



# St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

**December 19, 2021 - Sunday Before Nativity** 

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

(Nativity Above)

#### **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

Sunday before Nativity, Martyrs Boniface, Probus, Ares, Timothy, Polyeuktos, Eutychios and Thessaloniki; Our Righteous Father Gregentius, Bishop of Ethiopia; Agkaia the Righteous of Rome;

Apolytikion of the Week (1 Mode): The stone that had been sealed before Your tomb by the Judeans and the soldiers guarding did watch over Your pure and sacred Body. O Savior, the third day You arose, and unto all the world did You give life. Whereby all the heavenly powers did proclaim that You are the Giver of Life: Glory unto our Resurrected Christ; Glory unto Your Kingdom; Glory to Your dispensation, O You Who alone loves all.

Apolytikion for the Forefathers (2 Mode): By Magnificent are the accomplishments of faith! The holy Three Servants greatly rejoiced, as they stood in the fountain of fire, as if beside the still waters; and the Prophet Daniel appeared to be a shepherd of lions, as if they were sheep. At their entreaties, O Christ God, save our souls.

Apolytikion for 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 (3 Mode): 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 back in session the order for Holy Communion will be as follows:

- Altar boys
- Sunday school teachers (who will line up in middle aisle before Communion)
- Sunday school students (who will line up in the middle aisle before Communion behind the teachers)
- Then the rest of the congregation

#### Fifty-Two Verses in Fifty-Two Weeks: The Bible Project December 19-25

For we walk by faith, not by sight. II Corinthians 5:7

This week's theme is faith. The Sunday before Christmas we read the 42 generations of Christ's ancestors. This is roughly two thousand years of ancestors from Abraham to Christ. It is as long as the wait we have had from Christ's earthly ministry until now. At least some of the people from Abraham to Christ held on to faith and preserved it and passed it from generation to generation. Certainly many did not have faith. But from the time God made a covenant with Abraham until the time of Christ's incarnation was 2,000 years. And Abraham and the others in the line kept faith through wars, plagues, slavery, exile and other misfortunes, so that there was still enough faith left so that Christ was recognized by some as the promised Messiah. We live in a similar time as these ancestors of Christ. We are waiting the return of Christ, and final judgment on who will inherit the kingdom of heaven. We have had many things distract us from Christ, now especially with political upheaval and the pandemic. It is up to us to continue to believe and to work, as they did, to preserve faith and hope. Faith is walking even when we can't see where we are going or don't know how far we are from the end. None of us know how long it will be until the Second Coming, or from the end of our own lives. Faith compels us to keep walking, even when the journey is long and uncertain. The church, and being part of it, is supposed to encourage our faith as well.

Trisagion: Panagiotis Alithinos (11 years); Envagelos Stylianos Alithinos (11 years); Gwenette Voyadgis (40 days)

# **Upcoming Services & Events**

Sunday, December 19 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Monday, December 20 St. Ignatius Orthros 6:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 7:30 a.m. Christmas Candlelight Service 6:00 p.m. \*\*Day of Prayer - Church open all day

Tuesday, December 21 Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. College Student Discussion Dinner 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, December 22 St. Anastasia

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

Thursday, December 23 **Royal Hours** 9:30 a.m.

Friday, December 24 **Nativity of Christ** 

> Vespers 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Orthros 5:30 p.m. Divine Liturgy 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, December 25 **Nativity of Christ (Office Closed)** 

Sunday, December 26 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Monday, December 27 Office Closed

#### **Liturgical Notes**

Wednesday, 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.

Thursday, December 23 - 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 Com-munion 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 Wednesday, December 23. We will celebrate the entire service by candle-light. 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 - Friday, December 24 There are traditionally two Divine Liturgies celebrated in connection with the feasts of Christmas, Epiphany, and Pascha. On December 24, in the morning, we will celebrate the Great Vespers of Christmas followed by the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. The Vespers of Christmas includes Old Testament Prophecy Readings. It is hoped that those with young children and those who do not drive at night will take advantage of this morning Liturgy, which will be celebrated on December 24 with Vespers at 8:45 a.m. and Divine Liturgy from 9:30-11:00 a.m. Following the Divine Liturgy, Father Stavros will read a Christmas Story to our children on the solea.

On the evening of the 24th, the church will be open for a time of silent prayer beginning at 5:00 p.m. Orthros will be celebrated at 5:30 p.m., followed by the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom at 7:00 p.m. From 5:00-6:45 p.m., the church will be illumined only by candlelight. 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. If you wish, come to church at 5:00 p.m. and you'll be here for sunset, when day becomes night. However, be here at 6:45 p.m., to hear the Doxology, the hymn the angels sang that first Christmas, as night becomes day. Many of you have made a tradition of coming to church for this vigil of prayer and the Orthros and Liturgy and many people who have done so have commented to me how powerful the celebration of Christmas was for them.

# MINISTRY NEWS & UPDATES

St. John's Bookstore Christmas Shop — This is the final Sunday our Bookstore will feature a special Christmas shop where you can find inspiring and unique items for your Christmas celebration. Included are Icons of the Nativity of our Lord, Christmas cards, Icon Ornaments, and many other Christmas gifts you just won't find in the shopping malls.



College Student Night - We will be having our annual College Student Night on



Tuesday, December 21, 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.

My Word, 2022 - For the past two years, we've encouraged parishioners to identify one word that will shape their year. With 2022 now a month away, it's time to start thinking of the word that will define you in 2022. It is also time to start thinking of a word that will define our parish for 2022. If you have an idea for a word for our parish for 2022, please send it to Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com. Towards the end of December, he will send out a request for individual words to define you for 2022.





Orthodoxy 101 to be held in January 2022 – The next installment of Orthodoxy 101 will begin in January. More information to follow.

Hiring Helping Hands - We are looking to pay a parishioner on Saturdays & Sundays \$80 for weekend set-up and break down of tables, chairs, and sweeping. If you're interested in this opportunity, please reach out to Fr. Stavros, Alex, or the church office.



Gasparilla Parking Volunteers Needed - After 15 years, John Kokkas is retiring from chairing our Gasparilla Parking fundraiser. For those who do not know, we sell parking spaces in our parking lots for the two Saturdays of the Gasparilla parades—January 22 (children's) and January 29 (adults). John will be there to assist whoever the new chairperson is this year. If you are interested in chairing the Gasparilla Parking fundraiser, please see Fr. Stavros.

GriefShare Starting Back Up 2022 - If you are struggling with a loss in your life, GriefShare is open to you to be vulnerable with this hurt. Grief-Share is a Christian-based bereavement program open to those inside and outside our community. GriefShare groups meet weekly and has three distinct elements: Video seminar with experts, support group discussion with focus and personal study and reflection. This thirteen session program will begin on January 13 and weekly will be held from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. on Thursdays. If you are interested or have any questions about GriefShare, please contact Donna Hambos at 813-843-8412 or the church office.



# **Readings for Sunday Before Christmas**

Epistle Reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:9-10: 32-40

**Prokeimenon:** Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers. Verse: For you are just in all you have done.

BRETHREN, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundation, whose builder and maker is God. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets - who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - of whom the world was not worthy - wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

#### Gospel Reading is from Matthew 1:1-25

The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abjud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

Prayer List: Lord Jesus Christ, Physician of our Souls and Bodies, visit and heal your servants: Mary & Peter Nenos; Tony Ekonomou; Keith Lynn & Patrick Carroll; Daniel Hoss, Ourania Tziotis, Irina, Marina, Yuri, and Christophoros; Ashley Snyder; Evangelos & Caroline Critkas; Constantinos & Kalotina Klimis; Christine Alex, June, Lillian Thomas; Scotty; Desi Serriera; Ashley Kladakis; Dora Kallas, Kathy & Andrew Bouzinekis; Anastasia; Virginia Georgiou, Ron Myer, Toula Tsaros, Fr. Pat Legato, Nellie Pringle, Yolanda Webb, Angela Bougas, Ron, Jason Vickers, Rex Garrison, Tina Chakonas, Ann Demas, Christina Noel Kouzes Houck, Evangeline Xeroteres, Ashley Henderson, Natalie Henderson, Chris, Debbie, James, Avery, Lily, Jacob, Jesse, Ann, Rosario, Antonia Caffentzis, Alissa, John, Angela, Joey, Christine Scourtes, Steven, Matthew & Family, Phyllis, John Zelatis, Reagan, Peter Zaharis, Alexandra Ferrarolis, Leon & Despina Botham, Cindy Xenick, Mary Ellen Evdemon, Marie Sofia Panagopoulos, Maria Hursey, Chris Vamvakias, John Myer, Mike Trimis, Robert and Alice Stoccardo, John Alexander, Michael Romero, George Hambos, Dean Kondilis and Family, Bill and Nancy Manikas, Patricia Costello, Anastasia Smyrnakis, Ekaterina & Anna Shushaalykova, Dora Koudouna, Debbie Phelps, Mary Voykin, David Voykin, Denise Badrane, Don Payne, and all victims of war, terrorism, crime, natural disaster, and all of whom we are unaware.

# SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS & UPDATE

# December 19

January 2 Topic: Nativity

No Sunday School Classes (New Year)

### December 26

No Sunday School Classes (Christmas)

# January 9

Sunday School Resumes Topic: Epiphany/St. John

# **Education at St. John**

As a friendly reminder...

Fr. Stavros and Fr. John's Bible Studies & Adult Greek School will not meet this week. We invite you to come to our daily services this week instead!

# The Parish Assistance Program Continues (PAP)

Since May 1 2020, we have been offering a Parish Assistance Program, PAP, with BayCare Behavioral Health. The PAP program provides our parishioners access to free and confidential counseling services offering additional support when life's challenges become overwhelming. The PAP utilizes a network of faith-based providers and are sensitive to the values and beliefs of those they serve and provide compassionate care to children, adults, parents, and seniors. Parishioners can contact BayCare to request up to three free and confidential counseling sessions from a licensed mental health professional. The BayCare helpline, 800-878-5470, is answered 24/7 by mental health professionals.

# Youth Protection Program reminder!

At this time, many of our Youth Workers' background checks are coming up for renewal, which is done every two years. On or about your two-year mark, Praesidium will automatically send an email to you from backgroundcheck@praesidiuminc.com when a new background check is needed. Please be on the lookout for these emails, as the link for a background check expires after two weeks. Also, the Youth Protection Program administrator will notify you via email when it's time to renew your online training by completing the 2-part/2-quiz Youth Safety module and the 1-part/1-quiz Youth Worker Regulations module. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Suzanne Pileggi at <a href="mailto:smpileggi1@gmail.com">smpileggi1@gmail.com</a> or (813) 244-5855.

### **Altar Boy Schedule**

December 19 (Anyone Attending May Serve)

# **Captains**

John Palios Genaro Scarfogliero Nicholas Akrotirianakis Yanni Trimikliniotis James Magos Demetri Passalaris

### **December 24** (Anvone Attending May Serve)



# Happy Birthday and Happy Nameday!

If you want to make sure we have your birthdate on file, please call the office.

#### **Birthdays**

#### Namedays

December 19	George Soteriou	AGLAIA, ARIS
December 20		IGNATIOS
December 21		JULIA, THEMISTOKLIS
December 22	Kyra Frey; John Tsibris;	ANASTASIA, NATASA, ZOILOS
December 23		NIFON
December 24	Gregory Dimas; MaryEllen Evdemon;	AHMET, EVGENIA
December 25	Sophia Ladis; Lacee Richardson;	BALTASAR, BETHLEHEM, CHRISTINA, CHRISTOS, CHRYSTALLA, EMMANOUELA, EMMANUEL, GAS- PAR, HRISAVGI, HRISOULA, HRYSA, MELHIOR



O holy night! The stars are brightly shining, It is the night of our dear Saviour's birth. Long lay the world in sin and error pining, 'Til He appear'd and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.

Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices! O night divine, O night when Christ was born; O night divine, O night, O night Divine.



# Philoptochos Christmas Bake Sale

Philoptochos will be hosting a bake sale after church on Sunday December 5-26th

#### WHILE SUPPLIES LAST

48 piece appetizer tray of Spanakopita or Tyropita \$30.00 2lb spanakopita pan \$20.00 Baklava small tray \$16.00 Vasilopita \$10.00

#### A Day of Prayer—Liturgy, Prayer, Candlelight Service

Last year, we opened our church for a quiet day of prayer a few days before the Nativity and this was well-received. So, we decided that we will take an entire day for quiet prayer, with two services as the bookends. On Monday, December 20, we will celebrate Divine Liturgy at 7:30 a.m. (with Orthros at 6:45 a.m.). We never 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. After Liturgy, we will have the church open all day for quiet prayer, and if you want a prayer to be offered, Fr. Stavros and Alex will be available to offer prayers. If you haven't been to church in a while and would like to stop in during the Christmas week, or if life is moving too fast and you just want to slow down for a few hours and come sit in the church, this day is for you.

