feeling. *And we shouldn't stay away from Holy Week because of a feeling either.*

### Leading with Feelings is Actually Dangerous

Leading with feelings is actually a dangerous place to be, because when we feel nothing of God—either because the worship doesn't evoke feelings, or a dark chapter of life

leaves us feeling like God has abandoned us, or that we've permanently lost His love because of something we've done, then we simply quit doing both. Either we show up in body but not in spirit, or we don't show up at all.

Feelings are like a drug. We use feelings to get a "high" but eventually we need more and more feelings to get the same "high" or we jump from one place to another, one cause to another, one relationship to another, trying to get those feelings satiated and satisfied. That's why the song has it right, "It's more than a feeling"—life, relationships with people, and our relationship to God.



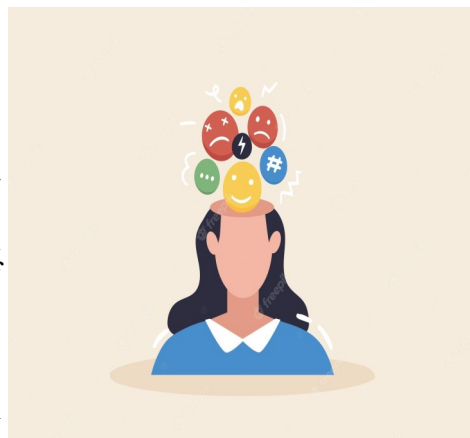
### Faith is a Choice

Life is about choices. And so is faith. Love is not a feeling. It is a choice. I can feel angry with someone but still choose to love them. I can feel

tired but still choose to get up and go to work. I can feel wronged by someone and choose to forgive them. And I can feel confused, frustrated, bored, or even angry with God and I can still choose to pray, worship and show up. Because faith is not a feeling, it is a choice.

Quoting from the song, this week we will "*hear that old song they used to play.*" Yes, on Palm Sunday night we will break out the old Holy Week book and make the march through its 500 pages.

Continued...





*We will sing the Hymn of the Bridegroom, the Hymn of Kassiane, the haunting hymn of “Simeron Kremate” as we carry the cross of Christ on Thursday, the beautiful Lamentations of Good Friday and the joyful “Christ is Risen” on Pascha. We will see maidens, myrrh-bearers and altar boys play their role in the services. We will hear dozens of Gospel readings and hundreds of prayers and petitions. And then what? What will we feel at the end of the week? Tired because of the long services and late hours? Glad that it is over and we can return to our regular lives? Uplifted, but the feeling quickly recedes into the rearview mirror? Depressed, because this week is a distraction but stressful life is right outside the door of the church when the week is over? Or will we feel nothing, because we haven’t put much in, as we “hear that old song play”—it’s more than a feeling!*

### **First Things First—Making Time for the Things that Matter Most**

This Lent, we’ve done a series entitled “First Things First: Making Time for the Things that Matter Most.” The words “Worship, Community, Love, Learning and Service” (our core values at St. John) have been the content of each of our Wednesday evening Pre-Sanctified dinners and the Sunday sermons of Lent. Each of these topics is also a choice, they are not feelings. We have a choice to worship, to live in community, to love, to learn and to serve. Feelings are not sustainable. Choices are. These choices are sustainable, regardless of how we feel. And a deep seeded faith in God is not based on a feeling, but a choice. Because even in the most devout Christian life, there will be times when life crushes us and God feels absent, and then what?



We can apply these five words, together with the sixth word, “Priorities,” into Holy Week this year. WORSHIP—there will be 20 opportunities to worship God this Holy Week.

There are dozens of scripture readings and hundreds of hymns during this journey.

They provide us an opportunity to LEARN. Worship, by definition, is done in COMMUNITY. The COMMUNITY will gather 20 times this Holy Week (and more times throughout the month of April). COMMUNITY is both validating and encouraging. It is validating because it is a collection of people who share the same values and who are on the same journey we are.

In today’s world, which is becoming more and more anti-Christian, it is encouraging to be with people who are like us, who are seeking God, who are trying to stay on a Godly path. If we came to church and no one was there for worship, we might feel that we are truly alone in our journey. The church being filled with people assures us that we are not alone. The greatest commandments given by our Lord are to LOVE God and to LOVE one another. Holy Week also reminds us of God’s LOVE for us, in dying on the cross for us. It gives us an opportunity to express our LOVE for Him, and there will be ample opportunities to express our LOVE for one another, whether that is a word of encouragement, an embrace, or a greeting. Finally, once Holy Week is over, and once we’ve hopefully had a transformational revival, we will be more motivated in our SERVICE to God, to His church, and to other people. Because the purpose of a revival is to revive, to transform, not just to keep someone on life support as they are dying, but to infuse new life into them.

### **I Begin Dreaming**

Let’s go back to the song—*it’s more than a feeling. Faith is a choice. Love is a choice. Following Christ is a choice. When I hear that old song they used to play—yes, we will hear those hymns and mark these services again for the first time in a year. We’re all a year older and a year more distracted, a year more busy and also a year closer to our personal meeting with God. And yes, these hymns and services are important. They are repetitive, they are the same every year, but they are necessary. God told Moses, after the first Passover, that the people of Israel should mark the feast in every generation, so that the people would not forget what happened when God led His people out of 400 years of slavery in Egypt. And likewise, now, with Christ as the New Passover, it is important to remember His Crucifixion and Resurrection in every generation, so that we will not forget what happened on Golgotha two thousand years ago, when Christ led His people from the darkness of Hades to the joy of heaven.*

This year for Holy Week, I invite you to do something maybe you’ve never done before, or maybe never even thought of before.

Continued...

And that is to follow the next line of the refrain, “I begin dreaming.” Dream of what was, what is, what could be, and what will be.

Dream of what was—think of what happened in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, put yourself with the disciples, at the table of the Last Supper, with Christ in the Garden, with the Virgin Mary and John at the foot of the cross, with Joseph and Nicodemus when they took courage and asked for the Body of Jesus so they could give it a proper burial, with the women who went early in the morning and found the tomb empty. We are going to relive that story, begin to dream of your place in it.

Dream of your relationship with Christ—does He feel distant? Do you feel like you walk hand in hand with Him? This is a week to get closer to Him, to get past our own failure and shame and recommit ourselves to Him. This happens when we take a long and honest look at ourselves and then take a good and honest look at Him, and dream not only of what is, but what could be. And finally, we should begin dreaming about heaven, what it will be like to walk in the twilight of heaven in the presence of God’s full glory, the same way that Adam and Eve did before the Fall. This is actually what the Hymn of Kassiane only Holy Tuesday Evening is about. Which is why we need to come not only as worshippers and parishioners but as pilgrims and seekers, who are coming to remember, to study, to learn, to pray and to grow. This Holy Week our community is not just a church, but a classroom.

### Relationships Are Choices

Relationships are based more on choice than on feeling. Because if they were based on feeling, we’d have no relationships, because in every relationship, we have times when we feel frustrated, even

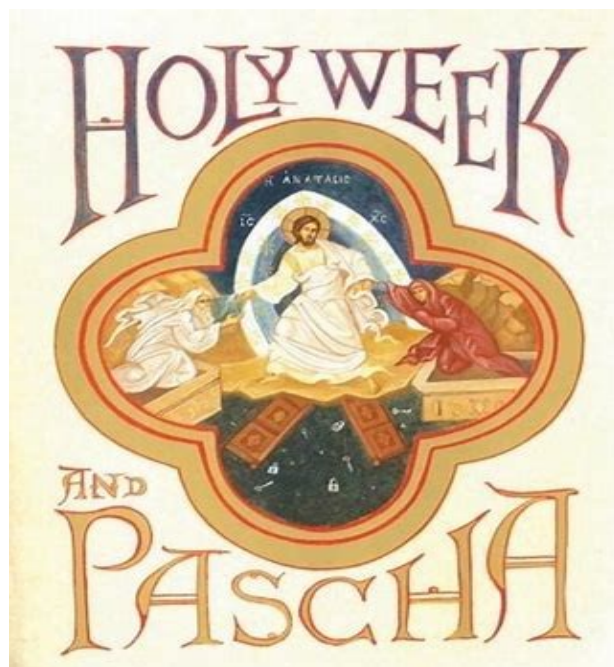


angry. Relationships are based on choice, whether that is a relationship with a spouse, a friend, or the Lord. Let’s spend some time this Holy Week strengthening our relationship with Christ, so that we are more convicted in our choice to follow Him.

Closing now with more lyrics from this song—*So many people have come and gone, their faces fade as the years go by, yet I still recall as I wander on, as clear as the sun in the summer sky.*

All of us remember people who are no longer with us. Some of their faces are fading from memory. And some still burn brightly. I can still hear the sounds of the choir growing up that kindled a joy for God in my heart. I can still remember the words of a priest who was a dear friend who helped me choose to be a survivor when I was feeling like a victim. One of the beautiful things about Holy Week is that ignites feelings of nostalgia. But these feelings shouldn’t lead to fixating on rituals. They should help convict us in our choice to follow Christ.

They should help revive our spirit. And just imagine, if our “Holy Week Revival” became like the Asbury Revival—if people flocked to the church—you, if you invited a friend, if our church was packed not just with people but with excitement for God, if people didn’t want the week to end, and if people at the end felt empowered and motivated to change the world. *I begin dreaming what that could be like.*



*It’s more than a feeling, when I hear that old song play, I begin dreaming. I’m thankful to again make this familiar journey with you. I look forward to dreaming about what was two thousand years ago, what is today, what could be going forward, and what will be—to stand in the presence of God and behold His glory. Faith is a choice, worship is a choice. To come as a seeker is a choice. And to open your heart so that the Lord can revive your spirit is a choice too. Have a blessed Holy Week! Kali Anastasi!*

+Fr. Stavros



# What we owe you, O Lord our God

By: Vasili Panagopoulos

Quoting the 8th Ode of the Resurrectional Katavasias, we are just a few weeks away from “the Day which is chosen and holy, Day One of the Sabbaths. It is the queen-day, the Lord's Day, and the Feast of all feasts, and the Festival above every festival, on which we extol Christ and bless Him to the ages...” We are just a few weeks away from Holy and Great Pascha. But, we are still in Great Lent, the time the Church has dedicated and set up for the faithful to prepare themselves for this Great Feast. For weeks now, we have fasted, increased our prayers, given alms, served our neighbor, made time for more services, sacrificed certain comforts, have faced plentiful amounts of temptations, and hopefully gone to Confession and received the Eucharist. The journey of Great Lent is the journey of man trying to reconcile himself with God. Hence the theme of Forgiveness Sunday is the expulsion of Adam from the Garden of Eden. Through Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection, mankind becomes reconciled with God, we now have a pathway to Heaven. We have Lent as a time for each of us to forget every worldly care, and personally reconcile ourselves with God, that way by the time we get to the Resurrection, the celebration and commemoration of mankind reconciled with God, we too may be reconciled with Christ. This reconciliation will allow us to truthfully and joyfully proclaim that Christ is Risen!



But in order to get to the Resurrection, we must first go through the Crucifixion, we cannot have one without the other. What exactly do we commemorate on Holy Thursday, and should we only remember this event one day out of the year? Holy Thursday night (which is the Orthros/Matins service for Holy Friday morning) is when the entire Orthodox world remembers and commemorates the day in which Jesus Christ was crucified. From the Synaxarion reading on Holy Thursday evening: “On holy and great Friday we remember the holy, saving and dread Sufferings of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ: the spittings, the blows, the buffetings, the outrages, the mockings, the purple cloak, the reed, the sponge, the vinegar, the nails, the lance and, above all, the Cross and death, which he accepted willingly for our sake; but also the saving confession on the cross of the Good Thief, crucified with him. You are the living God, slain on a Tree, O naked corpse, and Word of living God. Eden's locked gates the Thief has opened wide, By putting in the key, ‘Remember me’. In your ineffable and all-unbounded compassion, Christ our God, have mercy on us.”

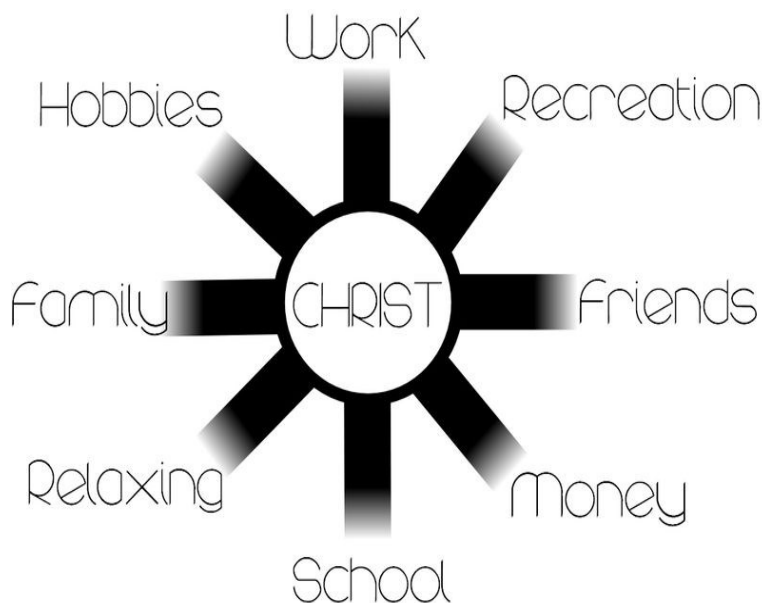
He accepted these things willingly for our sake, we are redeemed through His crucifixion, and with the Resurrection, humanity now has a pathway, a route in which man can enter Paradise. For this reason, we should not only remember the Crucifixion only on Holy Thursday evening, but everyday, every hour, every moment. Not only should we remember His Passion, but dedicate ourselves to Christ in every moment, that when the day comes that Christ calls us to come to Him, we may be prepared to welcome His Grace and Love with open and extended arms.

I recommend to everyone a Prayer Book called, *The Light of the World: Prayers to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. One of the morning prayers has a powerful and humbling message to the person offering the prayer: “You redeemed me by means of your precious blood, You have preserved me by your grace at all times, in every place, in every hour and moment, protecting my soul and my life, Thus I offer to you my whole life, for without you I am nothing and I can do nothing without your good will and thus from this very moment, O Lord my God, I dedicate myself wholly to you, and declare myself to be the everlasting servant of your majesty.

Continued...

And from this moment forward I offer unto you my every good thought, word, and deed vowing that whatever I do in this life shall be for the glory of your majestic Name and that, before anything else, the first thing I shall offer you is myself and no longer live for myself, but for you, my Creator and God."

I share this part of the prayer because it displays exactly how we should respond to Christ's Crucifixion, starting with "You redeemed me by means of your precious blood." I have been asked many times, "How does any of this Church stuff apply to me?" or "The events of Jesus Christ happened 2000 years ago, what does it matter now?"



These are valid questions, especially in today's society when many things are decided on feeling and how it applies to one's life. Jesus Christ's Crucifixion applies to every single person that has ever lived, and will ever live. We are redeemed through His precious blood, therefore we should offer our whole lives to remembering His Crucifixion and dedicate ourselves wholly unto Him.

If you are a parent, a son or daughter, a sibling, friend; no matter what your profession is, your hobbies; and no matter what your goals, dreams, and desires are in life, no matter what it is, if Jesus Christ is not at the center, it cannot be good... it's impossible. May this prayer be a reminder to always live according to Jesus' Word. May we always remember that we can do nothing good without Jesus Christ, and that in every part of our lives, in every decision we must first ask ourselves, "is Christ at the center of this?"

May these next few weeks of Great Lent be fruitful, and may the Grace of God be upon all of us as we celebrate His Holy Resurrection.

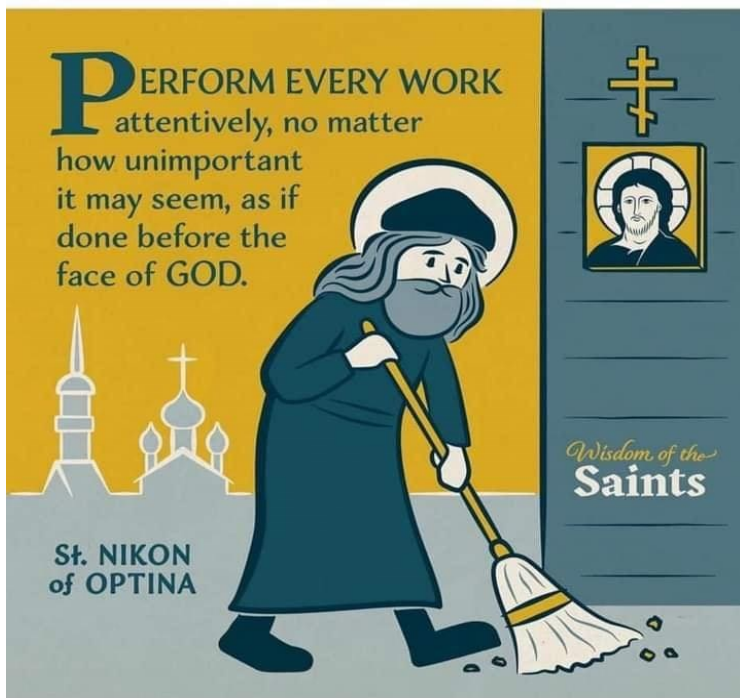
With love in Christ,  
Vasili

## Altar Angels

I would like to personally "Thank" all the ladies who volunteer and devote time to cleaning and beautifying our Church on a weekly basis. Their time and talents are greatly appreciated.

Special thanks to the Altar Angels:

Vickie Peckham, Ourania Stephanides, Tina Andre, Donna and Toulia Trakas, Jackie Voulgaris, Skip Higdon, Georgia Diamantakes and Kathy Kaburis. We are a great team! God Bless You All!



## Gift Card Donations for the Food Pantry

Gift cards in any amount for Publix, Walmart or  
Save-a-lot are greatly  
appreciated!

Feel free to drop them off to our

Office Admin. Assistant

Monday - Friday 8am- 5pm

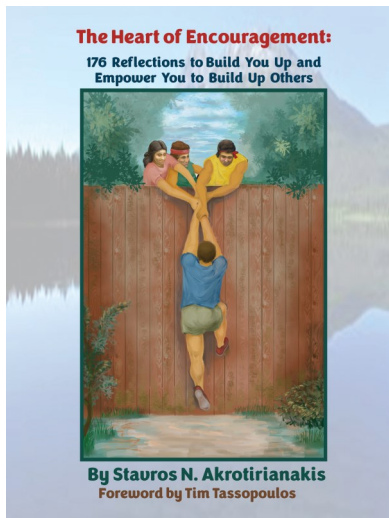
Or mail them in. Thank You!





# The Heart of Encouragement: 176 Reflections to Build You Up and Empower You to Build Up Others

## By Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis



*One of God's greatest blessings on my life is the ability to write. I love writing. For the most part it comes easy to me. By God's grace, I have written a daily reflection called "The Prayer Team" since February 2015. This has resulted in the publication of seven books, the latest of which is "The Heart of Encouragement." Each month*

*this year, I'm going to include one reflection from the 176 reflections of this book, as a way to share a small sampling of the contents with you in the hopes that you will buy this book. This is not about pushing a product. It's about sharing a message, a message we all need to hear. We all need more encouragement. Please read this reflection below, and if you like it, please consider purchasing the book for yourself or for someone else. It can be purchased from our bookstore or from Amazon/Barnes and Noble. Everyone wants to make a difference in the world. This book is my attempt to reach this parish and far beyond it with the hope that by God's grace, this book will help change the world even a little bit for the better. +Fr. Stavros*

### THE "THEOLOGY" OF FRED FLINTSTONE

**Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.**

**Exodus 20:8-11**

Many of us remember the Fred Flintstone cartoons. Fred worked in a rock quarry. He sat on the back of a dinosaur, chipping away at rocks all day. And at quitting time, a bird would squawk, Fred would drop his tools, slide down the back of the dinosaur, yell "yabba-dabba-doo," and run home to his family.



This image from a silly cartoon provides us a powerful metaphor for the work-family balance. Fred worked hard all day. And at quitting time, he quit and went home. There are two lessons we learn from Fred Flintstone—work hard during the work day, and then go home when the work day is over.

The concept of "quitting time" is vanishing. Why? Because when it is time to work, many of us are distracted. We all know people who "quit" (in the sense that they are mentally checked out) well before the workday ends. Texting, social media, and the internet contribute to our sense of distraction during the workday. If a person spends six minutes an hour surfing the web for non-work-related things, like reading the sports scores on ESPN.com, or texts with friends or updates their status on their social media accounts, that is 10 percent of work time being lost. If a person earns \$50,000 a year, he or she is stealing the equivalent of \$5,000 a year from the boss. So, work is not getting done at work, and that cheats your employer and customers. But it also cheats you.

When quitting time comes, people have to take work home because they didn't get it done at work. Or they have to stay overtime to get done what didn't get done during the day.

I recognize that the forty-hour work week is gone for many of us, including me. I have a job that I could work at twenty-four hours a day and still not get it all done. My solution? Appoint a quitting time, work hard until quitting time, and at quitting time, quit and go home. I look at Fred Flintstone for inspiration.

If your quitting time is 5:00 p.m., then work hard until 5:00 p.m. Don't get distracted.

Continued...

Don't quit at 4:00 p.m. or start texting and get on social media at 3:00 p.m. And if your quitting time is 5:00 p.m., and you've worked hard all day, then quit and go home and don't feel guilty about going home and relaxing.

Be present in whatever you are doing. Try not to think about home while at work. Try not to think about work while at home.

One of the Ten Commandments is quoted above: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Of all of the commandments, this is the longest, four verses. In it, God gives more details than any of the other commandments. God's intention for us is to live in balance.

His idea that we need rest is not a suggestion. It is a commandment!

We are to dedicate time each week to worship. That is not a suggestion. It is a commandment!

And we are to dedicate time to resting. That is not a suggestion. It is a commandment!

As you seek to live a balanced life, build in time to rest. Find a hobby. Build in time to worship. Make Sunday mornings sacred to the Lord. And when it is time to work, work without distraction so that you can rest without distraction or guilt.

Work/family/leisure/spirituality/rest—the struggle to find balance between all of these things will be a lifelong struggle. The first key to finding balance is to be present and undistracted when doing each.

*Lord, help me to focus today. At work, help me to be present and not distracted. Help me to be efficient in the tasks I need to finish. When it is time to quit, help me to leave work without guilt over what didn't get done. Give me a time to enjoy my family. Help me to find balance in all aspects of my life. Help me to put You first in all things. Amen.*

**Encouragement Challenge:** Work hard at work. Quit at quitting time. Be present.

**NO  
SHORTCUTS.**  
**WORK FOR IT**

## Inspiration

Listen earnestly to anything your children want to tell you, no matter what. If you don't listen eagerly to the little stuff when they are little, they won't tell you the big stuff when they are big, because to them all of it has always been big stuff.

~Catherine M. Wallace

If you left the Church to get away from hypocritical people, you should also quit your job, drop out of school, disconnect yourself from all of your friends and family, lock yourself in your room while you're at it. There will be flaws wherever there are humans. We need not start seeing church for what it is: It is a hospital with wounded and hurt people. You will find messed up, conniving, calculating, imperfect individuals, including yourself. As much as you want to deny it, we all go for healing. So if you felt betrayed by a fellow Church member, put your nursing cap on, and think of them as your patients. Treat them with care, love and kindness despite their rudeness.

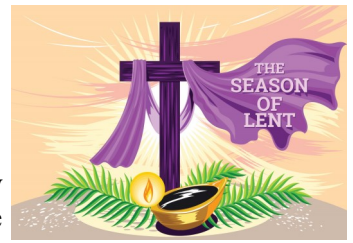
## On the Lighter Side

### Just for Laughs

1. Some people are kind, polite and sweet-spirited --- until you try to get into their pew.
2. The good Lord didn't create anything without a purpose, but the fly comes close.
3. Do you know the three times that most people are in church? When they are hatched, matched and dispatched.
4. Quit griping about your church; if it were perfect, you couldn't belong.
5. Every evening I turn my troubles over to God - He's going to be up all night anyway.
6. Young man, the secret of my success is that at an early age I discovered I was not God.
7. To err is human; to blame it on somebody else is even more human.
8. Some minds are like concrete, thoroughly mixed up and permanently set.



# Guidelines for the Last Week of Great Lent



## Sunday, April 2—Fifth Sunday of Lent - St. Mary of Egypt

St. Mary of Egypt was anything but a Saint throughout the first part of her life. From a very young age, she was a prostitute. Being from Egypt, she decided that she wanted to see the Holy Land and the Tomb of Christ (also known as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre). As she went to enter the Church, a force kept her from entering. She was unable to enter, while so many others did. She realized that God had done this to have her stop her sinning. She promised to God that day she would stop. She repented with a pure heart, and she was allowed to enter. She went for Confession, received Holy Communion, and then went to the desert to live for years in repentance. Years later, she was visited by a Priest-monk, Zosimos (later a Saint in our Church). He gave her Holy Communion, and they discussed her trials and tribulations. Although she suffered much, she was so happy to be with Christ. Later that same day, she fell asleep in the Lord. Her example of repentance is SO great, we commemorate her life many centuries later.

### Sacrament of Confession

Many people have already made appointments for their confessions to be heard, many for the first time in their lives. It is confidential. It helps you reconnect with God and unburden yourself of guilt. It helps you to make a new start in your spiritual journey and is an integral part of any successful Lenten journey. If you have questions about confession, please ask. There is no better way to prepare for Pascha than to receive this sacrament. Confessions will be heard up to April 7, and then again after Pascha. Please make your appointment as soon as possible, because our priests like to give people whatever time they need. As it gets closer to Holy Week and more and more people are coming, they must go quicker, and it is very important not to be rushed in this Sacrament. Both Fr. John Stefero and Fr. Stavros are available to hear confessions. You can contact them directly to make appointments.

## Guidelines for Holy Week

**Saturday of Lazarus**—April 8—Father Stavros will do the Proskomide (service of preparation of the Holy Gifts) on the solea at 9:30 a.m. This is an excellent opportunity for those who have never seen this service, especially our children, to learn how the Holy Gifts are prepared before each Liturgy. Father Stavros will offer the service and narrate while he is doing it.

**Making Palm Crosses** We will have a free breakfast after the Divine Liturgy on Saturday of Lazarus, April 8, and will make Palm Crosses after the breakfast. Many hands make light work, so please come for Liturgy, breakfast and making Palm Crosses.

**Palm Sunday afternoon—The Vespers of Holy Monday**—There is a short vespers service of Holy Monday that is generally suppressed in parish usage. We have done this the past three years and will continue this year as well. The Bridegroom Service is done Palm Sunday night. The Vespers of Holy Monday is the transition from the joy of Palm Sunday to the sorrow of Holy Week. The service begins with bright colors, green for Palm Sunday, and in the middle of the service, the colors change to the dark purple of Holy Week. The service will be from 5:00-5:45 p.m., with the Bridegroom Service beginning at 6:30 p.m.

### Why are the services at night during Holy Week called Matins Services, even though they are taking place during the evening hours?

Traditionally, the Matins or Orthros is done in the early morning hours, ending with the sunrise, when the Great Doxology is sung or read. The Orthros or Matins Services of Holy Week are VERY long, lasting almost three and a half hours. During the Middle Ages, the services were transposed ahead several hours, from the early morning hours to the evening of the preceding night. Thus, the Orthros of Good Friday was moved to Holy Thursday evening, the 12 Gospels and the Procession of the Crucified Christ. The Lamentations, which is the Orthros of Holy Saturday was moved from Saturday morning to Friday night. The Vespers services, was moved from Holy Thursday evening to Holy Thursday morning. Our services commemorate events about 12 hours before they happened in real time, with the Last Supper Holy Thursday morning, the Crucifixion Holy Thursday evening, etc. The Descent from the Cross on Friday afternoon remains at its proper time, as a Vespers service, but the interval between the Vespers of Friday afternoon and the Orthros of Holy Saturday does not. The Resurrection Service takes place at the proper time. The schedule of transposing services begins Palm Sunday when we celebrate Orthros and Liturgy in the morning and then in the evening, we celebrate Vespers (appropriately in the evening) and immediately after the Orthros (Bridegroom service). From then on, we are approximately 12 hours ahead in what would have been happening during Holy Week. The Vespers of Good Friday afternoon are at the appropriate time. Then the Lamentations

Continued...

(Orthros of Holy Saturday) is celebrated a couple of hours later.

We finally catch up with Pascha, celebrated in the middle of the night, the same hour as the Resurrection happened.

**Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, and Holy Wednesday mornings.** These three Pre-Sanctified Liturgies include important Scripture readings—from Exodus, from Job and from the Gospels. The Gospel readings are the last teachings of Jesus to His disciples on Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday. The Gospel of Holy Wednesday morning is the first act of the Passion, the betrayal by Judas. The Scripture readings of these services are an important part of the Holy Week narrative.

**Holy Unction** - The Mystery of Holy Unction is established upon the words and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ and is a sacrament of the church. This is a sacrament of healing and transformation from a bruised and hurt world to the deliverance from sin and corruption. All sacraments of the church are administered by the priests of the church. In fact, the primary role and identity of the priests of the church is to be the celebrant of the sacraments. Because of this, **Holy Unction may not be taken home.** If you wish to have this sacrament offered, Father Stavros is happy to offer it at the church, on a day and time of your choosing. For those unable to come to church, Father will be happy to bring it to shut-ins who are unable to come to church. *For those who are not Orthodox and cannot receive Holy Unction, as it is a sacrament, Fr. Stavros also has oil from the tomb of St. Nektarios, which can be administered to anyone. The oil will be administered also on Holy Wednesday for those who are not Orthodox, so that they can still receive prayer and anointing.*

**Bridegroom Service for the Last Supper** - There is actually a Bridegroom Service which is traditionally celebrated on Holy Wednesday evening. However, this service has been suppressed in most parishes because of the Sacrament of Holy Unction. This service is important because it contains the Gospel lesson of the Last Supper. We will celebrate this service, beginning at 5:15 p.m. The evening Holy Unction service will begin at 7:00 p.m.

### **Holy Thursday Evening - The Service of the Passion**

The service of the 12 Gospels and procession of the crucified Lord is the longest service of the Church year. On Holy Thursday, light and darkness, joy and sorrow are mixed. At the “upper room” and in Gethsemane the light of the kingdom and the darkness of hell come together. The way of life and the way of death converge. **However, one cannot truly celebrate the Resurrection if he/she has not stood at the foot of the cross of Christ.** As one prayer of the Sunday Orthros states, “Through the Cross, joy has come to all the world.” Without the Crucifixion, there could be no Resurrection. Thus, after the Resurrection Service on Holy Saturday Night, one could argue that Holy Thursday evening is the next most-important service of Holy Week. *If you are unable to attend the entire service, then please come from 7:30-8:30 p.m., witness the Procession of the Crucified Lord, venerate His precious Body on the Cross and leave early. But please do not abandon the Lord as He hangs on the Cross. Holy Thursday evening is the most powerful service of Holy Week and the entire church year.*

### **An All-Night/All Day Vigil at the Cross of Christ**

For the past ten years, we have done an All-Night Vigil at the Cross of Christ. Those who participated found it VERY inspiring. The vigil will begin following the service of the 12 Gospels and will continue until the service of the Lamentations on Good Friday Evening. Thus, beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Holy Thursday, there will be 28 continuous hours of prayer in our church. ***This way, even those who can't come out in the middle of the night can participate by taking a shift during the day*** The schedule will be as follows:

#### **Holy Thursday Evening**

6:30-10:00 p.m. Service of the 12 Gospels

10:00 p.m. - 9:00 a.m. (Fri.) Vigil of Psalm Reading at the Cross

#### **Good Friday**

9:00-11:00 a.m. Service of the Royal Hours

11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Vigil of Psalm Reading at the Cross

3:00-4:30 p.m. The Service of the Un-nailing

4:30-7:00 p.m. Vigil of Psalm Reading at the foot of the Cross

7:00-10:30 p.m. Service of the Lamentations



We will have a sign-up sheet for people to sign up for an hour or two to stand at the Cross and read from the book of Psalms. Please be on the look out for a SIGN UP GENIUS QR code through Constant Contact and in the weekly bulletin. Vasili P. will be coordinating this for us.

Continued...



If you are interested in participating at the All-Night/Add-Day Vigil on Holy Thursday, please contact Vasili at (414) 443-4899.

We know that at the Crucifixion, all but one of the Disciples fled. Only John stayed at the foot of the cross. In our world today, many people are abandoning Christ, Christianity, and any sense of Godliness. If Christ gave His life on the cross and did not abandon us, this is one chance, on this special day, to say thank you to Christ and remember what He did by not abandoning Him.

### Good Friday

**Decoration of the Kouvouklion** will be done following the Royal Hours on Good Friday. All are invited to come and help decorate the tomb of Christ. Please, however, work quietly—this job is meant to be solemn not social.

**Apokathelosis** - The Service of Apokathelosis (the Un-Nailing) re-enacts the narrative of Christ descending from the Cross. The figure of Christ is removed from the cross and wrapped in a new linen cloth, carried into the sanctuary and placed on the altar table. In the same service, a procession with the Epitaphios (embroidery of the dead Christ) is made around the interior of the church, and the Epitaphios is placed in the Kouvouklion (tomb of Christ).

**The Lamentations and the Epitaphios Procession** - The Lamentations are short, poetic verses lamenting the Passion, Death and Burial of Christ. Interspersed with the Lamentations are Psalm verses from Psalm 119, the same verses we sing at a funeral service, which is appropriate, as the Lamentations are the funeral service for the Lord. The service starts with the Canon, and after the Canon is complete, the priest opens the Royal Doors, the lights are turned up, and the Lamentations begin. Everyone is invited to sing together. Books will be provided for your use. For the past three years, we have held the procession indoors, walking around both the interior of the hall and the church, with everyone having an opportunity to pass under the Epitaphios, symbolizing how one day we hope to pass through death to eternal life. This went very smoothly last year and people indicated that they would like us to continue doing the procession like this. Thus the procession will be indoors this year.

### Holy Saturday

#### Anastasis Service

The service of the Anastasis will begin at 11:00 p.m. on Holy Saturday evening, with the chanting of the Canon. Shortly before midnight, the light of the Resurrected Christ will be given to all the faithful. We will then go outside, weather permitting, to read the Resurrection Gospel and sing the Christos Anesti for the first time. Please proceed outside in an orderly manner so that we can complete this service in a timely manner. We will then proceed back into the church for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. **Please plan to stay for the entirety of the Divine Liturgy on Pascha, the most joyous Liturgy of the year, and to receive Holy Communion. After all, we don't break our fast with meatballs and cheese, but with Holy Communion.** There will be a reception following the Divine Liturgy for all in attendance, in the Kourmolis Center. After making the journey through Holy Week together, what better way to continue our celebration than to sit down as a family and break bread together on the greatest feast day of the church year.



#### Blessing of Baskets of Food

It is the Orthodox Tradition on Pascha that we not only bless eggs but other types of food that will go on the table for the Paschal Banquet. Therefore, if anyone wishes to bring a basket of food to be blessed on Pascha night, they may come and place it beneath or around the table on the Solea where the basket of Easter eggs will be.

#### Reading of the Resurrection Gospel at the Agape Vespers

Those interested in participating in the beautiful Vespers of Agape on Pascha on Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. by reading the Gospel of the Resurrection in a foreign language are encouraged to see Fr. Stavros or call the church office, prior to Holy Week. **DON'T JUST SHOW UP EXPECTING TO READ. WE NEED TO CAREFULLY PLAN THE SERVICES SO THEY ARE DONE PROPERLY.** Please come to the Agape service by 10:45 a.m. to find out where you will stand for the reading of the Gospel. The reading is from the Gospel of John 20:19-25. You may read it in any language you wish, the more the better.

**Holy Communion to be given only during Divine Liturgy** - There are eight opportunities to receive Holy Communion during Holy Week - Saturday of Lazarus, Palm Sunday, Holy Monday morning, Holy Tuesday morning, Holy Wednesday morning, Holy Thursday morning, Holy Saturday morning, and of course, at the Paschal Divine Liturgy. There will be an additional opportunity the day before Holy Week as well as during Bright Week. Please plan to receive Holy Communion through prayer and fasting at as many of these services as possible.

Incidentally, a person may receive Holy Communion each time it is offered. For instance, you can receive Holy Communion on both Holy Saturday morning and at the Anastasis. For those who have kept the entire Lenten fast, you can receive Holy Communion conceivably, all eight times during Holy Week.

Since there are so many opportunities to receive Holy Communion during the Divine Liturgies of Holy Week, **Holy Communion will only be given in the context of the Divine Liturgy, not before or after.** (no drive through Communion) Also, even if we receive Holy Communion on Holy Thursday or Holy Saturday, we should not break the fast until the conclusion of the Paschal Liturgy. When receiving Holy Communion, it is important and necessary to have celebrated the entire Liturgy. Please no phone calls about what time is Communion, so you can duck in and out quickly. Come for the entire service. Be there for the invitation to enter the Kingdom, be there for the reading of the Gospel, the reciting of the Creed. And after Communion, don't just take your Communion and run, as many people will do on Holy Saturday morning, stay the remaining minutes of the services and pray the prayers of Thanksgiving in the back of the Liturgy book.

**A Note on Kneeling and Sitting** - It is the tradition of the church that we kneel or stand for the majority of the services. However, by dispensation, we now have pews in the church and the faithful are allowed to sit at certain points in the services. Because of the long lines for Communion and because the length of the services, **PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO SIT** as you need to during Holy Week, especially during Holy Communion. Also, for those with bad knees, just sit with your head bowed during times we are kneeling, do not attempt to kneel. Our church never seeks our physical hurt in worship, nor do we want people passing out or becoming sick, which will only make us nervous and anxious.

**Holy Week Books are available for sale in the church bookstore.** The Holy Week Book contains the words and hymns of all the Holy Week services and will serve not only as an aid to worship but as a complete theology book, for the services of Holy Week contain all the theology of the Orthodox Church.

**Pascha versus Easter** - In every language except English and German, the feast of the Resurrection is identified with a word whose root is "Pasch." For instance, in Spanish, the word is "Pasqual." "Pascha" comes from the Hebrew for "Passover." The first Passover occurred in the Old Testament book of Exodus. The last of the 10 plagues on the Egyptians was the death of the first born son. The Hebrews were told to slaughter an unblemished lamb outside the city wall on a Friday, to not break any of its bones, and to spread its blood over their doorways. Those who had the blood of the lamb on their homes would be spared. The angel of death then came to the Egyptians and killed the first-born son in each home. Passover was a holiday celebrating the deliverance of the Hebrews from the bondage of Pharaoh and his taskmasters. The Crucifixion occurred at the Passover—the Lamb of God was killed outside the city wall on a Friday, none of His bones were broken, and by His blood we are set free from the bondage of sin and death. "Easter" comes from the word "Oestre" and was actually a Pagan holiday each spring. That's why in the Orthodox Church, and in our personal lives, we try to use the word "Pascha" to describe the feast of the Resurrection, rather than Easter.

**The Pentecostarion - The 50 Days After Pascha** The period of 50 days between Pascha & Pentecost is referred to as the "Pentecostarion." The period of forty days between Pascha Sunday and the day of the Ascension is known as the period of Pascha (or Easter). It is a period set aside by the Church for the specific celebration of Christ's glorious resurrection. It is a celebration of "rebirth". . . .The rebirth of God's creation which surrounds us, and the rebirth of the spirit within each and every one of us! This period is not merely a ritualistic celebration but a celebration which can be seen, felt, heard and talked about. It is a very REAL celebration which CAN make our entire being jump with JOY. It is a celebration which offers us HOPE. It is a celebration which offers us the TRUE FREEDOM found only in Jesus Christ! During the 40 days of Pascha, we are to greet each other with the greeting "Christ is Risen" or "Χριστός Ανέστη!," to which the response is "Truly He is Risen" or "Αληθώς Ανέστη!"

**No Kneeling until Pentecost** It is actually the Tradition in the Orthodox Church that we not kneel on Sundays in honor of the Resurrection of Christ. Because we do not worship on a daily basis in our church communities, priests have encouraged people to kneel on Sundays, the thought being that if we do not kneel on Sundays, that we'll never kneel in church. It is a Tradition, that for 50 days after Pascha, we do not kneel in honor of the Resurrection.

Continued...



The next time we will kneel after April 15 is on the Feast of Pentecost (June 5) at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says “Again and again on bended knees let us pray to the Lord.”

**Fast Free the week after Pascha** - Having kept a fast for almost 8 weeks, including the week before Lent, Lent and Holy Week, the church gives us a “week off” from fasting the week after Pascha. During Bright Week, or Renewal Week, as that week is called each day is like a Sunday. Hence, there is no fasting during this celebratory week. Who, then, may receive Communion? Whoever wishes to, providing that they abstain from food the morning they are receiving. So, the Sunday after Pascha, everyone in the congregation may receive. There is no fasting on Wednesday or Friday of renewal week, or any other day of that week either.

**Doing it all** - The experience of attending all of the Holy Week services is rare indeed. But if you are able to do it this is a beautiful experience everyone should try at least once in their life. How often do you have the opportunity to receive Holy Communion 8 times in 9 days, to be within 12 hours of having received or receiving again for a week! How often do you have the opportunity to attend two services a day for a week! For a very uplifting and unique experience, please consider coming to all the services - priests go to all the services - they know the effort, the fatigue, the pain, but also the joy that only comes when you “do them all.”

### **Excused Absences from School for Good Friday**

If you would like to have your child/children attend Good Friday Services at St. John the Baptist, please pick up a letter from the baptistery in the front of the church.

### **Other Divine Liturgies during April**

**Friday, April 21 - Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain - Friday after Pascha** Commemorates the consecration of a Chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which was built over a spring in Constantinople, that emits water with healing powers. Hundreds of miracles and healings have occurred at this spring. This feast day of “Zoödochos Peghe - Ζωοδόχος Πηγή” the Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain, is always celebrated on the Friday of Bright (Renewal) week, the week after Pascha, April 21, this year.

**Sunday, April 23 - Sunday of St. Thomas** The Church brings to our mind the unbelief of Thomas followed by his belief after seeing the scars of Christ.

**Sunday, April 23 – St. George** -St. George the “Trophy Bearer” is one of the most famous saints of our church. He lived in the third century. He was a soldier, famously memorialized in icons as slaying a dragon. Symbolically, he “slayed” the “dragons” that opposed Christianity and was martyred for his faith. His relics were placed in the altar of our church when it was consecrated in 1986. St. George’s feast day is celebrated on the Monday after Pascha when Pascha falls on April 23 or later (when Pascha falls earlier than April 23, we celebrate his feastday on April 23). Thus, this year, we will celebrate his feastday on Sunday, April 23.

**Tuesday, April 25 – St. Mark the Evangelist** – St. Mark was the first Evangelist to write his Gospel. It’s important that we pause to remember the days of the four Gospel writers, after all, without their Spirit-inspired writings, we would not know the story of Jesus Christ.

**Wednesday, April 26 – 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. We will alternate some in the evening and some in the morning. For April, the Paraklesis will be offered on Wednesday evening, April 26, from 6:00-7:00 p.m.

**Sunday, April 30- Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women** They came to anoint Jesus’ body, but found an EMPTY tomb. We also commemorate Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

**Friday, May 5 - Feast of St. Irene** - St. Irene was a martyr of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Many miracles have been attributed to her. She is the patron saint of law enforcement officers.

## Liturgical Schedule for April

Sunday, April 2 **St. Mary of Egypt**  
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.

Monday, April 3 Great Compline 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 5 9<sup>th</sup> Hour 5:30 p.m.  
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Friday, April 7 9<sup>th</sup> Hour 9:30 a.m.  
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, April 8-Sunday, April 16—  
See Special Holy Week Schedule

Friday, April 21 **Life-Giving Fountain of the  
Virgin Mary (Zodochos Peghe)**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, April 23 **Thomas Sunday-  
St. George the Great Martyr**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Tuesday, April 25 **St. Mark the Evangelist**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, April 26 Paraklesis Service of  
Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 30 **Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday, May 5 **St. Irene**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 7 **Sunday of the Paralytic**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Monday, May 8 **St. John the Theologian**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

### St. Mary of Egypt



### Sunday of Myrrh-Bearing Women



### Sunday of the Paralytic





# HOLY WEEK AND PASCHA EASTER

## SCHEDULE FOR 2023

### **April 8 Saturday of Lazarus-Commemoration of the raising of Lazarus from the dead**

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Proskomide 9:30a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00-11:15 a.m.

*\*Fr. Stavros will celebrate the service of the Proskomide, the Preparation of the Holy Communion on the solea at 9:30 a.m. GOYA and Sunday School students are requested to attend to help in preparing the crosses for Palm Sunday, after Liturgy.*

### **April 9 Palm Sunday-The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.-noon

Vespers 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Service of the Bridegroom 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Procession of the Icon of the Nymphios

*Theme: Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church; watchfulness*

### **April 10 Holy Monday**

9<sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Service of the Bridegroom 6:30-8:00 p.m.

*Theme: The Parable of the Talents*

### **April 11 Holy Tuesday**

9<sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Service of the Bridegroom 6:30-8:30 p.m.

The Choir will sing the Hymn of Kassiane

*Theme: Repentance of the harlot vs. the Betrayal by Judas*

### **April 12 Holy Wednesday**

9<sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Sacrament of Holy Unction for Children 3:00-4:00 p.m.

Matins of Holy Thursday-5:15-7:00 p.m.

Sacrament of Holy Unction for Adults 7:00-8:30 p.m.

*Theme: washing away of sin; healing of soul and body*

### **April 13 Holy Thursday**

Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 9:15-11:00 a.m.

Service of the Holy Passion 6:30-10:00 p.m.

Reading of the 12 Gospels, Procession of the Crucified Christ

*Themes: The Betrayal, Trial and Death of Christ, the Passion*

*All-Night Vigil will follow the service*

### **April 14 Good Friday**

Reading of the Royal Hours 9:00-11:00 a.m.

*Standing vigil at the Cross of Christ*

Decorating the Epitaphios 11:00 a.m. (all are invited to help)

Apokathelosis 3:00-4:15 p.m. *The Unnailing/Burial of Christ*

Lamentations 7:00-10:30 p.m. *Singing of the Funeral Lamentations and Procession with the Epitaphios*

### **April 15 Holy Saturday**

Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 8:30-11:00 a.m.

*Reading of Prophecies foretelling the Resurrection of Christ*

Great Canon 11:00 p.m.

### **April 16 PASCHA**

The Service of the Resurrection of Christ-Midnight

Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom 12:30-2:00 a.m.

Following Liturgy, all are invited to a reception in the Kourmolis Center

AGAPE Vespers 11:00 a.m.-noon

Easter Vespers of Love-The Gospel is read in numerous languages to indicate the universal character of the Christian message

Easter Egg Hunt for Children NOON

## ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΟΣ-2023

Σάββατο, 8 Απριλίου Σάββατο του Λαζάρου

Ορθρος 8:30-9:30 π.μ.

Ακολουθία τη Θεία Προσκομιδή 9:30-10:00 π.μ.

Θεία Λειτουργία 10:00-11:15 π.μ.

Κυριακή, 9 Απριλίου Κυριακή των Βαίων

Ορθρος 8:30 π.μ. Θεία Λειτουργία 9:45 π.μ.

Κατανυκτικό Εσπερινο 5:00-6:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Δευτέρα, 10 Απριλίου Μεγάλη Δευτέρα

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

Θεία Λειτουργία των Προηγιασμένων Δωρων 9:30-11:00 π.μ.

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Τρίτη, 11 Απριλίου Μεγάλη Τρίτη

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

Θεία Λειτουργία των Προηγιασμένων Δωρων 9:30-11:00 π.μ.

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:30 μ.μ.

Τετάρτη, 12 Απριλίου Μεγάλη Τετάρτη

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

Θεία Λειτουργία των Προηγιασμένων Δωρων 9:30-11:00 π.μ.

Ακολουθία Ευχελαιονγία τα παιδιά 3:00-4:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 5:15-7:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία Ευχελαιον 7:00-8:30 μ.μ.

Πέμπτη, 13 Απριλίου Μεγάλη Πέμπτη

Θεία Λειτουργία του Αγίου Βασιλείου 9:15-11:00 π.μ.

Ακολουθία Σταυρώσεως 6:30-10:00 μ.μ.

Παρασκευή, 14 Απριλίου Μεγάλη Παρασκευή

Οι Βασιλικές Ωρες 9:00-11:00 π.μ.

Αποκαθλώσις 3:00-4:15 μ.μ.

Επιταφίος Θρήνος 7:00-10:30 μ.μ.

Σάββατο, 15 Απριλίου Μεγάλο Σάββατο

Θεία Λειτουργία του Αγίου Βασιλείου 8:30-11:00 π.μ.

Ο Κανών 11:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία της Αναστάσεως Μεσανυχτα

Θεία Λειτουργία της Αναστάσεως 12:30-2:15 π.μ.

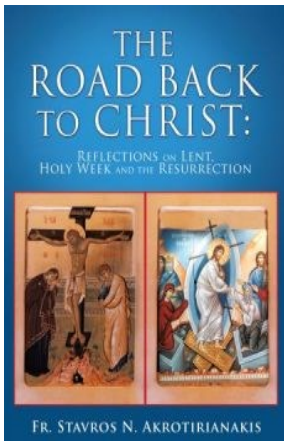
Κυριακή, 16 Απριλίου **Αγιον Πάσχα**

Μεγας Εσπερινος της Αγάπης 11:00 π.μ.



# The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection is now on sale!

It is a series of daily reflections to be read from the beginning of Triodion (this year that is February 5) through All Saints Day (this year that is June 11). Pick up your copy today so you can begin reading it. All monies taken in at the bookstore go to the church.



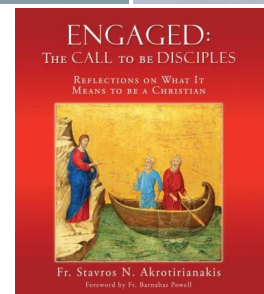
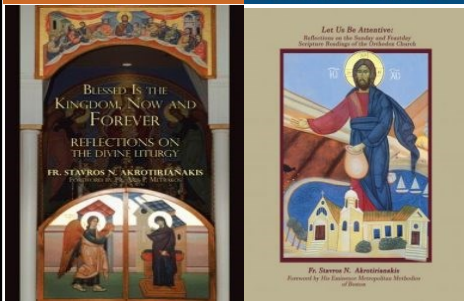
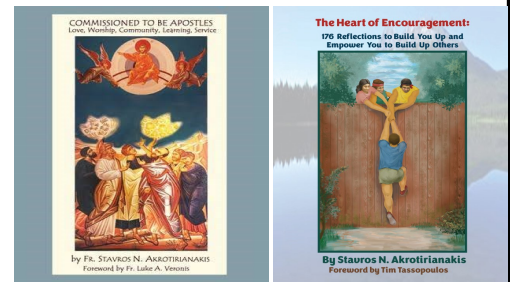
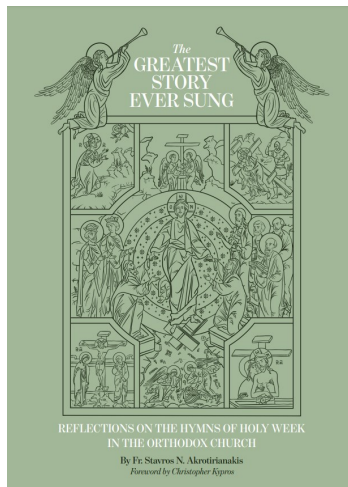
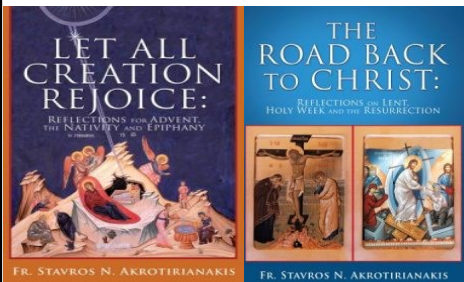
## Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

**Over 3,901 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](mailto:Vasili@stjohntpa.org) and ask him to add you. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email Vasili 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.

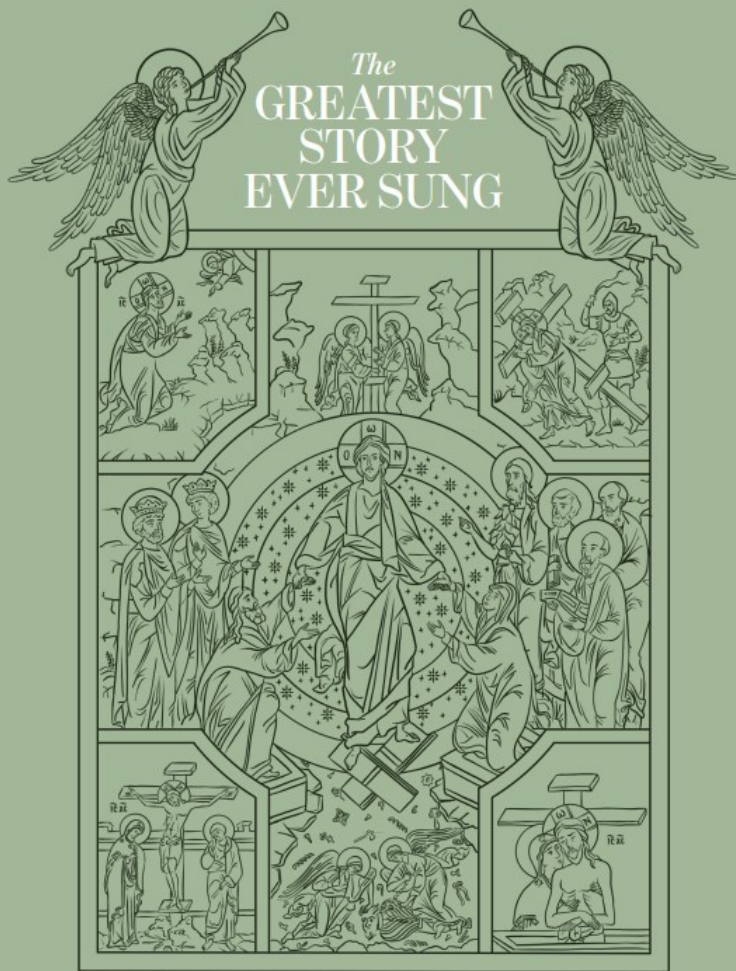
The Prayer Team has a new dedicated website: [PrayerTeam365.com](http://PrayerTeam365.com)  
Check it out! Search by topic and grow in your faith today!

Father Stavros has authored **EIGHT** 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*  
*The Heart of Encouragement: 176 Reflections to Build You Up and Empower You to Build Up Others*  
**NEW: *The Greatest Story Ever Sung: Reflections on the Hymns of Holy Week In the Orthodox Church***







REFLECTIONS ON THE HYMNS OF HOLY WEEK  
IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

By Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis  
Foreword by Christopher Kypros

**The Greatest Story Ever Sung:  
Reflections on the Hymns of Holy  
Week in the Orthodox Church  
By Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis**

For most of Christian history, learning about Christ could not be done through personal reading, as the majority of the world was could not read. Learning was done through listening to preaching, and through the singing of hymns. The events of Holy Week, from the triumphal entry of Christ in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, to the Cross of Good Friday, to the glorious Resurrection on Pascha, have been taught throughout the centuries primarily through song. In fact, the most well-known Orthodox hymn, "Christ is Risen", provides in twenty-two words, a summary of the Resurrection and its meaning for Christian salvation.

Holy Week in the Orthodox Church is a journey of nine days and nearly twenty services that put us back in Jerusalem two thousand years ago through Scripture, ritual and most especially through hymnology. Scripture captivates the mind. Ritual captivates the eyes. Hymnology is what captivates our emotions and our hearts and

what stirs our souls to spiritual renewal. *The Greatest Story Ever Sung: Reflections on the Hymns of Holy Week in the Orthodox Church* reflects on both the well-known and lesser known hymns of the services of the Orthodox Holy Week. It will take you on a journey not only to the week of Christ's Passion but to the depths of your own faith.

This book will capture your emotions, warm your heart and stir your soul to spiritual renewal. It will help you remember the saving work of Jesus Christ two thousand years ago and will help you to get more out of the Holy Week services in the years to come.

The foreword is written by Christopher Kypros, a dedicated choir director and composer who has poured his soul into leading choirs in singing these beautiful hymns. Consisting of sixty-one short reflections, this book guides the reader from the Saturday of Lazarus through the Agape Vespers on Pascha, taking us on a familiar journey that many of us know through Scripture, but instead leading us by way of the beautiful and powerful hymns that comprise the greatest story ever sung.

***This book is dedicated in loving memory of Artie Palios.***

# Donations Needed for Great Lent and Holy Week

Great Lent begins March 7. We have many special celebrations during these weeks. We know that many of you would like to contribute to the decorating of our church and icons during this period. For your convenience, below is a list of items needed for the celebration of the Sacred Services of Lent and Holy Week. Please contact the church office to reserve your desired offering for the health of your loved ones or in memory of a deceased loved one.

*Payment may be sent to the church office. Checks should be made payable to "St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church" with "Lenten Flower Donation" on the memo line. Online donations are also accepted, be sure to specify.*

April 9	Palm Sunday	Flowers for Icon of Palm Sunday	\$125
		Palms Strips & Branches	\$300 total
Holy Week		Pillar Candles for Windows (20)	\$20 each
April 9	Palm Sunday	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex	\$125
		Bridegroom Service	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom on Solea (2)
April 12	Holy Wednesday	Flowers for Icon of Last Supper	\$125
		Holy Unction	Olive Oil, Flour, Prosphora (2)
April 13	Holy Thursday	Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion	\$125
		Wreaths for Bottom of Cross (2)	\$200 each
		Wreath for Top of Cross	\$300
		Scattered flowers at base of cross	\$75
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)	\$20 each
April 14	Good Friday	16 Bags of Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers	\$125
		Flowers for Epitaphios	Several
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Apokathelosis	\$20 each
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Lamentations	\$20 each
		Icon of Extreme Humility	\$125
April 16	Pascha	Flowers for Icon of Resurrection	\$125
		Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb	\$125
		Silk Flower for Royal Doors	\$125
		Easter Lilies	\$30 per Lily

*Thank you*







For your continuous support





# OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2023

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS		THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week <b>FEBRUARY 5th</b>		<i>TRIODION WEEKS</i> <b>Publican and the Pharisee</b> Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week <b>FEBRUARY 12th</b>		<b>The Prodigal Son Returns!</b> Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare <b>FEBRUARY 19th</b> FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY		<b>The Last Judgement</b> Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare <b>FEBRUARY 26th</b> FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY		<b>Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise!</b> <i>FORGIVENESS SUNDAY</i> Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent <b>MARCH 5th</b>		<i>GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS</i> <b>SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY</b> Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent <b>MARCH 12th</b>		<b>ST GREGORY PALAMAS</b> Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent <b>MARCH 19th</b>		<b>VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS</b> <i>HALF WAY TO PASCHA!</i> Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent <b>MARCH 26th</b>		<b>ST JOHN of the LADDER</b> Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent <b>APRIL 2nd</b>		<b>ST MARY of EGYPT</b> Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! <b>APRIL 9th</b> GREAT WEEK BEGINS		<i>GREAT AND HOLY WEEK</i> <b>ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM</b> Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY <b>APRIL 14th</b>		<b>GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY</b> <i>JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS</i> CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! <b>APRIL 16th</b> NO FASTING!		<i>BRIGHT WEEK</i> <b>HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!)</b> Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!



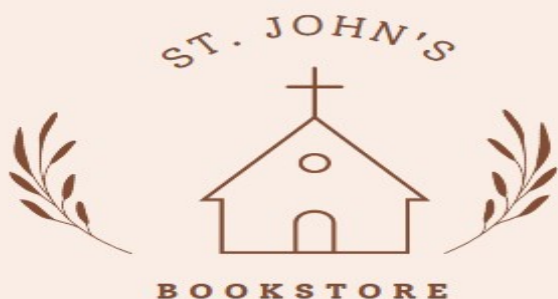
# St. John's

## YOUTH PROTECTION PROGRAM

At this time, the Youth Protection Program is currently under revision and changes from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Please be on the lookout in weekly bulletins and future Messengers with the updated Youth Protection Program.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Suzanne Pileggi at [smpileggi1@gmail.com](mailto:smpileggi1@gmail.com) or (813) 244-5855.



CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY HE IS RISEN!

Having risen from the grave, as He foretold,  
He has given us Eternal Life and the Great Mercy.  
(The Resurrection Ode)

With gratitude for your support and with prayers for God's blessings in this Holy Season of Pascha!

Presvytera Denise and Elaina Stefero



# 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 April, the dates are Wednesday, April 5 (as part of the program of First Things First: Making time for the things that Matter), Monday, April 17 and Monday, April 24.

**Women's Bible Study**—Women's Bible Study meets on most Tuesday mornings with Fr. Stavros from 10:00-11:30 a.m. either in person or on zoom. We are studying the Gospel of John. For April, the dates are Tuesday, April 4, Tuesday, April 18 and Monday, April 24.

**GOYA**—There will be two GOYA Meetings in April. The first will be Sunday, April 2. During this meeting, Fr. Stavros will hold a special seminar for mothers and daughters. The boys will have a separate discussion. On Sunday, April 23, Fr. Stavros will hold a special seminar for Fathers and sons, while the girls have a separate discussion. Each meeting will be held from 5:00-7:30 p.m. and we will gather in the Kourmolis Center.

**Parea Dancers**—Our Parea Dance Group (GOYAns) will be having a monthly practice one Sunday each month after the Divine Liturgy. Our April practice will be on Sunday, April 30.

**Young Adults**—Our Young Adult Group will meet for dinner/discussion on Monday, April 3 (note different day this month) from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Young Adults are encouraged to come earlier and participate in the Great Compline service beginning at 5:30 p.m. The group also meets informally for social events. If you are interested in getting notices via What's App, contact Aris Rogers at 813-309-5525. The Young Adult group (along with our Bible Study groups) will be co-hosting the Wednesday evening Lenten dinner on Wednesday, April 5.

**Men's Group**—Our men's group will meet on Sunday, April 30, 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, April 30 and Sunday, May 21.

**Panigyri Adult Dance Group**—Everyone grab your dancing shoes and brush off your costumes! The adult dance group Panigyri will be starting Greek dance practice on Wednesday May 10 at 7pm in the church hall.

Please wear dance shoes or sneakers and comfortable clothes for dancing.

This will be for fun the first few monthly practices and then we will start gearing up in August for our festival with weekly practices every Wednesday night until the festival. Thereafter we will create line-ups for those that commit to performing several times each day for the festival.

The next practice thereafter will be Wednesday June 14: Wednesday July 12: and then every Wednesday in August. All at 7pm. See everyone soon! Everyone is welcome!

# JOY TWEENS

GAME ON  
the stars who  
game for fun



LEVEL  
UP



in march, our joy tweens had so much fun working together and solving puzzles to find their way out the lost city of atlantis and philosopher's stone escape rooms. both groups managed to escape with 9 minutes to spare! on april 30, after the divine liturgy, joy tweens have their last meeting with father stavros for the 2022-2023 school year. we will start the meeting in the church. more details to follow in the joy tweens constant contact.

foreseeing the  
future with  
christ



OMG



# FOR THOSE WHO DON'T COME TO CHURCH OFTEN OR WHO HAVEN'T BEEN IN A WHILE



As there are in all churches, whether they are Orthodox or not, there is a segment of the congregation that doesn't come often.

- Some people come sporadically.
- Some come for the occasional wedding, baptism, funeral or memorial service.
- Some come in time of crisis.
- Some come for Christmas and Easter (in Tampa, we call them "Chreasters").

There are different reasons why people don't come to church.

- Some are angry at other parishioners.
- Some are angry at something that happened in the community in the past.
- Some are angry at God because their lives haven't gone well and they blame Him.
- Some work on Sundays.
- Some don't understand why it is important.
- Some have fallen out of the habit.
- Some choose to do other things.
- And some are just lazy.

Church is important. Why?

- It's not because God needs our praise—He is God, He doesn't need anything.
- It's not so we can brag about how many people come to church—church is about faith, not about counting bodies in the pews.
- It's not a matter of giving God His due, once in a while, or especially at Easter.
- It's not a matter of tradition or pride or culture.

Church is important because

- It helps us slow down the hectic pace of our life so we can reflect on what is really important—our salvation.
- It gives us the opportunity to pray for ourselves and our loved ones.
- It gives us the opportunity to receive the prayers of others
- It gives us the opportunity to enjoy fellowship with people like

us.

- It gives us the opportunity to pray in a way that is structured so well, that the Divine Liturgy is a complete prayer that touches on every aspect of our life and our World.
- It gives us an opportunity to touch God and for God to touch us, in the sacrament of Holy Communion.
- It unites us with the saints, the holy ones of God; and also with those in our family who have passed away, since we pray for the departed in our services.

It gives us a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven. Why?

- Because heaven won't be anything like life on earth.
- Heaven will not be a secular experience but a holy, awesome and moving one.
- The central activity in heaven is Communion with God and fellowship with those in God's kingdom.
- If we don't learn how to worship, we won't be ready to enter God's Kingdom, just like those who do not practice their sport don't play well on the field, just like those who don't do well in school do not graduate.

How can you get back in the habit of coming to church?

JUST START COMING!!!

When is a good time to come back?

ANY TIME, BUT ESPECIALLY DURING LENT

But what if I'm mad at someone?

It's a great time to forgive them. After all, if we want God to forgive us, we must forgive one another.

What if I'm totally lost in my faith and don't know how to start over again?

Make an appointment to meet with Fr. Stavros.

SEE YOU IN CHURCH!!!

PLEASE COME BACK!

## Parish Registry

**Baptism**-Gianna Gwendolyn Rudick, daughter of John and Stephanie Rudick, was baptized on Sunday, February 19. Jacklyn Walling was the Godmother. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Madelyn Faith Anton, daughter of Alexander and Kristen Anton, was baptized on Sunday, February 26. John and Genie Carter were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Alec James Papadakis, son of Robert and Kyleen Papadakis, was baptized on Sunday, February 26. Garrison and Maria Mason were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Evangelia Maria Stamas, daughter of Nicholas and Taylor Stamas, was baptized on Sunday, March 5. Christopher Vondos was the Godfather. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Sofia Isabella Morros Dimitrijevič, daughter of Stephan and Alina Dimitrijevič, was baptized on Sunday, March 12. Christine Scourtes was the Godmother. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Theone Grace Krajacic, daughter of Joseph and Alyssa Krajacic, was baptized on Sunday, March 12. Demetrios and Camille Halkias were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

**Chrismation**-Tanya Danielle (Magdalena) Perich was Chrismated on Sunday, March 12. Feriola Edwards was her sponsor.

**Chrismation**-Brandon Philip (Elias) Volino was Chrismated on Sunday, March 12. Giogios Chatzis was the sponsor.

**Chrismation**-Joseph Krajacic was Chrismated on Sunday, March 12. Alex Skijus was the sponsor.

**Wedding**-Giorgio Zaloumes and Tara Gianopulos were married on Saturday, February 11. Dimitri Gianopulos was the Koumbaro. Congratulations!

**Funeral**-Andrew Fotopoulos passed away on February 7. Funeral services were held on February 13. May his memory be eternal!

**Funeral**-Presbytera Helen Kalamaras passed away on February 9. Funeral services were held on February 21. May her memory be eternal!

**Condolences** to Nicole Mantzanas and Jaime Brewer on the passing of their father, Daniel Andriso, who passed away on February 21. May his memory be eternal!

**ST. JOHN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**

# **YOUNG AT HEART MINISTRY**



**WE WELCOME PEOPLE OF ALL AGES TO JOIN US AS A MEMBER OR A FRIEND OF THE YAH.**

**AS A MINISTRY WE INVITE ANYONE WHO WISHES TO ENJOY FELLOWSHIP WITH MEMBERS OF ST. JOHN'S GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY. WE MEET ONCE A MONTH TO PARTAKE, USUALLY, IN A POTLUCK LUNCHEON AT THE KOURMOLIS HALL. WE MEET NEW FRIENDS, SHARE STORIES, WATCH RELIGIOUS VIDEOS FOLLOWED BY A DISCUSSION UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF FATHER STEFERO, AND PLAY GAMES SUCH AS TRIVIA PURSUIT (RELIGIOUS TOPICS) AND BINGO. PRIZES ARE AWARDED TO THE WINNERS.**

**OUR MEETINGS ARE HELD ONCE A MONTH FROM 11:30 TO 1 P.M., USUALLY AT THE KOURMOLIS HALL OR AT A RESTAURANT IN PLACE OF MEETINGS AT THE HALL. FROM TIME TO TIME WE MAY GO ON FIELDTRIPS.**

**SEVERAL OF US WENT TO OCALA ON MARCH 5TH. WE ATTENDED LITURGY AT PANAGIA VLAHERMON MENS MONASTERY. MIKE AND DIANE TRIMIS PICKED UP PETER NENOS AND WENT TO THE MONASTERY FOR LITURGY, AND AFTERWARDS PLACED FLOWERS ON HIS PARENTS' GRAVE. NANCY AND BILL JOINED DIANE, MIKE AND PETER FOR LUNCH AT LAKIS GREEK RESTAURANT IN OCALA AND WISHED PETER HAPPY BIRTHDAY WITH A CANDLE IN A PAKLAVA.**

## **BIRTHDAYS IN MARCH AND APRIL**

**PETER NENOS-----3/30**

**JACKIE VOULGARIS-----4/8**

**PAM NOLEN-----3/31**

**DORA MORGAN-----4/27**

# Philoptochos Ministry

Membership Form  
Annunciation Chapter  
Philoptochos Society of  
St John the Baptist Greek  
Orthodox Church



St John Philoptochos  
would like to invite you to  
join us in our mission of  
outreach for the 2022-23  
Membership year.

While the word "philoptochos" means "friends of the poor", it does not begin to describe the many facets of the organization that chose this name. The Greek Orthodox Philoptochos are involved in all areas of philanthropy. From helping global victims of catastrophies like earthquakes and tsunamis to helping a local parishioner to pay a bill, Philoptochos seeks to help all those in need.

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# 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 April. 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](mailto:frstav@gmail.com).

**April 2-8**

***And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.***

***Colossians 3:17***

The theme of this last week of Lent is priorities. Our faith should be THE priority. Not one of many, not a co-priority. But THE priority. Whatever we do, in word or deed, should be done to honor Jesus Christ, as an act of thanksgiving. Sin occurs when we fail to do this. Because we can't be loving God and sinning against Him in the same moment, it just can't happen. This is the ideal—we are supposed to keep Him as to source and center of everything. And ideally we are to serve Him with thanksgiving, not begrudgingly, but with joy and gratitude.

**April 9-15**

***This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as an ordinance forever.***

***Exodus 12:14***

The first Passover is recounted in Exodus 12. God gave Moses, who gave the children of Israel, very specific instructions preceding the 10<sup>th</sup> and final plague to befall the Egyptians, the death of the first born. Each family was to kill a lamb without blemish, outside the city wall, and the blood of the lamb would be sprinkled over the doorpost of the house and then the angel of death, who would be sent to kill the first born of Egypt, would "pass over" the doors marked by the blood of the lamb.

Continued...

This, of course, prefigures the coming of Jesus, the New Passover Lamb, without blemish, killed outside the city wall, and by whose blood we are passed over by death to inherit eternal life. This was such a momentous event in the lives of the Hebrews, finally being set free from bondage to the Egyptians by the “salvation” granted by God, that God commanded that this feast day be marked throughout the generations, so that people would not forget what had happened at Passover. Likewise, through the death and Resurrection of Christ, we are set free from the bondage of sin and set towards salvation in Christ Jesus. Therefore, we commemorate this new feast of Pascha throughout the generations, to remember what happened 2,000 years ago. This week, we make the Holy Week journey in solemn and joyful remembrance of that happened 2,000 years ago.

#### **April 16-22**

***Listen to me in silence, O coastlands; let the peoples renew their strength; let them approach, then let them speak; let us together draw near for judgment.***

***Isaiah 41:1***

The week after Pascha is called Bright Week or Renewal Week. It's called Bright Week because of the bright colors and the joyful mood that has replaced the Lenten sadness. It's called Renewal Week because it is a time for us to renew our joy at being followers of Christ. Having had Great Lent to focus on discipline (fasting), repentance (confession), and recommitment (the services of Holy Week), it is a good opportunity to rejoice in the progress made while renewing our commitment to keep the new habits we've accumulated along the way.

#### **April 23-29**

***Eight days later, His disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said “Peace be with you.”***

***John 20:26***

On the Sunday after Pascha, we commemorate the Apostle Thomas, sometimes called “Doubting Thomas.” The disciples had met Jesus on the evening of the Resurrection. Thomas was not with them. When the disciples expressed their joy about seeing the Lord and expressed this to Thomas, Thomas expressed skepticism. He said that he wouldn't believe unless he saw the mark of the nails and placed his hand in the side of Jesus. We aren't told in the Gospel of any other encounter between the disciples and Jesus between that Sunday evening of the Resurrection and the following Sunday. That's a lot of time for the disciples to remain excited and for Thomas to be skeptical. While there are many more well-known verses in this Gospel story, there are five words that stand out from this verse: *And Thomas was with them. So before we give Thomas any more of a bad rap because of his doubting, the fact is that he still showed up, doubts and all. And this is what we are supposed to do as Christians, continue to show up doubts and*

*all. Thomas' doubts were actually put to rest because he had an encounter with Jesus. No way does that encounter happen if Thomas isn't present.*

*Our strength is bolstered and our doubts lessened when we have an encounter with Christ, that only happens when we show up—in prayer, for worship, etc. This is why like Thomas, we need to keep showing up.*

#### **April 30-May 6**

***And Pilate wondered if He were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether He was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that He was dead, he granted the Body to Joseph.***

***Mark 15: 44-45***

On the second Sunday after Pascha, and for that whole week, the church highlights both the Myrrh-bearing women, as well as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, those who ministered to Jesus in death, and the women who went to the tomb and first bore witness to the Resurrection. The Gospel reading of that Sunday combines the tenth Gospel of Holy Thursday night along with the Gospel of the Resurrection. These verses from Mark 15:44-45 involve Pontius Pilate, the Centurion and Joseph of Arimathea. The Centurion eventually became a saint. So did Joseph. The Gospel writer is intentional in this passage with the word “dead.” It is used three times in the two verses. Why? Because the Evangelist wanted to testify in no uncertain terms that Jesus DIED on the cross in the way that medical science would define death. He stopped breathing, he stopped living. The Resurrection wasn't coming out of a coma, it was coming back from death to live. That's why there is the intentionality of emphasizing death, so that no one would think there was any trickery involved. History testifies that the lifeless Body of Jesus was removed from the cross and interred in the earth. History also testifies that the tomb was empty three days later. Faith says that Jesus rose from the dead. That is faith. The rest is historical record.





## *We Will Serve the Lord*

# Photography Ministry

Our Photography Ministry began in 2017 and I became head of the ministry in 2019. I started to enjoy photography several years ago when my children were young and my husband bought me my first Canon SLR camera. As a retinal specialist, I've always been involved in photography since diagnostic imaging of the eye is a large part of what I do on a day-to-day basis.



In addition, capturing moments of my kids' milestones lead to a fun hobby. As I became more involved, I took a couple of photography classes, studied and practiced. Being a part of the Photo Ministry gives me the chance to hone my skills while at the same time show the public all the wonderful things that we do here at St. John. I think that God gives us talents to share and recognizing that and developing them is essential to having a fulfilling, fruitful life. The Photography Ministry gives me a chance to use a God given talent to help me and our community spread Christ's message to others.

Karina Findlay





# NURSE MINISTRY

## APRIL IS STRESS AWARENESS MONTH

Stress can be debilitating, and it can cause and/or aggravate health problems. Stress is a growing epidemic in our country; increasing our understanding of stress, its causes, and treatments is essential.

Stress afflicts your mind and affects you on a cellular level. Long-term stress can lead to a wide range of illnesses, including – headaches, stomach disorders, and depression. Stress can increase the risk of serious conditions such as stroke and heart disease. Understanding the mind-stress-health connection can help us to better manage stress, and improve health and well-being.

### Types of Stress

#### Acute Stress

Acute stress is usually brief. It is the most common and frequent. Acute stress is most often caused by reactive thinking. Negative thoughts predominate situations or events that have recently occurred or are upcoming.

#### Episodic Acute Stress

People who frequently experience acute stress, or whose lives present with frequent triggers of stress, have episodic acute stress. Individuals who frequently suffer acute stress often live a life of chaos and crisis.

#### Chronic Stress

Chronic stress is the most harmful type of stress. If chronic stress is left untreated over a long period of time, it can significantly damage your physical health and deteriorate your mental health.

### Ways to Manage Stress

#### Exercise

Even 20-30 minutes a day of walking is a great stress reliever and a good way to get your mind off your daily worries. Exercise has many healthy benefits.

#### Relaxation

Learn to incorporate some relaxation techniques into your daily life. Prayer, meditation, journaling, yoga and breathing exercises are just a few ways to help relax.

#### Have Fun

Spending quality time with family and friends, or simply watching your favorite sit-com can often be just the distraction you need.

#### Eat Well

The gut and brain are constantly sending signals to each other, so by keeping your microbiota (the bacteria in your gut) healthy, your brain feels less stressed.

#### Sleep & Rest

To relieve stress before bed, try some relaxation techniques and disconnect from technology as much as possible an hour before bedtime.

### Visit Your Doctor

Your family doctor is in the best position to get you started on the path to a stress-free lifestyle. Make an appointment today.

### Combat Your Stress

If you suffer from chronic stress and can't influence or change the situation, then you'll need to change your approach. Be willing to be flexible. Remember, you can choose your response to stressors, and you may have to try various options.

### Let go and let God!

- Recognize when you don't have control, and let it go.
- Don't get anxious about situations that you cannot change.
- Focus your mind on something that makes you feel calm and in control.

Want more information? Check out this website, <https://www.stress.org>



# 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  
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**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:**

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**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.**





### **Why Priests Stand With Their Backs to the Congregation**

"We could take a cue from Orthodoxy, whose priests stand with their backs to their congregation, leading a liturgy that is neither clever nor impassioned, but simply beautiful, like stone smoothed by centuries of rhythmic tides. It's an austere ritual, in the sense of — there's nothing new here; it's sublime, in the sense of — creating a clearer view into Heaven. The priest can be any priest. Who he is, what he looks like, how he speaks, and what he thinks matter little. He hasn't written the service that he officiates. It isn't about him or his prowess. He's an interchangeable functionary draped in brocaded robes, obscured by incense, and, as such, never points to himself, a flawed human, pointing ever and only to the Perfection of the Mysterious Divine. That is the role of every priest or preacher — invisibility, while making God seen." - Unknown

### **Enduring with Christ**

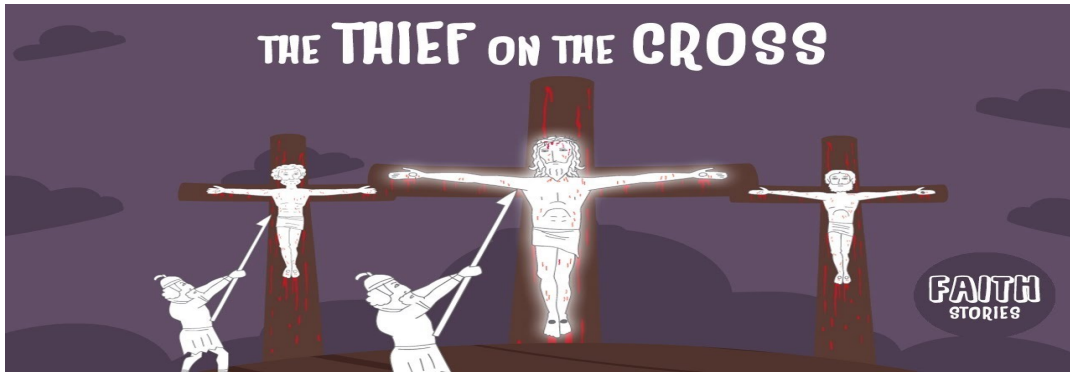
**Unknown Author**

"He received 39 stripes because 40 was known to kill a man. They wanted him alive.  
They held handfuls of his beard, and hair and pulled it out by the roots. They wanted him alive.  
They kicked, punched, and spit on him for hours. Until there wasn't a single spot on his body not covered in blood. They wanted him alive.  
They shoved a crown of thorns down on his head so harshly it stuck in his skin. They wanted him alive.  
After hours of being beaten, mocked, whipped, flogged, and tortured they made him walk with a cross. They made him carry it.  
A rough piece of wood with splinters digging into fresh wounds. They wanted him alive.  
They wanted him to feel every ounce of pain they could bring.  
He had to feel it in order to heal us.  
Crucifixion was historically one of the cruelest most tortured deaths a human could face. Hours upon hours of torture. Torture most of us can not mentally think of because the cruelty isn't normal. It isn't something our minds can comprehend.  
We celebrate Easter with pastel colors, happy children hunting eggs, and chocolate. Truth is there was absolutely nothing happy about the day Jesus died. It was cruel, bloody, and nasty.  
He could have stopped all of it. He could have called every angel in heaven to demolish every person standing and shouting "Crucify Him!"  
He didn't. He knew in order to have a Sunday you have to have a Friday. He knew in order to have joy you have to carry your cross. He felt everything that day. He felt how your heart broke wide open when you had to watch your baby die. He felt how heavy your life was when you were staring down the barrel of a gun wondering if the man you called husband was going to shoot you. He carried the weight of the burden you have felt since your spouse died and life just doesn't seem right since. On that cross he held the rapist and murderers, the sinner and the saint. He leveled every playing field and said ALL of you are worth it. He knew he had to carry the cross. He never promised the cross you carry in this life would not be heavy. His wasn't. His promise is that Sunday is coming.  
No matter how heavy Friday is. Financially, emotionally, mentally, or physically. Friday is heavy. That cross is weighing you down and you are about to crumble under its weight.  
His promise was simply this. He won't make you carry it alone.  
What kind of king would step down from his throne for this?  
Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God did. For you.  
He did every bit of it for you and me.  
Oh yes it is heavy. So heavy sometimes you do not think you can take one more step.  
But look up, because Sunday is coming."

Continued...

## The Thief on the Cross

Author Unknown



How does the thief on the cross fit into your theology? No baptism, no communion, no confirmation, no speaking in tongues, no mission trip, no volunteerism, and no church clothes. He couldn't even bend his knees to pray. He didn't say the sinner's prayer and among other things, he was a thief. Jesus didn't take away his pain, heal his body, or smite the scoffers. Yet it was a thief who walked into heaven the same hour as Jesus simply by believing.

He had nothing more to offer other than his belief that Jesus was who he said he was. No spin from brilliant theologians. No ego or arrogance. No Shiny lights, skinny jeans, or crafty words. No haze machine, donuts, or coffee in the entrance. Just a naked dying man on a cross unable to even fold his hands to pray."

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16

## Why We are So Unhappy

By Fr. Thomas Hopko

"People feel unhappy and don't know why. They feel that something is wrong but can't put their finger on what it is. They feel uneasy in the world, confused and frustrated, alienated and estranged, and can't explain it. They have everything and yet want more; and when they get it, they're still left empty and dissatisfied. They want happiness and peace, and nothing seems to bring it. They want fulfillment, and it never seems to come. Everything is fine, yet everything is wrong. In America this is almost a national disease. It is covered over by frantic activity and endless running around. It is buried in activities and events. It is drowned out by television programs [and cell phones] and games.

But when the movement stops and the dial is turned off and everything is quiet...then the dread sets in, and the meaninglessness of it all, and the boredom, and the fear. Why is this so? Because, the Church tells us, we are really not at home. We are in exile. We are alienated and estranged from our true country. We are not with God our Father in the land of the living. We are spiritually sick. And some of us are already dead."

(Fr. Thomas Hopko, "The Lenten Spring," 21)

# God says:

Seek me, not the pleasures  
of this world. I bring happiness.  
This world will disappoint you.  
Please turn to me, I don't want  
you to hurt anymore!

# Unbalanced "Orthodoxy"

What's missing from ministry (and why it's undermining the Church's witness)

By Steven Christoforou

I'm upset.

Today is Judgment Sunday and, during this morning's Divine Liturgy, we read a familiar passage from Saint Matthew's Gospel account.

So why am I upset?

*Because the sermon we heard completely undermined today's Gospel.*

We heard that, while we're called to help those in need, we don't need to overdo it. We can do as much (or as little) as we like—there's no need to risk our comfort or create a financial hardship for ourselves.

And, to top it off, as he was ending his lukewarm sermon, the presbyter called for the parish council to pass a tray “for the needs of the building.”

(Needs that demand our attention more immediately than the needs of the cold and hungry, apparently.)

But, as frustrating as this sermon was, it wasn't surprising...

*Because we Orthodox Christians have a fundamentally imbalanced approach to the Christian life.*

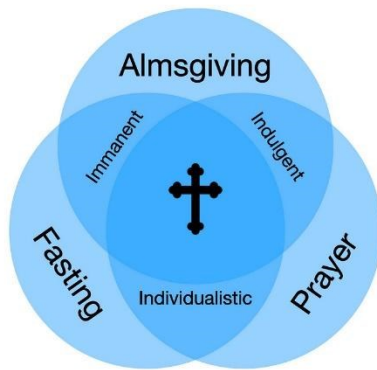
To understand why, let's first take a step back and consider the three basic practices of our life in Christ...

## The (Wobbly) Three-Legged Stool

You may have heard people refer to the “three-legged stool” of our ascetic life in Christ which includes three basic elements: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

(It's an image that Father Evan Armatas uses in his excellent *Toolkit for Spiritual Growth*, for example.)

But that three-legged stool is often wobbly for us Orthodox Christians because we don't give those three practices equal attention. Without almsgiving, the Church drifts towards a private, individualistic (and self-serving) ideology.



And, as we'll see later, it has *real consequences for the witness of the Church.*

Let's start with prayer....

Even if we don't all pray, we know we're supposed to “pray without ceasing,” as Saint Paul tells us in his first letter to the Thessalonians.

And we know that we're *supposed to have a prayer rule to help us reach that constant prayer: a regular rhythm of morning prayer and evening prayer, for example, even if that rhythm involves something short and simple like saying the Our Father.*

Do we all pray without ceasing? Do we all even stick to a prayer rule? No. *But we hold onto the ideal. And many of us at least try to deepen our prayer as we grow and mature as Christians.*

Now let's consider fasting...

Again, even if we don't all fast, we know we're *supposed to fast most Wednesdays and Fridays, and during the various fasting periods (Lent, Advent, the Apostles Fast, etc).* And we know how we're supposed to fast—abstaining from meat and dairy and even oil.

Do we all fast strictly? No. *But we hold onto the ideal. And many of us at least try to deepen our fasting as we grow and mature as Christians.*

But now let's consider almsgiving...

Continued...



## The Neglected Practice

Let's begin with a well-known exchange we see recorded in Matthew 19. It's when Jesus speaks with the Rich Young Ruler: a young man who comes to Jesus asking what he needs to do in order to have eternal life.

Christ tells him to keep the commandments, to which the Rich Young Ruler replies: *I've already kept all of them, what else do I need to do?* So the Lord responds:

Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (Matthew 19:21-22)

When we read this passage, we *always interpret it as applying just to the Rich Young Ruler, don't we? After all, Jesus couldn't possibly be telling me to sell everything I have, give to the poor, and follow Him, right?*

Could he?

## The Response of the Saints

Well, contrast our response with how Saint Anthony the Great reacted to the call of Matthew 19. Saint Athanasios of Alexandria records the story in his *Life of Saint Anthony the Great*:

It was as if by God's design he held the saints in his recollection, and as if the passage were read on his account. Immediately Anthony went out from the Lord's house and gave to the townspeople the possessions he had from his forebearers (three hundred fertile and very beautiful *arourae* [*a measure of arable land*]), so that they would not disturb him or his sister in the least. And selling all the rest that was portable, when he collected sufficient money, he donated it to the poor, keeping a few things for his sister." (*Life of Saint Anthony the Great*, §2)

So, unlike us, Saint Anthony heard Matthew 19—the call to sell everything he had and give to the poor—and received it as *an ideal that applied to him. He received it as we tend to receive the Church's direction around prayer and fasting: ideals which apply to all of us and which should continue to challenge all of us.*

(Even if it takes us a lifetime to get there.)

## An Objection to Almsgiving

"But wait," you might say. "It's possible to pray constantly and fast strictly. We see that in the great ascetics of the Church. But almsgiving is different because poverty is *inevitable. That's why there's less urgency around almsgiving.*"

(And, presumably, why a presbyter can essentially tell us that almsgiving doesn't matter—on Judgment Sunday no less.)

This objection often has some Scripture behind it. Consider Matthew 26, when a woman anoints the Lord's feet with expensive oil...

But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor."

But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. (Matthew 26:8-11)

It's that last bit, the part about "having the poor always," that tends to trip us up. After all, if poverty is inevitable, *what can we do about it?*

This was the conversation in a friend's parish, for example. A few years ago, his priest and parish council wanted to complete yet another expensive building project. My friend, on the other hand, wanted to begin developing some kind of outreach program to help people in need. But the priest and parish council shot his idea down. *And they based their rejection on Matthew 26.*

"We're always going to have poor among us," they reasoned. "There's only so much we can do to help. But you know what we *can do? Build a beautiful temple in which to worship!*"

## Right Worship, Right Action

Now, we should be clear: that parish council wasn't *really wrong*...

After all, God Himself gave Moses instructions to construct the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Just like our Churches today, that *visible worship space was a visible image of the invisible Kingdom.*

*So of course it should be beautiful! The Kingdom is beautiful!*

And the way we worship reveals that.

But God didn't simply tell Israel to build a beautiful *worship space. He told them to live in a particular—and beautiful—way.*

## There Shall Be No Poor Among You...

When we dig into the Scripture, we find clear parallels between the Old and New Testaments. In Deuteronomy 15, for example, we read something very similar to what Jesus says in Matthew 26 about the persistence of poverty.

(And that shouldn't be surprising: it's one and the same God, after all.

For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land.' (Deuteronomy 15:11)

Now, at first glance, maybe this is just another verse that leads to a sense of resignation about the *inevitability of poverty.*

It's the resignation that leads us to ask: *what's the point of almsgiving?*

But look again. Because, just a bit earlier in that chapter, we see this:

"But there will be no poor among you (for the Lord will bless you in the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance to possess), if only you will obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all this commandment which I command you this day." (Deuteronomy 15:4-5)

With this larger context, the persistence of poverty takes on a different shape...

Continued...

Yes, people will always be in need. But that's a consequence of our *unworthiness and disobedience*. Because God is *commanding us to open our hands to the poor and needy*. He's telling us that *there will be no poor among us if we obey the voice of the Lord*.

And the voice of the Lord is clear: open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and poor. *Sell all that you have and give to the poor*.

### **What this Means for Ministry**

Earlier this morning, I heard a profoundly disappointing sermon: the kind of ministry experience that tends to chip away at one's confidence in the Church.

Now, I've seen too much and experienced too much to walk away from the Church. But others (especially teens and young adults) don't have the same grounding...

And I'm sure you've heard both me and others raise the alarm about the ministry crisis we're facing as 60, 70, 80, even 90 percent of our young people fall away from the Church as they grow into young adults.

But these aren't just abstract numbers. We're talking about real people with real stories to tell. And I want to share one such story with you.

### *We Are Orthodoxy* podcast

It's a story you can hear yourself, described firsthand by the young man who experienced it. His name is Sean and we interviewed him for an episode of a podcast we used to produce at Y2AM called *We Are Orthodoxy*.

Sean grew up in the Bay Area. As a young man, he realized that his parish was very close to some *very rough neighborhoods: places where young people struggle with violence, broken families, and a general lack of the opportunities and stability that most of us take for granted*. So, Sean approached his parish leadership about potentially connecting with some of those people: of serving those people, *their neighbors in the Bay Area*.

But the parish leadership was, to put it mildly, *not very interested*. *There was plenty of money and effort available for the annual food festival, but not much available to help those in need*.

*And that had a very real consequence in Sean's life*.

Because, even though he continues to serve those in need, *Sean no longer considers himself an Orthodox Christian*. *It's not that he stopped believing in God: he simply realized that he doesn't see the world like the Church sees the world*.

### **The Consequences of Neglecting Almsgiving**

Saint John the Evangelist and Theologian shows us how the way we shrug our shoulders at the inevitability of poverty leads to us passing on a cold, dead faith:

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also. (1 John 4:20-21)



Consider Sean's story in light of these verses. I mean, how could Sean *not look at his parish, at the leaders of the Orthodox Christian Church, and not consider them to be liars? How could he look at these people who were so cold to the plight of their neighbors and not feel that there was some kind of hypocrisy at play?*

And there's more. Let's consider what Saint James says in his universal letter:

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. (James 1:27)

We Orthodox Christians *love to claim that we have the pure and undefiled religion—that we have maintained the faith of the Fathers*. *And maybe we have...on paper*. *But if the lived experiences of our communities does not include this love of neighbor, this care for widows and orphans, then Saint James (and not just him) would contradict our claims*.

Regardless of the prayers we mutter and the theology books we skim through—no, *we are not keeping the pure and undefiled faith*.

### FOCUS North America

In fact, it's one of the reasons I began working with FOCUS North America. Many people will point to the incredible volume of online resources that the Church has produced in recent years (including the resources I helped produce over the past decade, things like *Be the Bee* and *Pop Culture Coffee Hour*) and boast of the Church's growth in influence and awareness.

But if all we're doing is talking about God and not actually encountering Him, is that really ok? If all we're doing is posturing online about the glories of Orthodoxy and not actually doing as the Lord commands, is that really ok?

And remember what the Lord commands: to visit orphans and widows, to open our hands to those in need, to work so that there will be no more poor among us.

After all, that's how we'll be judged



# Sunday School News

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL STAFF PRAYS THAT YOUR LENTEN JOURNEY IS BRINGING YOU CLOSER TO CHRIST.

We would like to thank all the families who brought a Lenten meal to share at our Pre-Sanctified dinner on Wednesday, MARCH 1ST. The food was delicious and our many parishioners in attendance were very grateful. We can always count on our parents when we need them.

Our Sunday School topics for the month of March were Icons/Sunday of Orthodoxy (1st Sunday of Lent), Being a Good Friend - The Paralytic (Second Sunday of Lent), Veneration of the Cross (Third Sunday of Lent). and Faith - St. John of the Ladder (Fourth Sunday of Lent).



YOUTH SUNDAY took place on March 26th. We need to thank our children, who are singing more beautifully than ever and learning more church hymns under the direction of Maria Xenick. Our Epistle reader was also amazing.



Our Altar Boys, Myrrh Bearers, and Maiden for the Bridegroom Services are preparing and excited for their roles during HOLY WEEK. Everyone is also looking forward to our Sunday School Good Friday Retreat on April 14TH.



+++ May everyone have a blessed Lent, Holy Week, and a spiritually uplifting Pascha experience.

## APRIL CALENDAR:

- Sunday, April 2nd: TOPIC: Holy Week - 5th Sunday of Great Lent)
- Saturday, April 8th: Saturday of Lazarus - Sunday School makes the Palm Crosses
- Sunday, April 9th: Palm Sunday  
TOPIC: Holy Week - Palm Sunday - ALL STUDENTS will participate in the Palm Sunday Procession
- Friday, April 14th: Good Friday Retreat
- Sunday, April 16th: PASCHA - No Sunday School
- Sunday, April 23rd: TOPIC: St. Thomas
- Sunday, April 30TH: TOPIC: Fruit of the Spirit  
YOUTH SUNDAY





# Men's 2023 Retreat

Men's Retreat—we held our first men's retreat on Saturday, February 18, with 24 men from our parish and others participating. The theme was "Getting Back to the Basics of Christianity: How Can I Be a Spiritual Leader if I'm not Even a Follower?" It was a great day of fellowship, learning, praying and worshipping. We will definitely be doing this again next year. Below are some testimonials from the day.

*"The men's retreat was an enlightening experience that made me feel full of fellowship and a better understanding of what it means to be an Orthodox Christian. Fr. Stavros keeps the sessions moving with wonderful stories and meaningful explanations of our faith. Fr. Stavros was refreshingly honest about his own experiences, and the entire event left me changed for the better in many ways." Vasilis Zaferos, from St. John*

*Thank you for the wonderful Men's Retreat Fellowship, it is the best spiritual meeting/class that I have ever attended. Somehow you simplified Orthodoxy as a way of practicing Christianity and the fact that God is our Friend is Fantastic news. I took a lot of notes, I have a lot of homework, and Now I have a map to get started and get serious about my salvation. It was like spring training for athletes, I need the map, I need the directions, and I needed a few single highlights to follow. May God Bless all your ministries. George Dakkak, who came up from Sarasota*

*The retreat was informative ,entertaining and so organized. The handouts and resultant discussions were so special. Everyone seemed so happy to be there and the feeling of community was super. Thanks for setting this up and for setting up the monthly Men's Group. Nick Fallieras, from St. John*







# GOYA LENTEN 2023 RETREAT

**PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY**

**MEMBERS IN THE MEMORIAL SERVICE ON GOOD FRIDAY - April 14**

**In Memory of**

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**\*\*You only need to write the first name of each person. Please mail to the church office by Monday April 10.**

*You may also email the names to [office@stjohntpa.org](mailto:office@stjohntpa.org)*

## **St. John Stewardship 2023**

Here is where we are so far in 2023- March 10, 2023	3/10/2023	2/21/2023	Change
Total pledged and Unpledged Collected	\$378,204	\$353,308	\$24,896
Average of Pledged & Unpledged	\$1,666	\$1,731	(\$65)
Median of Pledged & Unpledged	\$600	\$800	(\$200)
Total Number of Families & Individuals Giving	227	204	23

**We hope to surpass last year's total of 363 Families & Individuals.**

**Please consider mailing your forms to the office or go online at [stjohntpa.org](http://stjohntpa.org)**

**If you any questions regarding Stewardship please call or text George Mitseas at 813-748-1220.**

**Mental Health Awareness**—Special thanks to Mary Ann Konstas and Amy Wenditz, as well as Vasili Zaferos, who led a seminar on mental health awareness on Sunday, February 19. Over a dozen people participated in this informative presentation on the benefits of mental health care.

**Sunday school parents retreat**-On Sunday, February 26, we had a parents retreat after church with many of our Sunday school parents participating. We talked about how to bring more spirituality into our homes, recognizing that what we do on Sundays, no matter how well we do it, is enough to compete with the noise we hear all week. Special thanks to Vickie Peckham and Maria Xenick for your help in organizing and assisting with this event.







# Adult Greek School

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My name is Magdalini (Magda) Myer and I am the Ministry Head of the "Adult Greek School" of St. John Greek Orthodox Church. I was born, raised and educated in Greece and I teach the Greek language to adults in this church.

How do I serve and my ministry the church and the Lord?

By teaching the Greek language to adults, I bring people to our church. Some of them become members of the church, some of them become members of several Ministries of the church and some of them are already members of a Ministry or the Head of a ministry (Sunday School teachers, Daughters of Penelope, AHEPA members, Ushers, Welcome Ministry and Youth Protection Ministry). Many of them help at the festival, coffee hours, socialize and worship God with us. They give their time, they use their talent and give us a lot of love. That way, I believe my students serve the church and the Lord!

I teach my students to read, write and speak the Greek language and prepare them to go to Greece either for vacation or visit their relatives and friends. I also teach them some of the Greek Culture. I teach my students all the Greek Holidays, religious or ethnic: Christmas, Easter and we participate at the Greek Independence Day Program, every year in March at church. I also teach them some history and Mythology.


That way, I believe I help and serve the church and the Lord, all together. I serve because I want to help people to learn the Greek language and help the Greek language to survive in this country.

I love teaching the Greek language, it's in my personality. I feel like God gave me this talent (I consider it as God's gift) because he wants me to be teaching the Greek language in this country.

That's why he is helping me to do it for almost 24 years: I taught to children (in San Jose, California for 9 years) and to adults for almost 14 years, here in our church. I feel like, I am in a mission!

Then, I really believe that I am serving the church and the Lord and that makes me very happy, proud and very thank full to God for giving me this talent and the energy to teach the Greek language, for all these years!

I will continue teaching the Greek language as long as the good Lord keeps me in good health, helping and bringing more people to our church, Serve the Church and the Lord!



# Church Etiquette by Fr. Stavros

*As we are in the Lenten and Paschal seasons, many people will be attending church services. It's always helpful to be reminded of a few basic points of etiquette for our church services. I have expanded on the article I have printed in years past so please reread this one.*

## Some General Thoughts

At a recent baptism, where the sponsor was chewing gum with his hands in his pockets, made me think that we need some continued commentary on church etiquette. The Orthodox Church is a sacred space. Our society is losing its understanding of sacredness in general, but the Orthodox Church is a sacred place. When you enter the church, you are entering a piece of heaven on earth. There are large icons of the Lord, the Virgin Mary and the Saints, that dominate the church edifice. The smell of incense reminds us of our prayers going to heaven. The Body and Blood of Christ are present at all times in the tabernacle on the Altar Table. So, whether there is a service going on or not, the church is sacred at all times.

When we enter the church for a service, before a service has begun, we should be quiet and reverent. If speaking, it should be in hushed tones. It is frustrating that before a baptism, the volume level in church would be the same as in a restaurant or bar, and that we often have to ask people for their attention to begin the service, or ask them to quiet down. Leaving the church is the same thing—when waiting for Antithoron, please do so quietly, and whisper if you are going to speak.

**Cell phones** should be turned off during the service. This is a time to disengage from the world and enter into God's world. The only cell phones that should be on are for doctors who are on call who come to church and these should be on vibrate mode. Also, please don't give phones to your kids to play on, or text people while in church. I have heard from several people who have been distracted by others who are texting or children who are playing video games. If you want to take a picture or a video of something in church, that's fine, but other than this, please don't use the phones in church.

**Gum** belongs at a ballgame, not at church. Our mouth should be praying and singing in church, not chomping on gum.

**Lipstick** stains have been left on the icons in the narthex or on the special icons that are on the solea. Please be careful that you do not leave lipstick marks on the icons. You should not wear lipstick on Holy Thursday or Good Friday. These are days of extreme humility and sadness. Do not leave lipstick marks on the body of Christ as it hangs on the Cross. Please refrain from wearing lipstick if you plan to receive Holy Communion.

**Hands in pockets** are too casual. Our hands should be in our laps or at our sides or folded in front of us, a position of reverence and attention.

**Don't Cross your legs in church** because it is too casual. When standing in church, either have your hands on the pews in front of you, cross them in front of you, or hold a liturgy book in front of you. When sitting, place hands in your lap, not around the person next to you. Have your feet flat on the floor, not crossed legs. The preferred posture in church is standing. So when we sit, we are to sit "at full attention." And crossing legs is too casual.

**Cocktail dresses** are too short for church. Low-cut tops are inappropriate for church and really for anywhere. Dress in a manner that befits an encounter with the living God.

**Strapless dresses**—in monasteries, women must have their heads covered in church. In our church, we only ask for the shoulders. A three inch wide strap is appropriate. Less than that is not.

We should put on our Sunday best for church. If the best at your disposal is blue jeans, then come in blue jeans. But don't opt for blue jeans if you have other attire. If the best you have is a T-shirt, then do not stay away. But if you own a polo shirt or a button down shirt, or a coat and tie, then come at your best.

We would never want anyone to stay away from church because of lack of an expensive wardrobe. Merely, put on the "best" that you have in your wardrobe for church, and come to church respectfully, and ready for worship, not like you are ready for a night on the town. As a society, we have become altogether immodest. I do not wish to return to the overly dressed gentlemen and ladies of the middle-ages, but it seems that we have taken it to the other extreme. And outside of church, we should consider what kind of statement our clothing makes about us and the Christian values of modesty that we claim to hold.

## Arriving at church

**Come on time** - The time to arrive at church is before the service starts. If you arrive after the Divine Liturgy begins, try to enter the church quietly and observe what is happening. **If it is the Small Entrance, the Gospel, the Great Entrance, the Creed or the Consecration (kneeling), then do not enter the church.** Wait until these are finished and then quickly find a seat. Do not enter the nave while Father is giving the sermon. Try to not interrupt the Liturgy by your entrance. The best way to avoid this situation is to arrive on time.

**Venerating the Gospel During Orthros**—Some people arrive during Orthros, before Divine Liturgy, on Sundays. There is a Gospel that is read during Orthros, and afterwards, on most Sundays, the Gospel is offered for veneration by the faithful. If you enter the church during this time, please come up immediately to venerate the Gospel and then go light a candle.

**How late can I come and still receive Holy Communion?** This is a sad question. If we really believe that Holy Communion is the Body and Blood of Christ, what kind of respect and order does it show for THE BODY and THE BLOOD of Christ if we are arriving only a few minutes before Holy Communion? If we are not there for the Consecration of the Gifts. We really should be at the Divine Liturgy from the beginning if we are to receive. So, what if we are running late? Can we get there by the reading of the Scriptures? If we can't come on time to hear God's Word, should really be receiving Holy Communion? Some might argue, I can read the Bible outside of Church, why do I need to be there for that? The most basic requirement for Holy Communion is a confession of faith, the Creed. Thus, if you are arriving after the Creed, it is not appropriate to receive Holy Communion. **Please refrain from receiving Holy Communion if you enter the church after the Creed.**

**Venerating icons** - It is customary to venerate icons in the Narthex when you enter into the church. When venerating (kissing) an icon, you are venerating an image of holiness. A Holy Person, or the LORD Himself is depicted in each icon. Pay attention where you kiss. It is not appropriate to kiss one of the saints on the lips. Rather, kiss the hands or feet of the saint, or if the person depicted in the icon is holding a cross, Gospel or scroll, you can venerate that, along with the hand or feet of the person depicted in the icon.

**Lighting candles** - Lighting candles is an important part of Orthodox worship. We light them along with offering personal prayers. Thus, it is not appropriate to be lighting candles during the Small Entrance, Gospel, Great Entrance, Creed or Consecration.

## While in Church

**Talk only to the Lord during the services** - worship is not an appropriate time to greet your friends and neighbors. Please leave that for the coffee hour.

**Leaving the church early** - our Sunday School students go to class after Holy Communion, so that they may receive proper instructions. For those who are not in Sunday School, or when there is no Sunday School, it is expected that everyone will remain in church until the end of the service. To receive Holy Communion and immediately leave is to treat the church like a restaurant where we come and go as we please.

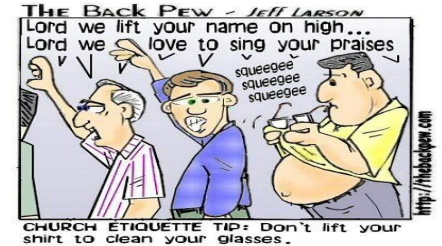
### When do I make the sign of the cross?

You can make the sign of the cross any time you wish, but please do

it in a reverent way. It is not necessary to cross oneself three times in a row. Once, and reverently, is sufficient. Making the cross sloppily many times makes it look like we are strumming a guitar. There are some times when we should cross ourselves.

### These include:

- Anytime you hear the name of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- When you hear the name of the Theotokos/Virgin Mary
- Before and after venerating an icon, the cross or the Gospel book
- When you enter and exit the church building
- When you cross in front of the altar, from one side of the church to the other.
- As the Holy Gifts pass you during the Great Entrance
- Before and after the Holy Gospel, when saying "Glory to You O Lord, Glory to You."
- At the phrase "In one, holy, catholic and apostolic church" in the Creed.
- At the words of Institution - "Take, Eat, this is My Body"; and "Drink of this all of you, this is My Blood."
- Before and after receiving Communion - Make the sign of the cross before it is your turn and after you've stepped away so one does not hit the chalice.
- When the priest comes out with Holy Communion and says "With the fear of God, with faith and with love draw near."
- On any petition or prayer that speaks to your heart.
- When the priest censes you, or blesses you, you can make the sign of the cross, or simply bow your head.



### Listen to the words of the service, they tell you what to do!

At the Small Entrance: "Come let us worship and bow down" make a slight bow.

"Let us lift up our hearts:" Look upwards to Christ in the dome and lift up your hands.

"Let us bow our heads to the Lord:" Pretty self-explanatory, bow your head to the Lord.

**Sing with the choir** and offer the responses of the Divine Liturgy, this is a work of the people, ALL the people. Recite the Creed and Lord's Prayer as well.

### Kneeling

Put the kneelers up and down quietly.

### Kissing the hand of the priest

When greeting a priest, you should kiss his hand as a sign of respect that this is the hand that holds the Holy Communion. This goes for in church, and also outside of the church, for instance when greeting a priest in his office or in the hall. Also, when you kiss the priest's hand (or the bishop's) you receive a blessing in return, they offer you a blessing in return.

### For Holy Communion:

- Pray the Holy Communion Prayers silently as Father prays aloud.
- As you are waiting in line, pray the Jesus Prayer, "Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner," or the prayer of the repentant thief "Lord, remember me in Your Kingdom" repeatedly.
- Don't have your hands in your pockets
- Girls, wipe off lipstick before receiving
- When the person before you is receiving, make the sign of the cross.
- When it is your turn to receive, say your Orthodox name to the priest, even if he knows your name.
- Either take the cloth and hold it under your chin or allow the altar boy to do that for you. Come close to the chalice so that Father doesn't have to reach.
- Open your mouth wide
- Close your mouth on the spoon. Holy Communion is the Body and Blood of Christ—it cannot communicate disease.
- Wipe your lips.
- As you walk away, make the sign of the cross
- Take a piece of the blessed bread.
- Pray the post-Communion prayers in the Liturgy book if you are staying in church.

Holy Communion is the Body and Blood of Christ. There has never been a documented case of disease being transmitted through Holy Communion. Every priest in the Orthodox Church, after distributing Holy Communion to all the faithful (and undoubtedly someone is sick in our church each Sunday when over 250 people are receiving) consumes what remains of the Holy Communion. No priest gets sick from doing this. Father chooses to put a lot of Communion on the spoon, so that you can "*taste and see how good the Lord is*" (Psalm 34:8). **So please don't pull away quickly, because it makes him nervous because we do not want the Body and Blood of Christ to end up on the floor.** Please approach with not only fear of God, with faith and with love, but also with care. This IS THE Body and THE Blood of Christ, "*shed for the life and salvation of the world*" (Liturgy of St. Basil) and imparted to us for "*the remission of sins and life everlasting.*"

**Bread at the end of church** is called Antithoron which means "instead of the Gifts." Antithoron is not Holy Communion but needs to be treated with respect and reverence. When you approach to receive Antithoron, cup your hands one inside the other, kiss the hand of the priest as he places the bread in your hand, and then eat the bread carefully so that crumbs don't fall all over the place. This is holy and blessed bread! When waiting for Antithoron at the end of the service, please do so quietly, and whisper if you are going to speak.



# 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

# Sunday of Orthodoxy March 5, 2023





# 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](mailto: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.

## St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!

### Have you downloaded our App?

Download the St. John's app in the App Store, or Google Play Store by typing in "St John GOC Tampa." You can access the Messenger, weekly bulletin, livestream services, and much more all through our app!

**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](http://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.



Like





## 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



*Our bookstore has an entire section of titles geared toward the many issues young married couples face. Check out the following books along with many others in our bookstore this month.*

*Under the Laurel Tree – Grieving Infertility with Saints Joachim and Anna*

*Children of My Heart – Finding Christ Through Adoption*

*Fertile Ground – A Pilgrimage through Pregnancy*

*Of Such is the Kingdom – A Practical Theology of Disability*

*Parenting Toward the Kingdom – Orthodox Christian Principles of Child Rearing*

*Preserve Them O Lord – A Guide for developing marital unity for Orthodox Couples*

# Family Calendar for Great Lent 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
February 26 <i>Matthew 6:21</i> Sunday of Forgiveness Divine Liturgy Forgiveness Vespers <i>Ask forgiveness of your family members</i>	27 <i>Psalms 95:6</i> Clean Monday Great Lent begins Canon of St. Andrew Holy Unction Service <b>WORSHIP</b> <i>No screens today</i>	28 <i>1 Chronicles 16:29</i> Call your Godparents to wish them a Blessed Lent	March 1 <i>Romans 12:1</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy <i>Pray for your priest</i>	2 <i>Hebrews 12:28</i> <i>Silently pray about how much God loves you</i>	3 <i>Psalms 63:3-4</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Salutations to the Virgin Mary <i>Make a prosphora bread to offer at church</i>	4 <i>Psalms 150:6</i> Saturday of the Souls St. Theodore Divine Liturgy <i>Pray for a loved one who has passed away</i>
5 <i>John 1:44-45</i> Sunday of Orthodoxy Divine Liturgy <i>Bring an icon from home to have it blessed</i>	6 <i>Psalms 133:1</i> Great Compline <i>Donate clothing to a charity COMMUNITY</i>	7 <i>Romans 12:4-5</i> Secretly put a plant on a neighbor's porch	8 <i>Proverbs 27:17</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy <i>Pray for sick children</i>	9 <i>Galatians 6:2</i> <i>Send a card to a friend who lives in another state</i>	10 <i>Matthew 18:20</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Salutations to the Virgin Mary <i>Make a list of five things you are thankful for</i>	11 <i>Hebrews 10:24-25</i> <i>Forgive someone who hurt you</i>
12 <i>Mark 2:3-5</i> St. Gregory Palamas Divine Liturgy <i>Give your Sunday School teacher a handmade card</i>	13 <i>John 13:34</i> Great Compline <i>Make and send a get-well card to someone who is sick</i> <b>LOVE</b>	14 <i>John 3:16</i> Draw a picture of the Cross with the word "love" on it	15 <i>Luke 10:27</i> Paraklesis Pre-Sanctified Liturgy <i>Pray for world leaders</i>	16 <i>1 Peter 4:8</i> <i>Do an intentional act of kindness for someone at school</i>	17 <i>1 John 4:18-19</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Salutations to the Virgin Mary <i>Smile at everyone you walk by today</i>	18 <i>1 Corinthians 13:4-7</i> <i>Make a donation to a charity you love</i>
19 <i>Mark 8:34</i> Veneration of Holy Cross Divine Liturgy <i>Bring a flower home from the cross</i>	20 <i>Philippians 4:9</i> Great Compline <i>Learn the words to a new prayer</i> <b>LEARNING</b>	21 <i>Isaiah 1:17</i> Read about the life of your patron saint	22 <i>Psalms 119:73</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy <i>Pray your teachers</i>	23 <i>Titus 3:14</i> <i>Choose a Bible verse and put it on your refrigerator</i>	24 <i>2 Peter 3:18</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Salutations to the Virgin Mary <i>Read a favorite Bible story with your family</i>	25 <i>Luke 1:35</i> Annunciation to the Virgin Mary Divine Liturgy <i>Thank God for something in nature He created</i>
26 <i>Mark 9:23-24</i> St. John of the Ladder Divine Liturgy <i>Draw a ladder and put a Lenten goal on each step</i>	27 <i>Ephesians 2:10</i> Great Compline <i>Clean your room without being asked</i> <b>SERVICE</b>	28 <i>2 Corinthians 9:11-12</i> Do a chore in your yard	29 <i>3 John 1:16</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy <i>Pray for first responders</i>	30 <i>Matthew 5:16</i> <i>Find a charity where your family can volunteer</i>	31 <i>Psalms 100:2</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Akathist Hymn <i>Visit someone who lives alone</i>	April 1 <i>1 Peter 4:10</i> <i>Make and serve someone a Lenten meal today</i>
2 <i>Mark 10:45</i> St. Mary of Egypt Divine Liturgy <i>Sing "Agios o Theos" in Church today</i>	3 <i>Matthew 6:33</i> Great Compline <i>Make a plan for the Holy Week services you will attend</i> <b>PRIORITY</b>	4 <i>Colossians 3:17</i> Write the names of your family members to give the priest to pray over during Holy Week	5 <i>Proverbs 3:5-6</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy <i>Pray for people who feel alone</i>	6 <i>Philippians 2:4</i> <i>Memorize a short bible verse</i>	7 <i>Proverbs 3:9-10</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy <i>Tell your family members what you love about them</i>	8 <i>John 11:27</i> Saturday of Lazarus Service of Proskomide Divine Liturgy <i>Watch a faith based movie or show with your family</i>
9 <i>John 12:15</i> Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy Vespers Service of the Bridegroom <i>Replace your old palm cross</i>	10 <i>Matthew 25:14-15</i> Holy Monday Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Service of the Bridegroom <i>Read the story about Joseph from the Old Testament</i>	11 <i>Luke 17:3-4</i> Holy Tuesday Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Service of the Bridegroom <i>Read the story of Kassiane the hymnographer</i>	12 <i>Psalms 147:3-4</i> Holy Wednesday Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Service of the Bridegroom Holy Unction <i>Receive Holy Unction</i>	13 <i>John 15:12-13</i> Holy Thursday Liturgy of St. Basil 12 Gospels service <i>Color eggs red for Pascha</i>	14 <i>Joshua 24:15</i> Holy Friday Royal Hours Unnailing from the Cross Lamentations <i>Pray about Jesus on the cross</i>	15 <i>Acts 2:22-24</i> Holy Saturday Liturgy of St. Basil Resurrection Service <i>Come see the leaves scattered at the morning liturgy</i>
16 <i>Psalms 51:10</i> PASCHA Agape Vespers Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!	17 <i>2 Corinthians 4:16</i> Joyfully sing Christ is risen!	18 <i>Ephesians 4:23</i> Crack your red eggs while saying "Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!"	19 <i>Isaiah 41:1</i> Find a picture with the verse John 3:16 and print it out	20 <i>Romans 12:2</i> <i>Play with someone who feels left out</i>	21 <i>Colossians 3:10</i> Life-Giving Fountain Divine Liturgy <i>Say a prayer for the gift of clean water</i>	22 <i>Isaiah 40:31</i> <i>Make resurrection rolls</i>

◀ Mar 2023		April 2023				May 2023 ▶	
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
<b>2** St. Mary of Egypt</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. meeting-Zaharias Room GOYA 5:00 p.m.	<b>3**</b> Compline 5:30 p.m. Young Adult Discussion 6:30-8:30 p.m.	<b>4**</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Philoptochos Board Meeting (zoom) Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Choir Practice	<b>5**</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Dinner/Discussion in Hall	<b>6**</b> Adult Greek School	<b>7**</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>8** Saturday of Lazarus</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Proskomide 9:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>1**</b> Young at Heart
<b>9**</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Philoptochos Luncheon Vespers 5:00 p.m. Bridegroom 6:30 p.m.	<b>10** Holy Monday</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Bridegroom 6:30 p.m.	<b>11** Holy Tuesday</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Bridegroom 6:30 p.m.	<b>12** Holy Wednesday</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Holy Unction 3:00 p.m. Bridegroom 5:00 p.m. Holy Unction 6:30 p.m.	<b>13** Holy Thursday</b> Vesper Liturgy 9:15 a.m. Passion of Christ 6:30 p.m. All Night Vigil	<b>14** Good Friday</b> Royal Hours 9:00 a.m. Descent from the Cross 3:00 p.m. Lamentations 7:00 p.m.	<b>15** Holy Saturday</b> Vespers 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Great Canon 11:00 p.m. Resurrection Service 11:40 p.m. Paschal Liturgy 12:30 a.m.	
<b>16 PASCHA</b> Agape Vespers 11:00 a.m. Easter egg Hunt- Noon	<b>17</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m. No Fasting This Week	<b>18</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	<b>19</b> Choir Practice	<b>20</b> Adult Greek School	<b>21</b> <b>Life-Giving Fountain</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>22</b>	
<b>23</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Bill (YAH) will talk in church GOYA 5:00 p.m.	<b>24</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>25 St. Mark</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Parish Council 6:30 p.m.	<b>26**</b> Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. Choir Practice	<b>27</b> Adult Greek School	<b>28**</b>	<b>29</b> Community Outreach	
<b>30</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Parea Dance Practice Men's Group 5:00 p.m.							



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*How lovely is YOUR dwelling place, O lord of hosts!*

PSALM 84 2:3

