

Parish Priest:
Retired Priest in Residence:
Retired Priest in Residence:
Bookkeeper:

Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038
Rev. Fr. Stratton Dorozenski 813-876-8830
Rev. Fr. John Stefero 678-637-4425
Debbie Bowe 813-876-8830

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

12 Disciples

AHEPA:

Altar Angels:

Bible Study:

Bookstore:

Choir:

Mathew Balasis 727-421-7376
Thomas Sakaris, President 201-819-2319
Kalliope Chagaris 813-789-4134
Fr. John Stefero 678-637-4425
Pres. Denise Stefero 678-464-4833
Tara Swartzbaugh, Director 813-313-0439
Ruth Losoviz, Organist 727-688-2782
Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038
Greg Melton 813-967-2074

College Ministry:

Community Outreach:

Dance Groups:

H XAPA MΑΣ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963
ΠΑΡΕΑ, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
Genie Carter 813-363-2362
ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668
Elena Ketchum 813-229-0144
Gary Ward 813-846-3898
Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747
Michael & Bessie Palios 813-523-0346
George & Zackie Ameres 813-245-3813
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963
Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038
Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026
Karina Findlay 813-476-9632
Katherine Sakkis 813-309-1073
Chris Kyrus 757-672-1920
George Mitseas 813-748-1220
Vickie Peckham 813-758-3102
Pete Trakas 813-505-2193

Daughters of Penelope:

Finance Committee:

Food Pantry:

GOYA:

Hope/Joy:

Joy Tweens

Men's Fellowship:

Nursing Ministry:

Photography Ministry:

Philoptochos:

Stewardship:

Sunday School:

Ushers

Veterans/1st Responders

Welcoming Ministry:

Women's Bible Study:

Young Adults

Young at Heart:

Youth Protection:

Fr. John Stefero 678-637-4425
Maria Xenick 813-765-3587
Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-876-8830
Aris Rogers 813-309-5525
Dora Morgan 813-613-3738
Suzanne Pileggi 813-244-5855



St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church



December 17, 2023

Daniel & the Three Holy Youths

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

11th Sunday of Luke ; Daniel the Prophet & Ananias, Azarias, & Misail, the Three Holy Youths ;
Dionysius of Zakynthos

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Let all things above in heaven rejoice, and let all things below on earth be glad. With all the might and strength of His arm, an eternal deed the Lord did perform. Beneath His feet He has trampled down death by death, and first born of the dead has He become. From the womb of Hades has He delivered us, and to all the world has granted His great mercy.

Apolytikion for the Saints:

By faith You justified the Forefathers, having through them betrothed to yourself the Church that came out of the nations. The saints are boasting in glory; for he glorious fruit, the Virgin who without seed gave birth to You, is from their progeny. At their entreaties, O Christ our God, save our souls.

Apolytikion of St. John:

The memory of the just is observed with hymns of praise; for you O Forerunner the witness of the Lord is sufficient. You have proved to be truly more venerable than the prophets. Since you were granted to baptize in the river, the One Whom they proclaimed. Therefore, you strove for truth, proclaiming with joy the Good News, even to those in Hades: that God was manifested in the flesh, and takes away the sins of the world, and grants to us His great mercy.

Kontakion:

On this day, the Virgin Maid goes to the cave to give birth to the pre-eternal Word in an ineffable manner. Dance for joy, O you inhabited earth upon your hearing, Glorify, along with Angels and with shepherds, Him Who willed that He appear as a newborn Child, the pre-eternal God.

Welcome to all of our Visitors “Welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” Romans 15:7 We pray that your worship experience with us today will be inspirational and uplifting. Please introduce yourself to an usher or a member of the Welcoming Ministry and pick-up a “welcome packet” as you exit the church. We are happy that you are with us today!

Holy Communion is offered only to Orthodox Christians who are in good canonical standing with the church and who have prepared through prayer and fasting. Everyone is invited to receive the Antidoron (Blessed Bread) at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

Order for Holy Communion—With Sunday School in session the order for Holy Communion will be as follows:

1. Choir
2. Altar boys
3. Sunday school teachers (who will line up in middle aisle before Communion)
4. Sunday school students (who will line up in the middle aisle before Communion behind the teachers)
5. Then the rest of the congregation (side areas then the main section)



Upcoming Services & Events

Sunday December 17

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Sunday School Christmas Program

Philoptochos Bake Sale

Men’s Group 5:00 p.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Monday December 18

Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Christmas Candlelight Service 6:00 p.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Tuesday December 19

Orthros 9:00 a.m.

College Student Discussion 6:00 p.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday December 20

St. Ignatios

Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Choir Practice

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Thursday December 21

Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday December 22

St. Anastasia

Orthros 6:15 a.m.

Royal Hours 9:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 7:00 a.m.

Saturday December 23

Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday December 24

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL

Vespers 4:00 p.m.

Orthros 5:30 p.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 7:00 p.m.

Monday December 25

Nativity of Christ

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

OFFICE CLOSED

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Religious Education at **St. John**

Monday Night
Bible Study

Leader:
Fr. John
RESUMES BACK ON
January 8 :
Monday at
6:30 p.m.

Women’s
Bible Study

Leader:
Fr. Stavros
RESUMES BACK ON
January 9:
Tuesday at
10:00 a.m.

WELCOME TO OUR PARISH

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

PLEASE TEXT THE WORD

"WELCOME" TO 813-790-5950

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

DO NOT NEGLECT TO SHOW *Hospitality* TO STRANGERS.
FOR THEREBY SOME HAVE ENTERTAINED *angels* UN-AWARE.
HEBREWS 13:2

MINISTRY NEWS & UPDATES

St. John's Bookstore



Our bookstore is currently featuring a special Christmas Shop where you can find inspiring and unique items for your celebration of the Nativity of Christ. Included are Icons of the Nativity of our Lord, Christmas cards in both English and Greek, Icon Ornaments, and many other Christmas gifts you just won't find in the shopping malls. Think of us when checking off those names on your gift list. Remember to shop early for the best selection!

Have a Joyous Nativity and a New Year filled with God's richest blessings!
Presvytera Denise and Elaina – Your Bookstore Staff

First Annual Yiayia's Table



The Daughters of Penelope invite you to stop by at the Yiayia's table following the Divine Liturgy **TODAY**. Unique, handmade, affordable Christmas gifts for teachers, home décor or gift exchanges will be available for sale. The items have been donated and all proceeds from the sale will be used to fund scholarships for deserving students in our community.

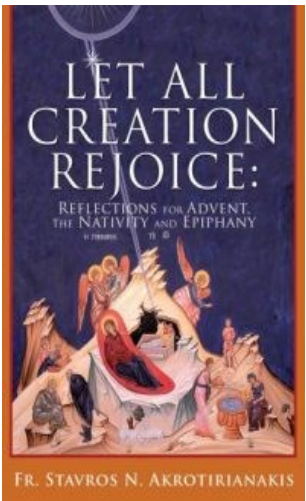
JOY Tweens

Sign-Up for Text Updates!

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



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

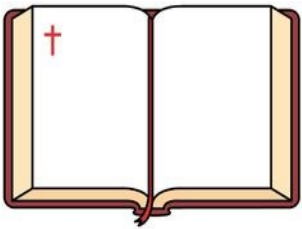


Although this book is written in an easy to read style - the concepts and application are very thought provoking! My husband and I have been reading it at meal time, as our Advent meditation. Each day's readings help me turn my mind to what's really going on and important this time of year - helping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

Readings for Sunday, December 17

Prokeimenon: Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers. Daniel 3.26,27

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 3:4-11



Brethren, when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

The reading is from The Gospel According to Luke 14:16-24

The Lord said this parable: "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time of the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I must go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and there is still room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. For many are called, but few are chosen.'"

COFFEE HOUR SCHEDULE

DECEMBER 17TH
Men's Fellowship

DECEMBER 24TH
AHEPA



Philoptochos News

DECEMBER 17, 2023

Spanakopita, Tiropita & Vasilopita Sale

DECEMBER 17 & 31

Time to stock up on these traditional holiday goodies!

From our freezer to yours. Make it fresh when you need it:

ONE TRAY LEFT **TIROPITA TRIANGLES (48) \$35 per tray**
SPANAKOPITA 2# BY THE PAN \$25 7- 2lb PANS LEFT

VASILOPITA \$12 FEW LEFT

Questions or additional information contact:
Lisa Alsina 813-728-1094



Young at Heart



Our ministry has been busy playing Santa to local Seniors . Through the kindness and generosity of our members, we were able to supply 15 bags of requested items to those in need !

Christmas Candlelight Service



Monday, December 18th at 6:00pm

*Please join us in person or online for
an evening prayer to recharge,
reflect, and refresh in preparation for
the Christmas season.*

*A light dinner will be offered after the
service.*

Altar Boy Schedule

December 17th

Michael Snyder
Zachary Carter
Dorian Setzer-Torres
Leo Lendaros
Niko Kyrus
Josh Roby
Michael Svintsitskiy
Michael Kwasny

Captains

Demetri Passalaris
Nicholas Akrotirianakis
Nicholas Magos
Nicholas Carter
George Xenick
PJ Zelatis

December 24th

Anyone attending may
serve--
Either Liturgy on
Christmas Eve

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS & TOPICS

December 17th
Christmas Pageant



December 24th
NO SUNDAY SCHOOL

**If you do not receive our weekly Sunday School Constant Contact every Friday afternoon,
please e-mail Vickie Peckham to let her know.
Her e-mail address is vickiepeckham@gmail.com**

Dear Parishioners,

It was eleven years ago this week that there was a massacre at an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut. Over twenty students and teachers were murdered. I remember it happened on a Friday. Our **Sunday school Christmas program** was scheduled for the following Sunday, with the rehearsal on the very next day. We debated whether it was even appropriate to have either the Christmas program, or the rehearsal. We decided that we would go forward with both, because by not doing so, it would mean that evil had won. However, we decided to do a memorial service for those children, and that at the end of the program, we would sing the hymn "Let There Be Peace on Earth." And we would open the doors of our church, and sing it to "the world."

So many people said that day "enough is enough" regarding these mass shootings. And eleven years later, they occur it seems almost every day. The world is less peaceful than it was eleven years ago. It is even more angry. Jesus Christ was called in the Prophecies of the Old Testament, "The Prince of Peace." That would make all of us, His children, children of peace. That's what we are supposed to be.

We know that our thoughts become words, and our words become actions, and actions determine character, and character changes the world. At the conclusion of the Christmas program, we will again sing this hymn "Let there be peace on earth." We will again open the doors of our church to the world. Hopefully our thoughts will go to peace, our mouths will sing these words of peace, and

when we leave, our actions will go to actions of peace, as will our character, and with a countenance of character, we can change our corner of the world.

Peace in the world begins with peace with yourself, with the decision to be a peacemaker and not a peace-taker. Let there be peace on earth—and let us each do our part!

With love in the Lord,
+Fr. Stavros

LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH

**Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth
The peace that was meant to be.
With God as our father
Brothers all are we.
Let me walk with my brother
In perfect harmony.**

**Let peace begin with me
Let this be the moment now.
With every step i take
Let this be my solemn vow.
To take each moment
And live each moment
With peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth,
And let it begin with me.**



Sunday School Christmas Program

TODAY-Following the Divine Liturgy, our Sunday school children will again present a Christmas program for us.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Our Community Outreach ministry has secured dates with Metropolitan Ministries to volunteer to help with the annual Holiday Tent for the needy.

Metropolitan Ministries Holiday Tent 2023
2609 N Rome Ave, Tampa, FL 33607



St John the Baptist GOC is requesting 12 amazing volunteers for both the Christmas event.

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.

Christmas Holiday: Thursday December 21— 2:00 to 6:00 PM

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

Men's Group



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 December will be Thankfulness & Generosity.

Please mark down our dates for men's group for this academic year—**TODAY** ; Sunday, January 28; 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.



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.

Adult Greek School

Will restart on Thursdays at 6:00 - 8:30 p.m. You all will do the "Registration" for the 1st Session and pay only for the "Half of the Session", because you missed half of it (6 lessons): \$75 for the parishioners and \$87 for non Parishioners. Write the check on my name: Magdalini Myer and the memo line: for Adult Greek School. Call me at my cell phone: (813) 523-5771 or email aspis69@aol.com, if you have any questions. The classroom will be on the 2nd floor of the Bridge Prep Academy School Building, Room 205.

Beware of Emails or Text Messages Asking for Gift Cards

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

College Student Night

We will be having our annual College Student Night on Tuesday, December 19, beginning at 6:00 p.m. We will have dinner and discussion. All college students are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please RSVP to Fr. Stavros by December 15 if you plan to attend.

St John needs all hands on deck for Gasparilla on January 27!

Every year we've opened our parking lot to attendees of the Tampa Bay Gasparilla Festivities. This has been a successful undertaking for years and we are thankful for all who have helped in years past!

To run this event, we are asking for your help once more!

We are looking for a new person to chair this event, as our past chairperson is unable to fill that role this year. He is, however, willing to help a new chairperson understand what is involved in this. If you are willing to chair this event, please contact Fr. Stavros. As for everyone else, even a few hours of volunteering is a great help to make this a safe, fun and profitable event. A sign-up genius along with details will be forthcoming through email and the bulletin.



Liturgical Notes

A Christmas “Holy Week”

We will celebrate the Divine Liturgy each day from December 17-December 25, so we can have additional opportunities to partake of Christ as we prepare for His Nativity. From Monday, December 18-Thursday, December 21, Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at 10:00 a.m., preceded by Orthros at 9:00 a.m. On Friday, December 22, Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at 7:00 a.m., preceded by Orthros at 6:15 a.m. We never offer the Divine Liturgy this early in the morning, and it will be a wonderful way to begin the day, to see the sunrise in the church. We will also celebrate Divine Liturgy on Saturday, December 23 at 10:00 a.m.

Friday, December 22 -St. Anastasia

St. Anastasia lived in the late third century and was martyred on December 25, 304. She is the patron saint of pharmacists, as she was gifted in making medicines, which she distributed to those who were ill.

Friday, December 22 – Liturgy at Sunrise

On Friday, December 22, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy at 7:00 a.m. (with Orthros at 6:15 a.m.) We rarely offer Divine Liturgy this early in the morning, and it will be a wonderful way to begin the day, to see the sunrise in the church.

Friday, December 22 - Royal Hours of Christmas 9:30-11:00 a.m.

The service of the Royal Hours consists of Prayers, Hymns, Psalms and Old Testament prophecies that foretell the coming of Christ on Christmas. Also read are the Gospel passages of the feast of Christmas. There is no Holy Communion at this service. Rather, it is a service of quiet meditation in anticipation of the Nativity. We will hold this service from 9:30-11:00 a.m. on Friday, December 22. We will celebrate the entire service by candlelight. This will be a wonderful and peaceful way to usher in the Feast of the Nativity. The service will be conducted in English.

Services for the Nativity – Sunday, December 24

We will celebrate Divine Liturgy as normal, on Sunday, December 24 at 10:00 a.m., preceded by Orthros at 9:00 a.m. It is hoped that those with young children and those who do not drive at night will take advantage of this morning Liturgy. Because December 24 is a Sunday, the order of service in the morning is called “Sunday Before the Nativity” and the hymns and Scripture readings reflect that. If you com to worship on Sunday morning, we hope that you will also either in the evening of the 24th or the morning of the 25th to the actual Nativity Divine Liturgy.

Vigil of the Nativity

A “vigil” in the Orthodox Church is where two or more services are connected in order to create a long period of worship. For the Nativity this year, we will hold such a “vigil.” You may attend some of all of it, come early and leave, or come only for the Divine Liturgy, whatever you wish.

Great Vespers of the Nativity—4:00 p.m.

The Vespers of the Nativity includes Old Testament Prophecy Readings, eight of them that begin with Genesis 1:1, the creation of the world, continue with readings from Isaiah and Jeremiah that have some of the more popular prophetic verses that foretell the coming of the Messiah. The sunset will occur during the Vespers service. This is traditional, as Vespers ends one day and begins another. With the setting of the sun, we will begin the feast of the Nativity.

Orthros of the Nativity—5:30 p.m.

Orthros is usually celebrated in the morning. It tells the story of a saint or feastday in hymns. The Orthros of the Nativity has dozens of hymns that tell the Biblical account of the Incarnation. During both the Vespers and Orthros, the church will be illumined only by candlelight.

Liturgical Notes Continued

Great Doxology—6:45 p.m.

The Feast of the Nativity marks the only time in human history that the night became brighter than day with the appearance of the multitude of angels. At 6:45 p.m. the choir will sing the Great Doxology, the hymn that ends nearly every Orthros service. We hear the choir sing this hymn on Sundays. It’s the first hymn they sing. It is the hymn of the angels from the Nativity. How appropriate it will be to hear the Doxology on the feast of the Nativity, as the lights come on in our church and “night becomes like day.”

The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great—7:00 p.m.

The centerpiece of our Nativity Feast is, of course, the Divine Liturgy. When the Nativity falls on a Sunday or Monday, we celebrate the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great as the Nativity Liturgy.

Monday, December 25 – Nativity of Christ

We will celebrate Divine Liturgy on Christmas morning. Since we are blessed now with more than one priest at the altar, we are able to celebrate additional Christmas Liturgies.

Christmas Prayer Request

Please write down below names of people you’d like Fr. Stavros to pray for, and any specific needs that these people or you have. Fr. Stavros will pray over these names and needs on December 24. Please place this card in the basket by the baptismal font or mail it to the church office.
