

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

THE MESSENGER

“Behold I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.” Mark 1:2-3

March 2014

MISSION STATEMENT:

St. John Greek Orthodox Church is dedicated to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.

VISION:

The church shall seek to fulfill its mission by:

1. Embracing the Spiritual Life of the Orthodox Church through regular prayer, worship, and frequent participation in the sacraments.
2. Supporting the Church through stewardship of time and talent and sacrificial giving.
3. Providing a welcoming, caring, loving environment.
4. Having its members exemplify Orthodox Christian character and morals.
5. Supporting ministries that facilitate the overall mission of the Church
6. Exemplifying commitment to community service and charitable outreach.
7. Creating an environment which encourages members to grow in their faith.

Daylight Savings Time begins March 9-Don't forget to set your clocks one hour forward on Sunday, March 9.

Father Stavros' Message

When I began writing this article some time ago, I wanted to focus on the topic of relationships as we begin Great Lent. A recent reading of the Bible and a deep conversation about it inspired me to write something on love as well. So what follows are really two separate articles, the first one on love and the second on relationships. Both go pretty much hand in hand, as things we should be consciously working on throughout our lives, but especially in the upcoming Lenten season. As we approach this Holy Season of our Church, which begins on March 3, let's each take a careful look at how love and relationships are working in our lives at present.

Love

Most of us are familiar with St. Paul's famous treatise on love in I Corinthians 13:

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the

gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought

Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis, Priest
2418 W. Swann Avenue, Tampa, FL 33609-4712
Office Phone: (813)876-8830 • **Fax** (813) 443-4899
E-mail: officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com>

like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

This scripture passage came up recently in the daily readings of our church. (there are two scripture readings each day in our church—an Epistle and a Gospel reading for most of the year, two Old Testament readings each weekday during Lent. You can get these readings sent to your phone each day by going on the Archdiocese website at www.goarch.org, just put in “get daily readings” on the search window.) As I was reading this chapter this morning, specifically verses 4-8, and reflecting and praying after, something came to me. Many times I have inserted God’s name into this scripture—God is patient, God is kind, etc. I thought what if I put my own name in there? No, not because I’m anything like God, and not because I have come anywhere near mastering what it means to be a loving person. . But it was quite a humbling thing to reread verses 4-8 with my own name in them. So, I put in Fr. Stavros is patient, Fr. Stavros is kind. Take a moment and try this yourself—reread the passage, slowly and out loud and insert your own name.

(your name) is patient, (your name) is kind. (your name) does not envy, (your name) does not boast, (your name) is not proud. (your name) does not dishonor others, (your name) is not self-seeking, (your name) is not easily angered, (your name) keeps no record of wrongs. (your name) does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. (your name) always protects, (your name) always trusts, (your name) always hopes, (your name) always perseveres. (your name) never fails.

Now that you’ve done this exercise, inserting your name into these verses of Scripture, how do you feel? I know for myself that I felt somewhat hypocritical as I realize that I fall short in many of these areas, some on a regular basis. So, I put in a qualifier—Fr. Stavros needs to be MORE patient. Fr. Stavros needs to be MORE kind. Now try reading the passage again, with the qualifiers inserted. Read what follows slowly, read it out loud, read it several times:

I will try to be more patient. I will try to be more kind. I will not try to not envy. I will not try to not boast. I will try to not be prideful. I will try to not dishonor others. I will try to not be self-seeking. I will try to not easily be angered. I will try to forget any record of wrongs. I will try not delight in evil but I will try to rejoice in the truth. I will try to protect. I will try to trust. I will try to not give up hope. I will try to persevere. I will not fail.

Do these verses ring true for you? Why or why not? If God is love, and if God expects us to love in the way He loves us, then these traits—patience, kindness, humility, trust, hope, perseverance, these will be central parts of our lives. If these traits are not central to our lives, then this upcoming season of Lent is a good time to work on them. Most of us benefit from pep talks, and inspirational speeches. However, on a daily basis, we may not have someone to inspire us. So this Lent, an idea for your to consider is reading what is italicized above on a daily basis, giving yourself a daily pep

talk and then going and behaving accordingly. The IDEAL way to read the passage and the ideal way to live this passage is without the qualifying “I will try” phrases. The IDEAL way to read the passage and live your life is to BE these things God is calling us to be. But before one can BE something, he or she must TRY TO BE that thing. So if patience or and humility are areas you have a hard time practicing, spend this Lent TRYING to be better at them.

God is good. God made us good. God sees good in us, which is why He sent His Son to die for our sins, because He saw and sees the potential for good in each of us—we’re each worth saving. There are people who seem to almost “naturally” see the bad in everything. That’s not what God intended, so therefore it is not natural. The “natural” way we are supposed to be is to delight in the truth, to see the good in things and people, rather than their shortcomings.

There is another way to read this passage. In place of love, rather than putting “God” or “I”, try putting the word “we”. The passage would then read like this:

We will be patient. We will be kind. We will not boast. We will not be proud. We will not dishonor. We will not be self-seeking. We will not become easily angered. We will keep no record of wrongs. We will not delight in the wrong but rejoice in what is right. We will always protect. We will always trust. We will always hope. We will always persevere. We will not fail.

Who does THIS pep talk apply to? Any facet of life where you function as a team—this could be the mission statement of your company or business. This could be the guiding principle of the team you coach or play on. Anytime that you are combining with someone on some effort, use this verse as it appears above as your guide.

And for **those who are married**, consider making this statement the cornerstone of your relationship with your spouse:

We will be patient with one another. We will be kind to one another. We will not boast. We will not be proud. We will not dishonor one another. We will not be self-seeking. We will not become easily angered with one another. We will keep no record of wrongs between one another. We will not delight in the wrong but rejoice in what is right. We will always protect one another. We will always trust one another. We will always hope in one another. We will always persevere. We will not fail.

The last verse is particularly important in marriage. Many marriages in today’s society are failing. Many are failing in the sense that they are ending in divorce and debacle. And many are failing in the sense that they are not what they could or should be. If your marriage is not what it could or should be, start reading this passage together, and work on patience, kindness, forgiveness, trust, hope, and perseverance, and these will ultimately lead to the success of your marriage.

The word “love” is a word we seem to throw around freely in the English language. With the same word, we say “I love my wife” and “I love pizza.”

This cheapens the definition of love. In the Greek language, the word “Agape” describes the kind of love we are to have with our spouses, our children, our parents, our close friends, and ideally for everyone. Agape love is the kind of love where we joyfully sacrifice for others, where we put others in front of ourselves, where we put the needs of others in front of our own, expecting nothing in return, where we are willing to alter the course of our life, right up to giving up our life itself, for the benefit of another. Agape love is the kind of love that God has for us—the love that caused God to not only create us, but to save us when we went away from Him. In John 3:16, we read that “God so LOVED the world, He sent His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” This was an act of Agape love, a sacrificial love authored by God Himself as a gift to us. This is why love is more of an action, than a word, it is a state of being and acting, rather than a state of talking. One thing we can all stand to work on a little bit (or a lot) this Lent is our love—our love for God, our love for one another.

This then brings the question, can one LOVE oneself? That’s a tough question. If I love myself with Agape love, meaning that I would do anything for myself, that would be a self-serving love. Rather, we should look at ourselves with a sense of self-respect, meaning we should act in a respectful way at all times. We should respect that God made us in His image and likeness. To use an extreme example, when a person is drunk to the point that they are throwing up over a toilet, they’ve lost that sense of self respect, because in that moment, in that act, they are not representing God in their behavior. When a person is shoplifting, or swearing or lying, or sinning, they’ve lost that sense of self-respect. Because sin not only dishonors God, it dishonors ourselves.

There is nothing wrong with having confidence in oneself. There is a difference of course between confidence and arrogance. Arrogance is too much confidence. But confidence tempered with humility is a good thing. What does that mean? Everyone has a gift, a talent. And all of our gifts and talents come from God. God wants us to be confident people, He wants us to believe in our ability to use the talents that He has given us. But He wants our confidence to be tempered with humility. So, we want to work on finding the balance between self-confidence and humility. We shouldn’t lack confidence, nor should we be arrogant—there is a proper balance and Lent is a good time to work on finding and maintaining that balance.

Relationships

The word relationship is defined as how we exist in proximity with someone else. If someone sits in my office opposite my desk, I could define my relationship as “sharing the same physical space, my office,” or “sitting in close proximity.” The person might be a “friend,” or “a parishioner,” or it might be “a new acquaintance” or even “a stranger,” but since I am existing in proximity to someone else, then there is a relationship.

We have many relationships—some of us are married, some have children, most have parents, all have neighbors, co-workers, friends and fellow parishioners. These are relationships that are easy for us to bring to mind. But there are many other relationships that we have, some with total strangers. For instance, when we go into the bank, we have a relationship with the teller, or the clerk at the supermarket, or even the man who picks up the garbage, if we see him when we leave our house and his

truck happens to be there at the same time. We have relationships with other drivers on the road. We have relationships with all of these people because for periods of time, our lives are in close proximity to the lives of others. So, how do we behave in these relationships, the ones we have with the unknown people. Do we offer a friendly hello to the bank teller, or go through our business without feeling? Do we respect the driver on the road next to us, or are we full of road rage, resenting him and putting him and ourselves at risk of a crash? We may not have friendships with the “strangers” we encounter but we do have relationships with them.

I was recently in a public restroom, a place where conversation, as a social norm, does not generally take place. I was washing my hands together with my son, when a man stood next to us and proudly announced “the next time I play, I’ll know two whole medleys.” And somewhere in between my thoughts of “who is this” and “who cares,” I realized that the man was speaking on a phone in an earpiece that I didn’t see. He was in his own little world, oblivious to me, perhaps oblivious that he was in the bathroom, a place where we don’t normally converse on the phone.

Driving home from work on a recent afternoon, two teenage girls were walking down the sidewalk, and stepped into the crosswalk to cross the street without even looking. They weren’t talking to each other, rather they had their ears plugged with the headphones of their I-pods. Again, oblivious to fact that they were on a public street, sharing the space with passing cars. Sometimes, our failure to relate results in accidents. If I hadn’t been paying attention or had been driving faster, I could have easily hit them.

Many of us are like the man in the restroom or the girls in the cross-walk. We are in our own little worlds. Around our homes, we don’t know our neighbors, so we certainly don’t trust them. We can’t leave our doors unlocked anymore, for fear that someone will steal our belongings. We can’t leave our children to even play in the front yard of our own homes because we fear they will be hurt by someone. So we exist either as islands, ignorant by and large of those around us, or we exist in fear of those around us. As time passes, it seems that relationships are changing, and not for the better.

Our relationship with God

As we begin Great Lent, it is a good time to examine our relationships. Let’s begin with our relationship with God. If I gave each of you a note card and asked you to describe God, what would you say? And how would you describe your relationship with God? As an exercise, take a few minutes, and write down a few descriptive words about God. And write down a few words describing your relationship with God.

Now, put the shoe on the other foot—what if God had a note card and wrote some things down on it about you, what would those things be? Would God rate you as flaky and insincere? Would He rate you as consistent and committed? Would He rate you as kind and compassionate? Self-absorbed and rude? How would He rate your relationships with others—with your spouse, with your children, with your friends and co-workers? How would He rate your relationship with His Church? How would He rate your contribution to the church—not only talking in monetary terms, but your overall effort contributing to the life and the ministry of the church,

which is growing and spreading the faith?

Lent is a time to examine this relationship with God—to take off the headphones and shut off the noise enough to have some serious reflection on where our relationship is with God. In the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee (Luke 18-10:14) are we the Pharisee, who offered a prayer of self-congratulations—Look how far I've come, look how much better I am than others, especially that tax collector? Or are we the tax collector, the one who prayed in contrition, "God have mercy on me" and help me go farther. In the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32), are we the older son, who told his father, "I have never disobeyed a commandment," or are we the younger son, who confessed his mistakes and vowed to do better?

We see that God exalted the Publican not because he was perfect, but because he was humble, and He restored the Prodigal Son, again not because he was perfect, because he was repentant. There wasn't much of a relationship with the Pharisee or the older son, but not because God didn't want one. It was because THEY didn't find any need for humility or repentance, they had no need for God. A good relationship with God requires humility and repentance—in exchange we find forgiveness, mercy and reward from God.

Our Relationship with the Church

One Christian is no Christian. No Christian is an island unto himself. Christians exist in relation to other Christians, in the context of a Christian community called the Church. We are all Orthodox Christians, we are all part of this parish of St. John—we each have a relationship to this community, and everyone in it.

What is that relationship like—Do we come frequently or infrequently? Do we come on time or habitually late? Do we come to worship, or do we merely go through the motions? Do we pray when we are not in church, or only when others are around? Are there private moments between each of us and God? Do we feel that our involvement in this church is helping us advance in our journey of faith? Why or why not?

And how can the church better serve you in this? I'd love to know the answer to that question in particular.

How much do we contribute to the life of the church? Do we give generously of time and talent? Do we make an effort to spread the Gospel? Do we speak well of the church, or do we speak negatively about it? Do we give sacrificially when it comes to our financial commitment?

These many questions that I have asked are things to ponder during Lent. These are questions that as I a priest will ponder and reflect on myself—how am I doing with these things? These are questions we should each ponder for ourselves, as one day we will have to make an account of these things before the Judgment Seat of Christ. These are things we should be pondering at all ages and stages of our lives, because none of us knows when we will meet our earthly end.

Someone asked me recently why I kiss the text of the Gospel passage after I read the Gospel at each service. (As an aside, we kiss one another as a form of greeting. In the church regarding sacred objects like icons and the Gospel, we use the word "venerate" rather than "kiss". Thus we are venerating images of holiness.) I venerate the Gospel text after the Gospel is proclaimed in the church not only out of respect for the Word of God, the holy words of the Lord that I am reading, but because of the privilege I have in reading them. We inscribe the word "requirement" to reading sacred scriptures, but the word "requirement" usually has a negative connotation. To see something as a privilege is to put a special connotation to that thing. In the case of the scriptures, we are supposed to read the Bible as God's personal love letter to us. That is a privilege!

Our involvement in the church is not compulsory. God doesn't force us to believe or worship. It is voluntary. Our choice to be a member of God's church is a privilege. Perhaps one's relationship with the church or the Orthodox faith begins as a compulsory exercise—i.e. my parents make me go to church. And for others the church becomes a list of compulsory rules—fasting, praying, and other things the church encourages us to do. But a goal of the Christian life is to move to a point where the practice of the Christian life is not a compulsory thing but a joyful thing.

The Gospel lesson of the weekend before Lent is taken from the Sermon on the Mount, Christ's instructions to His church on how the church is to conduct itself. In Matthew 6:1-13, which is read the Saturday before the beginning of Lent, we are taught to pray in secret, without boasting, and not necessarily with many words but with sincere ones. We are also taught to not sound the trumpet when giving alms, but to do so in secret, and to know that God know what we are doing and what we are not doing. One of the, in my opinion, poor traditions, in the Orthodox church throughout the world is that we do sound the trumpet when we give things—instead of our church encouraging the joy of giving, we are taught to give for credit, to get our name on something, as if that will create some lasting legacy when we are gone, so that we are never forgotten. Sure, almost everyone, likes to be mentioned and thanked. But for some this has become almost an obsession. The continuum that we are all on is one that leads from wanting credit from our fellow man, to wanting credit only from God. The ideal is to serve our fellow man with no credit whatsoever, to allow God alone to bestow His blessings on us in this life, and to grace us with entrance into heaven in the everlasting life. I remember back from my days back-packing with the Boy Scouts, that we were taught to leave NO trace in the woods that we had ever been there. That is the ideal. Obviously, we left foot-prints but we tried not to leave anything else. Hopefully in our relationship with the church, we will leave our footprints in the church, and in the hearts of our fellow parishioners, and that's it. We should give our glory to God and in turn He will bestow His mercies on us.

In Matthew 6:14-21, we are taught where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also. And that if we put all our treasure in earthly things we will be disappointed. If we invest solely in an earthly bank account we will be disappointed, not only because the economy is bad and our investments aren't paying off, but because when we die, that portfolio isn't going with us. I won't be taking my IRA with me. I'll be taking my ERA with me—my eternal retirement account. Sometime between now and April 15, I'll make a contribution to my IRA. But more importantly, sometime between now and April 20, I'll make a contribution to my ERA, a big one.

This issue of the Messenger is filled with opportunities to grow our relationship with the church. During Great Lent, this comes primarily through additional opportunities to worship. As you will read, there is a large menu of church services over the next seven weeks. If you've never been to some of the Lenten services, try coming to one additional service per week, or come to each Lenten service once. Add something new and challenging to your Lenten journey this year.

There will also be opportunities to learn, like our Adult Lenten Retreat on Saturday, March 22. There are continuing opportunities to participate in one of our SEVEN Bible study groups.

There are opportunities to reflect, as we offer more penitential prayers during Great Lent, and challenge ourselves with the spiritual discipline of fasting. If you are not in the habit of fasting, try some level of fasting this Lent, and you will see the benefit of disciplining your body by avoiding certain kinds of food, and how this in turn will discipline your mind and your spirit to avoid certain kinds of behavior.

There is an opportunity to wipe the slate clean—and have a personal encounter with a spiritual advocate, that is confession. Most people who shy away from confession do so for two reasons: They are afraid that someone else they know will know their shortcomings. Or, they are afraid to confront their own shortcomings. In this article, in almost a confessional sort of way, I have revealed that I need to be more patient and more kind, that I need to demonstrate more Christ-like love in my life. But see, that's not the most important part of the confession. The most important part of confession is NOT the list of our wrongs. That is an important and necessary part. But the most important part of confession is receiving guidance from someone else on how to do those things we can't figure out ourselves. I could and would benefit from a conversation with my spiritual father on how to be more kind and more compassionate and more loving. That's one of the great things about being a member of the Orthodox Church—no one expects us to figure these things out all by ourselves.

Let us use this Lent as an opportunity to improve on our relationships with God and with the church—I-tunes won't get us to heaven, nor will facebook, nor will the latest reality TV show or gossip magazine, or a promotion at work, a financial windfall or how many trophies our kids wins in sports. What other people think of us is not as important as what God thinks of us. Having our name written on a wall or in a book is not as important as it is for our name to be written in God's Book of Life.

So, take some time away from these things and add something to your life, not only for Lent, but for good. Identify one positive change that you can make a permanent one in your life beginning this Lent and continuing well beyond it. How will you spend the time between now and April 20? Where will you be tonight? Next Sunday at 10, or in three weeks on a Wednesday night?

Our relationship with other people

Finally, there is one other component—our relationship with other people. Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:24 to "leave your gift in front of the altar, first go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift." It is no coincidence that between the Great Entrance (when the Holy Gifts are

placed on the altar) and the Consecration (the point of the service where they are offered and consecrated), there is a line of the Liturgy which says "Let us love one another so that with one mind we may confess." In the early church, this was a point where the service stopped and people offered public confession of their wrongs between one another. This was followed by a greeting, called "the Kiss of Peace" where people embraced one another, so that their gift (the Liturgy) could be offered with not only a personal clear conscience but with a reconciliation with their neighbor. Lately, as we've had two priests in the altar, you see the clergy do this, the only vestige of this that remains in the service. First we bring the gift, then we reconcile, then we confess our faith together (the Creed), then we offer the Gifts, the consecration, and finally we partake of them in the Eucharist.

It doesn't do us any good to fast if we harbor anger towards others. It doesn't do us any good to worship if we do it with hostility in our hearts. As we begin Lent, we should meditate and reflect on this topic of reconciliation—and this begins first with a reconciliation with God through prayer and confession; it then extends to your family; it extends to those around you—neighbors, co-workers, fellow soccer moms and dads, etc.; fellow parishioners; and then it extends out even to strangers—reconcile with drivers on the road by being a better driver; reconcile with the nameless store clerk by offering a friendly greeting. Reconciliation also includes our environment—we reconcile with our environment by working to have a cleaner one, being more responsible with our use of natural resources, etc.

The Power of Forgiveness

Imagine this exercise—a large ring is placed into the ceiling of the church. And from that ring extends a string to each member of this parish. Each member of the parish also holds a ring, and to that ring is connected strings to every other member of the church, and by extension to every person in the world. Each time we sin, we are severing the string with God and with one another. Imagine how sad we'd be if we each held a ring with a bunch of string and it was connected to no one, all of the relationships severed or tainted because of our sins. That would be truly sad. But there is a way back, and that is forgiveness. Each time we forgive someone else, we tie a knot in the string and we reconnect it to someone. Each time we go to God in repentance and confession, we tie a new knot with God. You can see that the strings will get shorter, and people will draw closer to each other and ultimately closer to God, when they learn how to forgive.

And if we actually did this exercise in the church, we would see that all the people would be elevated towards God, we would have to build a platform up a foot off the floor to accommodate the shortened ropes. And next year, we might have to build it up another foot. Those who didn't wish to take part in the forgiveness exercise will become estranged from God and from others. And as others advanced closer to God and closer to each other, the non-participants would (and ultimately will) be left out—left out of wholesome friendships and relationships, and ultimately left out of heaven.

I once listened to a lecture on forgiveness by Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware), who said that our life is supposed to be a continued ascent towards God. He painted a picture with words of people kneeling in front of one another asking for forgiveness. What a blessed sight that would be, if we all came together to ask one another for forgiveness, each of us going to the other,

to say "I'm sorry" for anything that has come between us, and WE will do better, WE will try to be more patient, WE will try to be more kind, WE will try to be more loving.

Ideally we are supposed to be a family, we are supposed to bear each other's burdens—we are supposed to pray for one another, care for one another, and help one another get to the promised land. And that starts off with relationships—making new ones and fixing old ones.

We will have many opportunities to be together this Lent, beginning with the Forgiveness Vespers on March 2, and continuing with services several times a week. Again, it's no coincidence that Lent begins with Forgiveness Vespers. As we are entering a season where we work on our relationship with Christ, the Church first calls on us to work on our relationship with our fellow man. What a blessing it would be if I had an encounter with each member of our parish this Lent—at the Forgiveness service, in confession, at a retreat, so that we can reconcile with one another. What a blessing it would be if we each sought out one another to build relationships (and rebuild broken relationships), seek peace, and work towards kindness.

I'm not perfect—no one is. I'm trying, some days not hard enough. But I am trying. And I hope when I meet God face to face, that He will believe that I tried, and that He will pity me and overlook the times I failed. But if I want to receive His mercy and forgiveness, I must be able to offer it, as Metropolitan Kallistos says, even to my enemy; and as Christ did from the Cross, even to those who killed Him. Please forgive me for my shortcomings—they are many. And let us make this journey together, as a Christian family.

I close with words of President Abraham Lincoln: "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in."

Kali Sarakosti! Have a blessed Lent!

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros



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Living in the Loving Presence of God, That is Reality

By Charlie Hambos

Many of us live in what we think is reality. We wake up in the morning, get everything ready for our days and our family's day, we go to work or school, we have friends, we go home, prepare dinner, read the paper, do errands and many other things. Many of us claim this to be reality. We turn on the TV, to find more "reality" with many of the "reality" TV shows where we can watch the people who live in swamps, people digging for gold in the Bering Sea, the Amish breaking out and most especially the other foul-mouthed, scantily clad and embarrassing view of our youth. Is this reality? I don't know. Maybe if we turn on the news or read the newspaper, we will find reality. There we usually find murder, death, scandal, abuse and the occasional heart-tugging story of hope. If this is reality, it looks pretty grim and most of us might be willing to escape it.

So, what is reality exactly? According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, reality is "the true situation that exists or something that actually exists or happens." According to thefreedictionary.com, reality is "the quality or state of being actual or true; one, such as a person, an entity, or an event, that is actual; the totality of all things possessing actuality, existence or essence; and that which exists objectively and in fact."

Those definitions are pretty sufficient, but walking away now, how many of us are comfortable in the reality that we live in based on those definitions? Dr. Kyriaki Fitzgerald, a professor at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, has a very powerful definition of reality. I took her class on Addiction and Spirituality and this semester I am taking her Marriage and Family class. For Dr. Fitzgerald, "Reality consists of all of us and everything abiding in the loving presence of the Living God, thrice holy (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)." This is something that she maintains in all of her classes and discusses heavily in her book, "Persons in Communion: A Theology of Authentic Relationships." Now, how many of us are comfortable in any form or fashion? If I start to think about it, I get a little bit scared because I usually don't feel like I am in the presence of the Living God, not to mention, the loving presence of the Living God. It's okay though, like any good thing in life, it takes time to get used to the fact we are operating in the presence of God. We just need to make it our reality. Even if we are ashamed of what we have done, it is better to step into the loving presence of the living God. We are there already; we just need to realize it.

In the Gospel of John, chapter 3, we read about a man who knew he was in the presence of God or at least someone sent by God, but still came by night to inquire about the signs that Christ was performing. His name was Nicodemus and he was a ruler of the Jews. "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus replied, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus, doesn't miss a beat and replies, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus responded, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' (In other words, no silly questions) The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where

it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Here is the question of all questions from Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" I would like to translate this, "Is this real?" Better yet, "Is this what reality looks like?"

Yes, that is reality but we can really see it in verses 16 and 17 when Christ says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

As for abiding in the Loving presence of God, Christ speaks to this fully in verses 18-20. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done by God."

"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Jesus Christ is the light of the world. As Christians, we are to be little lights in the world reflecting the great light of Christ. As the song goes, "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine." We must let our light shine. This is reality. Sometimes the light can be too bright and we want to run away from reality into the darkness. There is no point in that because eventually we will go back into the light or the light will find us.

So, the next time we are questioning the "reality" that surrounds us when we watch tv, read the news and go about our daily lives, escape it and enter the reality which consists of all of us and everything abiding in the loving presence of the Living God, thrice holy (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).

If you would like to contact me, please e-mail me at Charlie.hambos@gmail.com or my address is 50 Goddard Avenue, Box 016, Brookline, MA 02445.

GUIDELINES FOR GREAT AND HOLY LENT

The Lenten Services

Saturday of the Souls—It is a Tradition in the Orthodox Church to offer prayers for the souls of all of our loved ones who have departed this life, in the hope of the Resurrection to Eternal Life. There are four Saturdays of the year that are dedicated specifically to this purpose. They are three Saturdays before and at the beginning of Lent and the Saturday before Pentecost. Everyone is encouraged to submit the names of their loved ones to be commemorated at the services. And you are all encouraged to attend one of these services (and bring Kolyva-boiled wheat) if you are able, as a way of honoring the people in your family who have passed away in church once a year. This year, the Saturdays of the Souls fall on February 22, March 1 and March 8.

Special Liturgy to be held at Garden of Memories Mausoleum for the 2nd Saturday of the Souls—March 1—On Saturday, March 1, we will hold the Divine Liturgy at the Garden of Memories Cemetery at 4207 E. Lake Avenue in East Tampa. We will have Orthros at 9:00 a.m., Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m., and a memorial service at the end of the Liturgy. After Liturgy is concluded, Father Stavros will visit the graves of the relatives of all attendees of the Liturgy. We began this tradition in our church last year and it was very well received. Please come and join us praying for the souls of our loved ones, as we also pray for strengthening and inspiration for ourselves.

Forgiveness Vespers—The Period of Great and Holy Lent begins on Monday, March 3, a day called Clean Monday, or “Kathara Deftera” in Greek. Vespers is the service that ends one day and begins another, so Lent actually begins with a Vespers service on Sunday evening, March 2. We will celebrate the Vespers of Forgiveness and beginning of the Great Lent on Sunday evening, March 2, at 6:00 p.m. This service lasts about an hour and marks the beginning of Great Lent, which is announced during one of the hymns mid-way through the service. During this hymn, the priest changes vestments from white to purple, the lights in the church are dimmed and the mood of the service becomes somber. In fact, it is the opposite of the Resurrection Service on Easter, where everything begins dark and goes to light. The service concludes with a prayer of forgiveness being read over the congregation and the exchange of mutual forgiveness among the members of the congregation. This service is an especially appropriate way to begin the Lenten season, and for those who attended last season, is one of the most moving services of the church year.

Canon of St. Andrew—The Penitential Canon of St. Andrew will be read from 10:00-11:00 a.m. on Monday, March 3 as we begin Great Lent. The Canon, in its entirety, takes hours to read. We will read and chant an abridged version of this Canon on Clean Monday. Service books for this service will be available in the narthex.

Sunday of Orthodoxy Icon Procession—If anyone has new icons that have not been blessed, please bring them to church on Sunday, March 9, the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and place them in the windows of the church. They will be blessed with Holy Water during the service.

The service of the **Great Compline** will be read each Monday at 5:30 p.m. This service lasts about an hour and consists of Psalms and hymns of repentance. Service Books for this service will be available in the Narthex.

The **Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts (also called Pre-Sanctified Liturgy)** will be held on the Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. This service consists of Vespers with Holy Communion added at the end from Communion that was “Pre-Sanctified” the previous Sunday. It is an opportunity to receive Communion frequently during the season of fasting. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy is preceded by the reading of the 9th Hour (each Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.), a short service with penitential prayers as well as the recitation of the Creed, a pre-requisite for the reception of Holy Communion. Service Books for this service will be available in the Narthex.

A Lenten Supper will be served after each Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, continuing a tradition we also began last year. Our ministries are generously hosting a Lenten Supper each week after Pre-Sanctified Liturgy. They are being held as follows:

Wednesday, March 5	Philoptochos
Wednesday, March 12	Choir
Wednesday, March 19	Sunday School
Wednesday, March 26	Small Groups—All Small Groups will attend the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on March 26
Wednesday, April 2	AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope
Wednesday April 9	Young at Heart

So, spend the hour you would spend cooking dinner worshipping in church and then stay for a complementary dinner. This is being offered in the hopes that more people will attend this service, and that each member of each ministry will attend at least one of these moving services.

The **Salutations to the Virgin Mary (Heretismo)** will be held on Fridays at 6:30 p.m. This service also lasts about an hour and is a series of prayers and devotions that invoke the intercessions of the Virgin Mary for our salvation. Service Books for this service will be available in the Narthex.

Why does Liturgy seem longer on Sundays during Lent? Because it is. It is the Tradition of the Church to celebrate the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great on the 5 Sundays of Great Lent, Holy Thursday morning, Holy Saturday morning, in addition to Christmas Eve, the Eve of Epiphany (January 5) and the Feast of St. Basil (January 1). St. Basil wrote his liturgy in the middle part of the 4th century. St. John Chrysostom would later edit some of the priestly prayers of Basil's liturgy, significantly shortening them. The Anaphora of St. Basil (from the Creed until right before the Lord's Prayer) has the priestly prayers significantly longer. They contain all the theology of the Orthodox Church. A copy of the “Anaphora” of St. Basil's Liturgy has been placed in the pews for you to use on Sundays.

What We Celebrate on the Sundays of Triodion and Lent

CHEESEFARE SUNDAY—FORGIVENESS

SUNDAY—March 2—Cheese-Fare Sunday is the last day in which dairy products are allowed. The Monday after Cheese-Fare Sunday is the official beginning of the Great Lent; this Monday is also called Clean Monday (Kathara Deftera). On Cheese-Fare Sunday the Church commemorates the sending away of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Paradise. Adam and Eve were in complete harmony with God, nature and themselves. They were tempted by the devil and they agreed to eat from the tree of knowledge, in order that they themselves might become gods. The result was fatal; they were cast out of Paradise and sin came into the world. The Holy Fathers selected this event to remind us of our obligations to God and about the laws of fasting and Christian behavior (Matthew 6:14-21).

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT—SUNDAY OF

ORTHODOXY—March 9—The first Sunday of Lent is also known as the Sunday of Orthodoxy. On this day we celebrate the triumph of the faith over the deniers of icons. Icons have always graced our churches from the Apostolic age. During the 7th century, a Byzantine Emperor with an army at his back, attempted to remove all icons from the churches, believing that icons should not be worshipped but only God. The population split into two parties, the party of Iconoclasts, who condemned the veneration of icons, and the party of Iconoduls, who supported it. Emperors like Leo the Isaurian, Constantine Copronimus and Leo the IV backed the Iconoclasts. The wife of Leo the IV, Irene, on the other hand, was devoutly attached to icons. At the death of her husband, as their son Constantine was a minor, she handled the affairs of the empire and convened a council in 787 in Nicea, known as the Seventh Ecumenical Council. The council restored icons in the church, but eventually other Iconoclastic emperors banished them, Leo the Armenian (813-820) and Theophilus (829-842). Theophilus' widow, empress Theodora, who was as much attached to icons as her husband had been opposed to them, reinstated the decrees of the Seventh Ecumenical Council.

A grand procession with icons took place on March 11, 843 AD, marking the permanent triumph of icons. From this time, icons were defined as objects to be venerated and not worshipped; only God is worshipped. They are spiritual mirrors through which we see the heavenly saints. Their restoration in our churches is a true victory for Orthodoxy.

Thus, on the first Sunday of Lent each year, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Triumph of Orthodoxy with a procession of icons, together with the reading of a Synodal Statement, authored in 843, marking their return to the church.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT—St. GREGORY

PALAMAS—March 16—On the second Sunday of Great Lent, which is called the "Sunday of Gregory Palamas", we commemorate the memory of St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Salonica. He dedicated his life to Christ, even though he was raised

in the royal palace of Constantinople. He withdrew to Mount Athos, where he lived an exemplary life of asceticism and scholarship. He defended the Faith against Barlaam the Calabrian (who was against monasticism). He taught that divine grace is not created, but the uncreated energies of God are poured out through creation; otherwise, humanity could never have authentic communication with God. He was appointed Archbishop of Salonica in 1349 and served with distinction; he died at the age of 63 and his relics rest in Salonica.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT—VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS—March 23

—On the third Sunday of the Great Lent we are celebrating the Veneration of the Cross; the Cross helps us to prepare for the Crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are not just witnessing from afar the passions of our Lord, but we participate in them. In the Synaxarion we read, "Through the forty-day fast, we too are in a way crucified, dying to the passions". Our efforts to keep up with the Fast, through prayer, fasting and alms giving, might take a toll over our bodies; we need help and encouragement, and the help and encouragement comes from the power of the Cross.

In the middle of Great Lent, the Church gives its faithful a sign of victory, one that can bring strength to them in this time of fasting. The Sunday of the Holy Cross is one that brings everything into perspective, especially with the Gospel reading (Mark 8:34-9:1), the Lord saying to all His disciples: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?"

FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE VIRGIN MARY—March 25

—The Angel Gabriel came directly to the Virgin Mary and told her that she was going to have a child. Naturally, she was alarmed at first and asked many questions. "Do not be afraid," said the Archangel Gabriel, "the Lord is with you because God has chosen you among all the women in the world and in history." The word "Evangelismos" means not only "Annunciation" but "Good news." The Gospel is called in Greek, the "Evangelion," and the authors of the Gospels are called "Evangelists," meaning those who proclaim the Good News of Christ. The announcement of Christ's birth is placed on March 25, 9 months before the feast of the Nativity. We, in turn are told to spread the Good News of Christ as well, imitating the faithful example of the Virgin Mary.

Greek Orthodox Christians celebrate March 25 not only because it is the Feast of Annunciation, but also because of its political significance. On this day, March 25, 1821, Bishop Germanos of Patras, Greece, raised the cross of Jesus Christ and proclaimed the freedom of Greeks from the Turkish yoke. March 25, 1821 was declared the beginning of the Greek Revolution against the Turks.

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT—ST. JOHN OF THE LADDER (March 30)—St. John of the Ladder was only 16 years old when he left Palestine and went to St. Catherine's monastery (at Mt. Sinai, Egypt). He lived there for 50 years, where he wrote his famous book, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. This is a spiritual ladder; Christians follow certain rules so that they can get closer to God, and symbolically climb to heaven. He had struggles, like any person does, but he won over those struggles that the Devil put for him. That's why we celebrate his memory on this Sunday of Lent: St. John is a perfect example of how a person could be faithful all of their life, and be together with God in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Vigil of the Akathist (April 4)—It is the tradition of the Orthodox Church (practiced in monasteries and in a few parishes) that the Akathist Hymn is celebrated as part of an all-night vigil, culminating in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. A Vigil is when more than one service is held in sequence. I have always made it a practice in my ministry to celebrate the Akathist Hymn (the fifth Friday of Lent) and to immediately follow it with a celebration of the Divine Liturgy. So, as we do each year, we will begin the Akathist Hymn at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, April 4, followed by the Divine Liturgy at 8:15 p.m., with both services concluding by 9:15 p.m. This will afford us the opportunity to pray the Divine Liturgy together in a more subdued

atmosphere (and how often do we get to celebrate Liturgy at night in our church?) and to receive Holy Communion on this very special feast day. For those who wish to receive Holy Communion, please abstain from food after 2:00 p.m. on that Friday

5TH SUNDAY OF LENT—ST. MARY OF EGYPT (April 6)—St. Mary of Egypt was anything but a Saint throughout the first part of her life. From a very young age, she was a prostitute. Being from Egypt, she decided that she wanted to see the Holy Land and the Tomb of Christ (also known as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre). As she went to enter the Church, a force kept her from entering. She was unable to enter, while so many others did. She realized that God had done this to have her stop her sinning. She promised to God that day she would stop. She repented with a pure heart, and she was allowed to enter. She went for Confession, received Holy Communion, and then went to the desert to live for years in repentance. Years later, she was visited by a Priest-monk, Zosimos (later a Saint in our Church). He gave her Holy Communion, and they discussed her trials and tribulations. Although she suffered much, she was so happy to be with Christ. Later that same day, she fell asleep in the Lord. Her example of repentance is SO great, we commemorate her life many centuries later.

Other Opportunities This Lent

Sacrament of Confession—Many people have already made appointments for their confessions to be heard, many for the first time in their lives. It is confidential. It helps you re-connect with God and unburden yourself of guilt. It helps you to make a new start in your spiritual journey and is an integral part of any successful Lenten journey. If you have questions about confession, please ask. There is no better way to prepare for Pascha than to receive this sacrament. Confessions will be heard up to April 10, and then again after Pascha. I ask that you make your appointment as soon as possible, because I like to give people whatever time they need. As it gets closer to Holy Week and more and more people are coming, I'm forced to go quicker, and it is very important not to be rushed in this Sacrament.

Interested in Reading during Lenten Services—In years past, we've offered the opportunity to parishioners to read during the Lenten services on Monday, Wednesday and Friday

evenings. If you are interested, you can sign up by calling the office and Father will tell you the times and dates that are available or email Father at frstav@gmail.com.

Adult Lenten Retreat—For the past eight years, we have held a Lenten Retreat for Adults during Lent. Our eighth annual adult Lenten Retreat will be held on Saturday, March 22, from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (Please see attached flyer). The theme of the Retreat is "Come Let Us Worship: The Services of Great Lent and Holy Week." In addition to the subject material related to the theme, there will be ample opportunity for general questions about our faith. Please sign up by sending the attachment from the flyer to the church office by March 16 or emailing Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com. This event is open to all adults in our parish, as well as surrounding Orthodox parishes of the area. Non-Orthodox friends and friends from other churches are certainly welcome.

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Liturgical Schedule for March 2014

Saturday, March 1 Second Saturday of the Souls

(Services to be held at Garden of Memories Memorial Park Mausoleum Chapel)

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

Memorial Service at the Conclusion of the Liturgy

Sunday, March 2 Fourth Sunday of the Triodion—Forgiveness Sunday-Cheesefare Sunday

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke (Christos Nenos, Dean Mitseas, Nicholas Katzaras, James Katzaras, Nicholas Yotis)

Ushers: Mike Trimis, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis

Coffee Hour: Glendi Dancers

Forgiveness Vespers 6:00 p.m.

Monday, March 3 Clean Monday-Kathara Deftera-Beginning of Great Lent

Canon of St. Andrew 10:00 a.m.

Great Compline 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 5 9th Hour 5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Friday, March 7 Salutations to the Virgin Mary—1st Stanza 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 8 Third Saturday of the Souls

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

Memorial Service at the Conclusion of the Liturgy

Sunday, March 9 First Sunday of Lent—Sunday of Orthodoxy

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

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (Alexios Diniaco, Nicholas Alsina, Thomas Shearer, Antonio Bavaro, William Sotiropoulos)

Ushers: Florin Patrasciou, Kevin Fentress, John Alexander

Coffee Hour: Greek Independence Day Luncheon—Parish Council

Monday, March 10 Great Compline 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 12 9th Hour 5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Friday, March 14 Salutations to the Virgin Mary—2nd Stanza 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 16 Second Sunday of Lent—St. Gregory Palamas

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew (Karter Lenardos, Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, Brigham Sibley, Benny Hidermichel, James Kavouklis)

Ushers:

Coffee Hour: AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope

Monday, March 17 Great Compline 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 19 9th Hour 5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Friday, March 21 Salutations to the Virgin Mary—3rd Stanza 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 23 Third Sunday of Lent—Sunday of the Holy Cross
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Procession of the Holy Cross

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark (John Karamitsanis, Lukas Karamitsanis, Andrew Mellon-Lynn, Dominic Garcia, Demetri Karounos, Grayson Borgeas)

Ushers: Gregory Tisdale, Jason Pill, George Trimikliniotis

Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Monday, March 24 Great Compline 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday March 25 Feast of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, March 26 9th Hour 5:30 p.m.
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Friday, March 28 Salutations to the Virgin Mary—4th Stanza 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 30 Fourth Sunday of Lent—St. John of the Ladder (Climacus)
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 p.m.

Altar Boys: Captains ONLY

Ushers: Brett Mourer, Christopher Kavouklis, Amin Hanhan

Coffee Hour: Philoptochos

Monday, March 31 Great Compline 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 2 9th Hour 5:30 p.m.
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Friday, April 4 Vigil of the Akathist
Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m.
Divine Liturgy 8:15 p.m.

Sunday, April 6 Fifth Sunday of Lent—St. Mary of Egypt
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke (Christos Nenos, Dean Mitseas, Nicholas Katzaras, James Katzaras, Nicholas Yotis)

Ushers: Ed Gerecke, David Voykin, Pete Trakas

Coffee Hour: AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope

Monday, April 7 Great Compline 5:30 p.m.

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

Do I Really Need to Complete a Pledge Form EVERY Year?

This question is being asked quite a bit it seems. The simple answer is: YES. In order to be current in your stewardship, you must complete a new stewardship form each year. Why?

1. We don't want to assume that each year your pledge will remain the same. So, please tell us each year what you are going to contribute for the year.
2. People's situations change from year to year. You are able to offer more treasure or time to different ministries, so a new form each year keeps you and our office up to date on who is going to contribute what.
3. Both the Uniform Parish Regulations (UPR) of our Archdiocese as well as our local by-laws at St. John require each steward submit a form in a timely manner each year.
4. The stewardship form is the only quantifiable way to know how many stewards we have. Others contribute, but it is only the stewards that we can count on to contribute in a consistent manner.

5. The stewardship pledges are really the only way we can budget since they indicate how much money is coming in to support the ministries and expenses of the church. Ideally, stewardship forms for the following year would be sent out in September and collected in October, so that a budget could be passed in November with a solid idea of how much to expect would be raised in stewardship. However, the system we currently use, sets a stewardship goal based on a budget (rather than the budget based on the stewardship goal) and then spend a lot of time and energy trying to achieve that goal.

Everyone is encouraged and requested to submit their form immediately so that we can reach (and hopefully exceed) our stewardship goal of \$400,000 as soon as possible. As you can see, we are ahead of last year's pace. However, our goal for this year was higher and as you can see, we still have a ways to go to reach our goal for this year.

Unveiling our New Stewardship Committee

We're taking a different approach to stewardship at St. John going forward. We have expanded our stewardship committee. Rather than being a small committee, the committee is now much larger, and has been subdivided into four subcommittees. Pete Trakas is going to serve as the overall chairperson of the stewardship committee. The four subcommittees are:

- A. Fundraising and directed gifts—chaired by Pete Trakas
- B. Welcoming and new member committee—Chaired by Maria Xenick and Marenca Patrasciou
- C. Administration—chaired by George Chagaris

- D. Manpower—chaired by Julie Palios and Ewana Forde
- As this committee develops in the coming months and as each subcommittee becomes active with the stuff for which is it responsible, there will be not only more news but more opportunities for you to be involved. If you want to work on the stewardship committee, please see Pete or one of the subcommittee heads. Please call the office for their contact information.

Stewardship Welcoming Committee

The Welcoming Committee wants to encourage new people and visitors to learn about Saint John Greek Orthodox Church in Tampa, FL and to feel at home in our church, in the fellowship hour, and in the many other activities that comprise our parish life. The ultimate purpose of this committee is to actively invite our fellow Orthodox Christians in our community to worship with us, that we greet them warmly, welcome all who enter our doors, offer a place to serve in ministry, and make all feel included. Our goal is to create an experience that is both spiritual and familial, leading them to further serve God and others.

If you are outgoing, friendly and have a love of our Church, then this is the place for you! We need many volunteers to help each week greeting our newcomers and making introductions. We will have a team of four people each Sunday to serve on a rotating basis as greeters in the church and as ambassadors in the Kourmolis Center during coffee hour. We will also need a team to make follow up phone calls to our new potential church members to give them a personal, immediate connection with our parish community. We would love to have enough volunteers so that the commitment would only be once every two –three months. For more information, please contact Maria Xenick at mpxenick@gmail.com.

Small Group Bible Study Update

Our Small Group Bible Studies continue to meet each week. If you haven't been part of one of these groups, please come and join one. They are on different days, at different times and in different parts of town, with the hope that we can accommodate everyone who wants to participate. Days and locations and contact information is below. For questions about small groups, please contact Fr. Stavros or any of the group leaders. New members are welcome at any time. Your non-Orthodox friends and neighbors are also welcome to participate—we have several who come to small groups. If we are going to grow our church, it is going to be from outside our church. Please feel free to invite not only your fellow parishioners but your non-Orthodox neighbors and friends to join us.

All Small Groups will attend Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday, March 26 at 6:00 p.m.

Women's Group (for adult women of any age)

Location: Meets at the home of Debbie Kavouklis, 3315 Jean Circle, Tampa, FL 33629—Debbie lives in South Tampa, a mile or so from the church.

Group Leader: Debbie Kavouklis—you can email Debbie at dkavouklis1@verizon.net, or call her at 690-0155.

Meeting time: Tuesday mornings from 10:00-11:00 a.m. (coffee and refreshments at 9:30 a.m.)

March meeting dates: March 4, and, 18. **On Tuesday, March 25, the Women's Group will attend Divine Liturgy as a group and have a brief discussion with Fr. Stavros at the end of the service.**

Men's Group (for adult men of any age)

Location: Kourmolis Center

Group Leader: Group Members rotate who leads each week. For more information, however, please email Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com or contact him at 813-394-1038.

Meeting time: Wednesday mornings from 7:30-8:30 a.m.

March Meeting dates: March 2, 12, 19 and 26

South Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults)

(for any adults) Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient for those who live in South Tampa

Location: Home of Helen and Ken Cauthorn, 3922 W. Palmira Avenue, Tampa, FL 33629. Helen's Number is 813-505-1059 and her email is hcauthorn@chubb.com

Group Leader: Bessie Palios—Her email is bmp1126@yahoo.com, and her cell number is 813-523-0347. If you are going to attend this group, please RSVP to Ellen, Bessie and Fr. Stavros

Meeting time: Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

March meeting dates: March 4 and 18 (attending Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday, March 26 at 6:00 p.m.)

North Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults)

(for any adults) Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient to those who live in North Tampa, Lutz, Land O'Lakes, Wesley

Chapel and Carrollwood

Location: Home of Michael and Artemis Conner. They live in Lutz near George Steinbrenner High School off of Lutz Lake Fern. Their address is 5524 Reflections Blvd, Lutz, FL 33558. Their number is 813-920-4404 and Michael's cell is 813-784-0182. Michael's email is conner.mike.01@gmail.com, and Artemis' email is artemisia004@yahoo.com. Please contact them before you attend the first meeting to get the gate code to their community.

Group Leader: Michael Conner

Meeting time: Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

March meeting dates: March 4 and 18 (attending Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday, March 26 at 6:00 p.m.)

East Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults)

(for any adults) Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient to those who live on the East side of town—Riverview, Brandon, Valrico, Seffner, Lakeland

Location: Home of George and Donna Hambos—They live in Valrico at 2604 Herndon Street, Valrico, FL 33596. Their home number is 813-651-9226 and Donna's cell number is 813-843-8412, and Donna's email is dhambos@msn.com

Group Leader: Donna Hambos

Meeting Time: Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

March Meeting Dates: March 4 and 18 (attending Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday, March 26 at 6:00 p.m.)

Young Adult Group (for adults ages 18-40)

(for adults ages 18-40)

Location: Homes of group members, this one rotates, contact group leader for location each week

Group Leader: Mary Ann Konstas, who can be reached at 813-215-9862 or at mapkonstas@gmail.com. Please contact Mary Ann if you are interested in joining this group so she can tell you where the next meeting will take place.

Meeting time: Wednesday evenings (during Lent meets after Pre-Sanctified Liturgy at 7:00 p.m. at the Church).

March Meeting Dates: March 5, 12, 19 and 26

COMMUNITY NEWS

Ye Holy Krewe of St. John raises over \$6,400!—Our yearly fundraiser for Gasparilla Parking raised \$6,410 between the two weekends, the January 18 children's parade and the January 25 adult parade. A big thank you goes out to John Kokkas for AGAIN chairing this event. Our Krewe members included Dante Skourellos, Michael Skourellos, Louis Stratigakos, Ed Gerecke, Alexandra Gerecke, Lisa Alsina, Alexa Alsina, Chace Sibley, Despina Sibley, Mark Hartung, Greg Tisdale, Ewana Forde, Dwight Forde, Kevin Fentress, Brett Mourer, Irene Kostaris, and Mike Xenick. Thank you so much.

Batteries Needed for Lent/Holy Week—Tis the Season of the many services in our church and consequently the greatest need for batteries for the wireless microphones in church. If you wish to donate new AA batteries (preferably Duracell or Energizer), please pick up some and give them to Father Stavros.

Greek Independence Day Luncheon—We will be hosting our annual Greek Independence Day Luncheon and program on Sunday, March 9, following the Divine Liturgy, in the Kourmolis Center. There will be a performance by our dance groups, singing of some folk songs and a tasty lunch. ALL proceeds will go to our church. More information will be available in the weekly bulletin.

An Opportunity to Serve--Wayne and Pauline Spencer facilitate Trivia Games at John Knox Village for the Seniors on Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights from 6:45-8:30 p.m. Seniors compete for "play money". At the end of each month, Wayne and Pauline go shopping and buy daily items (toothpaste, deodorant, hair spray, and other knick-knacks). They make baskets and have an auction, where residents use their "play money" to bid on baskets. It's a lot of fun for everyone, bringing residents together who may not otherwise talk to each other. As an example, there is a man who now is one of our regulars, his face is disfigured and he was always sloppy and carried a rag with him when he walked. Well at first he would just walk by but just listened never played he felt no one wanted to be around him. He usually sat alone at lunch and people there would just pass him in the halls and not even say Good Morning. He was pretty much alone all day. Slowly he started coming and staying longer and longer at the games. What we discovered was that he is extremely intelligent and not only did he know his answers but everyone else's. Soon he was known as a celebrity around the assisted living part of the building. People began talking with him asking him to sit with them at lunch and when he walked into our game we would always tell the newcomers that this man was our smartest player because he was right. 99% of the time! We were always praising him and pretty soon he stopped carrying his rag around started cleaning up combing his hair and was noticed by all. No one ever gave thought to his disfigured face and treated him just like anyone else. And that's just one story. It gives us a warm and fuzzy feeling that we are doing a good thing for them and it makes us feel good about ourselves especially when they always thank us for being a part of their life.. Where HELP is needed: If there is anyone interested in volunteering on a Monday, or Wednesday or Friday night, regularly or even once in a while, please call Pauline Spencer at 813-390-1782 or Wayne Spencer at 813-390-7588. Help is needed from 6:45-8:30 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays. And what is needed is getting patients from their rooms to the game room, facilitating the games and returning the residents back to their rooms at the end.

Get Acquainted Sunday, March 2—In an effort to get to know one another better, we are going to continue our "get acquainted Sundays" one Sunday of each month. We will have nametags and markers in the entry way of the Kourmolis Center and will ask that each person put one on during coffee hour and introduce yourself to at least one person that you do not know. This will serve to help us increase our fellowship and sense of community. Our "Get Acquainted Sunday" for March will be Sunday, March 2.

Get Daily Bible Readings Sent to your Email or Phone—One of the best ways to start each day is by reading from the Bible. There are prescribed readings for every day of the year in the Orthodox Church. You can go on the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America website at www.goarch.org, go into the search box and type in "Receive Daily Readings," follow the prompts and have this valuable resource sent right to your phone or email. Reading the Bible is so important and for those of us who don't make the time or are lazy to reach for the Bible, have the readings sent in a way that is easy to remember. Spend some time this new ecclesiastical year in God's Word, the sacred Scriptures!

Constant Contact Emails—Our parish utilizes Constant Contact as a way of staying in touch with parishioners, particularly on subjects that are time sensitive, i.e. funerals, special events, and last minute announcements. To keep you apprised of news in our parish, we will probably be sending out 1 (and no more than 2) message per week. This is an effort not to clog your inbox but to keep you informed of the goings on in our parish.

Scan to like St. John on Facebook
facebook.com/StJohnGOCTampa



St. John has a Facebook page. Please "like" our page and suggest it to your friends. Announcements are put on their frequently and we will also be posting photos in the near future.

MINISTRIES

COLLEGE STUDENT DINNER/DISCUSSION-FRIDAY, MARCH 21

We'll be having a college student dinner/discussion on Friday, March 21, following the Salutations Service. The schedule is as follows: 6:30 p.m.—Salutations to the Virgin Mary; 7:30-9:30 p.m.—Dinner and Discussion. There is no cost for this event. However, please RSVP to Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com if you are interested in coming so that we have enough food and supplies.

GOYA

GOYA Meeting—The GOYA Meeting for March will be Sunday, March 16, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

GOYA Lenten Retreat—Our TENTH Annual GOYA Lenten Retreat will be held from March 28-30. GOYAns from around the Tampa Bay area will join us for worship on March 28 (Salutations) and March 30 (Liturgy). On March 29, they will spend a day in retreat growing in their faith during the Lenten season. Any of the Tampa GOYAns who are interested in attending, please contact Elaine Halkias by March 10. You can reach her at 813-629-1843 or nybagel2@msn.com.

Oratorical Festival—The St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival is a public speaking contest for students in the 7th-12th grades. Our parish has had GOYAns participate in this for the past several years. It is a great opportunity to learn about our faith and get some public speaking experience. The local level competition for our parish will occur on Sunday, March 23, after Divine Liturgy. For more information, please contact Peggy Bradshaw at peggy65@verizon.net.

BIBLE STUDY

WITH DR. BILL MANIKAS

Bible Study is held every Monday from 6:30-8:00 p.m. in the multi-purpose room. Newcomers are welcome to join us. Dr. Bill Manikas leads the Bible study, which meets every Monday night.

JOY/HOPE

Souper Bowl of Caring Results—On Sunday February 2, our St. John community collected \$261 and over 400 pounds of nonperishable food items for our Saint John food pantry and Feeding America Tampa Bay in a fight to end hunger in America. THANK YOU for your generosity. In our friendly pre-game competition, the Denver Broncos' stockpot collected \$201 and the Seattle Seahawks' stockpot collected an even \$60. The food donated to the Broncos outweighed the Seahawks too, but much of the food donations were "undecided." Unlike the lopsided game that night, EVERYONE is a winner in this competition! It was a great way to show our support for a worthy cause and restock our pantry. Our donations will be reported to the Souper Bowl of Caring organization as well as to the International Orthodox Christian Charities.

Pre-Lent Retreat on Sunday, March 2—Our Sunday school staff invites all students to join us for our Annual Pre-Lenten Retreat on Sunday, March 2. We will devote our classes on this day anticipating the start of great Lent. We will have crafts and activities to focus our attention on preparing for this special season leading up to Pascha. We will discuss, fasting, forgiveness, the Lenten Covenant and confession. We will begin this year's retreat immediately after the children receive Holy Communion. The retreat will conclude at 1:30 p.m. This is a wonderful opportunity to enrich your family's Lenten experience. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. For more information, please email Maria Xenick at mpxenick@tampabay.rr.com.

Lenten Calendar—As part of our Lenten Program this year, we present the Lenten Calendar for our Sunday School Students. It is attached in the Messenger. Please use this as a guide to great Lent for your children.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS:

CONGRATULATIONS to the Students who had PERFECT ATTENDANCE for the month of JANUARY:

PRE-SCHOOL: Teddy Kafantaris

KINDERGARTEN: Gianni Bavaro and Maria Nicklow

1ST GRADE: Emily Nicklow, Ariana Choundas-Thatcher, and Calliope Kafantaris

2ND GRADE: Niko Bavaro and Eleni Katzaras

3RD GRADE: Maria Bavaro, Andrew Choundas-Thatcher, John Palios, and Yanni Trimikliniotis

4TH AND 5TH GRADE: Antonio Bavaro

7TH AND 8TH GRADE: Savvas Ferekides and Brigham Sibley

HIGH SCHOOL: Arianna Krinos, Larissa Krinos, and Chace Sibley

We would also like to thank Father Stavros for providing the teachers with an informational outline to support our weekly topics. Our topics for February were:

Sun. Feb. 2nd. - Sun. Sch. Topic - Presentation of Jesus (Gospel Lesson)

Sun. Feb. 9th - Sun. Sch. Topic - Fasting (Gospel Lesson - Publican and Pharisee)

Sun. Feb. 16th - Sun. Sch. Topic - Prodigal Son (Gospel Lesson)

Sun. Feb. 23rd. - Sun. Sch. Topic - Judgment (Gospel Lesson)

February was a month of preparation. Our older students are preparing for the Oratorical Festival and everyone is getting reading for the beginning of Lent which starts in March.

One of the best ways to prepare for Pascha is to participate in the Sacrament of Confession. Each Sunday School class will have the opportunity to participate in this important Sacrament. On February 16th our 1st and 2nd Graders attended and on February 23rd our 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders went to Confession. We would like to thank Father Stavros for hearing the confessions of this young children.

Our YOUTH SUNDAY for February took place on the 16th. The children sang beautifully, our Epistle Reader did a fine job and the Prospophora was delicious as usually. We would like to thank our first graders for making this holy bread. Our children are truly great stewards.

Also on February 16th, the Sunday School sponsored the Coffee Hour and Bake Sale to support our Sunday School Stain Glass Window Project. We would like to thank Christina Wagner and her group of bakers for all the delicious bake sale goodies and the parents who provided food for the Coffee Hour.

We would like to thank all of our Church families for supporting our CEREAL DRIVE and SOUPER BOWL of Caring. We can always count on our generous families to support the less fortunate.



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Meeting Schedule for March

Sunday, March 2	Sunday School Pre-Teen Retreat	After Liturgy	Sunday school classrooms
Tuesday, March 4	Young at Heart	11:30 a.m.	
Tuesday, March 11	Parish Council	7:00 p.m.	Meeting Room
Saturday, March 15	AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope		
Sunday, March 16	GOYA	5:00 p.m.	Kourmolis Center
Friday, March 21	College student event	7:30 p.m.	Kourmolis Center

Parish Registry

Baptism-Vasilis Aries Bush, son of Mathew and Antoinette Bush, was baptized on Sunday, February 2. Godparents were Alex and Elishia Meadows. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Serena Paige (Sophia Parasklevi) Meadows, daughter of Alexander and Elishia Meadows, was baptized on Sunday, February 2. Godparents were Margaret Halikoytakis, Anna Richards, and Kendall Athena Ruyle. Na Sas Zisi!

Chrismation-Zeina Fellios was Chrismated on Sunday, February 9. She will use the name Rita Maria as her Orthodox name. Tammy Christou and Despina Sibley were her sponsors. Congratulations!

Wedding-Thomas Barris and Jodi Coonradt were married on Saturday, February 8. James Barris and Greg Barris were the sponsors. Congratulations!

Condolences to Tina Chakonas, on the passing of her brother, Theodore Kavooras. May his memory be eternal!

Stewardship Update

	February 10, 2014	February 10, 2013
Stewardship Goal	\$400,000	\$300,000
Amount Pledged	\$329,746	\$237,792
Number of Pledged Families	218	178
Amount Collected	\$64,572	

If you have not made a pledge for 2014, please do so today! If you need a pledge form, please contact the church office and we'll be happy to send one.

Leave the Church in Your Will

Part of our life's legacy is the inheritance we leave our children. By leaving an inheritance, a part of us lives on through them. When preparing your will, you should consider leaving money to our church—this is the church of your children and part of their future can be positively impacted by leaving some of your inheritance to the church. The ability of the church to spread the Word of God is facilitated by everyone's stewardship. By leaving a portion of your inheritance to the church in your will, you remain a steward in perpetuity, but more importantly, you help cement a solid financial future for the church for your children and your grandchildren. If you are interested in leaving the church in your will, please contact Russell Sibley (church member) at rsibleylaw@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

DONATIONS NEEDED FOR LENT/HOLY WEEK

Great Lent begins March 3. We have many special celebrations during these weeks. We know that many of you would like to contribute to the decorating of our church and icons during this period. For your convenience, below is a list of items needed for the celebration of the Sacred Services of Lent and holy Week. Please contact the church office to reserve your desired offering for the health of your loved ones or in memory of a deceased loved one. Payment may be sent to the church office. Checks should be made payable to "St. John Greek Orthodox Church" with "Lenten Flower Donation" on the memo line.

March 7	Salutations to the Virgin Mary—1st Stanza (flowers will be displayed on the first Sunday of Lent)	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
March 14	Salutations to the Virgin Mary—2nd Stanza (flowers will be displayed on the second Sunday of Lent)	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
March 21	Salutations to the Virgin Mary—3rd Stanza (flowers will be displayed on the third Sunday of Lent)	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
March 23	Veneration of Holy Cross—	Flowers for Tray for Procession	\$300
March 28	Salutations to the Virgin Mary—4th Stanza (flowers will be displayed on the fourth Sunday of Lent)	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
April 4	kathist Hymn (Flowers will be displayed on the fifth Sunday of Lent)	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
April 13	Palm Sunday Palm Sunday	Flowers for Icon of Palm Sunday Palm strips/branches	\$75 several donors needed (\$250 total)
All of Holy Week		Pillar Candles for windows (20)	\$15 each
April 13	Bridegroom Service Bridegroom Service	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom—Table on Solea	\$75 \$75 for each of 2 arrangements
April 16	Holy Wednesday Holy Unction	Holy Unction Q-tips, Olive Oil, Flour-2 volunteers to make Prosfhora see Fr. Stavros Flowers for Icon of Last Supper	 \$75
April 17	Holy Thursday Holy Thursday Holy Thursday Holy Thursday Holy Thursday	Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion Wreath for Top of Cross Wreaths for bottom of Cross (2) Scattered flowers at base of cross Candles for Top of Cross (3)	\$75 \$250 \$150 each \$50 \$15 each
April 18	Good Friday Good Friday Good Friday Good Friday	8 Bags Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers Flowers for Epitaphios Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Apokathelosis Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Lamentations Icon of Extreme Humility	\$50 several donors needed \$15 each \$15 each \$75
April 20	PASCHA	Flowers for Icon of Resurrection Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb Silk Flowers for Royal Doors Easter Lillies	\$75 \$75 \$100 \$25 per plant

When the Position of My Tongue Reveals the Condition of My Heart

By Kimberly D. Henderson

I have written several posts on casting off fear and learning to walk in faith. Posts on being bold and living all out for Jesus. Posts I love and agree with and believe in – and yet, I fail so many days to actually walk any of them out in my own life.

I have been taking walks with a dear new friend this week, and we have been discussing what we want people to be able to say about us at the end of our lives. One of the things I want to be known for is being authentic. I don't want to merely be pretty words. I don't want to only type about living for the Lord. I want to live fully surrendered to Him, having an intimate relationship with Him that spills over into every area of my life.

Of course, a life like that is going to involve risk. And inconvenience. And being uncomfortable. And possible embarrassment. A life like that requires faith and boldness. And did I mention in my last post how cautious I am and how much I allow what I think others might think to affect my decisions?

The Lord got pretty specific with me in church on Sunday about what my real issue is.

I don't trust Him.

(Ummmmmm...Ouch.)

Oh, sure. I say that I trust Him. I say that I believe that He loves me and He is for me and I know that His plans for me are for good. And yet... how often do I hedge and waver or flat out say "no" when I feel Him prompting me to step out in faith?

In Joanna Weaver's book, *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*, she talks about saying the words "yes" and "no." The chapter is on balancing works and worship and how we have to be careful not only with saying "yes" to too much, but also with saying "no" to our spiritual detriment. And while my post here has nothing to do with being over or under involved in serving, I do want to share a little revelation on the tongue. Specifically how your tongue is positioned when you say those two words – "yes" and "no."

Go ahead and say them slowly. Notice how the tip of your tongue points. Joanna shares that when you say "no" the tongue points up and more inward, but when you say "yes" your tongue points outward. That "no" pointing inwards can become "our easy answer to anything outside our own personal agendas." (pg.180)

And sitting there reading those pages and saying "yes" and "no" while paying attention to my tongue's position – my eyes were opened. When I say "no" to God, tongue pointing inward, I am focusing

inwardly. Thinking about me, me, and me.

I am basically trying to protect myself – from pain, from discomfort, from embarrassment. I am also looking at what I can do instead of what He is able to do through me. My "no" to God shows that deep down, I do not trust Him – do not trust Him to keep me safe, do not trust Him to be my more than enough, do not trust Him with my heart and my dreams and my desires, do not trust His love.

But when I say "yes" to God, the focus is outward. Allowing Him to use me to bless others. Trusting Him to love me and fill me and watch over me as I give of myself freely in the ways He calls me to.

Little did I know that the position of my tongue has been revealing the condition of my heart.

How about you? What does your tongue reveal about your heart right now? Have you been saying "yes" to God or have the "no's" been winning out? Even "not now, God" or "not yet" have that inward pointing "n" position. Yikes.

What I do know is God does not point these things out so we will feel defeated. He wants our eyes opened so we can live this life with Him to the fullest. He wants us to believe and fully receive His love. He longs for us to trust Him.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV

"Those who know Your name will put their trust in You; For You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You." Psalm 9:10 NKJV

Kimberly Henderson writes an inspirational blog— check it out at <http://aplantingofthelord.com>

The Tongue Problem

This was found on several internet inspirational sites

When we have a problem with our tongues, we really have a heart problem:

- A harsh tongue shows an angry heart.
- A negative tongue shows a fearful heart.
- An overactive tongue shows an unsettled heart.
- A boasting tongue shows an insecure heart.
- A filthy tongue shows an impure heart.
- A critical tongue shows a bitter heart.
- An encouraging tongue shows a caring heart.
- A gentle tongue shows a loving heart.
- A truthful tongue shows an honest heart.

If you are fearful, you are not trusting of God. Unforgiveness relates to a critical heart. We are to boast only in the Lord.

What is the solution when we have a heart problem? Jesus is the Great Physician who specializes in hearts. He is the Healer of sick hearts and the Cleanser of dirty hearts. He pours God's love into our hearts (Rom.

5:5), a love that praises God and blesses others. Although we stumble in the area of speech, we should try, with God's help, to consistently speak only what is good. Think about your spouse, children, parents, siblings, neighbors, friends, co-workers, church members..are we cursing them?....

- *Pointing out their faults
- *Slander or demeaning
- *Nagging
- *Spreading gossip or rumors
- *Name calling, profanity
- *Angry attitudes

So look at Philippians 4:8 and think on these. It is Paul's checklist for our thoughts and makes for a good evaluation of our speech:

Do you know it is true?

Does it bring honor to the person spoken about and to God?

Is it a fair (just) thing to say?

Is it pure of slander, gossip, fault-finding and malice?

Does it portray the person, institution or situation in the best possible

light?(lovely) Is it positive, not negative? (commendable) Does it hold up against the highest standards for imitation? (moral excellence) Does it look for the best? (praise)

"Finally Brothers,
whatever is true,
whatever is honorable,
whatever is just,
whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely,
whatever is commendable-
if there is any moral excellence
and if there is any praise-
dwell on these things." Phil. 4:8

The Lenten Covenant

This year will be the 8th year we offer the program of the Lenten Covenant at St. John. Each year, those who participate say that they get a lot out of this program. A "covenant" is a promise. God has made covenants with us. In the Old Testament, He makes the first Covenant with Abraham, to be the God of Abraham's descendants. The sign of this Covenant is circumcision. In the New Testament, God replaces the Old Covenant with a New Covenant, which is baptism and Holy Communion. If you are baptized and have received Holy Communion, then you have a Covenant relationship with God—you are part of the Covenant between God and His people. The Lenten Covenant is a promise between us and God—it is a promise to do certain things during Lent so that one can grow spiritually during Lent, with a promise to change one thing after Lent has ended so that spiritual growth continues during the year. ***The Lenten Covenant will help us in keeping the lifelong Covenant relationship we have with God by giving us a short-term covenant by which to evaluate our standing in the lifelong Covenant.***

How does the Lenten Covenant Work

Below there is a form that lists a menu of plans to help in a Lenten Goal of growing closer to God this year. The menu includes fasting, prayer, worship, reading the Bible, reading a theology book, going to confession, changing one bad habit, and the one that is most important, a goal for once Pascha is over. The menu offer several levels of commitment for each area. Each area is important—it is important that you fast, pray, worship, read scriptures, go to confession, and change a bad habit if you are going to get something out of this Lent. But if you've never fasted before, the covenant offers different levels of difficulty. So if you've never fasted, perhaps you should check the easiest level. If you've mastered the first level, perhaps this year you challenge yourself with the second level. If you've never read the Bible, don't commit to reading the whole Bible during Lent—that is a huge commitment. Commit rather to something smaller like reading a chapter a day, or perhaps reading the Gospels, something that is challenging but attainable. If you've never worshipped in church on a day that isn't Sunday, don't commit to every service during Lent, but commit to one service per week, or even commit to one of each of the Lenten services, which would be three extra services over the six weeks of Lent. Regarding confession, how many hours of your life have you spent alone with an Orthodox priest to talk about your salvation? If you are over age 20 and the answer is zero, perhaps you need to think about changing that this Lent. If you are over age 60 and the answer is zero, you've got even more incentive. Think about how many hours a year you spend watching television, or listening to music, going to movies, doing yardwork, gossiping on the phone—it adds up to hundreds of hours each year, thousands of hours over a lifetime. And then think about how many hours you've spent in your whole life talking about your salvation, about repentance, with an Orthodox priest. Sadly, for many people, the answer is zero. This could be the year you change that.

So, if you decide to do the Lenten Covenant, do the following::

1. Fill out the survey which follows.
2. Make two copies of it for each person in your household that is going to participate.
3. Put one copy in a place at home where you can see it, on the refrigerator, by your bedside, in your Bible.
4. Take the other copy of the covenant and place it in an envelope.
5. Seal the envelope and write your name and address on the envelope.
6. Bring the envelope to church on Sunday, March 2, and place it in a box that will be in front of the icon of the Virgin Mary on the solea of the church.
7. The box will be kept locked, the only person with the key will be Fr. Stavros
8. FATHER STAVROS WILL NOT OPEN THE ENVELOPES OR READ THEIR CONTENTS—these will remain private. Father Stavros will merely jot down the names on the envelopes to pray for these people throughout Lent, to pray that they will make good on their covenants. This is my commitment to you.
9. The box will remain in the church until the Resurrection Service on Easter as a reminder to you each time you come to church that you have a covenant or promise to God.
10. After Easter, your envelope will be mailed to you in your self-addressed envelope, as proof that the envelope was never opened, and as a way for you to see how you did

Lenten Covenant for Children (Older children should fill out the regular form)

Things I promise to do this Lent (Check all that you wish to do):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pray every day | <input type="checkbox"/> Be nicer to my parents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say prayers every morning | <input type="checkbox"/> Be nicer to my brother/sister |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say prayers every evening | <input type="checkbox"/> Try harder in school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say prayers at meals | <input type="checkbox"/> Do my chores without being told |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Come to church each Sunday | <input type="checkbox"/> Be more helpful at home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Receive Communion each Sunday | <input type="checkbox"/> Not say any bad words |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to confession during Lent | <input type="checkbox"/> Share more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read a short passage from the Bible each day | |

PRAYER: Lord help me to be successful in keeping the promises I have made. Help me to grow in my faith and love You more this Lent. Help me to be a nicer person and a better Christian. Amen.

Sign your name

Make a copy for yourself, place your covenant in a sealed envelope, write your name and address on front of envelope. Bring covenant to church and place it in locked box on the solea in front of the icons.

The Lenten Covenant

Check as many as apply under each topic. You should (but need not) answer every topic. This is a matter of your own conscience and areas where you want to grow spiritually.

1. Concerning my prayer life, each day I will commit to:

- ☐ One 5- minute period of un-interrupted prayer
- ☐ One five minute period every morning of un-interrupted prayer
- ☐ One five minute period every evening of un-interrupted prayer
- ☐ One five minute period each morning AND evening of un-interrupted prayer

Other: Write in here

2. Concerning Worship

- ☐ I'll commit to attending Divine Liturgy each Sunday
- ☐ I'll commit to attending ONE additional service each week during each week of Lent
- ☐ I'll commit to attending AT LEAST 1 Compline, 1 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and 1 Salutations Service
- ☐ I'll commit to attending AT LEAST ONE Saturday of the Souls
- ☐ I'll commit to attending the Forgiveness Vespers March 2
- ☐ I'll commit to preparing and receiving Holy Communion at least once a week during Lent.

Concerning Holy Week, I'll commit to:

- ☐ Every Service
- ☐ Every Evening Service
- ☐ One service each Day
- ☐ Specifically Holy Thursday—the Passion of Christ
- ☐ Other (write in here)

3. Concerning Fasting, I'll commit to:

- ☐ Level One Fast from meat on Wednesday and Fridays and during Holy Week
- ☐ Level Two Fast from meat and fish on Wednesdays and Friday and during Holy Week
- ☐ Level Three Fast from meat the entirety of Lent and Holy Week
- ☐ Level Four Fast from meat and fish the entirety of Lent and Holy Week
- ☐ Level Five Level Four and eliminate dairy products during Holy Week.
- ☐ Level Six Level Four and eliminate dairy products on Wednesdays and Fridays and during Holy Week
- ☐ Level Seven Level Four plus eliminate dairy products during all of Lent and Holy Week
- ☐ Level Eight Level Seven plus eliminate oil and wine during Holy Week
- ☐ Level Nine The Strict Fast-no meat, fish, dairy products, wine or oil during the entirety of Lent
- ☐ I can't fast from food for health reasons. I will give up the following: (Write answer here)

****Note-**alcohol should be consumed at a very minimum during Lent, and abstained from totally if possible. Also, activities should be curtailed, socializing a little more sedate, no dancing and loud music. During Holy Week, all unnecessary activities aside from work and children should be curtailed, so that we can focus on the Holy Days of the Passion of Christ.

4. Concerning reading the Bible, I'll commit to:

- ☐ Reading one chapter a day from some book
- ☐ Reading the four Gospels
- ☐ Reading the Psalms
- ☐ Other (Write in)

5. Concerning confession,

- ☐ I'll commit to going once during this Lenten period either to Fr. Stavros or another Priest
- ☐ I've been recently to confession and don't feel the need to go at this time.
- ☐ I don't believe in going to confession
- ☐ I'll get more information on this sacrament and then make a decision.

6. Concerning Holy Communion, I will try to be prepared to receive

- ☐ Every Sunday
- ☐ Every Sunday and at Wednesday Pre-Sanctified
- ☐ At least every other Sunday

7. Concerning bad habits, here are one or two or a few bad habits I'll watch and change this Lent

- ☐ Gossip
- ☐ Self-aggrandizement
- ☐ impatience
- ☐ Greed
- ☐ Lust
- ☐ Disobedience
- ☐ Wasting time
- ☐ Self-pitying
- ☐ Not giving good effort at work/school/marriage/children

Others: Write in here

8. One spiritual goal I want to commit to once Pascha has passed is:

Prayer: Lord help me to be successful in this task I am about to undertake. May it be for the growth of my soul and the improvement of my spiritual life. Help me to keep all the commitments I have made. Amen.

_____ Sign your name

Make a copy for yourself, place your covenant in a sealed envelope, write your name and address on front of envelope. Bring covenant to church and place it in locked box on the solea.

A Lenten Prayer from the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy

Almighty Lord, You have created all things in wisdom. In Your expressible Providence and great goodness You have brought us to these saving days, for the cleansing of our souls and bodies, for control of our passions, in the hope of the Resurrection. After the forty days You delivered into the hands of Your servant Moses the tablets of the law in characters divinely traced. Enable us also, O Benevolent One, to fight the good fight, to complete the course of the fast, to keep the faith inviolate, to crush underfoot the heads of unseen tempters, to emerge victors over sin and to come, without reproach, to the worship of Your Holy Resurrection. For blessed and glorified is Your most honorable and majestic Name, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

**PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE SATURDAY OF THE SOULS
MEMORIAL SERVICES—February 22, March 1 and March 8**

In Memory of

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

****You only need to write the first name of each person. Also, you only need to fill this out once and all of the names will be commemorated each of the three Saturdays. Please mail to the church office as soon as possible.**

Pledged Stewards for 2014

(as of February
5, 2014)

ALEXA ALSINA
NICK and JUDY ANTONAKAKIS
DENISE BADRANE
DANIEL and ANNA MARIE BAVARO
CONSTANTINE and ANGELA BOUGAS
MICHAEL II CANTONIS
ROBERT and VIVIANA CHANDLER
LOUIS and MARY ANN CHRISTODOULOU
DR. TELLY and TOULA COURIALIS
ANNA K. DEMAS
PETER and REBECCA DINIACO
NICHOLAS and SUSAN FALLIERAS
CHRISTOS and DEBBIE FERKIDES
CHRIS FRAZIER
SPEROS and ELEANOR GEORGIOU
ALEX HALIKOYTAKIS
AMIN and GLORIA HANHAN
SKIP HIGDON
MIKE IRAKLIANOS
ARTHUR M. and ABBY JAMES
MARTHA KAPETAN
DIMITRI and MARIA KAROUNOS
NICK and HELEN KATZARAS
DENO and BARBARA KAZANIS
ATHANASIOS and GINA ROSATO KOMNINOS
DORA KOUDOUNA
DIMITRIOS J. LANGAS
MARY MAAS
CLARA and NICHOLAS MANIKIS
JAIME MELTON
MELINDA and JEFFREY MUELLER
BYRON and JEANIE NENOS
SCOTT and ELPIDA OLSEN
TOM and JENNY PALOUMPIS
JOHN and IRENE PAPADOPOULOS
FLORIN and MARENCA PATRASCOIU
RYAN and MEGAN RINDONE
LEO H. and ANNE SAKELLARIS
MICHAEL and PATRICIA SERBANOS
ALEXANDER SKIJUS
CHARLES and TAMAM SMITH
BILL and JENNY SOTIROPOULOS
GEORGE and KATINA STAVROU
MELVIN and VIOLET TAMASHIRO
GREG TISDALE
DIANE and MIKE TRIMIS
MARY H. VOYKIN
EVANGELINE XEROTERES
PETER ZEBAN
JOHN and ANETTA ALEXANDER
ED AMBROZY
STEFANOS AUGUST

SUZY and MATHEW BALASIS
RITA BEDRAN
PELAGIA K. and HAROLD BRADSHAW
JOHN and GENIE CARTER
BASIL and ALYSSA CHERPELIS
MICHAEL and ARTEMIS CONNER
ALKIS and AIME CRASSAS
JOHN DEMAS
MARC and MARAQUET EQUID
LAUREN FALLIERAS
KARINA and ANDLEN FINDLAY
STAMIE and RICK GARCIA
ED and TERRI GERECKE
GEORGE and ELAINE HALKIAS
CHRISTIE HARTSFIELD
EVELYN HOPPENSTAND
JON IRWIN
RAISSA JEWTUSHENKO
JIM and PAULA KARAGOUNIS
PRESBYTERA LORETTA and LORETTA
KARPELENIA
STEFAN and KARA KATZARAS
GEORGE and CHARLENE KLADIS
DEMETRIOS and MARY ANN KONSTAS
CHRISTINA KOUIMANIS
COLEEN and FRED LASKEY
KATHRYN MACLAURY
CHRIS and NICOLE MANTZANAS
GEORGE and CATHERINE MITSEAS
MARY J. and DAVID C. MULLIGAN
BILL NEYLAND
ARTEMIS PALIOS
THEODORE and MARISSA PANAPOULOS
GUS and Marina PARAS
GEORGIA PAYNE
ARCHIE and ELEFThERIA ROUSSOS
KATHERINE and JOHN SAKKIS
EUSTACE G. and BENNETTE SERMIER
DANTE and LINDSEY SKOURELLOS
EFTIHIA SOROLIS
PETER SPANOS
MARIO and OURIANA STEPHANIDES
ELIZABETH and JOHN THEOFILOS
PETER TRAKAS
JOHN TSIBRIS
GARY and SANDRA PAPPAS WARD
VICTOR and LISA YOTIS
MARIA ZEBETAKIS
MARIA ALIKAKOS
NICHOLAS and DORIS ANDREADAKIS
PABLO and VANESSA AVILES
SARA BARRETT
ROBERT TEACH and DR. KATHRYN BLACK-
BURN
CHRYSANTHI BROWN
GEORGE and KALLIOPE CHAGARIS
MARINA and GREG THATCHER CHOUNDAS
ZACKER and GEORGE AMERES COPULOS
JOANNE DALAKLIS
GEORGIA DIAMANTAKES
STAN and MARY ELLEN EVDEMON

KEVIN and MARIA FENTRESS
DWIGHT and EWANA FORDE
DEBRA Z. and ROBERT RITCHIE GAVALAS
JACK and HARRIET GOMBOS
EVANGELINE (Angie) HALKIAS
JOANN and MARK HARTUNG
SCOTT and RENA HORACK
PAM IRWIN
AMY and MICHAEL KAFANTTARIS
ELLEN KARAKU
PERRY and BETTY KATHERINE PALIOS
KATSAMAKIS
CHRIS and DEBBIE KAVOUKLIS
THEODORE and AMY KLADIS
ALEXANDROS KORAKIS
MELISSA and DIMITRI KRINOS
STEVEN and MELISSA LENARDOS
STEVE and HELEN MALTEZOS
ALEXANDER and ELISHA MEADOWS
BRETT and ANA MOURER
RON and MAGDALINI MYER
CHRISTOS and DEE NICOLAOU
JULIE and GEORGE PALIOS
EURIPIDES and DENISE PANOS
ISIDOROS and JOLIE PASSALARIS
RICHARD and VICTORIA PECKHAM
FLORIAN and JEANNIE ROYACK
MICHAEL SCHARBACH
KATINA and KENNETH SHANAHAN
MICHAEL P. and SHIRLEY A. SKOURELLOS
SOPHIA and CARLOS FREY SOROLIS
WAYNE and PAULINE SPENCER
CHRISTO STEPHANIDES
LARRY and COUSTANTINA, JD THOMAS, MD
ANDREW and ADRIENNE TRAKAS
BOB and PEGGY VALLIANATOS
CHRISTINE WORLEY
WILLIAM YOTIS
STAVROS and KATHY ZOUMBEROS
ANGEL and LISA ALSINA
PEGGY ANTHONY
CHRISTINE and SCOTT AXELROD
FRANK and DESA BARTOS
ATHENASIA and WAYNE BLANKENSHIP
DOROTHY BUSH
ETHEL ALTHENA CHAKONAS
JOHN E. CHRIST
SANDY COTTERMAN
ALEX and SYLVIA P. MICHOS DE MAIO
MELPO DIAMANTIDES
GEORGE FALLIERAS
ALEXANDRA FERAROLIS
TONY and CAROLE FOTOPOULOS
THOMAS and JANET GEORGE
MIKE and MARGARET HALIKOUTAKIS
GEORGE and DONNA HAMBROS
KENNY and NICKOLLET HENDERSON
STEPHANIE HORD
ANNE P. JACOBSEN
NICHOLAS and ALICIA KALOJIANNIS
ANTHONY and SOPHIE KARAS

MARGARET P. KATSIFIS
NICK and EDIE KAVOUKLIS
JOHN and CATHIE KOCH
IRENE KOSTARIS
NICK LALLOTIS
MELANIE and DOMENIC LETOBARONG
BILL and NANCY MANIKAS
GREG and VICTORIA MELTON
SPERO MOUTSATSOS
MARY and PETER NENOS
GEORGE and CHERYL NOLES
MICHAEL and BESSIE PALIOS
LAUREN and ALEC PAPADAKIS
ROBERT and DEB PASSAVANTI
BRAD and GERRI KAVOUKLIS PRICE
JOHN and PEGGY SAAVEDRA
CHRISTINE SCOURTES
DESPINA SIBLEY
PETER SKOURELLOS
PAUL and TERRI SOTIROPOULOS
JANE STAVROPOULOS
JULIANA STINGULESAU
MARY J. TINGIRIS
ALYSA TRAKAS
DAVID VOYKIN
MIKE and MARIE XENICK
CONSTANTINE and RACHEL ZAHARIS

**Please join us for the
Ninth Annual Lenten Retreat**

*A Journey through the Services of
Holy Week and Easter*

Why do we commemorate the Crucifixion on
Thursday evening instead of Friday?

Why is the service on Holy Saturday called
“The First Resurrection”?

***Come join us in renewing your spirit as a community and
depending your understanding of the faith this Lenten period in
preparation for Easter!***

Saturday March 22, from 9:00a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Cost is \$10.00 per person. Lunch will be provided

Please bring your Holy Week Book! Adults Only.

Please return this registration by mail or take it to the Church Office by March 16th.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Will you be attending with other family members? _____ If yes please list names and age below.



March 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Sunday School Pre-Lent Retreat Forgiveness Vespers 6:00 p.m. Fast Day	2 Clean Monday-Beginning of Lent Canon of St. Andrew 10:00 a.m. Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	3 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Young at Heart 11:30 a.m. Bible Study North Tampa 6:30pm Bible Study South Tampa 6:30pm Bible Study East Tampa 6:30pm Fast Day	4 Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner 7:00 p.m. Young Adult Bible Study Fast Day	5 Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. Fast Day	6 Salutations to the Virgin Mary 1st Sanza 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	7 2nd Saturday of Souls to be held at Garden of Memories Memorial Park Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fast Day
Sunday of Orthodoxy Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Procession of Icons Greek Independence Day Luncheon Fast Day	9 Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	10 Parish Council 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	11 Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner 7:00 p.m. Young Adult Bible Study Fast Day	12 Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. Fast Day	13 Salutations to the Virgin Mary 2nd Sanza 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	14 3rd Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fast Day
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m. Fast Day	16 Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	17 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study North Tampa 6:30pm Bible Study South Tampa 6:30pm Bible Study East Tampa 6:30pm Fast Day	18 Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner 7:00 p.m. Young Adult Bible Study Fast Day	19 Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. Fast Day	20 Salutations to the Virgin Mary 3rd Sanza 6:30 p.m. College Student Discussion 7:30 p.m. Fast Day	21 Adult Lenten Retreat Fast Day
Holy Cross Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Oratorical Festival Fast Day	23 Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	24 Annunciation Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Women's Group Attends Liturgy Fast Day	25 Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner 7:00 p.m. All Small Groups attend Liturgy Fast Day	26 Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. Fast Day	27 Salutations to the Virgin Mary 4th Sanza 6:30 p.m. GOYA Lenten Retreat Fast Day	28 GOYA Lenten Retreat Fast Day
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fast Day	30 Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	31 Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Fast Day				

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

Office Phone: (813)876-8830

Fax (813) 443-4899

stjohnngoctampa@gmail.com

www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

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ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Timetable of Services

Sundays: Orthros 8:30 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) 394-1038 (cell)

frstav@gmail.com

Parish Council:

Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867

Carole Fotopoulos, Vice President 813-982-0947

Diane Trimis, Secretary 813-968-9038

Dante Skourellos, Treasurer 813-765-9534

Nick Antonakakis 813-477-6639

Skip Higdon 813-831-9021

David Voykin 727-415-5603

Mike Xenick 813-340-8737

Stewardship Chairperson:

Pete Trakas 813-505-2193

.....

Office Staff:

Debbie Bowe-Administrative Assistant 813-876-8830

Office Fax: 813-443-4899

•Choir: Artie Palios, Director 813-831-1294

Jim Leone, Organist 813-254-7844

•Chanter: Nick Andreadakis 813-876-8830

•Sunday Sch.: Victoria Peckham 813-406-5626

Maria Xenick 813-839-9897

•Finance Committee: Mike Xenick 813-340-8737

•Adult Greek School: Magda Myer 813-909-2327

•AHEPA: Mike Trimis 813-968-9038

•Community Outreach: Chairperson

Betty Katherine Palios 813-215-9862

•Daughters: Diane Trimis 813-220-3389

•Food Pantry: Anetta Alexander 863-224-3001

•GOYA Adv. Elaine Halkias 813-968-9129

Byron Nenos 813-789-0729

•JOY/HOPE: Maria Xenick 813-839-9897

•Young Adults (YAL) Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862

•Philoptochos: JoAnn Hartung, Pres. 727-432-0228

•Oratorical Festival Chairperson

Peggy Bradshaw: 727-244-1374

•Young at Heart: Nick Antonakakis 813-477-6639

Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

•Jr Olympics: Byron Nenos 813-789-0729

•Ushers: Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

•Altar Angels:

Engie Halkias, Viorica Kirby &

Sia Blankenship. 813-932-5859

•Bookstore: Jon & Pamela Irwin 813-679-4113

•H XAPA MAΣ Dance Group:

Alex De Maio & 813-340-9668

Marina Choundas 813-877-6136

•Glendi Dancers: Jenna Mingledorff 813-610-7365

•Panigyri Dancers: Vanessa Aviles 813-221-2194

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is a parish under the spiritual and ecclesiastical oversight of His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of the Metropolis of Atlanta, of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America in the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

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The **Messenger** of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is published on a monthly basis. Publication is the first of each month. Deadline for notices and announcements for the Messenger is the 15th of each month. You may send announcements to the church office or through **email to: stjohnngoctampa@gmail.com**

Website: www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

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