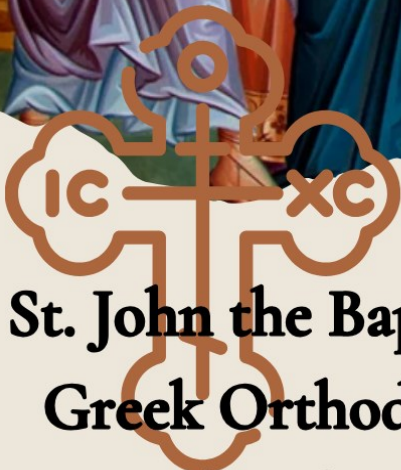


THE MESSENGER

November 2023 Edition

November 21-
Entrance of the
Theotokos into the
Temple



St. John the Baptist
Greek Orthodox
Church

Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis (Proistamenos)
Fr. Stratton Dorozenski
(Retired Priest In Residence)
Fr. John Stefero (Retired Priest In Residence)



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.

Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-876-8830 (Office) frstav@gmail.com		Choir Tara Swartzbaugh, Director 813-313-0439 Ruth Losovitz, Organist 727-688-2782		Parish Nursing Ministry Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026	
Retired Priest in Residence Rev. Fr. Stratton Dorozenski 813-876-8830 (Office)		College Student Program Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 414-254-5134		Oratorical Festival Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374	
Retired Priest in Residence Rev. Fr. John Stefero 813-876-8830 (Office) jwstefero50@hotmail.com 678-637-4425 (Cell)		Community Outreach Greg Melton 813-967-2074		Photography Ministry Karina Findlay 813-476-9632	
Parish Council 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 Scarfogliero 813-892-1599 Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026 Mike Xenick 813-340-8737		Connect Through Christ - Special Needs Ministry for Children Dante and Lindsey Skourellos 813-765-9534		Philoptochos Katherine Sakkis 813-309-1073	
Office Staff Kim Rojas 813-876-8830 Administrative Assistant, Messenger & Bulletin Editor kim@stjohntpa.org Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper debbie@stjohntpa.org fax:813-443-4899		Dance Groups H XAPA ΜΑΣ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668 Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347 Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963 ΠΑΡΕΑ, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136 ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668		Stewardship Chris Kyrus 757-672-1920 George Mitseas 813-748-1220	
Adopt a College Student Kathy Kaburis 813-240-6513		Daughters of Penelope Elena Paras Ketchum 813-229-0144		Sunday School Vickie Peckham 813-758-3102	
Adult Greek School Magda Myer 813-523-5771		Festival Mike Xenick 813-340-8737		Usher Pete Trakas 813-505-2193	
AHEPA Thomas Sakaris, President 201-819-2319		Finance Committee Gary Ward 813-846-3898		Veterans/1st Responders Fr. John Stefero 813-876-8830	
Altar Angels Kalliope Chagaris 813-789-4134		Food Pantry Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747		Website / Social Media / APP VOLUNTEER NEEDED!	
Altar Boys Fr Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038		GriefShare Donna Hambos 813-843-8412		Welcoming Ministry Maria Xenick 813-765-3587	
Bookstore Presbyteria Denise Stefero 678-464-4833		Gasparilla Parking Alex Limberatos 262-370-0586		Women's Bible Study Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038	
Bible Study-Monday Night Fr. John Stefero 678-637-4425		GOYA Michael & Bessie Palios 813-523-0346		Young Adult Aris Rogers 813-309-5525	
Buildings & Grounds Euripides Panos 813-352-3972		Hope/Joy George & Zackie Ameres 813-245-3813		Young at Heart Dora Morgan 813-613-3738	
		Joy Tweens Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963		Youth Protection Suzanne Pileggi 813-244-5855	
		Junior Olympics Dwight Forde 561-310-5034		12 Disciples Mathew Balasis 727-421-7376	
		Men's Fellowship Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038			

Fr. Stavros' Message

There are Four Festivals in November

As we turn the church calendar to November, there are four festivals on our calendar. First, there will be 15 celebrations of the Divine Liturgy in the month of November. Second, our Greek Festival is November 3-4. Third, on November 15, the Christmas “festival” begins with the beginning of the Nativity Fast. And fourth, during November we celebrate Thanksgiving. This month’s message is about these four festivals. I hope we will all plan to participate in our Greek Festival, in as many celebrations of the Liturgy as possible, that we will plan to mark the Nativity Fast together and that we will all have a blessed and meaningful Feast of Thanksgiving.

The Greek Festival

While the Festival that is the Divine Liturgy is the most important festival in November (we will have it 15 times), of more immediate concern



on the calendar is our Greek Festival, so I will address that first.

There are lots of reasons to have a Greek festival and there are lots of good things that can come out of the festival. The festival, first and foremost, is a needed fundraiser for our church. Many people don’t realize how much it actually costs to run a church. There are fixed expenses, such as utilities, insurance, maintenance and repairs. There is our allocation to the Archdiocese, which is \$100K. There are costs for personnel, ministries, office supplies, charitable giving and other things, and this brings our budget total to over \$850K. Our budget for 2024 reflects \$750 from stewardship and donations, leaving a gap of somewhere near \$100K (the amount is not precise as the budget will not be finalized until after this writing) and the Greek Festival is still how we are bridging this gap.

What We Need From You

It takes a lot of manpower to carry off the festival during the festival weekend. So, we need volunteers.

Most people come to the festival by word of mouth, so encourage your neighbors and your co-workers and non-Greek friends to come. Put a sign on your lawn or at your business.

A Sense of Community

You learn a lot about people when you work in close quarters with them for the weekend. The festival is a great opportunity to meet people in our community. Make it a goal to meet at least two new people from our community this weekend, one new person each day. And after the festival is over, I hope we will not only have made some income for our parish but that the parishioners can strengthen and build bonds with new people.

The Spiritual Benefit of the Festival

Ever since we moved the festival to our church grounds, we have always opened up the church for tours of our sanctuary. Several years ago we added a presentation by our choir of Orthodox Church music. As we deepen our understanding of the Christian faith and as I deepen my understanding of the priesthood and the role of the church, I hope we are seeing a greater and greater need and opportunity to share the joy of being a Christian. It would not be an exaggeration to say that at least half of the people who live in the Tampa Bay area are unchurched, meaning they don’t go to any church. Probably half of the people who will patronize our festival are unchurched. When those people are already on our property, we should invite them to come and see our church. This year, I hope that collectively we will be more intentional in inviting people to come see our church sanctuary. When you meet people at the festival, in the food line, at one of our booths, or on the dance floor, ask them if they’ve come into the church yet, and if not, encourage them to take a church tour. It’s just a simple invitation that everyone can offer.

The Nativity Fast—Guide Us to Thy Perfect Light



The second timely thing in the month of November is the Nativity Fast, which begins on November 15. Most of us are familiar with the fast that occurs in Great Lent preceding Pascha. However, there is also a fast that precedes the Nativity and it begins on November 15. The Great Lent in the spring is accompanied by an entire cycle of Lenten services that we don't have during the Nativity fast. Also, many Christians mark Great Lent as a period of some solemnity. In our Western culture, most people mark the period before the Nativity with celebrations and the solemnity and grandeur of the Nativity is almost forgotten.

During the period of the Nativity Fast, we will have many services, because the liturgical calendar shows many days that are to be commemorated with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Additionally, there be some services that are specific to the Nativity season, such as Holy Unction to begin the Nativity Fast on November 15.

As we have done in the past three years, we are going to be offering our families a Nativity bag. This year, we are using a desk calendar that will have a verse of scripture for every day, a point to ponder and an action item. The theme for this year is "Guide Us to Thy Perfect Light." We know that the journey of the Magi took two years, they were guided to Christ by the light of a star. Our journey to the Nativity will last forty days and this calendar we hope will be a guide for you to have a more spiritually impactful Nativity season. The journey to salvation will take our entire lives.

And it is important that as the years go by, that we stop often allow ourselves to be guided to His perfect light. As we mark this season of the Nativity, take some time and allow yourself to be guided by the Lord to be closer to the Lord. The Nativity bags will include other things, such as a votive candle, Christmas ornament, a special envelop to be opened by the your family on December 25 and other things. The bags will be available on Sunday, November 12; Sunday, November 19, and in the office if you can't make it to church either Sunday.

The Divine Liturgy and Why We Celebrate It So Often

The purpose of the Divine Liturgy is for us to partake of Christ in the Eucharist. That is why we have the Divine Liturgy. We can sing, we can pray, we can read the Bible and we can learn in other forums. The unique thing about the Divine Liturgy is that here and only here, we have the opportunity to partake of Christ, to touch the Divine God.



In the early church, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated on a daily basis. People communed every day. In monasteries this is still done during the present day. In most parishes, however, the Divine Liturgy is celebrated on certain pre-scribed days. The Divine Liturgy is celebrated every Sunday, in honor of the Resurrection of Christ. It is celebrated on all the feast days of Christ—Nativity, Epiphany, Transfiguration, Palm Sunday, Pascha, Ascension, and Holy Cross Day.

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It is celebrated on the Feast days of the Virgin Mary—Her Nativity (September 8), entrance into the Temple, (November 21), Her Presentation of Christ (February 2), the Annunciation (March 25) and her Dormition (August 15).

It is celebrated on feasts of the Evangelists, Apostles and the major saints in the life of the church. Again, there is a specific schedule that priests are supposed to follow, specific days that are to be honored with a Divine Liturgy. Priests can add to this list, but are not supposed to subtract from it. (Obviously, in July when I'm at summer camp, some are missed, but I actually plan vacations so as to avoid missing important Liturgical celebrations.)

I'm writing specifically on the Divine Liturgy this month, because in the month of November, we are going to celebrate the Divine Liturgy FIFTEEN times in our parish. There are four Sundays.

There are set feast days that are supposed to be marked with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy—November 1 (Sts. Cosmas and Damian), November 8 (Archangels), November 9 (St. Nektarios), November 13 (St. John Chrysostom), November 16 (St. Matthew), November 21 (Entrance of Virgin Mary in the Temple), November 25 (St. Katherine) and November 30 (St. Andrew). (Please see liturgical calendar for schedule as well as brief explanation of the lives of these saints). We will

also celebrate the Divine Liturgy on the Eve of Thanksgiving (Wednesday, November 22) and on the Friday and Saturday of our Festival (November 3-4). Why during the festival? Two answers—first, there was one year many years ago when the Friday and Saturday of the Festival were November 8-9 and it was required for us to celebrate Liturgy. We celebrated Liturgy on those two days and had the best festival ever, not only in terms of finances, but in terms of the overall mood and positive feel. Our Festival Committee actually commented on that to me and asked the next year for us to celebrate Liturgy on those two days as well. Because we can offer the Liturgy and wrap it around the context of the festival—For peace from Above, for this holy house, for our parish and city—we pray for all these things and more at the Liturgy and all apply to our Greek Festival.

In a sermon last month, I spoke about other benefits from the Divine Liturgy, besides receiving Christ in the Eucharist.

It gives us a “tour of the world” in prayer—everything that we can think of is remembered in the Divine Liturgy. If we forget to pray for the sick, or for forgiveness of sins, a Christian end to our lives, peace in the world, our country, the military, you name it, it's all in the Divine Liturgy, which is a consummate prayer.

It helps us build empathy. we may not be sick or suffering on a particular day, but when we are praying for those who are sick and suffering, which most likely includes people in our parish in the pews next to us, it helps us to build empathy for them, and empathy brings people closer together.

It gives us a chance to breathe and relax. The dialogue of petitions and responses is supposed to be done at a relaxing cadence, with the priest offering the prompts of what to pray for and the people gently responding with the response, which actually IS the prayer—the petition is the prompt, the “Lord have mercy” or “Grant this O Lord,” offered in response is the prayer.

It gives us a chance to stand at the throne of God. The altar table is the throne of Christ.

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It is the place where Christ sits at all times, in the Eucharist that always resides on the altar table in the tabernacle, and in the Eucharist we offer at each Divine Liturgy. We know that when we die, we will all one day stand before the awesome throne of Christ. This prospect strikes fear in many people who are about to die. And perhaps that is because they didn't spend enough time in front of the throne of Christ in this life, or they weren't cheerful when they were doing so. If one loves to stand before the throne of Christ in this life, it stands to reason that he or she will be looking forward to doing it when this life is over. Thankfully our church is centered around the throne of Christ, everything we do emanates from the altar. Other churches don't have an altar like we do, that's not a knock on them, but rather a reminder of what opportunity we have been given as Orthodox Christians.

The Divine Liturgy encourages unity among people. The altar is the ultimate place of unity—there is one Christ and all of us have equal access to Him. And He is given throughout the world in the same way, yet is never used up. He has made all of us the same—in His image and likeness. That is why the Divine Liturgy, among other things, is something that should unite us.

We Come to “Celebrate”—A Spiritual Glendi

When we gather for the Divine Liturgy, the proper verb used to describe the service we are offering is “to celebrate.” We “celebrate” the Divine Liturgy. The priest (or bishop) presiding over the Divine Liturgy is called the “celebrant.” Any other clergy participating are called the “co-celebrants.”

The use of the word “celebrate” is intentional. Think of when we use the word “celebrate” in our lives. We celebrate birthdays and holidays. We don't “offer” them, or “mark” them. We celebrate them. We have parties, we have great anticipation for them, we put on our best clothes, we clean our houses, we decorate, we revel. This is how we should approach each “celebration” of the Divine Liturgy. Each celebration is just that, a celebration. This is why we put on our “Sunday best” clothes, why we should go to bed at a reasonable hour the night before, why we should arrive on time or early, and why we should come with joy. For what greater “celebration” can there be than celebrating Christ and receiving Him?

One Hierarchy of the church once described the Divine Liturgy as a “spiritual glendi”. “Glendi” is a Greek word that describes a party that lasts hours, where there is eating and talking and laughing and dancing, and no one is in any rush to leave. The Divine Liturgy should be like this—there is partaking of Communion, singing, (in some liturgical traditions like in Africa, there actually is dancing) and no one is in any rush to leave.



When people arrive late, or don't participate, when there is a stale feel to the Liturgy, it is hard to see it as a celebration. However, when people come with enthusiasm, when they participate, when they understand, then the character of the Liturgy changes to the celebration that the Lord intends for us to have with Him, each time we gather for the Divine Liturgy.

NOW, the Most Important Word of the Liturgy

The MOST IMPORTANT word of the Divine Liturgy is found in the first line of the service. “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.” It is the word “now.” Why is that so important? Because most people think of the Kingdom of God in either past or future tense but not as a present reality.

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We think back to God creating the world and to the ministry of Christ 2,000 years ago. We think to the future and what it will be like when and if we are allowed to enter the Kingdom of God. We tend not to think of the Kingdom of God in the present. And yet, when Christ came to earth, He said in many places, “The Kingdom of Heaven IS at hand.” It was obviously present in the person of Jesus Christ, who came to earth 2,000 years ago. And it is continually present in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.



In instituting the Holy Eucharist, Jesus took bread and said, “This is my Body,” and He took the cup and said, “This is my Blood.” By receiving His Body and Blood, the Kingdom of God is united with us. Christ is present in our midst and in us. So, the beginning line of the Divine Liturgy is an invitation to this banquet, it is an invitation to be present with Christ, right here and right now. We hope to enter His Kingdom and live there forever. But forever can seem like a long time from now. Through the Divine Liturgy, we enter the Kingdom NOW.

The call to the Divine Liturgy is also a call to leave the world temporarily. Time stops in the Divine Liturgy—we do not measure it in minutes and seconds. We transcend time, and we transcend all the roles we have—we cease to be teachers or spouses or parents or doctors and we stand as children in the presence of our Father.

We acknowledge the Trinity—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We acknowledge the Divinity of the Trinity, calling the Trinity “blessed.” We acknowledge the power of God when we refer to His Kingdom. We acknowledge that God is timeless, when we speak of His Kingdom now and forever and to the ages of ages. And we speak of the Kingdom as a present reality, through the word “now.” That’s why it’s important to come on time—because the first line is actually the most important one!

Lord Have Mercy—It is the Faithful who actually offer the prayers

A priest at summer camp gave a sermon that I will never forget—it was so profound, to me at least, that I wanted to share his thoughts with you. His sermon was about the importance of congregational singing. And his thesis was that the responses ARE the prayers during the litanies offered by the priest or deacon. The petitions are prompts to remember certain things in prayer. When the priest says “For the peace from above and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord,” he is prompting the congregation to pray for peace from above and the salvation of their souls, and the people are answering in prayer “Lord, have mercy”. In other words, “Lord have mercy and offer us the peace from above and salvation of our souls.”

Lord
have
mercy

Think how it would sound if the priest offered a set of petitions and there was no response given to any of them. The priest would be giving a bunch of prompts and there would be no response, no action taken in regards to any of them. This is why it is necessary for people to be present for the Divine Liturgy. There can be no Liturgy with just the priest. There has to be people present to offer the responses to the prompts, in essence, to offer the prayers of the service. The priest offers prayers throughout the service that are “inaudible” or not heard by the faithful. However, it is the faithful that are offering “audible” prayers in the form of the responses, the “Lord have mercy” and the “Grant this O Lord” that are sung throughout the service.



As previously mentioned, worship is meant to be work, not just something we watch. And the work of the Divine Liturgy is for the faithful to “pray” the responses to the petitions throughout the service.

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Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth; sing the glory of His name; give to Him glorious praise! Say to God “How terrible are Thy deeds! So great is Thy power that Thy enemies cringe before Thee. All the earth worships Thee; they sing praises to Thee, sing praises to Thy name.”

Psalm 66: 1-4

Every line of the Divine Liturgy that is offered by the celebrant has a response from the people. The first line of the Divine Liturgy was an invitation into the Kingdom and the response was “Amen.” In between the first line and the last line, there are many responses of “Lord, have mercy,” and “Grant this, O Lord,” as we offer petitions, as well as many hymns of praise and supplication. As the service comes to an end, the final statement by the people is “Amen,” which again means, “let it be so.” Let the prayers we have offered in this service be answered in God’s way, in God’s time. Let this miracle of the Divine Liturgy, which we have offered, indeed guide us through our lives into everlasting life.

The Divine Liturgy is like the ultimate parable. To the untrained eye or the hardened soul, it is just a play starring a priest, a choir, chanters and altar boys.

But to the one with the soft heart and faithful soul, the Divine Liturgy is the Kingdom of Heaven made present in the here and now.

What the Divine Liturgy does (or should do) for us

Before the Divine Liturgy begins, when the priest prepares the Holy Gifts at the Service of the Proskomide, the first prayer he offers is a hymn from the feast of the Nativity. In Luke 2:20, we read “And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.”

After seeing Christ with their own eyes and becoming the first human beings to behold our Savior, the Shepherds returned to lives that were humdrum at best. Their encounter with Christ hadn’t changed their social status. It hadn’t changed their state of poverty or their lack of popularity. It changed THEM. It changed their hearts.

And this is what the Divine Liturgy can do for us. After we leave the Divine Liturgy, we will return to the same jobs, the same families, the same challenges and the same stresses. The Divine Liturgy doesn’t necessarily change any of these things. But the Divine Liturgy changes US. When we attend often, when we are active in worship, and when we apply the things we pray for to our everyday lives, the Divine Liturgy changes people. It can change you. It can change me.



I’m reminded of the story of the ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19. Jesus encountered ten lepers who asked to be healed. He told them to go and show themselves to the priests. He didn’t heal them in one quick moment. They trusted in His words enough to make their way to the priests and as they were going, they realized that they had been healed. The Divine Liturgy, I believe, works in the same way, over the course of our lives. We are not perfected in faith in one quick moment. We are not perfected at one Divine Liturgy. But over the course of our lives, the Divine Liturgy, if celebrated properly before, during and after the service, can perfect us in faith. It is a wonderful aid on the journey to salvation.

As we exit the church at the end of the Divine Liturgy, we come to the priest to receive a blessing, as well as a piece of antithoron. (In the Slavic Tradition, the faithful venerate a blessing cross, held by the priest.) The antithoron or

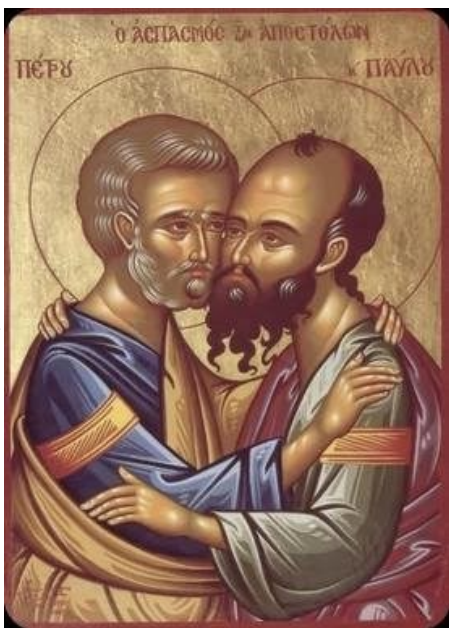


blessed bread is offered to the people. Traditionally it was given to those who did not partake of the Holy Gifts, hence the word “anti (instead of) thoron (the Gifts).”

It is also a sign of fellowship between people; we share fellowship by “breaking bread” together.

I remember as a child, we were taught to receive the anti-thoron and then walk to the door of the church, and that right before exiting, we were to turn around, face the altar one more time and make the sign of the cross. We make the sign of the cross as we face the altar in honor of the Holy Communion, Christ Himself, that resides in the Tabernacle on the back of the altar table.

This final gesture reminds us to remember what Christ did for us, what He does and what He will do. It reminds me of the words exchanged by the clergy when they offer the “kiss of peace:” “Christ is in our midst. He was, He is, and He ever shall be.” As we exit the church and re-enter the world, we return with joy and with renewed purpose, remember that Christ is with us always, “to the close of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)



Jesus says, in Matthew 5:14-16, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

The Divine Liturgy makes our light burn brighter. If our lights are burning strongly, they burn even stronger. And if our lights are going out, the Divine Liturgy rekindles them. The Divine Liturgy enables us to take our light back out into the world, stronger and stronger each time, so that we can share the Light of Christ, through our words and our actions and that through His grace, more can come to know Him through us.



Speaking personally, my life feels more in balance when I go to church on Sunday, and on the rare occasion that I don't, I find that I am truly missing something. I don't avoid missing the Divine Liturgy because of any sense of superstition or obligation. Rather, I don't like to miss out on the joy of the Divine Liturgy. As our parish becomes larger and my responsibilities become greater, there has always been a temptation to eliminate a few of the weekday Divine Liturgies. However, I find if anything, I am adding more of them. Because I realize how much I want and need to be at the Divine Liturgy.

In the early church, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated on an almost-daily basis. In modern times, the Divine Liturgy is celebrated each Sunday and on pre-scribed feast-days. In a given year, I have the privilege of celebrating the Divine Liturgy close to one hundred times, sometimes more. I try to celebrate each as if it was my first and my last, as a hierarch of the church once encouraged me.

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I encourage you to attend the Divine Liturgy as often as possible, but not to merely attend, to come to worship, to work, to pray, to sing, to learn and to commune. It is my fervent hope that each of you will allow yourselves to be moved by Christ in this Divine Service. And it is my

timeless.

hope that you will discover the joy and ecstasy of the Divine Liturgy by reflecting more carefully on its timeless words. If nothing else, I this article on the Divine Liturgy has given you the opportunity to pause and to

think more deeply about what we hear in the services and to realize that the Divine Liturgy is not something to be taken lightly, or attended casually, or infrequently, but something of infinite value. It is, in fact, the most precious thing we have in this life. For where can we, the sinful human being, look upon, touch and become one with Christ Himself? There are two answers. In heaven. And in God's Heavenly Kingdom brought to earth, the Divine Liturgy.



During the month of November there will be 15 opportunities to attend the Divine Liturgy. And throughout the year, there are many opportunities besides Sundays to attend the Liturgy and receive Communion. What a beautiful opportunity there will be to receive Christ often this month.

So, I hope you will take advantage of opportunities this month and in other months to receive Christ often. In the Divine Liturgy, after the Consecration, the prayer that is offered lists SIX reasons to receive Communion:

So that they (the Gifts) may be to those who receive Them:

For vigilance of soul

Forgiveness of sins

Communion of the Holy Spirit

Inheritance of the Kingdom of heaven

Confidence before You

And neither in judgement of condemnation.

There are six positive results of receiving Communion that are listed at each Liturgy. And there are MANY more besides these. Each time we receive Communion, we are strengthened in these ways and in other innumerable ways as well.



THANKSGIVING

On November 23, we will celebrate the Feast of Thanksgiving. Sadly, this holiday is marked by eating, shopping and football. Many of us have forgotten the historical background of this holiday, that the Pilgrims were so thankful to God for getting them through their first winter in a new land, that they made a day just to thank God. For some, Thanksgiving is the only time they gather with family to share a meal. For some, it is the only time prayer is said around the table. And for some, it is the only time they vocalize things they are thankful for. Thanksgiving should not just be a one day celebration, but being with family, praying at the table, and vocalizing things we are thankful for should be part of daily life.

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Efharisto

In Greek, the word for “thanks” is “Efharisto.” The Greek word for “thanksgiving” is “Efharistia.” “Efharistia” is also the Greek word for “Eucharist.” Holy Communion (“Theia Efharistia”) is the “Holy Thanksgiving.” There are three other words that are embedded in the word “Efharistia.” “Efhi” is the word for “blessing.” “Haris” means “grace.” And “Hara” means “joy.” So, in thanksgiving, blessings, grace and joy are intertwined. And in the Eucharist, we receive blessings from God as well as the grace of God, both of which bring us joy.

As you are reading this message, pause for a moment and bring to your mind some of the things that YOU are thankful for. A good thing to do every day in prayer is to remember at least five things for which you are thankful. (For those who have a hard time knowing how to pray, I suggest a rule of 5—first thing in the morning, offer to God five things for which you are thankful, five people whom you wish to pray for and five things you need help with today.)

In many of Christ’s miracles, the first thing He did was give thanks, i.e. before multiplying the five loaves and before instituting the Eucharist. So, we are supposed to give thanks for all things.

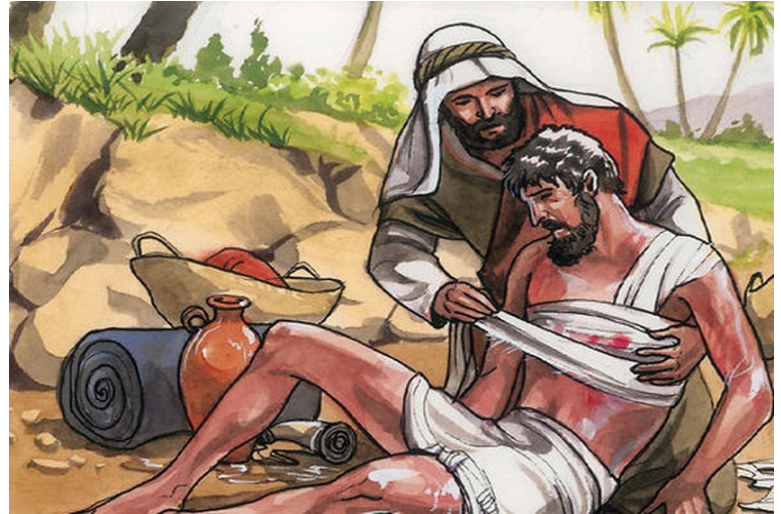
One way to demonstrate thanksgiving is through acts of charity

Thanksgiving goes hand in hand with gratitude. If we are grateful to someone who gives something to us, we look for ways to honor the giver, to show our gratitude. Since God is the giver of all that is good, we honor God with our gratitude by following His Commandments. The two great commandments of the Lord for us are for us to love the Lord with all our strength, heart, body and mind. The second commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves.

How do we love our neighbor? We extend charity to our neighbor.

Charitable giving is supposed to be a regular part of our lives. Whether that is supporting the church through stewardship, or supporting a local charity or helping your neighbor, this is one of the commandments—to be kind to others. Pause again for a moment and think of other ways that you can be a good neighbor.

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) tells us that our neighbor is everyone, and the one in the para-



ble who acted like a neighbor was the one who had mercy and compassion on his neighbor. Acts of charity also show our mercy and compassion for other people.

It is easier to be kind to others when we are thankful for what we have. Charity and thankfulness go hand in hand. When we feel a sense of entitlement and are not thankful for what we have, we are less likely to be charitable towards others.

Partaking of the Eucharist, Holy Communion, is also an act of Thanksgiving to God for His gifts to us. So we receive communion as an act of thanksgiving, as well as obedience to His commandment, as well as our humility. This is the reason why we will offer the Eucharist the night before Thanksgiving, so that we celebrate our feast of efharistia (thanksgiving) with the theia efharistia (the holy Thanksgiving, the Holy Eucharist).

Continued...

The Lord tells us that we are to share with those who are in need, that the one with two coats is to share with the one who has none. In Matthew 25: 31-46, we are told that our eternal judgment will be based in how well we have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, welcomed the stranger and visited the sick. Our entrance into everlasting life will be based in large part on how much we've showing our thanksgiving to God through acts of charity, kindness and love.

If we think about it, we can probably all stand to do a little better in showing charity to our neighbor. Take a moment and think of constructive ideas on how to show charity/love for our neighbor.



In our church, organizations like Philoptochos and Community Outreach give us opportunities to help our neighbor. But there are even more subtle and regular opportunities to

help our neighbors, be they the person who lives next to us, or who works next to us. Patience, listening, keeping a confidence, offering a prayer, offering some tangible help, giving good advice, and calling to check up on someone are great ways to show charity/love for our neighbors. There are many other ways as well. Take a few moments and think of a few ways you specifically can help your neighbors. Think of who your specific "neighbors" are (spouse, children, people who live next to you, people who sit next to you in church, people who work next to you, friends) and make an intentional plan to show charity and kindness to them.



When we offer the Holy Gifts at the Consecration at the liturgy, we sing "We praise You, we bless You, we give thanks to You and we pray to You Lord our God." Before we ask God for anything, we are supposed to praise Him, bless His Holy Name and Thank Him. This is in line with the prayer rule I have mentioned in the past—that we should thank God for five things, then pray for others and then pray for ourselves. But we begin our prayers with thanksgiving.

I'll close this month's message with a prayer from the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, because it captures both the spirit of Thanksgiving and the Eucharist.



Our God, the God who saves, You teach us justly to thank You for the good things which You have done

and still do for us. You are our God who has accepted these Gifts. Cleanse us from every defilement of flesh and spirit, and teach us how to live in holiness by Your fear, so that receiving the portion of Your holy Gifts with a clear conscience we may be united with the holy Body and Blood of Your Christ. Having received them worthily, may we have Christ dwelling in our hearts, and may we become the temple of Your Holy Spirit. Yes, our God, let none of us be guilty before these, Your awesome and heavenly Mysteries, nor be infirm in body and soul by partaking of them unworthily. But enable us, even up to our last breath, to receive a portion of Your holy Gifts worthily, as provision for eternal life and as an acceptable defense at the awesome judgment seat of Your Christ. So that we also, together with all the saints who through the ages have pleased You, may become partakers of Your eternal good things, which You, Lord, have prepared for those who love You. (From the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, Trans. by Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1988)

I look forward to seeing you at our FOUR Festivals: The Festival of the Divine Liturgy (please try to attend as many as you can this month), the Greek Festival, the Nativity Fast and the Thanksgiving Liturgy. Have a blessed month of November!

With love in Christ,
+Fr. Stavros





FRIDAY,
NOVEMBER 3RD
4:00 pm - 10:00 pm

SATURDAY,
NOVEMBER 4TH
11:00 am - 10:00 pm

WWW.TAMPAGREEKFESTIVAL.COM

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Inspiration

Inspiration

God's Voice	Satan's Voice
Stills you	Rushes you
Leads you	Pushes you
Reassures you	Frightens you
Encourages you	Discourages you
Comforts you	Frightens you
Calms you	Obsesses You
Convicts you	Condemns you

A Prayer to Calm Your Mind (Anonymous)

Dear Lord,

My thoughts are at war with my heart and my mind is the battlefield. Please give me Your peace to calm the thoughts of my heart. Give me the strength to accept what has happened, the wisdom on what to do next, and the hope to know with You all things work out for good and Your glory. I don't want to confuse desperation for faith, and create a mess. You never said that there wouldn't be storms in my life but Jesus did show me that no matter what is going on around me, I can find peace in the middle of a storm and walk on what is trying to drown me. So I lay down my worries and I'll pick up Your peace as I rest in You. Amen.

My mother once said:

"Hate has four letters, but so does love.
Enemies has seven letters but so does friends.
Lying has five letters but so does Truth.
Cry has three letters but so does joy.
Negativity has ten letters but so does positivity."
Life is two-sided, choose the better side of it.

Wait Until You Are Done Mixing (Anonymous)

A pastor asked an older farmer, decked out in bib overalls, to say grace for the morning breakfast.

"Lord, I hate buttermilk", the farmer began. The visiting pastor opened one eye to glance at the farmer and wonder where this was going.

The farmer loudly proclaimed, "Lord, I hate lard." Now the pastor was growing concerned.

Without missing a beat, the farmer continued, "And Lord, you know I don't much care for raw white flour". The pastor once again opened an eye to glance around the room and saw that he wasn't the only one to feel uncomfortable.

Then the farmer added, "But Lord, when you mix them all together and bake them, I do love warm fresh biscuits. So Lord, when things come up that we don't like, when life gets hard, when we don't understand what you're saying to us, help us to just relax and wait until you are done mixing. It will probably be even better than biscuits. Amen."



Joy Tweens Ministry

On September 24, we welcomed many new tweens at our first meeting of the year with Father Stavros. Thank you to all our tweens and parents who spent the afternoon with us. Fun was had by all! JOY Tweens also had their first movie night of the year on Friday, October 27.

Save the Date! Our November JOY Tweens meeting will be on Sunday, November 19, following Divine Liturgy! Stay tuned for more details by email and/or text messages, as well as our weekly church bulletins and Sunday school flyers.

Greek Festival News! We will be volunteering during the festival as a group! JOY Tweens who are interested in volunteering their time and talents at the Greek Festival on Saturday November 4, 2022, please keep a look out for information on how you can help.

We will be planning events for our tweens every month, either in conjunction with HOPE/JOY or separately just for our JOY Tweens. If you have children in 4th to 6th grades, please contact Maraquet Edquid (email: marquet@gmail.com/cell: 813-422-8963) with any questions.

Sign-Up for Text Updates!

To get updates and other messages for JOY Tweens, text **@783gc6** to 81010 on your mobile phone.



Continued...

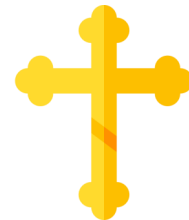


JOY

TWEENS



Icebreakers & Discussion
with Fr. Stavros
September 24th



Hope & Joy Fall Food Drive

Sun, Nov 12th - Sun, Dec 16th.

"HOPE starts with a MEAL. HOPE starts with YOU!"

Metropolitan Ministries' Holiday Tent helps 50,000+ families in need for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Let's help them meet this years goal of 1,763,000 pounds of food.

Please join St. John's Hope & Joy children's ministry in providing a meal to families in need through Metropolitan Ministries. Make this your family project and help us put together Boxes of Hope filled with the items needed for a Christmas holiday dinner. There are many ways you can help provide a Box of Hope:

- Shop for any of the items below and bring to church **Sun, Nov 13th - Sun, Dec 16th.**
- Donate \$25 or more (cash/ check/ gift card) for a Box of Hope-
Checks payable to Metropolitan Ministries

BOX OF HOPE contains:

Gift certificate for a turkey or ham	2 cans of black beans
1 box of cereal (hot or cold)	2 cans of cranberry sauce
2 cans of fruit	1 bag of dried beans
1 jar of peanut butter	1 box or bag of rice
2 cans of vegetables	1 can or packet of gravy
2 cans of yams	1 box dessert mix
1 bag or box of stuffing	1 package cookies or pastries
1 box of potatoes	1 family box of Jell-O/Pudding

Only non-perishable food donations please. ***Call Zackie Ameres at 813-245-3813 or email at zackiec@yahoo.com with any questions.*** Thank you!

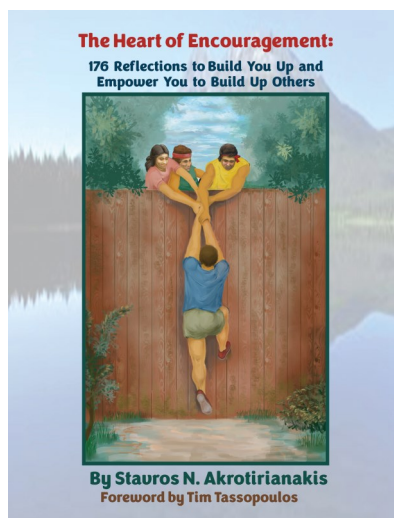
"He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and He will reward him for what he has done."

Proverbs 19:17



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

There Is No Need for Self-Pressure



So when they had come together, they asked Him, "Lord, will You at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons

which the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."

Acts 1:6–8

A previous reflection discusses how it is okay to be a "Smith" and not a "Jones," in other words, not feeling stressed out about "keeping up with the Joneses."

There is definitely a palpable pressure to keep up with what others are doing as if we are in some kind of competition with them.

We are all familiar with peer pressure, which is when peers pressure us to do what they are doing. This pressure might be overt, like our peers actually demanding that we do something. Or it might be as in the case of "keeping up with the Joneses" and feeling our own sense of pressure to keep up with them.

This reflection talks about another kind of pressure, self-pressure. This is a pressure that we put on ourselves to be at a certain place at a certain time in our lives. Regardless of what others pressure us to do, we each have ideas in our own minds for what we want to accomplish by a certain point in life. For instance, a senior in high school might feel pressure to date, not from their friends, but from themselves because in their own mind, they think they should have dated before they finish high school. So they go ahead and force a dating situation to occur, even if it is not the right person. A freshman in college might feel pressure to drink, not because others are telling them to but because they think it is something college students do. So they go ahead and start down this road, even if it is risky or they aren't comfortable with it. A person in their late twenties might feel pressure from others to get married, but there might be a certain expectation from their own minds that people should be married by age thirty. So they go ahead and rush to get married, perhaps to the wrong person. The same can be said for the thoughts that one might have as to how many children they want, what part of the country they want to live in, what successes they hoped to have at work, how much money they have hoped to save, and all the other pressures and expectations we put on ourselves. We create goals and then pressure ourselves to achieve them, sometimes at our own peril.

There is a certain "logic" that permeates our minds, where we think certain things should happen in a certain order by a certain age. I often think of these verses from Acts 1:6–8. By this point, the disciples had loyally followed Jesus for three years. Many times, they were confused as to who He was and what His purpose was. They had their own sense of what they thought would will happen.

Continued...

After suffering through the terror of the crucifixion and experiencing the joy of the resurrection, the disciples turned to Jesus and asked Him a question that had been on their minds: “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). They had lived under Roman oppression as well, and they were hoping that with the power Jesus had shown to rise from the dead, He would use that same power to give them political freedom. This was the next logical step in their minds. The answer Jesus gave to them must have seemed like a punch in the gut: “It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority” (1:7). In other words, the kingdom would not be restored to Israel at that time. The plans and hopes that the disciples had for political freedom would not be realized, at least not yet. Jesus told them, however, that He had other plans for them. They were to “receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (1:8). Jesus had plans for the disciples that were not contingent on whether they received political freedom. And stretching this a step further, perhaps Jesus didn’t allow their request because it might have proven to be a distraction from what they were really called to do.

Many times our goals and plans for ourselves will not work out. And we won’t understand this at the time. Sometimes what happens will not make any sense at all but will make sense later. Take, for instance, the senior in college who is devastated to break up with a boyfriend. At the same time, she gets accepted to a graduate school in a faraway city, decides to attend the school, and goes on to have an amazing career (and eventually gets married). Later on, she will look back and be thankful for the breakup, realizing that had she stayed with her boyfriend, she might have not gone to that school.

In Isaiah 55:8, we read, “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord.” Yes, we should motivate and pressure ourselves to achieve goals and excel in what we are doing. But when a goal can’t be realized, or we feel pressured to do something we really don’t want to do, we should back up and reflect on the possibility that God is using our situation to lead us to something different than what we are thinking, or perhaps even protecting us from making a mistake. In the instance of the person who didn’t date in high school or who broke up with a boyfriend in the process of applying to graduate school, sometimes God allows these things to protect us from making a wrong decision.

When I was in high school, it saddened me that I wasn’t dating. However, looking back now, it was a good thing to not have the temptations that go along with dating in

high school. When I was younger, I had a desire to climb the career ladder and go to a very large parish. Looking back, I’m glad that I didn’t get the transfer that I had hoped for because I’m very happy where I am. These “failures” were God’s way of protecting me and have not only led to what He has desired for my life, but they have led me to be happier as well.

Sometimes we try too hard to do something or be something that we aren’t. A wise person once told me, “If you are trying too hard to get a square peg in a round hole, you are probably doing the wrong thing.” Another person told me, “The right decisions are the ones that bring you peace.” And yet another person told me, “If you are thinking too hard about a decision you are making, it is probably the wrong decision.”

There are times when we will make plans and goals and work hard, and we will achieve them. There are also times when we make plans and goals and work hard, and we will not achieve them. Sometimes there is no reason for this other than we won’t succeed at everything. And sometimes there is a reason for this; we just won’t realize it at the time. And many times, the reason is because God is protecting us from something or helping us become who we are really supposed to be.

While we should try to not succumb to peer pressure, we should also not succumb to self-pressure.

We should also remember that some peer pressure and some self-pressure can be good.

Mostly, let us remember that what seems logical to us in terms of the times and seasons of our life may not fit with God’s plan for our lives. However, be assured at all times that God has a plan. For His disciples, that plan was not political freedom but to receive the Holy Spirit and spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. What higher goal in life could there be than that?

Lord, thank You for the many gifts, talents, and opportunities You have given to me. Help me to know Your plan for my life. Help me to stay true to who I am and who You created me to be. Help me in times of pressure and uncertainty to know what is the right thing to do. Help me to remember that if I am honoring You and serving others, not achieving other goals or expectations is not necessarily the end of the world. Help me to understand the best way I can honor You and serve others. Give me wisdom to set goals, wisdom to achieve them, and patience when they work out differently than I had planned. Help me to trust You at all times. Amen.

Encouragement Challenge: Stay true to yourself and stay true to God!

WELCOME MINSITRY



Guide us to Thy Perfect Light!

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

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

Special thanks to Monastery Icons for allowing us permission to use their beautiful "O Holy Night" Icon of the Nativity.

The bags will be available after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, November 12th. You may pick one up as you leave liturgy. The gift bags will also be available in the office during the week. There will be a few extras if you would like to share one with a friend or family member!

During this season of the Nativity Fast, may we grow in Christ's love, both individually and as a community that will Guide us to Thy Perfect Light!

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

Matthew 2:9



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

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



Join us on Saturday, November 11th for our **monthly** gathering in the Kourmolis Center at 11:30 am. We'll be focusing on thanks – thanks to God for our many blessings and thanks to each other for the growing friendships we are forming through this ministry.

WE ARE SEEKING OUT NEW MEMBERS and growing month by month.

We look forward to seeing you on November 11th!

For more information see Dora Morgan, Diane Trimis, or Pres Denise



Food Pantry Update

The St. John Food Pantry helps support our existing Ministry Food Drives along with Metropolitan Ministries, Feeding Tampa Bay, Bridge Prep and others in need!

Every little bit helps! One donation at a time YOU can help us help OTHERS to tackle hunger in our community! It's as easy as 1,2,3 ...

1) Look for our dedicated drop off location in the entrance area of the Church Hall.

2) Mark your calendars for the First Sunday of Each Month as our primary collection day (but donations are welcome anytime).

3) When you attend a Ministry Meeting bring a food item from the list below.

Lastly, we accept grocery store gift cards in the church office.

Thank you for your support and thinking of the St. John Food Pantry one item at a time! If you have any questions or know of someone in need (we can create meals in a bag to go) please contact Sandra Pappas at 813-785-3747.

Requested Food Pantry Items

- ◆ Canned fruits and vegetables
- ◆ Canned beans (all varieties)
- ◆ Canned Meat
(including Vienna sausage, spam, chicken, and tuna)
- ◆ Cans of soup
- ◆ Cereal
- ◆ Instant mashed potatoes
- ◆ Jell-O/Pudding
- ◆ Macaroni & cheese
- ◆ Oatmeal
- ◆ Pasta
- ◆ Peanut Butter & Jelly (in plastic jars)
- ◆ Ramen noodles
- ◆ Rice
- ◆ Spaghetti sauce
- ◆ Dry goods
- ◆ Paper towels
- ◆ Toilet paper





Sunday School News



We are very grateful for the wonderful start to our 2023-2024 Sunday School year. We would like to thank Fr. Stavros and all our parents for supporting our ministry. All of our Sunday School teachers are committed to providing great lessons about our faith to your children and we look forward to seeing our students week after week.

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

Our first YOUTH SUNDAY of this school year took place on October 22nd. We would like to thank our Sunday School students for singing our church hymns so beautifully and our high school student for reading The Epistle for our Youth Sundays. Our music program would not be possible without the guidance and leadership of Maria Xenick. We can't thank her enough.

Please stop by our updated SUNDAY SCHOOL BULLETIN BOARD. Our new class photos are up along with our updated Hall of Faithers! CONGRATULATIONS to Eliana Edquid, Michael Meadows, Koula Niatsikas, Aspasia Panos, Eliana Roby, and Maggie Trakas for being inducted into our HALL OF FAITH for memorizing The Creed. If your child is not in the Hall of Faith and has memorized The Lord's Prayer or The Creed, please have them ask their teacher or Vickie Peckham to test them.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CALENDAR FOR NOVEMBER:

- November 5th: No Sunday School-Festival
- November 12th: Topic: Communion-Liturgy-Worship
YOUTH SUNDAY
- November 19th: Topic: Charity/Thanksgiving
- November 26th: No Class-Thanksgiving Break



Sunday School Pictures

Prek- 3 Class Picture



smile!

Prek- 4 Class Picture



Toddler Two's Class Picture



Kindergarten
Class Picture

Second Grade
Class Picture



First Grade Class
Picture





Third Grade Class
Picture



Fourth Grade Class
Picture



Fifth Grade Class Picture



6th Grade Class Picture



7th & 8th Grade
Class Picture



High School Boys
Class Picture



High School Girls
Class Picture

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.

TWELVE DISCIPLES PROGRAM

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

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18



Throughout the centuries, Orthodox Churches in the area of Constantinople (Istanbul) frequently felt the pressures of invasion from foreign powers. During just such an occasion in 911 at one of the churches, the church of Blachernae, there were several of the Holy Lady, Mother of God's relics preserved for veneration. At this church and at a critical time, a priest in prayer witnessed our Lady answer his continuous prayers requesting protection from the invasion. The Priest, The Fool for Christ, Saint Andrew, witnessed our Holy Lady in the air. She was brilliant with uncreated light, surrounded by Saints. Our Lady took her veil and spread it over the attending congregation, protecting them from all enemies. Saint Andrew had a disciple, Epiphanius, who was nearby. He asked Epiphanius "Do you see, brother, the Holy Mother, praying and protecting all the world?" Epiphanius was quick to confirm it. Prayer always is heard by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Saints, as well, listen to all intercessory prayers such as Saint Andrew's prayer. This is why it is a solemn responsibility of us all to pray for the whole

world and especially for members of our congregation. Please consider continuing or joining us serving St. John's as a member of the Twelve Disciples Program, we lovingly refer to ourselves as Prayer Warriors.

Prayer Warriors

Father Stavros prays for all twelve pages of compiled names representing the entire St John the Baptist membership at each service but specifically at each Paraklesis. Thinking that praying for members of our community should not be the responsibility of the Priest alone, in August 2020, we started a program called "The 12 Disciples." The names of all St. John members are sorted onto 12 pages. The individual pages are divided and distributed between interested individuals that are referred to as Prayer Warriors (disciples). The idea is for each "disciple" or "warrior" to take one or more page of names and pray for the entire group of people every day. Each page, along with a page that includes the Trisagion prayer, is distributed to each Disciple monthly. We currently have nearly 50 "disciples", meaning that each person in this community is being prayed for by at least four people every day. Participating requires no special talent, no physical ability, no financial investment but only a desire to offer up prayerful love for your fellow parishioners. As Father Stavros admonished us in a recent Prayer Team message, "We (all) need time to be in the presence of the Son of God." If you'd like to participate (to enjoy the presence of God!) and receive at least one page of names to pray for, please contact the church office or Mathew Balasis, 727-345-4855 (mathewbalasis@verizon.net). "O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." The Jesus Prayer

Liturgical Schedule for November

Wednesday, November 1	Holy Unmercenaries Sts. Cosmas and Damian Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Friday, November 3	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, November 4	Orthros 8:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:00 a.m.
Sunday, November 5	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. DAYLIGHT SAVINGS—FALL BACK
Wednesday, November 8	Archangels Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.
Thursday, November 9	St. Nektarios Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. <i>The faithful will be anointed with oil from the tomb of St. Nektarios at the end of the Liturgy.</i>
Sunday, November 12	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Monday, November 13	St. John Chrysostom Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, November 15	Beginning of the Nativity Fast Sacrament of Holy Unction 6:00 p.m.
Thursday, November 16	St. Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, November 19	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Tuesday, November 21	Entrance of the Virgin Mary in the Temple (Ta Eisodia) Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, November 22	Evening Liturgy for Thanksgiving Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Saturday, November 25	St. Katherine Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, November 26	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Thursday, November 30	St. Andrew the Apostle Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, December 2	St. Porphyrios Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, December 3	Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Holy Unmercenaries



St. Nektarios



St. Katherine



Liturgical Notes for November

Wednesday, November 1 – Feast of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, the Unmercenary Healers

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

Friday, November 3 and Saturday, November 4 - Divine Liturgy on BOTH DAYS OF THE FESTIVAL

The Divine Liturgy can be celebrated any day of the year except Good Friday. As we have done in previous years, all days of the Greek Festival begin with the Spiritual Glendi, which is the Divine Liturgy. Before we welcome one guest or serve one meal, we invite the most important guest, the Holy Spirit, down on the most important meal, the Eucharist. The Divine Liturgy on Friday, November 3 will be held at 10:00 a.m. (Orthros 9:00 a.m.) and on Saturday, November 4 at 9:00 a.m. (Orthros 8:00 a.m.). On Sunday, November 5, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy at the regular time, 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, November 8 - The Archangels

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



Wednesday, November 8 – Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary

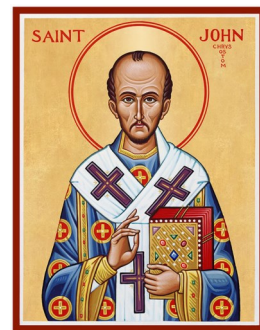
We will continue to offer Paraklesis once a month, so that we can pray for all the members of our community by name, out loud. For November, the Paraklesis will be offered on Wednesday evening, November 8, from 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Thursday, November 9 - St. Nektarios

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

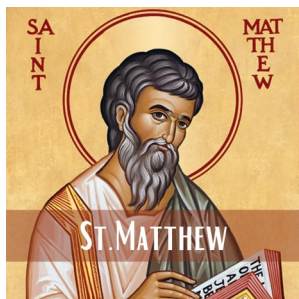
Monday, November 13 - St. John Chrysostom

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



Continued...

Wednesday, November 15- Holy Unction for the beginning of Advent at 6:00 p.m. The forty-day period of Advent begins on November 15. It is a period of fasting and reflective preparation. In America, Advent is marked by a period of shopping, decorating and parties, none of which really help us prepare spiritually to celebrate the great feast of the Nativity. As we have done in past years, we will hold a Holy Unction Service as we begin the period of Advent—it will be on Wednesday, November 15, at 6:00 p.m. Please bring your Holy Week book as the service will follow the service of Holy Wednesday evening.



Thursday, November 16 –St. Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist

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

Tuesday, November 21 - Entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Temple

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

Wednesday, November 22 - Evening Liturgy for Thanksgiving

In Greek the word for Thanksgiving is “Eucharistia,” so the Holy Eucharist is the “Holy Thanksgiving.” As we celebrate Thanksgiving with turkey and the Dallas Cowboys on Thursday, set aside Wednesday to receive the Holy Thanksgiving. As is our custom at St. John, we will celebrate Divine Liturgy for Thanksgiving on Wednesday, November 22 at 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, November 25 - St. Katherine the Great Martyr

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

Thursday, November 30 - St. Andrew the Apostle

St. Andrew is the first-called of the Apostles.

He is also the patron saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.



Saturday, December 2 – St. Porphyrios of Kafsokalivia

St. Porphyrios was a monk on Mount Athos known for his gifts of spiritual discernment. He lived from 1906-1991, and was canonized in 2013. He was alive in most of our lifetimes. There have been several saints that have been canonized in recent years. And it important that we begin to remember and celebrate some of the them with a celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 4,097 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 6 years! Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email Vasili at Vasili@stjohntpa.org and ask him to add you. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email 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 prayerteam365@gmail.com has been added to your contacts so that these emails stay in your Inbox rather than going to the Junk or Spam folders.

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

Father Stavros has authored NINE 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

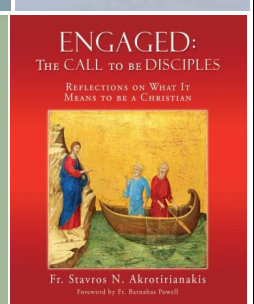
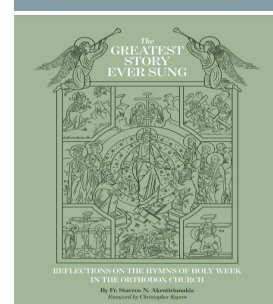
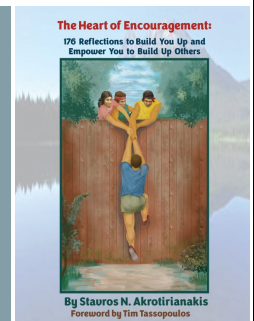
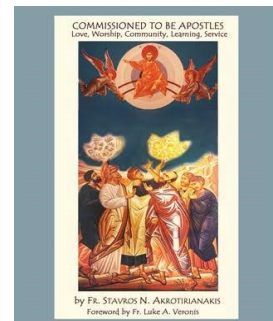
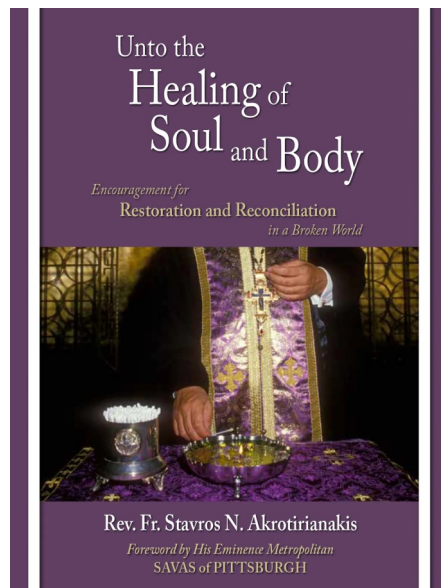
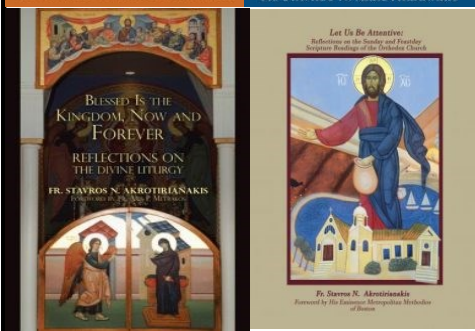
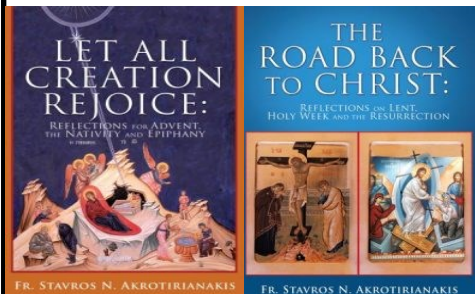
Engaged: The Call To Be Disciples, Reflections on What it Means to be a Christian

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

The Greatest Story Ever Sung: Reflections on the Hymns of Holy Week In the Orthodox Church

NEW: Unto the Healing of Soul and Body: Encouragement for Restoration and Reconciliation in a Broken World



Parish Registry

Baptism-George Arnaoutakis, son of Konstantinos Arnaoutakis and Diana Myer, was baptized on Saturday, September 16. Demeti Arnaoutakis was the Godfather! Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Mia Eleni Crenshaw, daughter of James and Aidonitsa Crenshaw, was baptized on Sunday, September 17. Constantine Crenshaw and Megan Crenshaw were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Stephan Thomas Reace, son of Richard and Virginia Reace, was baptized on Sunday, September 24. Theodore Reace and Lina Bowers were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Margaret Blake Biddinger, daughter of Thomas and Margaux Biddinger, was baptized on Sunday, October 1. Andrew and Maria McAdams were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Chrismation-Nicholas Anthony Fortino was Chrismated on Sunday, September 17. Maria Xenick was the sponsor. Congratulations!

Looking for Donation

for a Nativity Icon

The Nativity Calendar that we are going to give out this November has a beautiful icon on every page. We would like to purchase an identical icon to display in church this Christmas season. If you would like to donate, please contact Fr. Stavros. The cost is \$200.



Community Outreach

Metropolitan Ministries Holiday Tent 2023

2609 N Rome Ave, Tampa, FL 33607

St John the Baptist GOC is responsible for 12 volunteers for both the Thanksgiving and the Christmas events.

Below are the dates, times and sign up website for St John the Baptist GOC.

It is imperative that each St John volunteer pre-registers for this opportunity as any unfilled slots are released 2 weeks prior to our scheduled dates.

Thanksgiving Holiday: Tuesday, November 21 - 2:00 to 5:30 PM

Christmas Holiday: Thursday, December 21 - 2:00 to 6:00 PM

Sign-up at : <https://metromin.volunteerhub.com/vv2/lp/stjohngreekorthodox/>

YOUTH PROTECTION PROGRAM REMINDER:

It's that time again . . . time to register with the Youth Protection Program! Our child and youth ministries will be starting up soon and the ministry heads will need your assistance with meetings and events. Would you like to help out? Great! But first you must register with the new Youth Protection Program, get screened, and do a training module before you can help your favorite child/youth ministry. To get started, please contact Suzanne Pileggi at smpileggi1@gmail.com or (813) 244-5855. Thank you!



VETERANS & 1ST RESPONDERS

TWO UPCOMING EVENTS

Veterans Day this year will be celebrated in our parish on Sunday, November 12th. Prayers and recognition for our Veterans will be offered at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy.

Following this, Father Stavros will dedicate a Veterans plaque in the church hall to honor all veterans who have served God and country. This plaque will have an encased American flag along with emblems of our six military branches to include the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and Space Force.

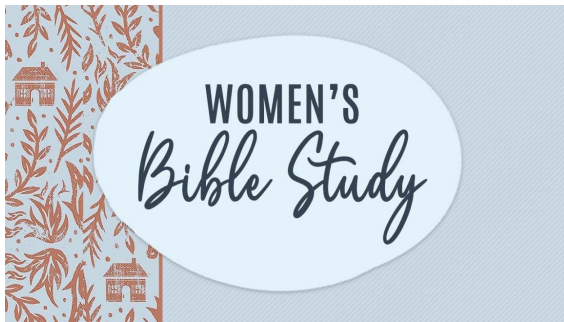
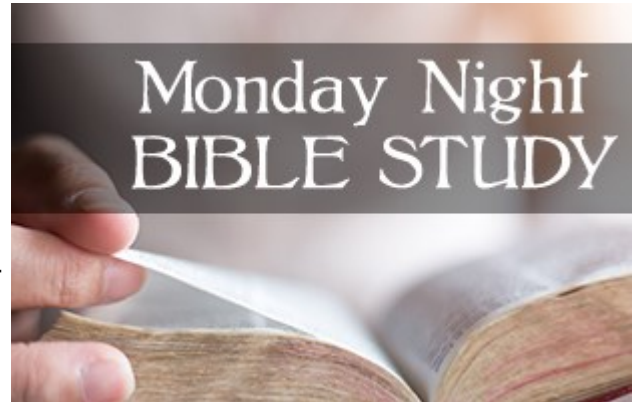
This year the Veterans/1st Responders Ministry members will collect toys for the Marines "Toys for Tots Program." Parishioners are encouraged to bring an unwrapped new toy on Sunday, November 12th or Sunday, November 19th for this most noteworthy cause.

Plan to join us as we thank our veterans and share toys for those in need in our local community!



St. John the Baptist Community News

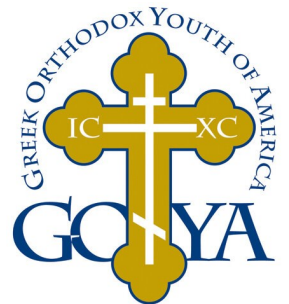
Monday night Bible study with Fr. John—will continue meeting at 6:30 p.m. on most Monday evenings. Join us in person or via zoom for some very informative, lively and interactive discussions on how we apply Biblical principles in our everyday lives. See the Sunday bulletin for specific topics. For November, the dates are Monday, November 6; Monday, November 13; Monday, November 20; and Monday, November 27.



Women's Bible Study—Our Tuesday morning women's Bible Study began in September. We meet on most Tuesdays from 10:00-11:30 a.m. either in person or on zoom. For November, the dates are Tuesday, November 7; Tuesday, November 14 and Tuesday, November 28.

GOYA—The GOYA Meeting for November will be Sunday, November 12, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

There are lots of GOYA events in October.



Men's Group—Our men's group will meet on Sunday, November 19, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Any men of our community are welcome to join us for dinner, discussion. We meet at 5:00 p.m., walk to a local restaurant and get some food, then bring it back to the hall where we eat and have a discussion. Our Topic for November will be Thankfulness & Generosity. Please mark down our dates for men's group for this academic year—Sunday, November 19; Sunday, December 17; Sunday, January 21; Sunday, March 3; and Sunday, April 14.

Save the Date—Men's Retreat—Saturday, February 10—Men's Retreat for Orthodox Men of the Tampa Bay Area.



Young Adult Ministry

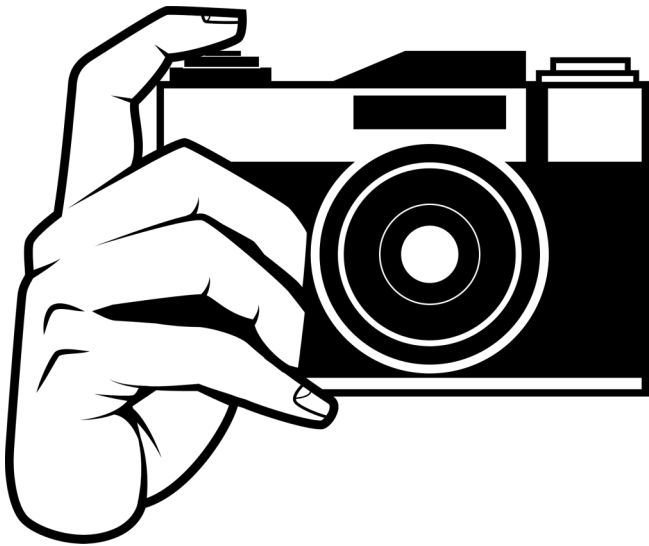
Young Adult Dinner/Discussion-Thursday, November 9-Our young adult group meets once a month for dinner/discussion (and other times for fellowship and service). The meeting for November will be on Thursday, November 9, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. All young adults, ages 18-40, are invited to participate. We will be having a monthly discussion based on some set topics. The Topic for November is how Thanksgiving & Generosity bring meaning to life. Group Members use What's App for communication. Please contact Aris Rogers to be added to our what's app for young adults at 813-309-5525.

Successful Young Adult Retreat—

On Saturday, September 30, over 40 young adults from the Tampa Bay area came together for a day-long retreat on the connection between spiritual and mental health. Fr. Stavros and Mary Ann Konstas co-presented. (Maybe put the pictures of this opposite the little blurb about it.



College Student Monthly Luncheon—We invite all college students for lunch after Liturgy on Sunday, November 12. We will have a lunch/discussion in the library. There is no cost.



**Love to take photos?
Come join our Photo
Ministry!** It's a fun and
creative way to serve and to
show the community all the

beautiful services and

wonderful activities we have here at St. John.

All abilities are welcome. Please call or text

Karina Findlay at (813) 476-9632.

FIFTY- TWO VERSES IN FIFTY- TWO WEEKS



THE BIBLE PROJECT
BY FR. STAVROS

May God bring good things into your life everyday.



Most of us don't spend enough time in the Bible. Sadly, some of us don't spend any time. Each week since January 2019, we provide in The Messenger and then repeated weekly in the bulletin, a verse or two. I choose verses that are meaningful to me, or well known or ones that have meaning in contemporary times. You are welcome to submit verses via email to me as well, as many of you have. If you want a challenge, do the following:

- Memorize the verse of the week.
- For a greater challenge, read the entire chapter of the book that the verse comes from.
- For a greater challenge, read the entire book where the verse comes from.

Another challenge to consider is to keep a journal, read it, memorize it and contemplate the verse each week. Allow the Holy Spirit to move your mind and your thoughts and then write down those thoughts and keep them in a journal. If you do one reflection on Scripture each week, you will have the best book that could be. A book written by you, for you, guided by the Holy Spirit, who will guide your thoughts as you read the Scriptures.

Below are verses for the month of November. There is one verse for each week. I have written a few comments below each verse to get your mind going. Don't let my thoughts be your interpretation. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you through your reflection on Scripture. If you have any favorite verse you'd like me to comment on, please forward it to frstav@gmail.com.

November 5-11

Like warriors they charge, like soldiers they scale the wall. They march each on his way, they do not swerve from their paths. They do not jostle one another, each marches in his path; they burst through the weapons and are not halted.

Joel 2:7-8

At the end of this week, we will observe Veterans' Day, celebrating and thanking our Veterans for their service, and also remembering the Veterans who were killed in the line of duty, those who succumbed from injuries and those who have passed on. These two verse from the prophet Joel describe the life of a soldier. Soldiers face a dangerous job, as they charge the enemy and scale walls not knowing what is on the other side. Soldiers are taught to march in formation, to maintain order and discipline and to not swerve from their paths. They march in harmony with one another, they do not crowd each other. And they move forward regardless of the opposition, single-minded in their mission. These verses might also describe the life of a committed Christian—to charge at sin and temptation with the goal of defeating them. To scale the walls of life, even when unsure of what lies on the other side of them, with faith that God will help us in the fight and in the unknown. We are supposed to march on our Christian path and not swerve or deviate from it. That is the ideal. We are supposed to support one another, not get in the way of the other. And we are supposed to march undaunted by the temptations and challenges that threaten to take us off our path.

Continued...

November 12-18

Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?”

And he said to them, “Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”

Luke 3:14

This verse from Luke 3:14 was said by John the Baptist. John was baptizing people in the River Jordan, and people went out to him in the same way that people now go to confession. They went for a ritual washing of sin, but they also went to get guidance. In the spirit of Veterans’ Day, which we just commemorated, this week’s verse is the advice that John gave to soldiers. Back two thousand years ago, there wasn’t the sense of law and order that we have today. Whoever was the strongest ruled. Soldiers could rob people—Jews, and even fellow Romans—and no one was going to stop them. John called them to not rob anyone by violence or false accusation and told them to be content with their wages, not always seeking more by devious means. This is good advice for us today. We are all soldiers in the army of God. We certainly shouldn’t be robbing anyone—whether that is actual stealing of goods or stealing someone’s self-esteem. We shouldn’t falsely accuse people, or spread rumors about them. And we should be content with our wages. This is a big subject for another day—but many people are never satisfied with what they make and this is evident in their work ethic, or lack thereof. We are supposed to work diligently for the salary we have agreed to. And if we are not content, look for another job, don’t cheat the job that you have.

November 19-25

I give Thee thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing Thy praise; I bow down toward Thy holy temple and give thanks to Thy name for Thy steadfast love and Thy faithfulness.

Psalms 138: 1-2

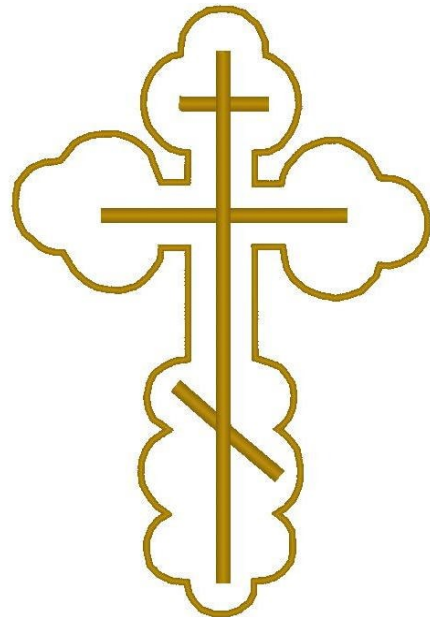
This week we celebrate Thanksgiving. The concept of Thanksgiving shouldn’t be something we express on only one day. It should be expressed every day. Indeed, Psalm 138 gives us the ideal when it comes to thanksgiving, that we should be giving thanks to God with our whole heart, with all of our being, with every beat of our hearts, we should be praising God. Hand in hand with our heart beating for God is for us to worship. Worship helps our heart beat for the Lord. When we bow before the Lord, when we humble ourselves and acknowledge that He is at the center and that we are not, it puts us in a posture of thanksgiving for the things He provides that we cannot provide for ourselves. As we celebrate Thanksgiving this week, let us make a concerted effort to reflect on what it means to be thankful, and to reflect on how much of our hearts are filled with thanksgiving to God.

November 26-December 1

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3: 15-16

Our thoughts move from Thanksgiving to Christmas this week, as we put up decorations and ring in the season. These verses give us several good reminders. First, to “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” This is great advice for the month of December. The Christmas season brings added stress, because on top of our usual responsibilities, there is the pressure to decorate, shop, bake, mail things and plan and attend Christmas gatherings. It’s like life continues with these added things. And the peace of Christ can quickly be overtaken by this additional stress. This is a reminder to keep the peace of Christ this season. Thanksgiving is not celebrated once a year, but should be remembered daily. Just because the holiday is over, the concept should continue. In a season of commercialism, we shouldn’t forget the word of Christ, or the significance of the miracle of the Nativity. And as we hear Christmas carols, and sadly many of them are just holiday songs that mention little to nothing of Christ, we need to remember the words of the carols, that remind us to give “glory to the newborn King” and that this event brought “Joy to the World.” These are not just catchy tunes, but have words that are deep in meaning. Let us let these words penetrate our hearts, uplift our souls, and inspire our actions.





Thanks to the generosity of our community and the hard work of our members our Philoptochos projects are off to a great start this year. Since August, we have donated:

- \$500 to Metropolis Youth Programs (Fanouropita)
- \$200 to Retired Clergy & Widowed Presvyteres Fund
- \$300 to Hellenic College/Holy Cross Scholarships

October Highlights:

We had an inspiring Team Building retreat with Father Stavros. Thank-you Father!

For the first time we formed a team to represent our church in the Making Strides in Breast Cancer Walk. Thanks to all that participated!

November Highlights:

- November 12 -Bags of Love – we will partner with the Daughters of Penelope to fill bags of essentials to hand out to the homeless in our area. We will be distributing the bags in the Kormoulos Center. All parishioners are encouraged to take a bag or two with them to distribute and bless a homeless person.
- November 19 - National Sisterhood of Presvyteres Coffee Hour Please come enjoy some refreshments and help us support this worthy cause.
- November 19 – General Membership Meeting; 12:15 PM – 1:00 PM in the Zaharias Room. Open to everyone. If you are not a member, feel free to come and see what it is all about!

Save the Date:

- December 3 – after church Christmas Fellowship Brunch. (Details to follow)
- December 10 & 17 – Community Spanakopita, Tiropita and Vasilopta sale
- First two weeks of December – we will be collaborating with Sunday School/ Joy & Hope in providing turkey gift cards for the Boxes of Hope they will be distributing to Metropolitan Ministries. We are asking for grocery store gift cards for \$15 or donations of the same (we will buy the cards). You may give your donations to any board member or see Katherine Sakkis.

Stewardship

Thank you for your gifts of Stewardship!

325 families strong, who have committed \$539,566 of their treasure in 2023. The entire St. John's community benefits through your generosity.

We lovingly remind you to make your commitment official today if your name is missing from this list.

Please call the office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

The Stewardship Committee

Abramis, John G (Nicky M.), Mr. & Mrs.

Afloarei, Michael (Mariana), Mr. & Mrs.

Akrotirianakis, Stavros (Presbytera Lisa), Rev. Fr.

Alastanos, Jennifer, Ms.

* Alikakos, Maria, Ms.

Alithinos, Ekaterini, Ms.

Alsina, Alexa, Ms.

Alsina, Angel (Lisa), Dr. & Mrs.

Ambrozy, Philip, Mr.

Andre, Gregory (Haritini Tina), Mr. & Mrs.

* Andrews, Margaux (Biddinger, Thomas, Mr.), Ms.

* Anghelescu, Mihnea (Gabriela Damian), Mr. & Mrs.

Apockotos, James (Maria), Mr. & Mrs.

* Apostoleres, Nicholas S. (Rosalie C.), Mr. & Mrs.

Armstrong, Jim (Myra), Mr. & Mrs.

Arnaoutakis, Dean (Diana), Dr. & Mrs.

Assimiadis, Paul, Mr.

Austin, Kyle (Hali Drizis), Mr. & Mrs.

Aviles, K. Bliziotis

Badrane, Denise, Ms.

Bakirdgi, Joan, Mrs.

Balasis, Mathew (Suzy), Mr. & Mrs.

* Barron, Christian, Mr.

* Beach, Kevin (Borgeas, Heidi, Ms.), Dr.

* Bedan, Matt (Christi), Mr. & Mrs.

* Bilthouse, Kevin (Carena), Mr. & Mrs.

Blackburn, Robert T. (Kathryn), Mr. & Dr.

Blankenbaker, James (Michelle), Mr. & Mrs.

Bondi, Katerina, Ms.

Bougas, Constantine (Angela), Mr. & Mrs.

Bouzinakis, Andrew (Kathryn), Mr. & Mrs.

Bradshaw, Harold (Pelagia), Mr. & Mrs.

* Calamunci, Alex (Sarah), Mr. & Mrs.

Capitano, Frank (Christina), Mr. & Mrs.

Carreon, Delfin (Danae), Mr. & Mrs.

Carter, John (Genie), Dr. & Mrs.

* Cathopoulos, Mary Ann, Ms.

Catsikopoulos Evanovich, Lauren
(Catsikopoulos, John, Mr.), Dr.

* Cauthorn, Ken (Helen), Mr. & Mrs.

Chagaris, George (Kalliope), Mr. & Mrs.

Chakonas, Ethel Athena, Mrs.

Charalabakis, Terry G., Mr.

Choundas, Marina (Thatcher, Greg, Mr.), Ms.

Choundas, Peter (Adis), Mr. & Mrs.

Christodoulou, Maryann, Mrs.

Christopher, Penny (Louis), Dr.

Chrysakis, Emmanuel, Mr.

* Ciorogar, Trevor (Maryann), Mr. & Mrs.

Colado, David (Alexandria), Mr. & Mrs.

Comminos, William (Margaret), Mr. & Mrs.

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Costello,Patricia,Ms.
Costianes,Kathleen,Ms.
Cotterman,Sandra,Ms.
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De Maio,Alexandra,Ms.
- * Delashaw,Alex(Kim),Mrs.
- * Demas,Anna K.,Ms.
Demas,John,Mr.
Demos,Maria,Ms.
- * DeYoung,John(Jenna),Mr. & Mrs.
Diamantakes,Georgia,Ms.
Dimas,Gregory(Patsavos,Evelyn,Ms.),Dr.
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Fallieras,Lauren,Ms.
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- * Forde,Dwight(Ewana),Mr. & Mrs.
Fortina,Nicholas(Lampos,Cynthia,Ms.),Mr.
- * Fotopoulos,Anthony(Carole),Mr. & Mrs.
- * Frantsvog,Eric(Maria),Mr. & Mrs.
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- * Frey,Carlos(Sorolis-Frey,Sophia,Ms.),Mr.
Galin,Mary,Ms.
Garcia,Rick(Stamie),Mr. & Mrs.
Gavalas,Debbie(Ritchie,Robert,Mr.),Mrs.
- * Geis,Jeffrey(Maria),Mr. & Mrs.
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Georgas,Thomas(Janet),Mr. & Mrs.
George,Peter,Mr.
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Georgiou,Speros(Eleanor),Mr. & Mrs.
Gerecke,Ed(Terri),Mr. & Mrs.
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Grammaticas,Bill,Mr.
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- * Hanhan,Usama(Lina),Dr. & Mrs.
- * Hartsfield-Molina,Christie(Molina,David,Mr.),Dr.
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Kaburis, Kathy, Mrs.	* Lenardos, Peter, Mr.
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Kallenekos, Constantine, Mr.	Leontsinis, Nicole, Ms.
* Kane, Lance (Georgia Laliotis, Dr.), Dr.	* Letobarone, Domenic (Melanie), Dr. & Dr.
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Kapetan, Martha, Ms.	Limberatos, Alexander (Alexandra), Mr. & Mrs.
* Kargakos, Joan Williams, Mrs.	* Liras, John (Stavroula), Mr. & Mrs.
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* Katsadouros, Konstantin (Katherine), Mr. & Mrs.	Magos, Tony (Mary), Mr. & Mrs.
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Katzaras, George (Angelina), Mr. & Mrs.	Malacos, John G. (Lucy A.), Mr. & Mrs.
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* Katzaras, Stefan (Kara), Mr. & Mrs.	* Malo, Frank, Mr.
Kavouklis, Lazarus (Maria), Dr. & Mrs.	* Maltezos, Lisa, Ms.
Kavouklis, Nicholas (Edie), Dr. & Mrs.	Mangarides, Markos (Petranelis, Ekaterini, Mrs.), Mr.
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* Kickish, Robert (Rosalia), Dr. & Mrs.	Mantzanas, Chris (Nicole), Mr. & Mrs.
Kladis, George (Charlene), Mr. & Mrs.	* Markowski, Katina, Mrs.
* Konstas, Demetrios (Mary Ann), Dr. & Mrs.	Martin, Tyson (Marissa), Mr. & Mrs.
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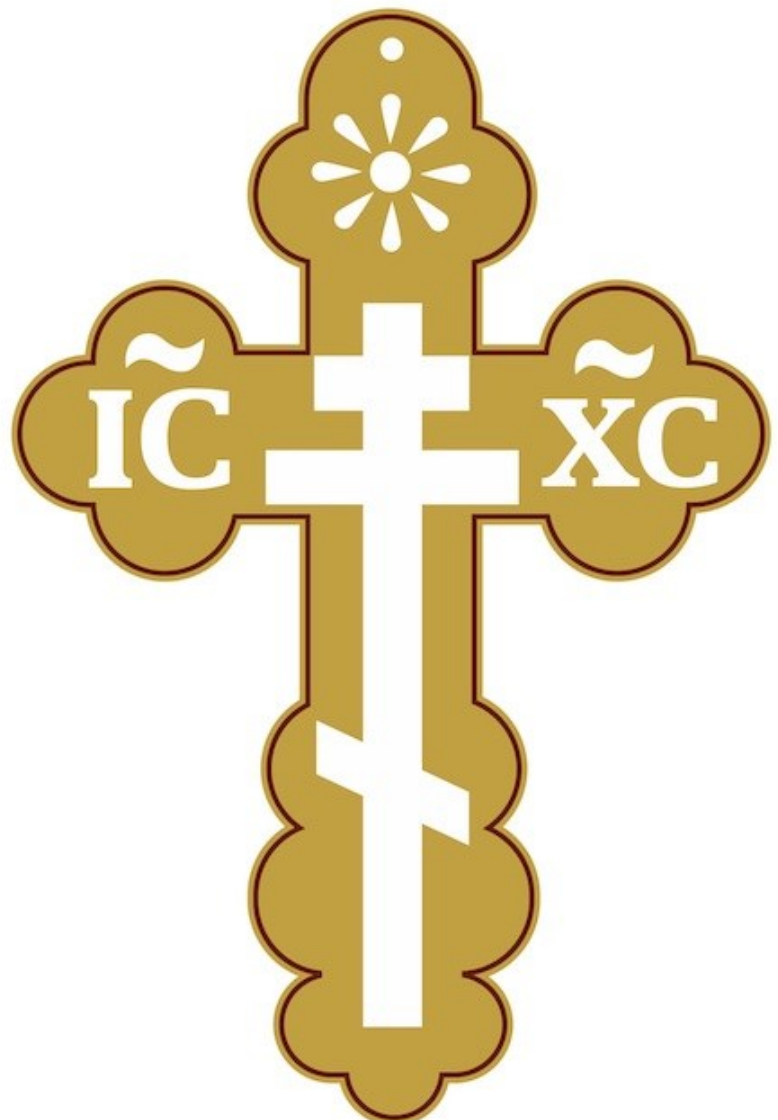
* Milonas,Taso(Thay),Mr. & Mrs.	Passavanti,Robert(Debbra),Mr. & Mrs.
Mitchell,John(Edith),Mr. & Mrs.	Payne,Suzanne,Mrs.
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 * Zaharis,Constantine(Rachel),Dr. & Dr.
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* Indicates receipt of a Stewardship Check without a completed pledge form. Our office will be happy to forward a pledge package and the form can also be completed on-line. Keep in mind pledges in writing help us adequately plan financially for our church and also bring voting privileges, which are critical to support the mission and vision of our church.





*Our word for our parish for 2023 is “serve.” Every month this year, an article about service will appear. During some months, the article will be written by one of our ministry heads, talking about how their ministry serves and why they serve in it. **This month’s article is about our choir.** As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Joshua 24:15*

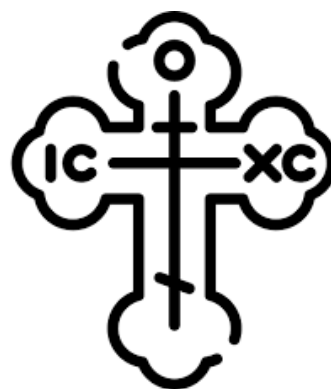
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I've written extensively this month about the Divine Liturgy. The goal of the Divine Liturgy is for the priest to lead the faithful in the worship of the Lord and the partaking in the Eucharist. But who leads the faithful in offering the hymns and responses? That would be the choir and the chanters. The choir and the chanters set the tone for prayer, for peace, for relaxation and ultimately for empathy to occur. The priest directs the service, he offers prompts for what to pray for, he guides the journey to the Eucharist, and he ultimately is the one who offers the Eucharist to the faithful. There is no Eucharist without the context of community. The church is the people. We are the body of Christ. And while the priest may be at the head of the body, the body doesn't work without eyes, a mouth, hands and feet. The whole body works in unity to accomplish whatever worthwhile things we do in life. Likewise the body of the church should work together not only to worship, but to serve once worship is over, whether that is in a community project or an individual one. Worship brings us together to celebrate Christ, the center of our faith, but it also bring us together to relax and to build empathy, so that when we leave, we are more relaxed and less anxious and we are motivated by empathy to serve our neighbor and to be served by our neighbor, so that we can have peace, repentance, make good decisions and ultimately have the painless, blameless Christian end to our lives, which prepares us for the good defense before the awesome judgment seat of Christ which ultimately leads us to everlasting life. And all of that can come through worship.

So thank you to our choir who so faithfully leads us in worship. Thank you to Tara who leads our choir. Thank you to Ruth who plays the organ. Thank you to those who have stepped up to chant, especially at our sacraments. Thank you for our choir members who sing so faithfully, and who come and practice so that what is being offered is prepared, well done and yields the relaxation we so desperately need. And thank you to those in the pews who worship. I encourage you to sing with the choir, because not only is this our tradition, but it will help you to relax, and when you participate actively in worship, it will build empathy and compassion in you.

If anyone is interested in joining the choir, please see Tara Swartzbaugh. Practices are held on Wednesdays, except for during Lent, when they are held on Thursdays. We are always looking for new members for our choir. At present we do not have a full-time chanter in our church but have been working with a rotation of volunteers to chant the weekday services and sacraments. If you are interested in learning how to chant, please see Fr. Stavros.



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 - Lynchburg, VA
Katherine Beasley - Vero Beach, FL
Christopher & Jaime Brewer - Tampa, FL
Pete & Carol Caldwell - Ringgold, GA
William Camarinos - Alexandria, VA
William & Kanella Jane Chapman - Ellenton, FL
Nicholas & Sondra Chronis - Mt. Pleasant, SC
Emmanuel Chrysakis - Palm Harbor, FL
Victor & Cynthia Cucuz - Tampa, FL
Fr Stratton & Pres. Denise Dorozenski - Sterling Heights, MI
Eric & Artemis Mellen - Longwood, FL
Peter George - Tampa, FL
Ron & Maria Gregory - St. Petersburg, FL
Charlie & Eleftheria Hambos - Orlando, FL
Gabriel Hurst - Largo, FL
Michael Ibrahim - E. Brunswick, NJ
Judith Jogerst

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

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

Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

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Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

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

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

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

Nursing Ministry

November is Diabetes Prevention month.



Changing your lifestyle could be a big step toward diabetes prevention — and it's never too late to start. Lifestyle changes can help prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes, the most common form of the disease. Prevention is especially important if you're currently at an increased risk of type 2 diabetes because of excess weight or obesity, high cholesterol, or a family history of diabetes.

If you have been diagnosed with prediabetes — high blood sugar that doesn't quite reach the threshold of a diabetes diagnosis — lifestyle changes can prevent or delay the onset of disease.

Making a few changes in your lifestyle now may help you avoid the serious health complications of diabetes in the future, such as nerve, kidney and heart damage. It's never too late to start.

1. Lose extra weight

Losing weight reduces the risk of diabetes. Studies have shown weight loss has reduced risk of developing diabetes by almost 60% after losing approximately 7% of their body weight with changes in exercise and diet.

The American Diabetes Association recommends that people with prediabetes (who are overweight) lose at least 7% to 10% of their body weight to prevent disease progression. More weight loss will translate into even greater benefits.

Talk to your healthcare provider about reasonable short-term goals and expectations, such as a losing 1 to 2 pounds a week. Set a weight-loss goal based on your current body weight.

2. Be more physically active

There are many benefits to regular physical activity. Exercise can help you:

- Lose weight
- Lower your blood sugar
- Boost your sensitivity to insulin — which helps keep your blood sugar within a normal range
- Have more energy
- Boost mood

3. Goals for most adults to promote weight loss and maintain a healthy weight include:



- **Aerobic exercise.** Aim for 30 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise — such as brisk walking, swimming, biking or running — on most days for a total of at least 150 minutes a week. You can break this up by walking 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes after dinner.
- **Resistance exercise.** Resistance exercise — at least 2 to 3 times a week — increases your strength, balance and ability to maintain an active life. Resistance training includes weightlifting, yoga and calisthenics.
- **Limited inactivity.** Breaking up long bouts of inactivity, such as sitting at the computer, can help control blood sugar levels. Take a few minutes to stand, walk around or do some light activity every 30 minutes.

Continued...

4. Eat healthy fats

Fatty foods are high in calories and should be eaten in moderation. Fried foods should be avoided all together regardless of the fat source. To help lose and manage weight, your diet should include a variety of foods with small amounts of unsaturated fats, sometimes called "good fats."



Unsaturated fats — both monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats — promote healthy blood cholesterol levels and good heart and vascular health. Sources of good fats may include:

- Olive, sunflower, avocado, and some canola oils
- Nuts and seeds, such as almonds, peanuts, flaxseed and pumpkin seeds
- Fatty fish, such as salmon, mackerel, sardines, tuna and cod

Saturated and trans fats, the "bad fats," are found in dairy products and meats, and oils that are solid at room temperature (i.e., Crisco and lard). These should be a minor part of your diet. You can limit saturated fats by eating low-fat dairy products and lean chicken and pork.

5. Skip fad diets and make healthier choices

Many fad diets — such as the glycemic index, paleo or keto diets — may help you lose weight. There is little research, however, about the long-term benefits of these diets or their benefit in preventing diabetes.

Your dietary goal should be to lose weight and then maintain a healthier weight moving forward. Healthy dietary decisions, therefore, need to include a strategy that you can maintain as a lifelong habit.

Making healthy decisions that reflect some of your own preferences for food and traditions may be beneficial for you over time.

A simple strategy to help you make good food choices and eat appropriate portions sizes is to divide up your plate. These three divisions on your plate promote healthy eating:

- One-half: fruit and nonstarchy vegetables
- One-quarter: whole grains
- One-quarter: protein-rich foods, such as legumes, fish or lean meats

When to see your healthcare provider

Should you have any questions or concerns connect with your provider. Additionally, the American Diabetes Association recommends routine screening with diagnostic blood tests for type 2 diabetes for all adults ages 45 or older and for the following groups:



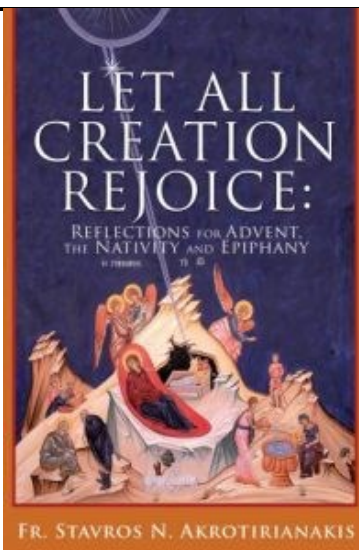
- People younger than 45 who are overweight or obese and have one or more risk factors associated with diabetes
- Women who have had gestational diabetes
- People who have been diagnosed with prediabetes
- Children who are overweight or obese and who have a family history of type 2 diabetes or other risk factors

Want more information, check out these sites —

<https://diabetes.org/about-diabetes/diabetes-prevention>

<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevent-type-2/index.html>

<https://health.gov/myhealthfinder/health-conditions/diabetes/take-steps-prevent-type-2-diabetes>



Start Your 2023 Advent Journey with "Let All Creation Rejoice"

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

+Fr. Stavros

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



Fr. John
678-637-4425 >

Fr. Stavros
< 813-394-1038



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.

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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 unaware.*
HEBREWS 13:2


Names to remember your greek by (Greek Book titles)
Just for laughs. 🇬🇷 🇬🇷 🇬🇷 🇬🇷

1. Greek Meat by SUE VLAKI
2. Greek Obesity by TROY POLI
3. Greek Gardening by LOU LOUTHI
4. Greek Journalism by EFFIE MERITHA
5. Greek Cooking by PAT STICHIO, LOU KOUMADES & MOU SAKKA
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10. Greek Dancing/Indian Style by CHIEF TETELI
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14. Greek Religion by THEO TOKOS
15. Greek Winter by PAUL E. KRIO
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17. Greek Millionaires by POLLA LEFTA
18. Greek Punishment by TIM ORRIA
19. Greek Psychiatry by DENISE E. KALLA
20. Greek Lust by SETH ELLOW
21. Greek Cross-stitch by KEN DEEMA
22. Greek Comedy by KAREN GYOZIS
23. Greek Decision-Making by TINA KAHNO
24. Greek Thank You by F. HARRY STOWE
25. Greek Pain Management by POLLY PONAEI



Young Adult Retreat– Sept. 30





*St. John is
responsible to have 6
volunteers sign up
each month.*



Sign Up

*Have a heart, lend a hand,
and make a difference.*

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# COMMUNITY OUTREACH 2023

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OUR SCHEDULE FOR THE REMAINING MONTHS OF 2023 IS
AS FOLLOWS:

SATURDAY OCTOBER 21,
NOVEMBER 18, DECEMBER 16.

TIME: 8:00 AM - 10 AM

PLACE: TAMPA HOPE
3704 E. 3RD AVENUE
TAMPA, FL. 33605



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2418 W. Swann Avenue
Tampa, FL 33609

(813)876-8830

St. John's Bookstore – Festival



Our bookstore will feature many special items at our festival this year! We have been shopping since last November to offer distinctive items to you and the general public. We have expanded the icons, books, jewelry, and other selections we have for you each Sunday, and will also offer a section of Thanksgiving and Christmas items. This is a great place to find unique and inspiring gifts for your upcoming celebrations and gift-giving. You can also look for our regular bookstore Christmas shop to open on Sunday, November 26th following Divine Liturgy.

Stay in the Present—Serve in the Present (Anonymous)

The devil appeared to three monks and said to them: if I gave you power to change something from the past, what would you change?

The first of them, with great apostolic fervor, replied: "I would prevent you from making Adam and Eve fall into sin so that humanity could not turn away from God."

The second, a man full of mercy, said to him: "I would prevent you from God and you will condemn yourself eternally".

The third of them was the simplest and, instead of responding to the tempter, he got on his knees, made the sign of the cross and prayed saying: "Lord, free me from the temptation of what could be and was not".

The devil, giving a raucous cry and shuddering with pain, vanished.

The other two, surprised, said to him: "Brother, why have you responded like this?"

He replied: "First: we must NEVER dialogue with the devil . Second: NOBODY in the world has the power to change the past. Third: Satan's INTEREST was not to prove our virtue, but to trap us in the past, so that we neglect the present, the only time God gives us His grace and we can cooperate with Him to fulfill His will ".

Of all the demons, the one that catches the most men and prevents them from being happy is that of "What could have been and was not".

The past is left to the mercy of God and the future to his Providence. Only the present is in our hands. "Live in the moment"

November 2023							Dec 2023 ▶
◀ Oct 2023	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Fast Day				1 Sts. Cosmas and Damian Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Choir Practice	2 <		

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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