

# 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

## April 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.

## Father Stavros' Message

### FORM VERSUS SUBSTANCE

#### -The Journey of Holy Week

No other Christian denomination can compare its liturgical “form” to that of the Orthodox Church. That is because a) We have the most complete set of worship services (comments below); b) The worship services are old—most of them date to the early centuries of Christianity, so they are historical and timeless, rather than modern; and c) they are done the same way the world over, so there is consistency.

Most people's worship experience is restricted to the weekly celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Yet, there are MANY other worship services in the liturgical anthology of the church—such as Orthros, Vespers, Compline, Akathist, and Paraklesis, in addition to the Divine Liturgy. Our worship is restricted in part because it is not possible for many of us who work to attend services outside of Sundays. And most simply live too far away from the church to come down to St. John several times a week. It is also impossible for a parish with only one full time priest, or one chanter, as most Orthodox churches in this country have, to offer a “full” array of services. It would be unrealistic to offer daily Orthros (morning service) and Vespers (evening service) and expect people to come to these services. So by and large they are not offered.

During Lent and especially during Holy Week, a more complete calendar of services is kept. During Lent, Sunday Liturgy is supplemented with the service of the Compline on Monday

evenings, Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday evenings and Salutations/Akathist services on Friday evenings. (Throughout the year, I try to keep the tradition of honoring the feasts of the Lord and the Major Saints with Divine Liturgies on weekdays). And during Holy Week, the liturgical calendar reaches a climax as the church offers services EVERY morning and evening for a week. This is the church at its best, because we are first and foremost a praying church, and we are at our best when the church is in an almost constant state of prayer and worship.

#### Holy Week-You Are There

I've often looked at Holy Week as a lengthy play. It has several scenes, a plot that runs all the way through, times of conflict and times of reflection, times of sorrow and times of triumph. The road is long but the reward is great. I've had many non-Orthodox friends who have never been to church in between Palm Sunday and Easter. And there are many Orthodox who don't make much of the journey in between either. But the reward of the journey, the glory of the Resurrection, is found in making the Holy Week journey in as complete a way as possible. As one of our prayers says, “Through the cross, joy has come to all the world.” And there isn't much joy to be had at the Resurrection, if one hasn't endured the pain of the crucifixion.

In the Holy Week journey, you are there—each event of the week is commemorated in scripture, in hymn and in action. On Holy Wednesday, for example, we pray for healing,

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we chant about healing, and then we approach to be anointed for physical and spiritual healing. On Holy Thursday, we read about the Passion of Christ, we chant hymns about it, and we experience the procession of the Crucified Christ. This puts us back 2,000 years ago to Jerusalem. We feel the darkness and fear in the troubled city, we stand watch over the crucifixion, we make the midnight journey with the women to the empty tomb and we return to the church to proclaim the good news that Christ is risen from the dead.

What does this do for us? It reminds us what it is we believe. This is a one-week tutorial if you will on why the Crucifixion and Resurrection are important for our lives. It reaffirms our faith—it is a “shot in the arm” so to speak of enthusiasm for being a Christian, because the week ends on a positive note, and because the journey is shared with pilgrims like us. It provides a time of new beginnings—as we will sing on Pascha, “Let all things be forgiven in the Resurrection.”

### The Scenes of Holy Week

#### **Scene One—The Triumphal Entry**

Days: Saturday of Lazarus-Palm Sunday Morning

These two days provide a respite from the austerity and sadness of Great Lent. The Saturday of Lazarus commemorates the miracle of Jesus raising His friend Lazarus from the dead. And it is a foreshadowing of the general resurrection of the dead that is possible for all through Christ's Resurrection. Palm Sunday commemorates the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. Jesus enters the city on a donkey and is met by thousands of people who wave palm branches and sing praises to him.

Observations: The colors for these two days are lighter, generally white on Saturday of Lazarus because of this is a Resurrectional liturgy and green on Palm Sunday. The Divine Liturgy both days is that of St. John Chrysostom. Both days are joyful in tone and nature.

#### **Scene Two—The Early Days of Holy Week—the Final Teachings/Plotting the Betrayal**

Days: Palm Sunday evening through Holy Wednesday morning

As day changes to night on Palm Sunday, the joy of the morning fades to reflective sadness on what lies ahead. The journey of the next three days is a mixture of Christ telling His followers of the end times and to remain vigilant and narrative of the Chief Priests and the plot against Christ.

The Bridegroom services are actually Orthros (Matins) or morning services, celebrated the evening before by anticipation, i.e. the Orthros of Holy Monday is celebrated Palm Sunday evening by anticipation. The name of this service comes from the central figure in the well-known parable of the ten maidens (Mt. 25:1-13). The Kingdom of God is compared to the bridal feast and the Christ of the Passion is the Divine Bridegroom of the Church. The title Bridegroom also suggests the Parousia or Second Coming. The central hymn of these services is “Behold the Bridegroom comes in the middle of the night. . .” and is a reminder to all of us that we must be vigilant in our faith. On Palm Sunday evening, we have the procession of the icon of the Nymphios. The Nymphios service is also celebrated on Holy Monday in the evening and Holy Tuesday in the evening, and the choir will also sing the Hymn of Kassiane during the service Holy Tuesday evening.

Observations: The Icon of the Nymphios/Bridegroom, is carried in procession on Sunday evening and remains in the middle of the church sanctuary until after the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday morning. The Bridegroom service is held on Palm Sunday, Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday evenings with the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy being held on Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday and Holy Wednesday mornings. The colors worn at these services are traditionally purple and black. The lights are kept dim for these services. Last year, for the first time, we instituted the tradition of the “maidens” (taken from the aforementioned scripture) who keep vigil around the icon of Christ the Bridegroom.

#### **Scene Three—The Upper Room**

Days: Holy Wednesday Evening-Holy Thursday morning

The theme now changes to one of healing, as we commemorate the washing of the feet and the institution of the Holy Eucharist. On Holy Wednesday evening, we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Unction and on Holy Thursday morning, the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. The Mystery of Holy Unction is established upon the words and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a sacrament of healing and transformation from a bruised and hurt world to the deliverance from sin and corruption.

Observations: The Icon of the Last Supper is displayed at both services. Traditionally crimson or deep red is worn on Holy Thursday, symbolizing the blood of Christ instituted in the New Covenant of Holy Communion and shed for the life and salvation of the world on the Cross. The Divine Liturgy of Holy Thursday morning has a joyful tone to it.

#### **Scene Four—The Passion and Death of Christ**

Days: Holy Thursday evening, Good Friday morning and Good Friday afternoon

The journey of Holy Week now goes into high gear. We move from the upper room, to the Garden of Gethsemane, to the Betrayal, the Torture, the Trial, the road to Golgotha, the Crucifixion, Death and Burial of the Lord. Between these three services, 17 Gospel passages are read, almost half of the Holy Week total. The first Gospel on Holy Thursday evening is the long discourse and High Priestly Prayer of Christ and is a beautiful passage on love and friendship. The Procession of the Crucified Christ occurs after the fifth Gospel. The faithful have an opportunity to kneel and pray before the Cross. The service of the Hours on Good Friday morning is traditionally not well attended, which almost seems appropriate. Very few followers hung on to witness the Crucifixion of the Lord. Most fled to their homes. The service of the Hours has little fanfare or pageantry, but is a quiet vigil watching over the Lord on the Cross. The Vespers of the Descent of the Cross is a good service to attend particularly if you cannot attend the other two. It summarizes the events of the previous two services adding the burial of Christ in the tomb. The body of Christ is removed from the cross and wrapped in a white linen sheet. It is entombed on the altar table for the remainder of the service and is not put back up on the cross until the Ascension forty days after Pascha.

Observations: The vestments worn at these services are purple and black. Good Friday is the only day of the year when no Divine Liturgy can be held. Also no funeral services can be done on Good Friday—the only funeral is that of the Lord. The Icon displayed is the Icon of the Crucifixion.

#### **Scene Five—The Lamentations**

Day: Good Friday Evening

This is a service of transition between the sadness of Holy Thursday and the joy of the Resurrection. The color worn at this service is traditionally gold or red. The lights are turned up again for the first time since Palm Sunday. This service is highlighted by the singing of the Lamentations and the procession around the outside of the church with the tomb of the Lord. In terms of the Holy Week narrative, however, very little is covered. The Gospel is only 4 verses long and is a repeat of the 12th Gospel of Holy Thursday night. The Prophecy of Ezekiel and the Epistle reading from the book of Corinthians are important scriptural references. The icon displayed for this service is the icon of the Extreme Humility. It shows Christ going into the tomb with the cross in the background. *Many people flock to the Good Friday service for the “pageantry”—the Lamentations, the Procession, etc. In my opinion, while this is one of my favorite services in Holy Week to celebrate, it is not one of the most important. Certainly Holy Thursday evening, the Gospel narratives of the Passion and the Procession of the Crucified Christ rank of higher importance. So, while I encourage you to attend as many services of the week as possible, I would actually consider this service not as important as many others.*

## Scene Six—The Empty Tomb

Days: Holy Saturday Morning-Holy Saturday Evening-Easter Sunday

There are two Paschal Liturgies, that is two liturgies that commemorate the Resurrection of Christ. In the ancient church, there was an all-night vigil commemorating the Resurrection with the Vespers and Liturgy of St. Basil being held in the evening hours of Holy Saturday, the Resurrection Service at midnight, and the Orthros and Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom being held on Sunday morning. In recent centuries, this has been changed. The Resurrection service is still held at midnight. The Orthros and Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom follow immediately, from 12:30-2:00 a.m. And the Vespers and Liturgy of St. Basil have been transposed to Holy Saturday morning. Thus, we proclaim the Resurrection with “Arise o God,” “Anasta o Theos,” from the morning of Holy Saturday. The Holy Saturday morning Liturgy commemorates the first announcement of the Resurrection to those who were in Hades. Jesus Christ descended into Hades and bestowed eternal life to those who had been held captive there. The Resurrection Service and the Liturgy which follows commemorate the Resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Observations: The color for Pascha traditionally is White. On Holy Saturday morning, bay leaves are scattered throughout the church as a sign of Christ’s victory over Hades and death. Prophecies foretelling the Resurrection are read, including the Prophecy of Jonah and the whale (the three days Jonah spends in the belly of the whale foreshadow the three days of Christ in the tomb) and the Prophecy of Daniel (The three youths saved from the fiery furnace). The Liturgy of St. Basil follows. This is a longer liturgy than that of St. John Chrysostom. The Resurrection service begins with the chanting of the Canon of Good Friday at 11:00 p.m. This is a summary, if you will, of the events of Holy Week. There is an actual closing to the period of the Great Lent, where petitions are said for the well-being of the community as we close the Lenten season and anticipate the Resurrection. The Great and Holy Lent concludes with “Through the Prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us and save us.” This is traditionally how we end all the services in our church, except for those services between Easter and Ascension. “Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers. . .” will not be said again in the church until Ascension. The lights in the church are completely extinguished, except for the Vigil Candle on the Altar Table.

The priest lights his candle from a solitary light in the altar, the vigil candle that is in front of the tabernacle. He comes through the Royal Doors and chants “Come receive the Light, from the everlasting Light and glorify Christ, who is risen from the dead.” The light is then “passed” to all in the church. A procession is made outside to the empty tomb, where the Gospel of the Resurrection is read and we sing “Christos Anesti-Christ is Risen” proclaiming the Resurrection of Christ. We then return to the church and turn all the lights on, and celebrate the Divine Liturgy for the “feast of feasts” the Resurrection of our Lord.

Having celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the early hours of the morning, there is no Liturgy at 10:00 a.m. on Easter Sunday, ironically the only Sunday of the year where that is the case. On Easter Sunday morning, we celebrate the Agape Vespers from 11:00 a.m.-noon. This is a brief service where we chant “Christos Anesti” many times and read the Gospel in many languages. This is a reminder to us that we are to share the good news of the Resurrection of Christ to all peoples in all languages.

## THE HOLY WEEK PLAN

Here is an idea to help you get the most out of your Holy Week experience this year. *(Obviously it is the ideal to attend as many services as possible each year, because Holy Week is where we re-learn, re-live and recommit to the message of salvation that plays out in the services. For those who are retired or not working, this is a great opportunity to attend all of the Divine Services)* Here is a practical guide to celebrating Holy Week this year

**Choose at least one service from each scene, 1-4 and 6.** I consider scene five almost “optional.”

**Scene One**-Pick either Saturday of Lazarus or Palm Sunday, to experience the “joy” and

“hope” of these feastdays, as well as the temporary break from the austerity of Great Lent

**Scene Two**-Pick at least one of the early services of Holy Week, either an evening Bridegroom service or a morning Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and you’ll get a better understanding of the theme of watchfulness.

**Scene Three**-Pick either Holy Unction on Holy Wednesday or the Liturgy on Holy Thursday morning to experience healing and the Institution of the Holy Eucharist. Ideally, pick both so you can receive Holy Unction and Holy Communion

**Scene Four**-After the final scene of the Resurrection, SCENE FOUR is the most important. It is very important for us to stand with Christ as He hangs on the cross. Holy Thursday evening, Good Friday morning and Good Friday afternoon afford us this opportunity, so choose at least one of these to attend.

**Scene Five (optional)**—While one of the most popular services of Holy Week, Good Friday evening is not even one of the most important or moving. Come to this one only if you’ve done a good number of the other ones.

**Scene Six**—The victory scene—It is obviously most important, after the journey of Great Lent, to experience the joy of the resurrection. Pick either Holy Saturday morning, Holy Saturday evening or the Agape Vespers on Sunday morning.

## AND NOW A COUPLE OF WORDS ABOUT SUBSTANCE

As I said at the outset, no other Christian Church in the world has the FORM of the Orthodox when it comes to celebrating Holy Week—the processions, the pageantry, the vast amount of scripture readings, and the moving hymns. Unfortunately, for many, we almost worship for the form, forgetting the substance. This is apparent even in how we speak about the services. We say that on Holy Wednesday, we go to church to “get the oil.” Yet, it’s more than that—we go to be anointed for “healing of soul and body.” It’s so much more than getting the oil. We tend to focus on the “souvenirs” of Holy Week—That’s why many people come just to the services where they get to take something home, like oil on Holy Wednesday, or a flower on Good Friday or a Palm on Palm Sunday, but they don’t come to Holy Monday evening, or the Great Hours of Good Friday. Many people come to church on Easter who never come to church during the year, and they light their candle, sing Christos Anesti and think they’ve done a great thing.

The most important thing about Holy Week is the substance. The opportunity to receive Holy Communion 8 times in 9 days is an opportunity to keep ourselves in a perpetual state of readiness. Holy Wednesday is an opportunity to pray for our own physical and spiritual healing. Holy Thursday is an opportunity to kneel before the Cross of Christ, and leave anger and disappointment at the foot of His cross. The long Holy Week Book provides us an opportunity to relearn what it is we believe about Jesus Christ, salvation, heaven, the Resurrection and many other topics. Just about all of our theology in the Orthodox Church is found in the Holy Week Book.

So, make a Holy Week plan for yourself, invest some time in the form, open your heart to the substance, and I guarantee you will have a meaningful Holy Week journey. I’m looking forward to celebrating my tenth Holy Week and Pascha in Tampa and I wish all of you a blessed journey through Holy Week. May our journeys bring each of us spiritual comfort, refreshment and renewal, and may we rejoice in the Resurrection of Christ on Easter night and throughout the year.

Καλή Αναστασι!! Kali Anastasi! Let us have a good journey to the Resurrection of Christ!

With love in Christ,

+Fr. Stavros

# Guidelines for the Remainder of Great Lent and Holy Week

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, 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.***

**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.

**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.

# Holy Week Guidelines

**Saturday of Lazarus/Service of the Proskomide**—Father Stavros has received the blessings of Metropolitan Alexios to celebrate the service of the Proskomide on the solea once a year, on the Saturday of Lazarus. The Proskomide is the service where the bread and wine are prepared to be offered at the Divine Liturgy. On Saturday, April 12, Father Stavros will celebrate this service at 9:30 a.m., on the solea at St. John and will explain the service to those who are in attendance. He will also pray for everyone in attendance and offer a piece of bread on each person's behalf in the preparation of the Holy Communion. Please plan to come to this service to see this important aspect of the Liturgy which is not usually witnessed by the congregation. If you've never seen this service, it is really something you should do at least once in your lifetime.

**Making Palm Crosses**—Following Divine Liturgy on Saturday, April 12, we will be preparing the palm crosses for Palm Sunday, the following day. Please plan to stay for a while to decorate our church and make the palms as we do every year. No experience necessary. Come and we'll be happy to teach you. Breakfast will also be served.

**6:30 p.m. Starting Time for the Evening Services of Holy Week**—Last year, we began our evening services at 6:30 p.m. (with the exception of Good Friday Night which will still begin at 7:00 p.m.) and this was well-received. It is hoped with the earlier starting time, more people will attend the services, especially early in the week. Palm Sunday evening, Holy Monday evening and Holy Tuesday evening should be over by 8:00 p.m.

**Why are the services at night during Holy Week called Matins Services, even though they are taking place during the evening hours?** Traditionally, the morning service in the Orthodox Church is called the Matins, or Orthros service with the evening service known as the Vespers Service. Traditionally, the Matins or Orthros is done in the early morning hours, ending with the sunrise, when the Great Doxology (Glory to God who has shown us the light) is sung or read. The Orthros or Matins Services of Holy Week are VERY long—The Orthros of Good Friday lasts almost three and a half hours. Same thing with the Orthros of Holy Saturday. During the Middle Ages, the services were transposed ahead several hours, from the early morning hours to the evening of the preceding night. Thus, the Orthros of Good Friday was moved to Holy Thursday evening, and is the service we are familiar with, the 12 Gospels and the Procession of the Crucified Christ. The Lamentations, which is the Orthros of Holy Saturday, was moved from Saturday morning to Friday night. Thus, the Vespers services, like the Vespers Liturgy of Holy Thursday morning (which commemorates the Last Supper), was moved from Holy Thursday evening to Holy Thursday morning, where it currently is celebrated. Thus, our services commemorate events about 12 hours before they happened in real time, with the Last Supper Holy Thursday morning, the Crucifixion Holy Thursday evening, etc. The Descent from the Cross on Friday afternoon remains at its proper time, as a Vespers service, but the interval between the Vespers of Friday afternoon and the Orthros of Holy Saturday, which normally would be 12-15 hours, is only about 3 hours. The Resurrection Service takes place at the proper time. The schedule of transposing services begins Palm Sunday with

we celebrate Orthros and Liturgy in the morning, as we usually do, and celebrate the Orthros of Holy Monday on Palm Sunday evening. There is a vespers on Palm Sunday, which has been suppressed in modern usage.

**Holy Unction**—The Mystery of Holy Unction is established upon the words and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a sacrament of healing and transformation from a bruised and hurt world to the deliverance from sin and corruption. Holy Unction is a sacrament of the church. All sacraments of the church are administered by the priests of the church. In fact, the primary role and identity of the priests of the church is to be the celebrant of the sacraments. Because of this, Holy Unction may not be taken home. Father Stavros will anoint people who are unable to attend services on Holy Wednesday evening on Holy Thursday and Good Friday after each service, and will make such announcements at each of these services. For those unable to come to church, Father will be happy to come to your home and anoint those who are home-bound. And as for use throughout the year, Holy Unction is kept in the church year-round. If there is ever a time when you would like to be anointed, or have a loved one anointed, all you have to do is ask. TWO Holy Unction services will be held this year, on Wednesday, April 16, one at 3:00 p.m. for those with young children, and one at 6:30 p.m. for everyone else.

**Bridegroom Service for Last Supper**—There is actually a Bridegroom Service which is traditionally celebrated on Holy Wednesday evening. However, this service has been suppressed in most parishes because of the Sacrament of Holy Unction. This service, however, is important because it contains the Gospel lesson of the Last Supper. So, if you are not going to attend church on Holy Thursday morning, and would like to have a complete narrative of Holy Week, please plan to attend this brief service at 5:45 p.m. on Holy Wednesday, which will be celebrated before the evening's Holy Unction Service.

**Holy Thursday Evening**—The Service of the Passion—The service of the 12 Gospels and procession of the crucified Lord is the longest service of the Church year. On Holy Thursday, light and darkness, joy and sorrow are mixed. At the "upper room" and in Gethsemane the light of the kingdom and the darkness of hell come together. The way of life and the way of death converge. In many parishes this service is not very well attended. **However, one cannot truly celebrate the Resurrection if he/she has not stood at the foot of the cross of Christ.** As one prayer of the Sunday Orthros states, "Through the Cross, joy has come to all the world." Without the Crucifixion, there could be no Resurrection. Thus, after the Resurrection Service on Holy Saturday Night, one could argue that Holy Thursday evening is the next most-important service of Holy Week. *If you are unable to attend the entire service, then please come from 7:30-8:30 p.m., witness the Procession of the Crucified Lord, venerate His precious Body on the Cross and leave early. But please do not abandon the Lord as He hangs on the Cross.* **HOLY THURSDAY EVENING, AS YOU EXPERIENCED LAST YEAR FOR THOSE WHO ATTENDED IS THE MOST POWERFUL SERVICE OF THE ENTIRE HOLY WEEK, AND OF THE ENTIRE CHURCH YEAR.**

**An All-Night Vigil at the Cross of Christ**—Last year, we did our first

ever All-Night Vigil at the Cross of Christ. Those who participated found it VERY inspiring. I have included their comments from last year again with this issue of the Messenger so we can be inspired by their reflections as we prepare for this year's vigil. The vigil will begin following the service of the 12 Gospels and will continue until the service of the Royal Hours, so it will last from approximately 10:30 p.m. on Holy Thursday evening until 9:00 a.m. on Good Friday morning. We will have a sign up sheet for people to sign up for an hour or two to stand at the Cross and read from the book of Psalms as well as other prayer books. Charlie Hambos will again be coordinating this for us. If you are interested in participating at the All-Night Vigil on Holy Thursday, please contact either Fr. Stavros (frstav@gmail.com) or Charlie Hambos (Charlie.Hambos@gmail.com). A sign-up sheet will also be made available towards the end of Lent for this purpose as well.

**Good Friday**—Decoration of the Epitaphios will be done in church following the Royal Hours on Good Friday (about 11:00 a.m.) All are invited to come and help decorate the tomb of Christ. Please, however, work quietly—this job is meant to be solemn not social.

**Sunday School Retreat**—We will again be having a retreat for our Sunday School children (please see enclosed flyer) from 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. The church will also be open throughout the day for those who wish to sit and pray.

**Apokathelosis**—The Service of Apokathelosis (literally, the Un-Nailing) re-enacts the narrative of Christ descending from the Cross. The figure of Christ is removed from the cross and wrapped in a new linen cloth, carried into the sanctuary and placed on the altar table. In the same service, a procession with the Epitaphios (embroidery of the dead Christ) is made around the interior of the church, and the Epitaphios is placed in the Kouvouklion (tomb of Christ). This year, we will celebrate the Apokathelosis at 3:00 p.m.

**The Lamentations and the Epitaphios Procession**—The Lamentations are short, poetic verses lamenting the Passion, Death and Burial of Christ. Interspersed with the Lamentations are Psalm verses from Psalm 119, the same verses we sing at a funeral service, which is appropriate, as the Lamentations are the funeral service for the Lord. The service starts with the Canon, and after the Canon is complete, the priest opens the Royal Doors, the lights are turned up, and the Lamentations begin. Everyone is invited to sing together. Books will be provided for your use. The outdoor procession of the tomb of our Lord will take place, weather permitting, at the Service of the Lamentations. We invite all the faithful to participate in this procession by proceeding in an order, quiet and dignified manner befitting the solemnity of this occasion. Please, refrain from conversing with others or acting in a way which will bring attention to you instead of the dead Lord. Please sing along with the choir—don't check your cell phone for messages. This is a time to pray, not to text message! Everyone will pass under the Epitaphios, symbolizing the passing from death to life, re-enter the church quietly and await the resumption of the service. Finally, everyone will be given a flower from the Epitaphios as a blessing at the end of the service.

**Anastasis Service**—The service of the Anastasis will begin at 11:00 p.m. on Holy Saturday evening, with the chanting of the Canon. Shortly be-

fore midnight, the light of the Resurrected Christ will be given to all the faithful. We will then go outside, weather permitting, to read the Easter Gospel and sing the Christos Anesti for the first time. Please proceed outside in an orderly manner so that we can complete this service in a timely manner. We will then proceed back into the church for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. **Please plan to stay for the entirety of the Divine Liturgy on Easter. Please don't leave early. Plan from now to stay for the entire Liturgy, the most joyous Liturgy of the year, and to receive Holy Communion. After all, we don't break our fast with meatballs and cheese, but with Holy Communion.** There will be a reception following the Divine Liturgy for all in attendance, in the Kourmolis Center. After making the journey through Holy Week together, what better way to continue our celebration than to sit down as a family and break bread together on the greatest feast day of the church year.

**Blessing of Baskets of Food**—It is the Orthodox Tradition on Easter that we do not only bless eggs but other types of food that will go on the table for the Easter Banquet. Though this practice has become sort of dormant in the Greek Orthodox Church, it is very much alive in other Orthodox jurisdictions. Therefore, if anyone wishes to bring a basket of food to be blessed on Easter night, they may come and place it beneath or around the table on the Solea where the basket of Easter eggs will be.

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

**Holy Communion to be given only in context of the Divine Liturgy**—The are eight opportunities to receive Holy Communion during Holy Week—Saturday of Lazarus, Palm Sunday, Holy Monday morning, Holy Tuesday morning, Holy Wednesday morning, Holy Thursday morning, Holy Saturday morning, and of course, at the Paschal Divine Liturgy on Easter.. Please plan to receive Holy Communion through prayer and fasting at as many of these services as possible. Incidentally, a person may receive Holy Communion each time it is offered. For instance, you can receive Holy Communion on both Holy Saturday morning and at the Anastasis. For those who have kept the entire Lenten fast, you can receive Holy Communion conceivably, all eight times during Holy Week. Since there are so many opportunities to receive Holy Communion during the Divine Liturgies of Holy Week, **Holy Communion will only be given in the context of the Divine Liturgy**, not before or after. (no drive through Communion) Also, even if we receive Holy Communion on Holy Thursday or Holy Saturday, we should not break the fast until the conclusion of the Easter Liturgy. When receiving Holy Communion, it is important and necessary to have celebrated the entire Liturgy. Please no phone calls about what time is Communion, so you can duck in and out quickly. Come for the entire service. Be there for the invitation to enter the Kingdom, be there for the reading of the Gospel,

the reciting of the Creed. And after Communion, don't just take your Communion and run, as many people will do on Holy Saturday morning, stay the remaining minutes of the services and pray the prayers of Thanksgiving in the back of the Liturgy book.

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

**The same thing goes for fasting—if you are on medication, are sick, are pregnant or nursing, you do not need to fast before Holy Communion—follow the directions of your doctor. Again, fasting is designed for our spiritual benefit, not as a threat to our health.**

**Holy Week Books are available for sale in the church bookstore.** The Holy Week Book contains the words and hymns of all the Holy Week services and will serve not only as an aid to worship but as a complete theology book, for the services of Holy Week contain all the theology of the Orthodox Church. These books are well made and will last forever, so get yours today and get more out of your Holy Week experience.

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

**No Kneeling until Pentecost**—It is actually the Tradition in the Orthodox Church that we not kneel on Sundays in honor of the Resurrection of Christ (exceptions being if you are receiving the sacrament of confession on a Sunday, or are present at an ordination on a Sunday). Because

we do not worship on a daily basis in our church communities, priests have encouraged people to kneel on Sundays, the thought being that if we do not kneel on Sundays, that we'll never kneel in church. It is a Tradition, that for 50 days after Pascha, we do not kneel in honor of the Resurrection. The next time we will kneel after April 19 is on the Feast of Pentecost (June 8 of this year), after the liturgy, at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says "Again and again on bended knees let us pray to the Lord." Until you hear that petition, do not kneel from April 20-June 8.

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

**Feast of St. George-to be celebrated April 23 this year**—St. George the "Trophy Bearer" is one of the most famous saints of our church. He lived in the third century. He was a soldier, famously memorialized in icons as slaying a dragon. Symbolically, he "slayed" the "dragons" that opposed Christianity and was martyred for his faith. His relics were placed in the altar of our church when it was consecrated in 1986. St. George's feast day is celebrated on April 23 (or the Monday after Pascha if Pascha falls on or after April 23). Thus, this year, we will celebrate his feastday on its correct liturgical date, which will be Bright Wednesday, April 23.

**Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain-Friday after Pascha**—Commemorates the consecration of a Chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which was built over a spring in Constantinople, that emitted water with healing powers. Hundreds of miracles and healings have occurred at this spring. This feast day of "Zodochos Peghe", the Feast of the life-giving Fountain, is always celebrated on the Friday of Bright (Renewal) week, the week after Pascha, April 25, this year.

**Doing it all**—The experience of attending all the Holy Week services is rare indeed. But if you are able to do it—if you are not currently working, or are retired, this is a beautiful experience everyone should try at least once in their life. How often do you have the opportunity to receive Holy Communion 8 times in 9 days, to be within 12 hours of having received or receiving again for a week! How often do you have the opportunity to attend two services a day for a week! For a very uplifting and unique experience, if your schedule allows, please consider coming to all the services—as a priest, I go to all the services—I know the effort, the fatigue, the pain, but also the joy that only comes when you "do them all."

# Comments on our First All Night Vigil at the Cross from those who took part

**Victoria Melton**-Holy Thursday's Passion service is truly the most moving service for the life of an Orthodox Christian. I never thought anything would ever compare to that night each year. I participated in, what was the first "vigil" at St. John's---in the wee hours of the morning, under the direction of Charlie Hambos. It was truly beautiful and so moving! At the foot of the cross, there was silence, there was peace, there was faith, hope and Love---there was Jesus my friend and savior. The reading of Psalms all alone, keeping watch over Jesus, warmed my heart...it was a feeling that I had finally done something worthy with Jesus by my side, something that left me with comfort and great hope and reassurance through solid prayer, it's a feeling I will never forget and, God willing, I will hope to repeat again!

**Mary Maas**-Looking specifically at the vigil on Thursday night, two words : grace and strength. When I arrived in the early morning, I was very tired, feeling weak and worthless. The half dozen people that were there gave me strength seeing the love in numbers. People really cared...really wanted to pray...wanted to be with Jesus and each other....isn't this what heaven will be like. The longer I stayed and listened to the psalms I became more awake, aware, and feeling like this is what our church is capable of being. Soldiers guarding our Lord with our love and prayer. As I took my turn reading the psalter, I was amazed at how physically strong I felt, standing a few hours ago was painful...now no pain. My voice was weak and thin, yet as I read I felt strength and conviction in the bible truths. The gifts of strength and grace came from our crucified Lord who gave all His strength and His All, for all of us. In my weakness He gave His strength, to do His work. He gave His Life, His Grace to fill the church with prayer for all of us. Christ Is Risen....He Is Risen Indeed. Thank you to Charlie and all the vigil participants who shared in a labor of love and grace. Thank you Fr. Stavros for trusting your people to keep the Lord's vigil.

**Pam Irwin**-I suppose you could say I was not part of the first night vigil since I showed up at 6:00 a.m. in the morning! However, it was a pretty interesting experience. When I arrived there were about five people there besides Charlie and one of them was reading the Psalms. We sat there and listened and I followed along in my copy of the Psalms. Shortly after that, it was my turn to read the Psalms and I enjoyed doing it for the few that were there. I said a short prayer at the cross and left around 6:50 as I had to get to school. I think the vigil is a great idea and one that the church should do again - and maybe at other times as well, not just Holy Week.

**Anastasia Garcia**-I found reading the Psalms at the foot of the cross was truly a gift of immeasurable worth. It was an honor to stand on the alter and pray such profound prayers that glorified our lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The experience seemed to elevate my relationship with Him to a deeper and even more personal level. I am sure I will participate again next year and enthusiastically encourage others to take advantage of this blessed opportunity.

**Donna Hambos**-The night of the Vigil had arrived and thinking Charlie needed company I thought it would be great if his 14 year old brother spent the night together. They packed items they would need and we traveled to St. John's. "Make sure you lock the door, try to get some sleep and drink plenty of water were my "earthly words of advice. Praying for their safety I traveled home. I planned to read at 8:00am and arrived with Joe to find his brothers in wonderful shape. George explained that no matter where he rested in the church upon opening his eyes he always saw Jesus first. I went to the podium which faced the Cross and alter and began reading Psalm 112. All of a sudden it was just me

and the Cross. The surrounding area was gone along with the people and the children I worry so much about...The feeling was like nothing I have experienced before. Feeling myself growing more and more emotional I began to read Psalm 113, 'He makes the barren women to be a homemaker and a joyful mother of children. Praise the Lord' I began to cry and was so overwhelmed with the realization how powerful yet all loving our God is and through the crucifixion of His Son we truly receive salvation with a life beyond all words awaiting for us in his kingdom. Charles approached and stood by my side but I could not read on. In just a few minutes with just a few words I felt all that was needed to know. I have not gone by a day without wonderment and peace when thinking of my time at the Cross. I am trying my best to live how I feel and should with God's help of course!

P.S. A wonderful experience that I encourage all to try.

**Michael Conner**-For an hour during the quiet of the night, I had the privilege to join like minded Christians as we separated ourselves from the world and held vigil at the foot of the cross. In the quiet of the sanctuary, we listened to the Psalms. The verses spoke of the righteous man being reviled and despised. For me personally, I was overjoyed to share this time with my son's Nouna and my Daughters Nouno. I don't know of anything more meaningful then to celebrate Easter knowing that my children have the love and support of this extended family.

**Greg Melton**-Participating in the vigil psalm readings from 4 to 5AM was a very small sacrifice of my time that generated great returns to me personally. Feeling God's unconditional love, total peace of mind and heart, the comfort of the solitude time with our Lord, strengthened my faith and totally fulfilled me. Reading psalms at the feet of our Lord Jesus Christ and being able to thank Him for the pain and suffering he endured to save all of us from our sins was a moment in my life that I cherish and will have an impact on my spirituality for the rest of my life. I hope to have the opportunity to participate again next year during the wonderful holy week period. Special thanks to Charlie for his passion, leadership and guidance during the vigil.

**Betty Katherine Palios**-In our overly connected world, there are few times to find solace and peace in our everyday life unless we seek them out. Even for myself, (who never wanted, but somehow recently purchased an I-phone), find that I check my email every time I have a lull in my day. It was beautiful entering the church in the early morning darkness with my brother-in-law and cousin. The only focus was Jesus on the cross on the solea. I had been reading the psalms during lent, and when it was my turn to read, I read a psalm that really related to exactly what I had been praying for during lent, but hadn't realized when I read the first time. Maybe I was more focused reading out loud in front of the cross. I jogged home from church and watched the sunrise over the bay and thought about how I felt like my prayer had been heard, which gave me a great sense of peace. Thank you to Charlie for organizing this special event!

**Debbie Kavouklis**-The vigil was the highlight of my Holy Week! How awesome to stand at the cross of Jesus and read from Psalms. I have no idea how long I read as I got lost in what I was doing. The feelings were overwhelming realizing how much we are loved. We were given the ultimate sacrifice of his precious son! I felt moved and felt God's presence that night and I am going to continue to seek his love and spirit and look forward to next years vigil! I can't wait.



# Receiving the Light from the True Light

By Charlie Hambos

Christ is Risen! When we as Orthodox Christians approach the time of the Great Fast, the only thing I can think about is the Light of Christ that we will receive at Pascha. We fast in order to prepare to receive this light. Where does this light come from? In the Gospel Reading that is read during the Divine Liturgy immediately after the Resurrection service, we hear from John 1:17, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was God...."

In this Gospel Reading we begin to see how John refers to Jesus Christ as the light. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:4-5) Jesus Christ is the life and the light of men. He is the light that shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot beat it. Christ says this himself in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." As Christians, we are bearers of this light and therefore we are to shine as light in the darkness. Let's go back to verse 5, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." In the original Greek, the word translated unto "over come" is *katalambanein*. In the New Jerusalem Bible, the translation reads, "And the light shines in darkness, and darkness could not overpower it." Another English translation says, "darkness could not understand it."

There is something about this verse that is very encouraging, regardless of the translation. All three ways give us a glimpse as to how powerful the light is. It is interesting to think that the darkness could not overpower the light. It is even more thought provoking to think that the darkness could not "understand" the light. So what does this mean? Basically, as Christians we must have faith that the light that we have in Christ, will not allow the darkness to take over. It reminds me of a quote from a famous little book I read recently called *The Little Prince*. "When a mystery is too overpowering, one dare not disobey." The light of Christ is too overpowering for the darkness. Therefore, we must obey Christ.

Is it that easy? We all live in the world. We know the answer. No, it isn't easy. This is the reason why we receive the light of Christ at Pascha every year. We need to be reminded that Christ is the light of the world and we, as Christians carry that light. We have to believe in Jesus Christ. In Chapter 3 of the Gospel of John we get more of the light and darkness dichotomy when Christ is speaking with Nicodemus, who seeks Christ at night. In John 3:18-21 it says, "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 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."

The key in this passage comes from the last couple verses that speak about those practicing evil and how they hate the light. When we do evil things or bad things, do we want people to know about them? No way. We would rather do it behind closed doors. We run away from the light because sometimes it is just too bright and instead of being a source of refreshment and renewal, it ends up being something that burns us. Obviously, this is not the ideal. As Christians, we believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God. "For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that who ever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16). We must be inspired then to want to walk in the light. The darkness that we have inside us due to sin, will never overpower the light of Christ. It will only be a matter of time before our deeds are exposed. Again, we must want to dwell in the light of Christ. Not to mention, we have the responsibility of caring the light of Christ to the rest of the world.

So what do we do? For a good first step, let us run in the footsteps of the patron saint of our church, St. John the Baptist. In the Gospel of John, in the same reading heard during the Pascha Divine Liturgy, we learn of John the Baptist's role in observing the light of Christ. In John 1:6-9 it says, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world." What was John the Baptists supposed to do? He was to bear witness to the Christ, the light of the world. Let us do the same as St. John the Baptist and be reminded at Pascha that we are to bear witness and to carry the light of Christ that we receive as Christians. May Christ, the true light, enlighten and sanctify all of us. Amen.

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



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# Pascha not Easter

## By Fr. Michael Diavatis

Language, while admittedly being a fluid and dynamic entity, guides our thoughts and lives. There is meaning, and often a story, behind every word. In this day and age, even though we have many linguistics tools at our disposal, we have lost the meanings of many important words. We frequently use words in our every day language unaware of their origin and true meaning. In addition to this, we also “go through the motions” in our religious lives unaware of the reality and meaning behind traditions and rituals. As a result, I would like to encourage us to step away from uninformed use of a misunderstood word, namely that of “Easter,” and to use the didactic and international word “Pascha” when we speak to each other concerning the Resurrection of Christ.

The word “Easter” is derived from the name Eostre (a.k.a. Eastre, Oatare, Eastur, and many more derivations). Eostre was a pagan fertility goddess who was often symbolized in the form of a bunny. The Easter Bunny also comes from her symbol.

How then does Pascha fit into the story? First of all, Pascha is not originally a Greek word. Pascha is derived from the Hebrew pesach which means Passover. In the days of Moses, the Hebrews (God’s chosen people), were enslaved by Pharaoh and their cries rose up to heaven. God sent Moses (τυπος Χριστου type of Christ) to deliver them from slavery to freedom in the Promised Land. Pharaoh did not wish to let God’s people go, so God delivered upon Pharaoh and all Egypt ten Plaques. The tenth plague was the most grievous. As we read in Exodus chapter 12:12, “I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.” In order for God’s people to be saved from this terrible event, each household was to take a lamb and sacrifice it to the Lord, and with a hyssop branch they were to sprinkle some blood of the lamb upon the lintel and the two doorposts; “For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you (Exodus 12:23).” Thus God’s people were saved by the blood of the lamb, and thereafter delivered from slavery to freedom.

Now Moses, as we have said, was a type of Christ. That is to say Moses really lived and did what the Bible says he did, but he also foreshadowed Jesus Christ as a “deliverer.” The Passover event of the Old Testament

foreshadowed and outlined that which was to come; the Lord’s Pascha, the greatest event in the history of the world. Jesus Christ is “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).” Just as God’s people were saved by the blood of the lamb and delivered from slavery to freedom, so too are we saved by the blood of the Lamb of God who ascended the cross of His own free will for our salvation, and hence delivered us from slavery to sin and death to freedom in His kingdom.

This is not an “American vs. Greek” debate. It is a matter of spiritual education and development, and being proud of our Orthodox Christian faith. The only languages to utilize the term “Easter” are English and German. “In most Christian countries, the word for Easter reflects its origins in the Jewish Passover which is called pesach in Hebrew. Thus, in both Greek and Latin the word is pascha and in Italian it is Pasqua. French has Pâques, Spanish has Pascua, and the Dutch is pask.” Fr. Michael Harper wrote “In our increasingly secular and pagan society the use of a pagan word, of which no one knows the meaning, is hardly suitable to describe the greatest day in the Christian year. When most people knew the Christian meaning of the word “Easter” one could perhaps make out a case for using the word. But not today!” Pascha really is not a foreign word. You can look it up any English dictionary. It is a universal Christian word meant to convey the reality that Christ rose from the dead. “This is the day of Resurrection let us be radiant O people, Pascha the Lords’ Pascha. For Christ our God has passed us from death to life and from earth to heaven we who sing the song of victory (Eirmos from Ode 1 of the Paschal canon).” And what is the song of Victory? Christ is risen from the dead, by death He has trampled upon death, and on those in the tombs He is bestowing life!”

May Christ our Risen God grant unto us every blessing during Paschal season. Christos Anesti! Christ is Risen! El Messieh Kahm! Christos Voskrese! Hristus A Inviat! Khristos Voskrese! Hristos Vaskrese!



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# Liturgical Schedule for April 2014

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.

Saturday, April 12-Sunday, April 20—Please see separate Holy Week Schedule which follows

Wednesday, April 23      Feast of St. George  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday, April 25      Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain (Zodochos Peghe)  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, April 27      Sunday of St. Thomas  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (Thomas Shearer, Alexios Diniaco, Nicholas Alsina, Antonio Bavaro, William Sotiropoulos)  
Ushers: Florin Patrasciou, Kevin Fentress, John Alexander  
Coffee Hour: Parish Picnic—Ballast Point Park

Sunday May 4      Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women  
Orthros 8:45 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: Nick Kavouklis, Perry Katsamakis, Peter Theophanous  
Coffee Hour: Young at Heart



# Schedule of Ushers/Altar Boys for Holy Week

Saturday, April 12	Saturday of Lazarus	Divine Liturgy	10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (Thomas Shearer, Alexios Diniaco, Nicholas Alsina, Antonio Bavaro, William Sotiropoulos)			
Sunday, April 13	Palm Sunday	Divine Liturgy	9:45 a.m.
Ushers: Mike Trimis, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis			
Altar Boys: Captains only: Aris Rogers, Nicholas Kavouklis, Yonathan Alem, Mihail Kaburis, Val Courialis, Savvas Ferekides, Peter Hanhan, Christopher Scarfogliero, Tyler Shanahan, George Hambos			
Coffee Hour: Philoptochos Palm Sunday Luncheon			
Sunday, April 13	Palm Sunday	Service of the Bridegroom	6:30 p.m.
Ushers: Amin Hanhan			
Altar Boys: St. Matthew (Karter Lenardos, Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, Brigham Sibley, Benny Hidermichel, James Kavouklis)			
Monday, April 14	Holy Monday	Service of the Bridegroom	6:30 p.m.
Ushers: Florin Patrasciou			
Altar Boys: St. Mark (Kohn Karamitsanis, Lukas, Karamitsanis, Andrew Mellon-Lynn, Dominic Garcia, Demetri Karounos, Grayson Borgeas)			
Tuesday, April 15	Holy Tuesday	Service of the Bridegroom	6:30 p.m.
Ushers: Tom Georgas			
Altar Boys: St. Luke (Christos Nenos, Dean Mitseas, Nicholas Katzaras, James Katzaris, Nicholas Yotis)			
Wednesday, April 16	Holy Wednesday	Holy Unction	3:00 p.m.
Ushers: Tom Georgas, Greg Tisdale			
Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve			
Wednesday, April 16	Holy Wednesday	Holy Unction	6:30 p.m.
Ushers: Tom Georgas, Amin Hanhan, John Alexander, Kevin Fentress			
Altar Boys: Captains and St. John			
Thursday, April 17	Holy Thursday	12 Gospels	6:30 p.m.
Ushers: Christopher Kavouklis, Brett Mourer, Ed Gerecke, Perry Katsamakis			
Altar Boys: Captains only			
Friday, April 18	Good Friday	Apokathelosis	3:00 p.m.
Ushers: Tom Georgas, Greg Tisdale			
Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew			
Friday, April 18	Good Friday	Lamentations	7:00 p.m.
Ushers: John Alexander, John Tsibris, Peter Theophanous, George Trimikliniotis and Entire Parish Council			
Outside Candles: Pete Trakas, Nick Kavouklis, Demetri Halkias			
Altar Boys: Captains only			
Saturday, April 19	Holy Saturday	Divine Liturgy	8:45 a.m.
Ushers: Tom Georgas, George Mitseas			
Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark			
Saturday, April 19	PASCHA	Resurrection Service	11:00 p.m.
Ushers: Florin Patrasciou, Jason Pill, Peter Theophanous, Brett Mourer and Entire Parish Council			
Outside Candles: Perry Katsamakis, Mike Trimis, Chris Kavouklis			
Altar Boys: Captains only			
Sunday, April 20	PASCHA	Agape Vespers	11:00 a.m.
Ushers: Greg Tisdale, George Mitseas			
Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke			
Coffee Hour: Paschal Reception—Parish Council			

## HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SCHEDULE FOR 2014

April 12 **Saturday of Lazarus**-Commemoration of the raising of Lazarus from the dead

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

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

\*Fr. Stavros will celebrate the service of the Proskomide, the Preparation of the Holy Communion on the solea at 9:30 a.m.

GOYA and Sunday School students are requested to attend to help in preparing the crosses for Palm Sunday, after Liturgy.

April 13 **Palm Sunday**-The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

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

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

Procession of the Icon of the Nymphios

Theme: Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church; watchfulness

April 14 **Holy Monday**

**9th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.**

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

Theme: The Parable of the Talents

April 15 **Holy Tuesday**

**9th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.**

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

The Choir will sing the Hymn of Kassiane

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

April 16 **Holy Wednesday**

**9th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.**

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

**Matins of Holy Thursday-Reading of the Gospel of Last Supper 5:45 p.m.**

**Holy Unction for Adults 6:30-8:00 p.m.**

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

April 17 **Holy Thursday**

**Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 9:30-11:00 a.m.**

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

Reading of the 12 Gospels, Procession of the Crucified Christ

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

All-Night Vigil will follow the service

April 18 **Good Friday**

**Reading of the Royal Hours 9:00-11:00 a.m.** Standing vigil at the Cross of Christ

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

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

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

**Procession with the Epitaphios**

April 19 **Holy Saturday**

**Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 8:45-11:00 a.m.**

Reading of Prophecies foretelling the Resurrection of Christ

**Great Canon 11:00 p.m.**

May 5 **PASCHA**

**The Service of the Resurrection of Christ-Midnight**

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

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

**AGAPE Vespers 11:00 a.m.-noon**

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

Easter Egg Hunt for Children NOON

## ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΟΣ-2014

Σάββατο, 12 Απριλίου Σάββατο του Λαζαρου

Ορθρος 8:30-9:30 π.μ.

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

Θεία Λειτουργία 10:00-11:15 π.μ.

Κυριακή, 13 Απριλίου

Ορθρος 8:30 π.μ.

Ακολουθία Νυμφιου

Κυριακή των Βαίων

Θεία Λειτουργία 9:45 π.μ.

6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Δευτέρα, 14 Απριλίου

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

Ακολουθία Νυμφιου

Μεγάλη Δευτέρα

6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Τρίτη, 15 Απριλίου

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

Ακολουθία Νυμφιου

Μεγάλη Τρίτη

6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Τετάρτη, 16 Απριλίου

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

Ακολουθία Ευαγγελιον για τα παιδια

3:00-4:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία Νυμφιου

5:45-6:30 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία Ευαγγελιον

6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Πέμπτη, 17 Απριλίου

Θεία Λειτουργία του Αγίου Βασιλείου

Ακολουθία Σταυρωσεως

Μεγάλη Πέμπτη

9:30-11:00 π.μ.

6:30-10:00 μ.μ.

Παρασκευή, 18 Απριλίου

Οι Βασιλικές Ωρες

Αποκαθηλωσις

Επιταφιος Θρηνος

Μεγάλη Παρασκευή

9:00-11:00 π.μ.

3:00-4:15 μ.μ.

7:00-10:30 μ.μ.

Σάββατο, 19 Απριλίου

Θεία Λειτουργία του Αγίου Βασιλείου

Ο Κανων

Ακολουθία της Αναστασεως

Θεία Λειτουργία της Αναστασεως

Μεγαλο Σάββατο

8:45-11:00 π.μ.

11:00 μ.μ.

Μεσανυχτα

12:30-2:15 π.μ.

Κυριακή, 20 Απριλίου

Μεγας Εσπερινος της Αγαπης

Αγιον Πασχα

11:00 π.μ.

Τετάρτη, 23 Απριλίου

Ορθρος 9:00 π.μ.

Αγιος Γεωργιος

Θεία Λειτουργία 10:00 μ.μ.

# 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.

April 13	Palm Sunday	Palm strips/branches	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	Flowers for Icon of Last Supper
April 17	Holy Thursday	Wreath for Top of Cross	\$250
	Holy Thursday	Wreaths for bottom of Cross (2)	\$150 each
	Holy Thursday	Scattered flowers at base of cross	\$50
	Holy Thursday	Candles for Top of Cross (3)	\$15 each
April 18	Good Friday	8 Bags Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers	\$50
	Good Friday	Flowers for Epitaphios	several donors needed
	Good Friday	Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Apokathelosis	\$15 each
	Good Friday	Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Lamentations	\$15 each
	Good Friday	Icon of Extreme Humility	\$75
April 20	PASCHA	Flowers for Icon of Resurrection	\$75
		Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb	\$75
		Silk Flowers for Royal Doors	\$100
		Easter Lillies	\$25 per plant

## New Office Protocol

Our parish is very fortunate to have Debbie Bowe as our Administrative Assistant. During the past several months, Debbie has also worn the "book-keeper" hat as we try to sort out this position. This is a time of transition in the office, as we are not only having one person temporarily doing two jobs, but we are also trying to create some new ways of doing things that will eventually make us more efficient. Additionally, this is the busiest time of year as far as traffic through the office.

**If you wish to meet with Fr. Stavros**, please call the office to set up an appointment. When not meeting with parishioners, Father fills his days preparing for parish programs and Bible studies, doing correspondence and other administrative work. He is happy to meet with any of our parishioners but requests that these meetings be by appointment.

**If your time with Debbie is going to be more than a few minutes, please also make an appointment**—Debbie does a lot of work assisting not only Father Stavros but the Parish Council and the other ministries of the church. Like everyone who works, she schedules her tasks daily. If you have a need to meet with Debbie to go over information for a particular ministry or event, please also contact her to set up an appointment.

We are trying to make the office more efficient so that we can serve you, our community, more efficiently. When people "drop by" for a few minutes which becomes many minutes that puts the office behind task and creates inefficiency. Again, we seek to serve the needs of everyone, but ask that we work to do it efficiently. Thank you.

# Stewardship

## 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.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Hebrews 13:2

## Some Stewardship Nuts and Bolts

**If our church was a body, stewardship is the hands that do the work** - If you compared our church to the human body, stewardship is the hands of the body. The ears hear the faith, the eyes behold the holy images of the church, the mouth prays and received the Holy Gifts, the mind interprets what is heard and the heart internalizes faith. The feet carry the message, but it is the hands that do the work of the church. The hands provide the talent that runs the ministries of the church. The hands utilize talents, that produce income, a portion of which is donated back to the church in thanksgiving for those talents. So, our church needs your hands, to do the work of the church, and to support the work of the church. It needs your hands to do the work that you can do, and it needs your hands to support the work of the church that you cannot do—i.e. the work of the priest, maintaining the buildings, etc. A body without hands can think and can see and can hear but it will be challenged when it comes to doing. A church without hands is the same thing—we need to hear, we need to see, we need to pray but we need to do.

**An Important Reminder on Stewardship Checks**—If you pay your stewardship with a check (whether you deposit it in the tray or mail it to the church), PLEASE WRITE “STEWARDSHIP 2014” on the memo line. If a check put in the tray or in the narthex does not have “stewardship” or some iteration therein on the memo line, ushers place it with the candle money or the tray money. Again, for accounting purposes, please write “stewardship” in the memo line on all checks that are written to the church for this purpose. Thank you.

**The only way to count how many people we have is by how many forms we have**—The number of people listed below, 258, is the number of families we can currently say we have. There are a lot of families who attend our church on a regular basis, and even participate in the ministries, but we have not received your pledge form yet. Your pledge form is the only way we can know how many people we have and how much time, talent and treasure that we can count on. So, if you have not pledged yet, if you haven’t filled out a form for 2014, please do so today.

**We’re closing in our goal but we need to reach it in order to know we’ll meet our budget and bring Charlie Hambos back!!!**—In our budget this year, we budgeted for receive \$400,000 on stewardship income. We also budgeted to have a pastoral assistant added to our personnel, and that person is our own Charlie Hambos. In order to bring Charlie back here, we have to know that we have enough income to pay him. So, please help us reach our stewardship goal of \$400,000, insuring that our church can take the next step in bringing a pastoral assistant to bring needed help to our ministries.

### Stewardship Update (as of March 15)

	2014	2013
Stewardship Goal	\$400,00	\$300,000
Total Pledged	\$372,034	\$254,387
Number of Families Pledged	258	201

*If you have pledged for 2014, we sincerely thank you for your support of our church. If you have not pledged for 2014, we ask that you please do so today. If you need a pledge form, please contact the church office and we’ll be happy to send you one today. As you can see, we are ahead of last year’s pledged amount (good) but behind last year’s pledged number of families. Please make your stewardship pledge TODAY if you haven’t done so. Thanks!*



# 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.

## There will be no small groups during Holy Week

### **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.)

**April meeting dates:** April 1, 8, 22 and 29 (Attending Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Tuesday, April 15)

### **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.

**April Meeting Dates:** April 2, 9, 23, and 30

**South Tampa Mixed Group (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.

**April Meeting Dates:** April 1, 8, 22 and 29

**North Tampa Mixed Group (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.

**April Meeting Dates:** April 1, 8 22 and 29

**East Tampa Mixed Group (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.

**April Meeting Dates:** April 1, 8, 22 and 29

### **Young Adult Group (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).

**April Meeting Dates:** April 2 and 9 (at the church after Pre-Sanctified Liturgy), April 23 and 30 at a home TBA



# COMMUNITY NEWS

**Special Parish Council Election held**-A special Parish Council election was held on March 9, in order to fill three openings on the Parish Council. The following people were elected: Ed Gerecke and Sandra Pappas (who will serve in 2014-2015) and Michael Kafantaris, who will serve out the remainder of a one-year term in 2014 pending ratification from the Metropolis Office.

**A Big Thank You to Garden of Memories/Myrtle Hill Cemeteries** who allowed our church to use the mausoleum chapel at Garden of Memories Memorial Park FREE of charge for a Divine Liturgy on Saturday of the Souls for the second year in a row. Approximately 40 parishioners attended the Liturgy and afterwards accompanied Father Stavros to bless the graves of their loved ones. We will continue to make this an annual tradition. If you missed it this year, please come join us next year.

**Ushers Meeting**-A Meeting for all ushers will be held on Sunday, April 6, following Divine Liturgy, in the Zaharias Room. All ushers are requested to attend. Tom Georgas is the Head Usher for our parish and we will be re-organizing the groups as well as going over the procedures for Holy Week. Are you interested in serving as an usher? We are looking for some more people to serve in this capacity. If so, please come to the meeting on April 6. If you are on the list as an usher and do not wish to serve in this capacity, please notify Tom Georgas at [Georgas@verizon.net](mailto:Georgas@verizon.net).

**Luminaries for Good Friday and Easter**-The GOYAns of our parish will be selling Luminaries, votive candles, for Good Friday and Easter. These are little bags with votive candles inside that line the way of the procession of Christ's tomb around the church on Good Friday and which are lit around the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. On each bag can be written the names of loved ones, either for their health and well-being if they are living (Easter), or in memory of someone who has passed away (Good Friday evening). We hope to have 100 for each night to add to the beauty of the services. The GOYAns will be selling the luminaries after church on Sundays, March 30, April 6 and April 13. This is a wonderful way to honor those who are living, those who passed away, to make our services even more beautiful and to help out our GOYAns.

**Get Acquainted Sunday, April 6**-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 April will be Sunday, April 6.

**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](http://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!

**A Big Thank You to the Kalojiannis Family for donating the entire Greek Independence Luncheon on Sunday, March 9.** Through their efforts, we enjoyed a beautiful luncheon, and raised \$1,000 for our church. A special thank you to the Parish Council for decorating, to Alex DeMaio for leading the program and to Marina Choundas for preparing our children to dance, and to our I Hara Mas dancers for dancing so well. Thanks also to the choir for singing the national anthems of Greece and America, to Magda Myer and the students of the Greek school for presenting songs and poems, to Nick Andreadakis for singing folk songs, and to the Honorable Consul General of Greece, Antonios Sgouropoulos, for his remarks on the occasion of Greek Independence Day.

**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](https://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

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Thank you to everyone who continues to support our Community Outreach ministry to serve the homeless and those in need. For those who don't know, we serve breakfast at First Presbyterian Church on the third Saturday of each month from 8:00-10:30 a.m. Upcoming dates are Saturday, April 26 (note Community Outreach will be LAST Saturday of April because of Holy Saturday the third Saturday) and Saturday, May 17. For more information or to sign up to serve one Saturday, please contact, please contact Betty Katherine Palios at [bettypalios@gmail.com](mailto:bettypalios@gmail.com) or 813-468-1596.

## GOYA

**April GOYA Meeting-April 6-**The GOYA Meeting for April will be held on Sunday, April 6, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

## WHAT'S UP PHILOPTOCHOS?????

A big thank you goes out to the 100 parishioners that supported our Super Bowl Chili Dog Lunch. We were able to send Kenny Kidd from OCMC back to St. Augustine with close to \$1500.

Our membership tea was well attended with our 2014 count at 39. Please see Melissa Krinos, membership chair, if you wish to join Philoptochos.

We have 5 ladies signed up for Diakonia Center Retreat (March 21-23). You need not be a member to come visit the 210 acres of water, trails and serenity. Please see JoAnn Hartung for cost and air travel arrangements.

## 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. During April, we will meet on April 7 and April 28, taking a break on Holy Monday and Monday of Bright Week.

## CHOIR NEWS

We are thrilled to have hosted the 37th Annual Southeastern Federation of Greek Orthodox Choirs and Musicians in July of 2013. A great deal of planning and coordination was done to prepare for this event. We hosted over 130 adult singers, and 30 children participating in the youth choir from all over the Metropolis. The weekend was filled with worship, fellowship, and liturgical music. His Grace Bishop Demetrios of Xanthos presided over the beautiful Divine Liturgy, assisted by Fr. Stavros. Christina Polizos from Atlanta, GA was the guest conductor and Mary Anne Mastorides from Clearwater, FL was the guest organist. We sang the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom arranged by Dean Limberakis. We were so honored to have the composer with us for the weekend. The weekend was a success in many aspects – the liturgy was flawless, the food and fellowship was exceptional, and our financial success was unmatched by any previous conference. We are happy to announce that with our profits of just over \$20,000, half of the money earned was presented to the Federation. We made a \$1000 donation in memory of our beloved choir member and SFCOCM Vice-President Marilyn Neyland to One Voice, a charitable organization which supports families who are affected by children's cancers. We also donated to our beloved St. John church by contributing to the restoration of the icon facing the choir loft, Sts. Cosmas and Damian. Thank you to everyone for their support and help during this wonderful weekend! Our bookstore has the CD recording from the Divine Liturgy on sale for \$15.00.

## YOUNG AT HEART

The Young at Heart Meeting for April will be held on Tuesday, April 1, at 11:30 a.m., at the home of Tony and Carole Fotopoulos, 10507 Bermuda Isle Drive, Tampa, FL 33647. Her number is 813-982-0947. You can also contact Mary Nenos at 813-935-2096, for more information. Young at Heart congratulates Carole Fotopoulos who is the new president. YAH also welcomes new members Skip Higdon and Louis and Georgia Stratigakos. New members are always welcome to join us, and we invite you to lunch on April 1.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL:

**Youth Sunday-April 6**-Each Monday we have one Sunday designated as "Youth Sunday." Our Sunday school students sing with the choir and sing part of the liturgy by themselves. Sunday School students also read the Epistle and act as greeters. Youth Sunday in April is April 6, so please bring your children to Liturgy at 9:45 a.m. and sit next to the choir.

**Communion Breakfast/Palm Crosses**-All the youth of our parish are invited to attend Divine Liturgy on Saturday of Lazarus, April 12 at 10:00 a.m. We will have a breakfast after Liturgy for all in attendance and will be making the palm crosses for Palm Sunday.

**Excused Absences from School for Good Friday**-If you would like to have your child/children attend Good Friday Services at St. John, please let Fr. Stavros know and he will write a letter to your child's school asking for an excused absence for religious holiday.

**Sunday School Retreat for Good Friday**-see attached flyer-The Sunday School will again be sponsoring a retreat on Good Friday on Friday, April 18, for all children of our Sunday School.

**Easter Egg Hunt**-The Annual Easter Egg Hunt will take place on Easter Sunday, April 20, following the Agape Vespers, at noon. Please plan to attend the Agape Vespers as a family beginning at 11:00 a.m. which will be followed by the Easter Egg Hunt.

## A Note from Father Stavros to Our Sunday School Teachers and Students

Over the course of several Sundays, I heard the confessions of most of our Sunday school students. I want to thank all of our Sunday School teachers for preparing our students for what was a moving experience for ME, as well as for them. The relationship with a spiritual father is something of great importance in the Orthodox Church. The relationship is akin to that of our relationship with a doctor. The doctor is the physician of the body. The priest is the physician of the soul. So, as we go to the doctor regularly for check-ups on our physical health, we should be going to the priest for a check-up on our spiritual health. We know that as we get older, our doctor's appointments get more complex. More tests are needed. More visits are needed. It's the same thing with our spiritual check-ups. As children, they are brief. What we did over the past several weeks was to get our children to understand that we go to God, through the person of our priest, to not only confess our sins but to try to form new habits in our Christian walk. With them getting used to this at a young age, when they get older, when they are teenagers and adults, the mechanisms will already be in place for them to come to their priest with the more serious issues that we all face. Thank you for supporting the Sunday school program. Thank you to our teachers for preparing our children for a wonderful experience. Thank you for our children for taking their first steps in what is a beautiful tradition in our faith. And thank God for continuing to bless our community in so many ways.

**And a note for the rest of the community, the procedure for the children works for adults too**—the students were asked to make two lists—the things I have done wrong, and the things I want to work on. The same principle works for adults—make a list of what you've done wrong, and what you want to work on—you read that in front of an icon of the Lord in the presence of a priest, have a short discussion about the lists, receive a prayer of forgiveness and absolution and go about your life, now free of guilt and shame, with a renewed sense of commitment with your faith. There is a third list that adults may also want to add, a list of questions—confession is an excellent opportunity to ask questions about fasting, receiving Communion, Orthodox theology or anything else that will aid you in your spiritual journey.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

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

Sun. March 2nd. - Sun. Sch. Topic -Forgiveness (Forgiveness Sunday)

Sun. March 9th - Sun. Sch. Topic - Icons (Sunday of Orthodoxy - 1st Sun. of Lent)

Sun. March 16th - Sun. Sch. Topic - Being a Good Friend (Paralytic - 2nd Sun. of Great Lent)

Sun. March 23rd - Sun. Sch. Topic - Holy Cross (3rd Sun. of Great Lent)

Sun. March 30th - Sun. Sch. Topic - Faith (Gospel Lesson - 4th Sun. of Lent)

Our YOUTH SUNDAY for March took place on the 2nd. The children sang beautifully and the Prospophora was delicious as usually. We would like to thank our second graders for making this holy bread. Our children are truly great stewards.

On March 2nd our students also experienced a very successful Pre-Lenten Retreat. We focused on the important days of Lent and Holy Week, Forgiveness Sunday, the Beattitudes, making our Lenten Covenant, the Lenten Calendar and using our 2014 Lenten Journey PASCHA PASS-PORTS. We would like to thank Maria Xenick, Heidi Borgeas, and Vickie Peckham for conducting the classes and all the teachers who assisted in this retreat. We would also like to thank Father Stavros for meeting with our older children prior to the presentation he made to all of our students and parents.

One of the best ways to prepare for Pascha is to participate in the Sacrament of Confession. Each Sunday School class had an opportunity to participate in this important Sacrament. On February 16th our 1st and 2nd Graders attended, on February 23rd our 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders went to Confession, on March 16th our 6th grade participated, and during the GOYAN retreat on March 28th-30th our 7th-12th graders had the opportunity to experience Confession. We would like to thank Father Stavros for hearing the confessions of over 70 of our students.

On March 9th our children did a wonderful job in the Icon Procession during the Sunday of Orthodoxy service. Prior to this procession our students learned what the Sunday of Orthodoxy means and some of the hymns for this service.

We would like to thank all the families that brought a lenten dish to the PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY DINNER Sponsored by the Sunday School on March 19th. It was a pleasure to offer this delicious meal to our parishioners after such a spiritually motivating service.

On March 23rd the first step of the 2014 Oratorical Festival took place at our church. Many of our students participated and spent months working on their presentation under the direction of Peggy Bradshaw. Participants and winners will be acknowledged in the next Messenger.

Many of our families attend the Salutations to the Virgin Mary service on Friday March 28th which was designated for our Sunday School. It is wonderful for our children to attend the many different services of Great Lent.

Speaking of Lent and Holy Week, our Altar Boys, Myrhh Bearers, and Maiden for the Bridegroom Services are preparing and excited for their roles during this important time in our church. Everyone is also looking forward to our Sunday School Good Friday Retreat on April 18th.

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



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## SOME NOTES ON CHURCH ETIQUETTE

As we are in the Lenten and Easter seasons, many people will be attending church services. It's always helpful to be reminded of a few basic points of etiquette for church services.

1. Please remember that the church is a place of worship.
  2. Be respectful; you are a guest in the House of God.
  3. Come on time at the beginning of the services.
  4. Please refrain from talking; rather, everyone is encouraged to sing along with the Choir or the Chanters.
  5. There should be no movement in the church, including entering and leaving a pew or walking down the side aisles, whenever the Priest is:
    - i. Out on the Solea during the Small Entrance with the Gospel.
    - ii. During the Great Entrance with the Holy Gifts.
    - iii. During the readings of the Epistle or Gospel Lessons.
    - iv. During any procession.
    - v. At the Consecration
    - vi. During the Sermon
  6. During Holy Communion, all those who are prepared are asked to come forth quietly with respect and the anticipation that they will be receiving the very Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Cross yourself, take the cloth and hold it under your chin, state your baptismal name clearly, open your mouth, close your mouth on the spoon to insure that the spoon is empty when it comes out of your mouth, then cross yourself, and take Antidoron, being careful not to let the crumbs fall on the floor.
  7. Those who bring up infants, please hold them in your left arm (because Fr. Stavros is left-handed), and make sure their arms and legs are as secure as possible.
  8. Please do not cross your legs in church—too casual. When sitting, sit up straight “at attention,” since we are in God’s house.
  9. On the same note, don’t put your hands in your pockets, or behind your back, again, too casual. And please tell your children as well.
  10. A note about lipstick—For a long time, large lipstick stains have been left on the icons in the narthex or on the special icons that our on the solea. We come to church to worship. The emphasis should not be on appearance. We dress nicely in church as a sign of respect, not fashion. Therefore, please be careful that you do not leave lipstick marks on the icons. You should not wear lipstick on Holy Thursday or Good Friday. These are days of extreme humility and sadness. Do not leave lipstick marks on the body of Christ as it hangs on the Cross. Please refrain from wearing lipstick if you plan to receive Holy Communion.
  11. Please dress appropriately for church. Short skirts, strapless dresses and exposed cleavage are not appropriate in church. And outside of church, we should consider what kind of statement our clothing makes about us and the Christian values of modesty that we claim to hold.
  12. The Narthex is part of the church and all of the above apply. Please do not linger in the narthex after you arrive. The only people that should be in the narthex are the ushers for the day, and mothers who have fussy babies that want to stand with them in the narthex, that is fine as well. The narthex is the place we light our candles, the pews in the nave are the place we are to worship.
  - 13. Please turn off cell phones!**
  14. As the Holy Week services are long and run late, for those who bring small children to the services, please sit near either the side door or in the back and if your child becomes fussy, please take them outside for a few minutes.
  15. Please don’t chew gum—this is church, not a baseball game.
- Thank you for your cooperation in honoring the sanctity of our Holy Church. Your cooperation will assure that our services will continue to be celebrated with the proper honor and dignity with which they should be afforded and will make our celebration of Holy Week and Easter truly memorable. These etiquette practices should be observed all year round!

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## Parish Registry

**Adult Baptism**—Amy Johnston was baptized on Thursday, January 30. Her Godparent is Christine Scourtes. Congratulations!

**Baptism**—Nicholas Andrew Kappiris, son of Nicholas and Leslie Kappiris, was baptized on Saturday, March 8. Godparents were Tom and Stephanie Stuhlsatz. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**—Mason Andrew Horack, son of Scott and Rena Horack, was baptized on Saturday, March 8. Godparent was Myles Sakellaris Scott. Na Sas Zisi!

**Chrismation**—John Carter was received through the sacrament of Chrismation on Sunday, February 16. Despina Sibley is the Godmother. Congratulations!

**Wedding**—Justin Joseffy and Valerie Houseman were married on Saturday, February 22. John Houseman was the Koumbaro. Congratulations!

**Funeral**—George Papas passed away on February 11. Funeral services were held on Monday, February 17. May his memory be eternal!

## ADULT EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES OUTSIDE OF OUR PARISH

Orthodox Manhood: a Retreat for Orthodox Men of the Atlanta Metropolis, to be held at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Clearwater, on Saturday, April 5, from 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Special Guest Speaker will be Dr. Timothy Patitsas (Ph.D in Systemic Theology), the Assistant Professor of Ethics at Holy Cross School of Theology in Brookline, MA. \$5 donation per person, and a Lenten lunch will be provided. Please RSVP to 727-799-4605 by March 28.

Discovering Orthodox Christianity Video Series—The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese has just launched a major series of informational videos about the Orthodox Church. Entitled “Discovering Orthodox Christianity,” the resource is a series of talks, shows, and presentations designed to introduce and explain the basic teaching of Orthodox Christianity. Each is approximately 30–40 minutes long and they can all be viewed on the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Website at [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org). The topics are as follows:

What is Christian Orthodoxy? With Rev. Dr. Thomas Fitzgerald and Rev. Dr. John Chrysavgis  
The Bible in the Orthodox Church: The New Testament, with Rev. Dr. Eugene Pentiuc and Dr. Bruce Beck  
The Bible in the Orthodox Church: The Old Testament, with Rev. Dr. Harry Pappas  
Worship and Life, with Rev. Dr. Alkiviadis Calivas and Rev. Dr. Philip Zymaris  
The Orthodox Liturgical Year, with Rev. Dr. Philip Zymaris and Rev. Fr. John Vlahos  
The House of God: Iconography, with Dr. Helen Evans and Dr. Anton Vrame  
The House of God: Architecture, Vestments and Religious Articles, with Dr. Helen Evans and Dr. Anton Vrame  
Music in the Orthodox Church, with Archdeacon Panteleimon Papadopoulos, Dr. Vicki Pappas and Dr. Grammenos Karanos  
The Early Church, with Dr. Demetrios Katos and Dr. James Skedros  
The Modern church: The Growth of the Church in America, with Dr. Anton Vrame and Mark Arey  
The Ecumenical Patriarchate: Aspects of Past and Present, with His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America  
Orthodoxy and Other Faith Traditions, with His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios of Boston and Rev. Dr. Demetrios Tonia  
Orthodoxy: Faith in Action, with His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of Detroit and Rev. Fr. John Vlahos  
The Orthodox Stance on Moral and Social Issues, with His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of Detroit and V. Rev. Dr. Nathanael Symeonides  
Saints and Martyrs of the Orthodox Church, with Rev. Dr. John Chrysavgis and Dr. James Skedros  
The Changing Orthodox Family, with Rev. Fr. Constantine Sitaras and Presbyter Kerry Pappas  
Orthodoxy and our Youth, with Rev. Fr. Jason Roll and Eva Kokinos  
Ministering to our Elderly, with V. Rev. Dr. Nathanael Symeonides  
Orthodoxy in a New Media Age, with His Eminence Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh and Theo Nicolakis  
Faith and Pop Culture, with His Eminence Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh  
Patristics: The Father of the Church, with Rev. Dr. John Chrysavgis and Dr. James Skedros  
The Ethics of Orthodox Christianity, with His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of Detroit and Rev. Dr. Mark Sietsema  
Bible Study: Interpretation of Psalm 8, with His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America  
Bible Study: Interpretation of Luke 19:1-10, with His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America  
Bible Study: Interpretation of St. Paul's Letter to the Romans, with His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America  
Bible Study: Interpretation of the 1st Epistle of St. John, with His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America

### Meeting Schedule for April

Thursday	1	Young at Heart	11:30 a.m.	at the home of Carole Fotopoulos
Sunday	6	Ushers	after church	Zaharias Room
Sunday	6	GOYA	5:00 p.m.	Kourmolis Center
Tuesday	8	Parish Council	7:00 p.m.	Meeting Room in Administration Building
Sunday	27	Church Picnic	after Liturgy	Ballast Point Park

### 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](mailto:rsibleylaw@gmail.com). Thank you for your consideration.

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

#### Friends of St. John

Nicholas and Barbara Akrotirianakis—Whittier, CA

James and April Dellas

Mary Hatzikazakis—from Bristol, TN

---

#### FRIENDS OF ST. JOHN

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50      \_\_\_\_\_ \$100      \_\_\_\_\_ \$200      \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Please mail this form and check to: St. John Greek Orthodox Church 2418 Swann Avenue, Tampa, FL 33609

# FOR THOSE WHO DON'T COME TO CHURCH OFTEN

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

Some people come sporadically.

Some come for the occasional wedding, baptism, funeral or memorial service.

Some come in time of crisis.

Some come for Christmas and Easter (in Tampa, we call them "Chreasters").

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

Some are angry at other parishioners.

Some are angry at something that happened in the community in the past.

Some are angry at God because their lives haven't gone well and they blame Him.

Some work on Sundays.

Some don't understand why it is important.

Some have fallen out of the habit.

Some choose to do other things.

And some are just lazy.

**Church is important. Why?**

It's not because God needs our praise—He is God, He doesn't need anything.

It's not so we can brag about how many people come to church—church is about faith, not about counting bodies in the pews.

It's not a matter of giving God His due, once in a while, or especially at Easter.

It's not a matter of tradition or pride or culture.

**Church is important because**

It helps us slow down the hectic pace of our life so we can reflect on what is really important—our salvation.

It gives us the opportunity to pray for ourselves and our loved

ones

It gives us the opportunity to receive the prayers of others

It gives us the opportunity to enjoy fellowship with people like us

It gives us the opportunity to pray in a way that is structured so well, that the Divine Liturgy is a complete prayer that touches on every aspect of our life and our World.

It gives us an opportunity to touch God and for God to touch us, in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

It unites us with the saints, the holy ones of God; and also with those in our family who have passed away, since we pray for the departed in our services.

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

Because heaven won't be anything like life on earth.

Heaven will not be a secular experience but a holy, awesome and moving one

The central activity in heaven is Communion with God and fellowship with those in God's kingdom.

If we don't learn how to worship, we won't be ready to enter God's Kingdom, just like those who do not practice their sport don't play well on the field, just like those who don't do well in school do not graduate.

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

**JUST START COMING!!!**

When is a good time to come back?

**ANY TIME, BUT ESPECIALLY DURING LENT**

But what if I'm mad at someone? It's a great time to forgive them.

After all, if we want God to forgive us, we must forgive one another.

What if I'm totally lost in my faith and don't know how to start over again? **Make an appointment to meet with Fr. Stavros**

-----

**PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY MEMBERS IN FRONT OF THE EPITAPHIOS (TOMB OF CHRIST) ON GOOD FRIDAY EVENING**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

\*\*You only need to list the first name of the person you wish to be commemorated. You may list names of people who are Orthodox or non-Orthodox. Please mail to the office or bring to church by April 15.



# Pledged Stewards for 2014

FATHER STAVROS and LISA  
AKROTIRIANAKIS  
JOHN, ANNETTA & ALEXANDER  
MARIA ALIKAKOS  
ANGEL & LISA ALSINA  
ALEXA ALSINA  
ED AMBROZY  
NICHOLAS & DORIS ANDREADAKIS  
PEGGY ANTHONY  
NICK & JUDY ANTONAKAKIS  
JIM & MYRA ARMSTRONG  
STEFANOS AUGUST  
PABLO & VANESSA AVILES  
CHRISTINE & SCOTT AXELROD  
DENISE & BADRANE  
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SARA & BARRETT  
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SHIP  
CONSTANTINE & ANGELA BOUGAS  
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DOROTHY BUSH  
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JOHN & GENIE CARTER  
GEORGE & KALLIOPE CHAGARIS  
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ROBERT & VIVIANA CHANDLER  
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MICHAEL & ARTEMIS CONNER  
ZACKIE & GEORGE AMERES  
COPULOS  
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NICHOLAS & SUSAN FALLIERAS  
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ALEX & HALIKOYTAKIS  
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MEADOWS  
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CHRISTOS & DEE NICOLAOU  
GEORGE & CHERYL NOLES  
SCOTT & ELPIDA OLSEN  
ARTEMIS & PALIOS  
JULIE & GEORGE PALIOS  
MICHAEL & BESSIE PALIOS

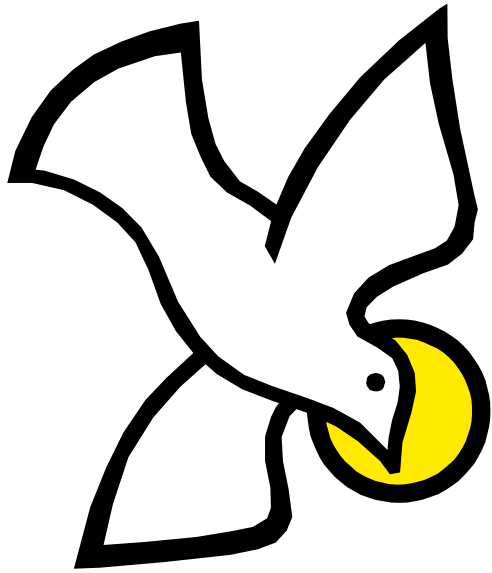
TOM & JENNY PALOUMPIS  
THEODORE & MARISSA PANAP-  
OULOS  
EURIPIDES & DENISE PANOS  
LAUREN & ALEC PAPADAKIS  
JOHN & IRENE PAPADOPOULOS  
PAUL & GEORGIA PAPPAS  
GUS & MARINA PARAS  
ISIDOROS & JOLIE PASSALARIS  
ROBERT & DEB PASSAVANTI  
FLORIN & MARENCA PATRASCOIU  
GEORGIA PAYNE  
RICHARD & VICTORIA PECKHAM  
CHRISTIAN & ATHINA PERRY  
BRAD & GERRI KAVOUKLIS PRICE  
ANNA K. RICHARDS  
RYAN & MEGAN RINDONE  
ARIS ROGERS, II  
ARIS ROGERS, SR.  
`MARYANN ROSE  
ARCHIE & ELEFThERIA ROUSSOS  
FLORIAN & JEANNIE ROYACK  
JOHN & PEGGY SAAVEDRA  
LEO H. & ANNE SAKELLARIS  
KATHERINE & JOHN SAKKIS  
MICHAEL SCHARBACH  
JENNIFER KLIMIS SCOTT  
CHRISTINE SCOURTES  
MICHAEL & PATRICIA SERBANOS  
EUSTACE G. & BENNETTE SERMIER  
KATINA & KENNETH SHANAHAN  
JOHN & FIFIKA SHEARER  
DESPINA SIBLEY  
ALEXANDER SKIJUS  
ALEXANDER SKIJUS  
DANTE & LINDSEY SKOURELLOS  
MICHAEL P. & SHIRLEY A.  
SKOURELLOS  
PETER SKOURELLOS  
CHARLES & TAMAM SMITH  
EFTIHIA SOROLIS  
SOPHIA & CARLOS FREY SOROLIS  
PEGGY SOTIROPOULES  
PAUL & TERRI SOTIROPOULOS  
BILL & JENNY SOTIROPOULOS  
PETER SPANOS  
WAYNE & PAULINE SPENCER  
JANE STAVROPOULOS  
GEORGE & KATINA STAVROU  
ELLIOTT & SPERO STEELE  
DR. MARIO & OURIANA STEPH-  
ANIDES  
CHRISTO STEPHANIDES  
JULIANA STINGULESAU  
HELEN STRATIGAKOS  
MELVIN & VIOLET TAMASHIRO  
ELIZABETH & JOHN THEOFILOS  
PETER THEOPHANOUS  
LARRY & COUSTANTINA, THOMAS,  
MD  
MARY J. TINGIRIS

GREG TISDALE  
MARK ISSIA TOULIATOS  
PETER TRAKAS  
ANDREW & ADRIENNE TRAKAS  
ALYSA TRAKAS  
GEORGE AND MARIA TRIANTA-  
FILOPOULOS  
DIANE & MIKE TRIMIS  
JOHN TSIBRIS  
BOB & NANCY VALLIANATOS  
DAVID VOYKIN  
MARY H. VOYKIN  
GARY & SANDRA PAPPAS WARD  
CHRISTINE WORLEY  
MIKE & MARIE XENICK  
GEORGE & CINDY XENICK  
EVANGELINE & XEROTERES  
VICTOR & LISA YOTIS  
WILLIAM YOTIS  
CONSTANTINE & RACHEL ZAHARIS  
PETER ZEBAN  
MARIA ZEBETAKIS  
STAVROS & KATHY ZOUMBEROS

\*\*If you have submitted a form  
and are not on this list, please  
contact the church office

If you have not submitted a  
stewardship form for 2014, please  
do so today.

Thank you for your support of St.  
John Greek Orthodox Church!



# Great and Holy Friday Youth Retreat

Friday, April 18, 2014  
9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

\*Service of Royal Hours - 9:00 am  
Retreat will begin following the service at 10:45 a.m.

Please join us for a day of  
crafts, activities, music, reflection, and  
worship with your Sunday School friends

Come spend a wonderful day at Church  
preparing for the Triumphant Resurrection!

Lunch and snacks included

**Please register your child by Friday, April 11, 2013**

All parents are encouraged to attend the  
Descent from the Cross Service at 3:00 p.m.  
Students should dress appropriately for Church and also for  
comfort during the retreat (or bring a change of clothes.)  
Parent volunteers are needed for any part of the day!  
Please call the church office or send email to

[mpxenick@gmail.com](mailto:mpxenick@gmail.com)



# April 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<b>1</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Young at Heart 11:30 a.m. Bible Study South Tampa 6:30 pm Bible Study North Tampa 6:30pm Bible Study East Tampa 6:30 pm Fast Day	<b>2</b> Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner Young Adult Bible Study Fast Day	<b>3</b> Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. Fast Day	<b>4</b> <b>Vigil of the Akathist</b> Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m. Liturgy 8:15 p.m. Fast Day	<b>5</b> Fast Day
<b>6</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Ushers Mtg. GOYA 5:00 p.m. Fast Day	<b>7</b> Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	<b>8</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study South Tampa 6:30 pm Bible Study North Tampa 6:30pm Bible Study East Tampa 6:30 pm Parish Council 7:00 p.m. Fast Day	<b>9</b> Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner Young Adult Bible Study Fast Day	<b>10</b> Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. Fast Day	<b>11</b> Fast Day	<b>12</b> <b>Saturday of Lazarus</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Proskomide 9:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Breakfast/Making Palm Crosses Fast Day
<b>13</b> Palm Sunday Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Philoptochos Luncheon Bridgroom Service 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	<b>14</b> Holy Monday 9th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Bridgroom Service 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	<b>15</b> Holy Tuesday 9th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Bridgroom Service 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	<b>16</b> Holy Wednesday 9th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Holy Unction for Children 3 pm Bridgroom Service 5:45 p.m. Holy Unction 6:30 p.m. Fast Day	<b>17</b> Holy Thursday Vespers Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Service of the Passion (12 Gospels) 6:30 p.m. Vigil at the Cross Fast Day	<b>18</b> Good Friday Royal Hours 9:00 a.m. Sunday School Retreat Apokathelosis-Descend from the Cross 3:00 p.m. Lamentations 7:00 p.m. Fast Day	<b>19</b> Holy Saturday Vespers Liturgy 8:45 a.m. The Great Canon 11:00 p.m. Resurrection Service 11:45 p.m. Paschal Liturgy 12:30 a.m. Paschal Reception Fast Day
<b>20</b> <b>PASCHA</b> Agape Vespers 11:00 a.m.	<b>21</b> No Fasting This Week	<b>22</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study South Tampa 6:30 pm Bible Study North Tampa 6:30pm Bible Study East Tampa 6:30 pm	<b>23</b> Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. <b>Fest of St. George</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>24</b> Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	<b>25</b> <b>Feast of Life-Giving</b> Fountain Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>26</b> Community Outreach
<b>27</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Church Picnic	<b>28</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>29</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study South Tampa 6:30 pm Bible Study North Tampa 6:30pm Bible Study East Tampa 6:30 pm	<b>30</b> Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Young Adult 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

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

**•Welcoming Committee:**

Maria Xenick 813-839-9897

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**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:** Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947

Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

**•Jr Olympics:** Byron Nenos 813-789-0729

**•Ushers:** Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

**•Altar Angels:**

Engie Halkias & 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](http://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