

# 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

## October 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 member to grow in their faith.

## **Father Stavros' Message**

### **Being a Martha in a Martha World is Okay**

*38 Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. 40 But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." 41 But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; 42 one thing is needful. [e] Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her."*

*27 As he said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" 28 But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"*

*Luke 10: 38-42; 11:27-28*

**T**he above Gospel passage, taken from the Gospel of Luke, is read on all of the feasts of the Virgin Mary—August 15, September 8, November 21 are days we offer the Liturgy in

church and read this passage. There are some other more minor days of the year—August 31, October 28—where this is also read. Needless to say, the passage comes up in the Liturgy and in the daily readings several times a year.

Each time we read this passage, we contrast the two sisters, Mary and Martha, and we tend to be critical of Martha while we also kind of despise Mary. I know that many times when I've preached on this passage, I have praised Mary for her desire to listen to the teachings of the Lord, and have given Martha a bad rap, i.e. we shouldn't be too distracted with work, while at the same time thinking to myself, "C'mon Mary, get up and help," or "we all can't sit at the Lord's feet all day, we've all got jobs and responsibilities!"

Many articles, books and Bible studies have been written about having a Mary heart in a Martha world, or surviving as a Mary in a Martha world. Mary's attribute of being able to patiently listen to the Lord in the midst of a chaotic house is certainly admirable. It is a lesson to us that even in our chaotic world, we need to set aside time to sit, patiently, quietly, and without distraction, to absorb the Word

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of the Lord, to pray to the Lord, to worship the Lord, and to develop and perfect a relationship with the Lord. These things are impossible to do with the radio blaring, or in a busy office, or a loud sports arena. Silence is something that is all too often missing from our world and our individual lives in the world. Patience? What is that? We are all running around, anxious and troubled about so many things, we have no patience for one another, and most of the time we don't have patience for God either. And rather than RUN to church or RUN to private prayer or meditation on scriptures, we think that we will "fall behind" in our lives or lose time not actively working on our earthly lives and we often feel condescending to those around us who do this, just like Martha chewed out Mary, seemingly demanding that she get to work also, we tend to do the same to those who aren't towing the same line. Imagine you are the boss at your company and you see a co-worker pause for a few seconds to pray. How long will it be until you tell them to get back to work? Would you question their work-ethic if they took a few moments to ask God for His help before starting an important project? On our high and self-righteous horses, let's be honest, we don't really have much admiration for the Marys of the world.

However, it's not easy to concede that we live in a Martha world. After all, do more of us reflect the patient attentiveness of Mary or the "running around like a chicken with my head cut off high anxiety" of Martha? Somewhere deep down, we all long to be a Mary. But let's face it, we all play the role of Martha for the majority of our waking hours. We are all Marthas!!! Now asking whether that is a good thing or not is really pointless—we pretty much are all Marthas!

But is that necessarily a bad thing?

Let's look at the passage again—we aren't really told what happens to Martha after this "rebuke" from Jesus. Did Martha continue serving and running around? Did Martha pout and go away? Did she say, "what is that supposed to mean, Jesus?" Or maybe did she say, "You know what, to heck with the food, you are right. I am sitting right here and someone else will take care of it." We don't know. The only thing we know for certain is that at some point, Jesus emerged from the home of Mary and Martha, and engaged with the crowds that were often following Him around. Luke 11, if the narrative reads in chronological accuracy, has Jesus introducing the Lord's Prayer to the crowds. Going with what we read in Luke 11, we tend to side against Martha and extol the virtues of Mary

Let's go now to another Gospel Passage, where Martha again encounters Jesus and makes one of the boldest statements in the Bible, while Mary is home, absent and silent at a critical moment.

*Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. 3 So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." 4 But when Jesus*

*heard it he said, "This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it."*

*5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that he was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. 7 Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." 8 The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any one walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10 But if any one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." 11 Thus he spoke, and then he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him out of sleep." 12 The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." 13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. 14 Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead; 15 and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." 16 Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."*

*17 Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary sat in the house. 21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 And even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; [c] he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world."*

*28 When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying quietly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." 29 And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was and saw him, fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also*

*weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled; 36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"*

*38 Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb; it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. 39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. 42 I knew that thou hearest me always, but I have said this on account of the people standing by, that they may believe that thou didst send me." 43 When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."*

*John 11:1-44*

Mary and Martha, friends of Jesus, had a brother named Lazarus, who was also a friend. They lived in Bethany, which is about two miles from Jerusalem. We are told in the Gospel accounts that Jesus visited Jerusalem on many occasions, and when He did, most likely He was staying as a guest in their home. In John 11:5, we read that Jesus loved Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus. And they no doubt loved Him as well. Being fully man as well as fully God, Jesus had the human emotions we have—like the desire for meaningful friendships, and the joy of fellowship they bring. (He later would feel the pangs of betrayal as well). When Jesus heard that Lazarus had died, He made His way to Bethany. And during this visit, it was MARTHA, not Mary, who ran to meet Jesus. We read in John 11:19, that many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them, concerning their brother. There was already a tension in Jerusalem, only a few miles away from Bethany, concerning Jesus, whether indeed He were the Christ. The Jewish leadership had already threatened to put out of the synagogue anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Christ. (John 9:22). Presumably there would have been Jewish temple leaders very close at hand.

Martha addresses Jesus as "Lord" in 11:21. She also shares a very human emotion—disappointment—that "if you had been here, my brother would not have died." And then immediately, she followed with a statement of faith: "And even now I know that whatever You ask from God, God will give You. (11:22). Jesus replies to her "Your brother will rise again." And THEN, Martha makes another statement of faith, as well as dogma "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." (11:24). Many of the Sadducees, another sect of the Jewish Temple leadership, did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Thus Martha, a Jew, but also a woman, again put herself at risk by speaking in theological terms about the resurrection at the last day.

Jesus responded to her with one of the great "I AM's" of the Gospels—"I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believe in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (11:25). Again, this dialogue was most likely not a private one, for there were many people around Mary and Martha consoling them. Jesus certainly must have known that a comment like this was likely to provoke a confrontation and consternation from the Jewish Temple elite. And Martha also must have known the risks of engaging in this dialogue with Jesus.

Nevertheless, her answer to Jesus in John 11:25 is one of the "boldest" confessions of faith in the Bible—"Yes, Lord; I believe that YOU are the Christ, the Son of God, He who is coming into the world." At a time when women weren't even allowed to speak up, and to the Jewish people standing around there mourning her brother's death, what she said was crazy talk, unheard of, revolutionary, scandalous, and to many of them, blasphemous. As we read in other places in the Bible, only the demons were saying this out loud. If Martha is given a negative review in Luke 10, it would seem that she should be given a HEROIC review in John 11. Imagine the faith and the courage of conviction it must have taken to confess Jesus as the Christ, something that would have risked exclusion from the Temple itself, if not being condemned to death for blasphemy.

So, Martha "redeemed" herself, so to speak. We tend to think of Martha as an obsessive hostess, running around her house, exasperated by too much work, not enough time and not enough help. There is no doubt that Martha loved Jesus. There is no doubt that she was a courageous woman. And there is no doubt that she was a devoted Christian, who had a deep-seeded faith in Jesus as the Christ at a time when so bold of a display of devotion likely would have serious, severe and potentially fatal consequences.

When you compare yourself to Mary and Martha, who do you identify with? Mary? Martha? Neither? Are you patiently sitting like Mary, listening intently to the Lord? Or are you running around crazy like Martha? Most of us would identify with Martha over Mary, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. However, in our identification with Martha, we have to have the courage and boldness to confess our faith and live our faith, even in the midst of our busy-ness, even in the face of ridicule. Martha didn't "confess" Jesus as the Lord merely in the comfort of her home. She did it publicly at a time that it wasn't necessarily safe to do so. I've actually gotten a whole new respect for Martha. I actually aspire to be a Martha. I'm probably going to be a running around, exasperated person for most of the rest of my life. That shouldn't stop me from being a courageous person, with deep faith and the conviction to express and live it!

### **The "Faith" of Peter**

There are two other "bold" confessions of Jesus as the Christ that are note in the Gospels. Let's examine Peter's confession of faith in Matthew 16:

*13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesare'a Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the*

*Son of man is?” 14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Eli’jah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, [b] and on this rock [c] I will build my church, and the powers of death [d] shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” 20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.*

*21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” 23 But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance[e] to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men.”*

*Matthew 16:13-23*

Many times, the way the Gospel readings are divided, we read verses 13-20 together, for instance on the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul on June 29. And we look at Peter as a saintly, convicted and courageous man, the obvious leader of the disciples, since he, among them all it appears, is the only one who confesses Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” When Jesus answers him “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven, He seems to be singling out Peter as the ONE disciple who truly gets it. And immediately, He makes Peter the “rock” of the church and promises HIM the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, no one else. It is interesting how not even three verses later in the chapter, Jesus is rebuking Peter, calling him “Satan” and a “hindrance.” Does this make Peter a hypocrite? A flake?

Actually, it makes Peter a human being we can all relate to, just like Martha. He had his moments of genuine “humanness”. And he had moments of GREAT spiritual clarity. This was a man who would deny Christ at a really important moment. Imagine the human hurt that Christ felt, where one of His closest disciples and friends denied Him at a moment when the whole world seemed to be against Him. And yet Peter was THE leader of the early church—without his efforts, without his witness, we would not have our church today. Like Martha, an ordinary man, with ordinary thoughts and concerns, really was quite extraordinary.

### **“Doubting” Thomas**

*19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” 20 When he had said this, he showed*

*them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.” 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”*

*24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.”*

*26 Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, “Peace be with you.” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.” 28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”*

*John 20:19-29*

The Apostle Thomas is said to have taken the Gospel of Jesus Christ all the way to India. Imagine the effort it would take to walk the thousands of miles from Jerusalem after Pentecost and to take the Gospel to a place that had never heard it before. Unlike Israel, where Jesus had done His ministry publicly for three years, and unlike the rest of the Roman Empire, which no doubt had at least “heard” about Jesus, India was a totally different part of the world, where the ministry of Jesus was probably not heard of. And yet Thomas is remembered for his doubting of Jesus. Thomas was eventually martyred for his faith. However, we don’t hear him called “Thomas the Apostle” or “Thomas the Martyr” or “Thomas the missionary”. He is called “Doubting Thomas.” And his doubts about the Resurrection seem to be the only thing we remember about him. One of the things that is important to remember about Thomas, is that he gave the GREATEST confession of faith in Jesus Christ, when he called him “My Lord and my God!” Nowhere else in the Bible does someone address Jesus like this.

### **Martha, Peter and Thomas—People Just Like Us**

Reflecting on the stories of Martha, Peter and Thomas brings me a lot of hope. Many days I feel like Martha—running around, distracted, exasperated. Many days I feel like Peter—focused on material things. And many days I feel like Thomas—I wonder what does it all mean, why God doesn’t make things easier, or a little more obvious?

The lesson of these three often-ridiculed people is that it is okay to be a Martha, Peter and Thomas—It’s quite normal to be running around, focused on material things and to have doubts. Here’s the

thing though—the relationship of Martha to Christ did not end up with exasperated domestic work—it ended with a public and potentially dangerous confession of faith. And Peter didn't end up in denial about Christ—He was the head of Christ's church. And Thomas did not end up as a doubter, but as a missionary, putting to rest the doubts of non-believers. Ordinary people with ordinary emotions and lives ended up as extraordinary leaders. It just proves the old adage, that it's not where a person starts in something but where they finish.

If you are a busy Martha, a materialistic Peter or a doubting Thomas, don't despair. But don't stay that way either. Try to put talking about Christ with others into your life, like Martha did. Try to be a leader in matters of faith, like Peter. And spread the Gospel to others, like Thomas.

Let's face it—we live in a Martha world. Our world is full of Peters. And at certain times in life, everyone is a Thomas. Let's not deny these things. Let's embrace them. And let's seek to become not the Marthas, Peters and Thomases that we are so critical of, but let's see the good that came from them, and look to the good that can come from us.

Having a Mary heart in a Martha world is great, but probably unrealistic. But having a Martha faith in a Martha world is something we can all do!

I'll close this month's message with an interesting quote I saw recently about all of the people we consider extraordinary in the Bible who actually were quite ordinary. God does not call the extraordinary, but the ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Martha, Peter and Thomas are three example. There are many more:

*Isaac was a day dreamer, Jacob was a cheater, Peter had a temper and denied Christ, David had an affair and tried*

*to cover it up with murder, Noah got drunk. Elisha was suicidal, Jonah ran from God, Paul was a murderer and he was way too religious.*

*Timothy had too many ulcers, Gideon was insecure, Miriam was a gossip, Martha was a worrier, Thomas was a doubter, Sara was impatient, Elijah was moody, Rehab was a prostitute, Samson – he liked prostitute. Isaiah preached naked for three years, John the Baptist ate bugs and had second thoughts about the very Messiah he baptized.*

*Jeremiah was way too emotional, Moses stuttered, Zachaeus was too short, Abraham was old and Lazarus was dead. **God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called!***

*Never say to yourself, "God can never use me." God is not looking for the qualified, he's looking for people who would just avail themselves to him. When Jesus called the 12, most of them were not even educated. Yet, Jesus equipped them and they turned the world upside down.*

*When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he told them: "not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth." But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are.*

***Those whom God calls, He equips.***

With love in the Lord,  
+Fr. Stavros

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# Silly Parents, Communion Isn't Just for Kids

by Charlie Hambos

Even though, I hold the communion cloth while people are receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, I often do not prepare myself and do not receive Holy Communion because I feel completely unworthy to receive. The following is not only to encourage the parents or Godparents to receive Holy Communion with their children but to remind all of us to be prepared and to understand exactly what is happening. The fact of the matter is that whether we “prepare” ourselves or not, we are never, ever worthy to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ. As Christians, however, we must struggle to get closer to Christ and to imitate Him on a daily basis. Holy Communion provides that direct encounter with Christ and especially the forgiveness of our sins. The priest prays during the Cherubic Hymn in the Divine Liturgy, “No one bound by worldly desires and pleasures is worthy to approach, draw near or minister to You, the King of glory. To serve You is great and awesome even for the heavenly powers. But because of Your ineffable and immeasurable love for us, You became man without alteration or change.” It is through God’s love and Christ’s sacrifice that we are able to receive His Body and Blood. It is both mysterious and beautiful.

We are all a part of the Body of Christ. St. Paul writes in Romans 12:3-5, “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” So just as we are all made in the Image of Christ (Genesis 1:26), we are the Body of Christ.

If someone asks an Orthodox Christian, what do you have that other Christians do not have? Or what is the difference between your church and other churches? The easy answer is The Divine Liturgy. The very first account of the Divine Liturgy was written by Justin Martyr in his First Apology. Justin Martyr was an early Christian of the Second Century. He wrote many documents about the Christian faith and about the early church. He wrote:

*Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to *yévoitto* [so be*

*it]. And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.*

Let’s take a look at a few things. First, “gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at a considerable length.” It is in the Divine Liturgy that we give thanks to God for everything he has given us and continues to give us. Second, “And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to *yévoitto* [so be it].” This is so important. Having traveled to many churches in the U.S. and in Greece, the opportunity is not always there for people to join the priest in saying “Amen” during the consecration prayers. I am thankful that Fr. Stavros does this aloud so that all us can say “Amen” with him and I am encouraged by all of the faithful at St. John’s who do say it with him.

Now, back to receiving Holy Communion. What is it for and when did it start? I will again return to the First Apology of Justin Martyr who uses the Gospels to support his position, which is actually our position as Christians:

*And this food is called among us *Εὐχαριστία* [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, This do in remembrance of Me, Luke 22:19 this is My body; and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, This is My blood; and gave it to them alone.*

Christ asked us to receive the bread and wine, which are His Body and Blood, to remember Him and all that He has done for us. Let’s look at the first sentence which reads,

“And this food is called among us Εὐχαριστία [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined.” Why don’t we allow everyone to receive Holy Communion? The simple answer is that not everyone or every church believes the same thing we do. Some do not believe in the full divinity and the full humanity of Jesus Christ. Some do not believe that Holy Communion is actually the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. We must all believe the same thing in order to be the Body of Christ. We cannot have one arm believing one thing and the other believing something different. The body will not work in unison. Although everyone is made in the image of Christ not all of them know they are. The image has been tainted because of our sin. Communion is for the remission of sins, so that we can be joined with Christ in a very real and tangible way.

Now, what does all of this have to do with Parents and kids. I have often observed many parents or Godparents shuttling their children to Holy Communion but not receiving themselves. I understand not being prepared. What are we teaching our children? Do we not want to join ourselves to Christ with our children or God children? It’s just a thought. Receiving as a whole family is beautiful and shows the children that Holy Communion is just as important to the parents as it is for the children.

Finally, a note on preparation for Holy Communion. Yes, you must be an Orthodox Christian. Yes, we are never ever worthy to

receive Holy Communion. Some things that can help. Speaking with Father Stavros or your spiritual father about the things that make you feel unworthy to receive Holy Communion. Many, many times I do not receive because of my thoughts or things that I have done. Admittedly, I do not seek the council of my spiritual father but I should. There are many prayers that can be read the night before in preparation for Holy Communion. There is the prayer that we read during the Divine Liturgy which begins, “I believe and confess that this is truly your precious Body and this is truly your precious blood...” That is a good start. For additional prayers please ask Father Stavros or Charlie. Yes, we must fast. But when? Many believe that the fasting on Wednesday and Friday is in preparation for Holy Communion on Sunday. This is not true. We fast on Wednesday in order to remember the Betrayal of Christ and the Cross. We fast on Friday to remember the Theotokos and also for the crucifixion of Christ. The fast for Holy Communion on Sunday begins when we go to bed the night before or at least by midnight. This means abstaining from all food and drink. DO NOT do this if you need to take medication or for other health issues. These are exceptions made for the health of each person.

I am encouraged to see so many people receive Holy Communion at St. John’s. It is a very sacred and mysterious thing. It is something we should leave on Sunday, feeling joyful and thankful. When we all receive together, we all become a part of Christ, His Body. We must continue to give God all the glory and thanks for everything that we have in our life.

**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***

Barbara Akrotirianakis—Whittier, CA  
James and April Dellas  
Mary Hatzikazakis—from Bristol, TN

**FRIENDS OF ST. JOHN**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

***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



# GREEK FESTIVAL

## 2014

### Goals for the 2014 Tampa Greek Festival

It is probably unknown to most of the congregation that the 2013 Festival Committee had set an internal, never-before-achieved financial goal for last year's festival. During their planning in the summer, they decided the upcoming 2013 Tampa Greek Festival would net \$100,000 in profit. Remarkably — through the hard work of everyone involved — we surpassed that goal.

In all, last year's festival brought in nearly \$240,000 of revenue. After all expenses, we generated \$107,313 profit for our church. All of these proceeds were immediately directed towards outstanding needs within the church operating budget, for establishing a new account with the deposit necessary for the Smart Starts School, which is now a public charter school, and for donations from our parish to the Diakonia Center and to our community partner, LifePath Hospice.

The new car raffle, the revived festival album, the expanded kids area, the new gyro/meze booth, and even the adorable wine-toss tent all worked their magic to make this festival a huge success. But the greatest elixir of all was the combination of good will, hard work, and high spirits that everyone brought to the weekend. It was, Father Stavros believes, simply the happiest festival we've ever thrown.

This year, the goal is higher and just as lofty: \$200,000. To reach it will require creativity and hard work — but we know you will be there every step of the way. We don't think we can achieve this goal through selling much more gyro or baklava. We need to attract corporate sponsors and other large donors to cover a lot of our expenses, and we need to test new ideas outside the realm of what we've done before. It may seem crass to some that the Festival Committee leaders are monetizing the festival to this degree. But the truth of the matter is our church lives day to day and each year, our festival acts as a financial bandage — covering expenses that should be handled by our stewardship and other funds.

By nurturing our festival — by making the Tampa Greek Festival the best among the rest in Tampa Bay — we begin to build a foundation upon which the church can flourish, rather than simply survive. St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church prides itself on a 58-year tradition of bringing its beautiful faith, values, and customs to its parishioners and community. Now it is time to think of the future, of how our church will live and grow in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

It's time to set the bar a little higher! Opa!



<b>St. John Greek Orthodox Church</b>	
<b>2013 Greek Festival Financial Results</b>	
<b>Income</b>	\$ 239,913
<b>Direct Expenses</b>	(81,970)
<b>Gross Profit</b>	\$ 157,943
<b>Gross Margin</b>	66%
<b>Other Expenses:</b>	
Advertising/Mktg	17,315
Equipment Rental	14,098
Set Up/Clean Up	6,018
Security	3,287
Paper Good	2,690
Entertainment	2,875
Other Expenses	4,347
	\$ 50,630
<b>Net Profit</b>	\$ 107,313
<b>Net Margin</b>	45%





# THE GREEK FESTIVAL IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER

**November 7, 8, and 9**

*And we need everyone's help to make it a success!*

## **DID YOU SAY YES?**

The goal of the Greek Festival is

1. Raise funds to sustain, maintain, and grow St. John's Greek Orthodox Church.
2. Create an opportunity for fellowship among our community

How can we as a community achieve these goals to make this the most profitable and enjoyable Greek Festival yet?

## **Just say yes!**

Say yes to:

Giving your time by volunteering. See the Greek Festival webpage and the bulletin for more details.

Promoting the sale of raffle tickets! Tell your friends, co-workers, and neighbors, our grand prize is a new car! See the Greek Festival webpage and the bulletin for more details.

Helping to complete the festival album by selling an ad, purchasing an ad to commemorate a loved one or promote your business. This year's album will be full of coupons and Greek recipes, sure to catch our guests' eye.

We look forward to saying yes as a community to make this the most successful and positive festival ever!

## **Book Your School's Field Trip Today!!!**

New this Festival Year is Field Trip Friday – please encourage your children's school to consider scheduling a field trip to our festival.

On Friday Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> Father Stavros will present a series of informative lectures throughout the afternoon on our religion's extensive history. He is a great speaker and the kids will enjoy learning about our religion, whose roots lie in the Byzantine Empire, and our church, which is a beautiful example of 5<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. church architecture.

On the same trip, they experience our wonderful food, music, and culture.

It's a wonderful opportunity for your school to introduce their children to a world culture while enjoying and supporting a local cause.


Please see our website for a flyer that you can print and give to your school or stop by the church office for one today. All school trips should be scheduled ahead of time, so please act on this today!

## **Festival Baking Days**

Here are the Festival Baking Dates we have so far:

1. **Koulourakia**—Monday, October 6 at 9:00 a.m.; and Tuesday, October 7, beginning at 11:30 a.m.
2. **Finikia and Kourambiethes**—Wednesday, October 15, beginning at 9:00 a.m.
3. **Tsoureki**—Wednesday, October 22, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

**Please consult the weekly bulletin additional baking information, dates, etc.**



PELAGIA "PEGGY" BRADSHAW  
Loan Officer NMLS#320507  
3508 West Azeele Stree #101  
Tampa, FL 33609  
727-244-1374 Direct  
813-353-4222 Office  
peggyk65@verizon.net  
peggy.k.bradshaw@gmail.com

**HUBBARD LENDING**  
NMLS#881616

**Mortgage rates are at record lows.**  
Please call me and mention this ad, 10% of the commission will be given to the church.

# Parish Council Report

**October, 2014**

Dear Parishioners,

The Parish Council is excited to share with you all that has been happening at St. John's this summer! To better serve our community, the church office has gone through some changes:

- We have welcomed our new pastoral assistant, Charlie Hambos. Charlie has been a great addition to our team and great help to Father Stavros. Our community is lucky to have them both. Charlie's arrival (and the new school—see below) made it necessary to reorganize some of the rooms in the main administration building. Father's and Charlie's offices received a fresh coat of paint and much needed updating. Along with those offices, we have freshened up and installed a wall AC unit at one of the rooms that will serve as our new meeting room for Bible study groups, Ministry meetings, PC meetings, etc. **The use of the Meeting Room must be booked in advance with the church office.**
- We also welcomed Monica Gjerde. Monica will be Father's executive assistant and the office manager. She's a veteran of the Orthodox faith, having served at the Metropolis of Atlanta's St. Stephen Camp for 13 years as a camp counselor. Significantly, she spent five years working for the Gwinnett County Public School System in the human resource department of a local high school where she was an assistant to the principal. She is well versed in current office software technologies and is a warm welcoming presence in our lives.
- Monica's arrival means we finally have a designated bookkeeper. Debbie Bowe who has been with us for almost a year has had an extensive background in bookkeeping. She will now work part-time and focus strictly on our financial recordkeeping along with a newly hired CPA firm that specializes in non-profit organizations and will help us on a project by project basis.
- We've licensed a new contact management software system designed specifically for churches. This software will make the work of the office staff much easier and efficient and better serve our parishioners. We expect to be integrating and rolling out the software for the next few months and hope to have the system fully operational by early next year.

Watch for more changes as we continue to reorganize our office staff & space to build the foundation that will help us grow and thrive in the future!

Another significant achievement this summer was that our school tenant, SmartStarts Day School, was awarded a charter school license by the School District of Hillsborough County:

- Operated under the name of BridgePrep Academy, it is a public charter school (tuition free) focusing on bilingual education where all students receive one hour of Spanish per day.
- The school also received a \$300,000 technology grant by the federal government; the funds will supply Smart Boards in every classroom and a state-of-the-art computer lab.
- A new principal and teacher staff have been hired adhering to the strict guidelines of the state of Florida.
- Coupled with our beautiful facilities and gym, it is no surprise that the school has experienced tremendous success as it now enrolls more than 120 students. In addition, it operates a preschool that is at enrollment capacity.

These are positive developments as there is a direct correlation between the success of the school and the financial stability of our church, at least in the short term. Our support will be key to ensure that the school continues on this path. The school must now follow the rules and requirements of the Hillsborough County public school system. For us, this means there will be a "new normal," in how we operate and use our campus. Changes include:

- Pursuant to the lease agreement that was put in place in 2012, the school has full use of the school campus and of the Kourmolis Hall from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. on weekdays. They will use the hall for drop off and pick up of the children as well as for after-school care and daytime P.E. classes. We are working closely with the administration to ensure that the hall is available as needed.
- The back parking lot gates leading to the church office may be closed after 8:30 a.m. each weekday. The gates will NOT be locked though. We recommend that parishioners use the front parking lot adjacent to Swann Avenue to access the church office. The courtyard gate will not be closed.
- The school has designated certain parking spots in front of the flagpole as "No Parking" spaces. This is to ensure the safety of the children during drop-off and pick-up hours. Please feel free to use these spots after school hours and on the weekends and during church on Sunday.
- The school is required to have a security guard on premises. These individuals carry walkie-talkies and wear yellow shirts that say "security." Like police officers at any public school, they are here to ensure the safety and security of the children.

It is exciting to watch this fledgling school grow and we, as Parish Council, will do our best to ensure that their success translates into a positive, long-term relationship for our community.

These updates are only a sample of the projects we've embraced and are working on. As other successes blossom, we will keep you informed and up-to-date.

-Parish Council

# Liturgical Schedule for October 2014

**Sunday, October 5** Orthos: 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.  
**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. John (Thomas Shearer, Nicholas Alsina, Antonio Bavaro, Jonah Blankenbaker, Yianni Trimikliniotis, Nicholas Oliver, Athansios Oliver)  
**Ushers:** Chris Kavouklis, Geroge Mitseas, Mike Trimis  
**Coffee Hour:** Choir - Church musician's Sunday  
**Welcoming Committee:** Greeters - Donna Hambos, Irene Kostaris; Ambassador - Carole Fotopoulos; Caller - Amy Kafantaris; Get Acquainted- Betty Katherine Katsamakis, Perry Katsamakis

**Wednesday, October 8** **Sacrament of Holy Unction** 9:30 a.m.

**Sunday, October 12** Orthos: 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.  
**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Matthew (Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, John Palios, Brigham Sibley, Benny Hidermichel, James Kavouklis, Andrew Patrasciou)  
**Ushers:** Tammy Christou, Kevin Fentress, Florin Patrasciou  
**Coffee Hour:** AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope - Founders Day Luncheon  
**Welcoming Committee:** Greeters - Marenca Patrasciou, Megan Rindone; Ambassador - Donna Trakas; Caller - Ewana Forde

**Sunday, October 19** Orthos: 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.  
**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Mark (John Karamitsanis, Lukas Karamitsanis, Andrew Mellon-Lynn, Dominic Garcia, Demetri Karounos, Grayson Borgeas, Peter Chandler, Frankie Giallourakis)  
**Ushers:** Perry Katsamakis, Nick Kavouklis, Peter Theophanous  
**Coffee Hour:** Glendi Dancers  
**Welcoming Committee:** Greeters - Marisa Panopoulos, Theo Panopoulos; Ambassador - Toula Couralis; Caller - Martha Kapetan

**Wednesday, October 22** Evening Liturgy for St. James  
Orthos: 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy: 6:00 p.m.

**Sunday, October 26** **Feast of St. Demetrios**  
Orthos: 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.  
**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Luke (Christos Nenos, Dean Mitseas, Nicholas Katzaras, James Katzaras, Nicholas Yotis, Gennaro Scarfogliero, Andrew Thatcher, Chris Cojita)  
**Ushers:** Jason Pill, Gregory Tisdale, George Trimikliniotis  
**Coffee Hour:** Community Outreach  
**Welcoming Committee:** Greeters - Debbie Kavouklis, Edie Kavouklis Ambassador - Skip Hidgon

**Sunday, November 2** Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. John (Nicholas Alsina, Antonio Bavaro, Jonah Blankenbaker, Yianni Trimikliniotis, Nicholas Oliver, Athanasios Oliver, Gabriel Fallon)  
**Ushers:** Brett Mourer, Demetrios Halkias, Amin Hanhan  
**Coffee Hour:** Philoptochos  
**Welcoming Committee:** Greeters-Jenny Paloumpis, Megan Rindone; Ambassador-Katherine Sakkis; Caller-Maria Karounos; Get Acquainted Sunday-Michael and Bessie Palios

**Note: There will be Divine Liturgy on All three days of the Festival—Liturgy will begin each day at 9:00 a.m.!**

**Friday, November 7** Orthros 8:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:00 a.m.

**Saturday, November 8** **Feast of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel**  
Orthros 8:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:00 a.m.

**Sunday, November 9** **Feast of St. Nectarios**  
Orthros 7:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:00 a.m.  
**Altar Boys:** Anyone attending may serve  
**Ushers:** David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas  
**Coffee Hour:** No Coffee Hour—Greek Festival  
**Welcoming Committee:** Greek Festival

# Weekday Liturgies in October

**Sacrament of Holy Unction**-The Sacrament of Holy Unction is offered for the healing of soul and body. It is traditionally done on Holy Wednesday but can be done at other times during the year. We try to offer this sacrament 3-4 times per year at St. John, and one is scheduled for Wednesday, October 8, from 9:30-11:00 a.m. We will use the Holy Week Book for this service, so if you decide to attend, please bring your book to follow along.

**Special Prayer for Medical Personnel on October 19**-St. Luke, Apostle, Evangelist and also Physician, has his feastday celebrated on October 18. In conjunction with this, as he is the patron saint of doctors, we are going to offer a prayer for everyone in the medical field on Sunday, October 19, at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. All doctors, nurses, dentists, researchers, students and anyone connected to the medical field is encouraged to attend.

**Liturgy of St. James** - to be celebrated Wednesday, October 22

The Orthodox Church celebrates four different Divine Liturgies throughout the liturgical year. The most prominent is the Divine Liturgy written by St. John Chrysostom, which is celebrated almost every Sunday and on most feast days. The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is celebrated 10 times a year—on the eve of Christmas, the eve of Epiphany, on the five Sundays of Lent, Holy Thursday morning, Holy Saturday morning, and on the feast of St. Basil, which is January 1. The Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated on Wednesday and Fridays of Great Lent and the mornings of Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday and Holy Wednesday. The Divine Liturgy of St. James is celebrated only once a year, on his feastday, which is October 23. The Liturgy of St. James will be celebrated on Wednesday evening, October 22, the evening before his feastday.

The Divine Liturgy of St. James is the oldest of the Divine Liturgies and is also the longest. It was written around 70 A.D. making it the oldest Eucharistic service in the entire Christian world. Among the interesting things about this service is that by the end of the first century, the structure of the Liturgy we celebrate today was already loosely in place. The Liturgy begins not in the altar, but in the Narthex of the church, as was the custom of the early church. The priest and faithful enter the church together from the narthex, and the next part of the service is conducted on the solea, with the priest facing the people. The priestly prayers, while very long in the liturgy, reveal a beauty and completeness which would later be shortened by St. Basil and even more by St. John Chrysostom. The most unique part of this service comes at the reception of Holy Communion. In this liturgy and this liturgy only, it has become the custom for the faithful to receive Holy Communion in separate elements, in similar fashion with how the clergy commune. The communicants first receive the Holy Body of Christ in their hands and consume it, and then drink from the Holy Chalice. This is a special beautiful tradition which will be continued at St. John, and it is encouraged that all who attend this service fast beforehand and prepare to receive Holy Communion at this Liturgy. The Liturgy of St. James will be held on Tuesday, October 22 at 6:00 p.m.

**Feast of St. Demetrios-October 26**-St. Demetrios was born into a wealthy and distinguished Christian family in the Greek City of Thessaloniki in the late 3rd century. Demetrios was noted for his wisdom, and was a good speaker and polished orator. St. Demetrios was also a distinguished soldier. Thessaloniki was known for popular gladiatorial games which attracted the local pagans. Travelling with the Emperor Galerius after a military victory, Demetrios stopped in Thessaloniki, where many pagans, who were jealous of his successful life, denounced him as a Christian before the emperor, who ordered Demetrios put in prison. A man named Nestor befriended Demetrios in prison. The Emperor went to the arena to see his favorite gladiator, Lyaos and offered a reward to whomever could defeat him. Nestor accepted the challenge, and through the prayers of St. Demetrios, defeated the giant. When Nestor refused to kill Lyaos, because he had been helped by the “God of Demetrios”, the Emperor ordered that both be killed. This occurred in the year 306. We commemorate St. Demetrios on October 26 and St. Nestor on October 27.



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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.

# Community News

## Parish Registry

**Wedding**—Perry Roy and Alysa Trakas were married on Sunday, August 31. Pete and Donna Trakas were the Koumbaroi. Congratulations!

**Funeral**-Bess Paloupis passed away on Monday, September 8. Her funeral was held on Saturday, September 13. May her memory be eternal!

**Condolences** to Dory Passalaris and family on the passing of Dory's father, Demetrios. **May his memory be eternal!**

## Meeting Schedule for September

Sunday, October 5	Philoptochos	After Liturgy	Zaharias Room
Tuesday, October 7	Parish Council	7:00 p.m.	Admin Building
Thursday, October 9	Young at Heart	11:30 a.m.	Zaharias Room
Sunday, October 12	GOYA	5:00 p.m.	Kourmolis Center
Sunday, October 19	AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope	After Liturgy	TBA
Sunday, October 19	JOY/HOPE Fall Festival	4:00-6:00 p.m.	

**Order for Holy Communion** - With Sunday school classes beginning, we want to remind you of the order for Holy Communion:

1. Choir Members
2. Altar Boys (this is a new procedure so that they can receive Communion and go to their classes)
3. Parents with babies/small children
4. Sunday school Students and Teachers
5. Anyone sitting in the side sections of the church
6. Those sitting in the main section of the church, from the front row to the back row.

The ushers will also be assisting everyone so that everyone who wishes to receive Communion may do so in the correct order. Thank you for your patience and your cooperation with these procedures.

**Get Acquainted Sunday** - October 5-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 October will be Sunday, October 5.

**Parish Assembly**-The Fall Parish Assembly will be held on Sunday, October 26, following Divine Liturgy. An agenda will be mailed in advance to all members in good standing. Primary topics include the 2015 budget as well as nominations for Parish Council and Audit Committee and Election of an Election Committee. Parish Council Elections are Sunday, December 14.

**Donations Needed for altar boy robes** - we have an ever-increasing amount of altar boys. When we ordered the altar boy robes eight years ago, we ordered 18 of various sizes, based on the boys we had at the time. We also ordered three more last year. But with more boys, who are now the same size, we are probably going to order 1-2 sets per year to keep up with this new class (10 altar boys) For each size, we have one gold robe, one white robe, and six stoles (red, white, blue, green, gold and purple). We need to order an additional robe in the small size, one more in the medium and one more in the large. They are about \$1,000 per set—that's for the two robes and six stoles in each size. So we need a total of \$2,000 for this project. The good news is that the robes we have, thanks to the donations for dry cleaning that we have received, look as good as new. The robes are excellently made and will last at least 20-25 years because we take such good care of them. We just need a few more for the additional boys and their additional sizes.

**Donations for Speakers in the Church** - Thanks to the Young At Heart for helping us get new speakers in the Kourmolis Center we are finally enjoying once again, the ability to play music and have microphones for meetings and events. Now, it is time to turn our attention to the speakers in the church. We have had some donations so far for new speakers and are pricing new speakers out—by the time you receive this publication, we will have the estimates. But if you are interested in donating for new speakers for the church, please contact Fr. Stavros.

# Community News

**Orthodoxy 101 Class to be held in September** - Fr. Stavros offers this class two times per year, in spring and in fall. This will be the SAME CLASS so no need to take it again if you already have. This will be a three-week course of study on Monday nights to make people aware of the basics of being an Orthodox Christian. Who should attend the Orthodoxy 101 class?

- ♦ Interfaith couples—this will help the non-Orthodox person understand more what is going on in our church when they attend.
- ♦ Anyone who is considering joining our church. Going forward, this class will be a requirement for those who wish to join our Orthodox faith.
- ♦ New converts to Orthodoxy—For those who recently joined our church and who want to know a little bit more about it.
- ♦ Anyone who wants to know more about the basics of our faith, or who wants a refresher course in the basics of Orthodoxy is encouraged to attend.

The classes will be part lecture, part discussion, with lots of time for questions and answers. The three sessions will be done as follows:

**Monday, September 29** A Tour of the Orthodox Church: What we see in the Church and what it means

**Monday, October 6** Orthodox Spirituality—The Seven Sacraments and the Divine Liturgy

**Monday, October 13** Orthodox Traditions—fasting, icons, prayer and separating Theology from “yiayialogy” (what our grandparents taught us wasn’t always right)

Classes will be held on these three Mondays from 6:30-8:30 p.m. and will be held in the CHURCH Sanctuary. Please sign up with Fr. Stavros at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com), so he has enough materials for everyone. There is no charge for this class.

## **REAL (Representing Emerging Adult Leaders)—this is a new ministry!**

REAL Group (Representing Emerging Adult Leaders) Are you 18-30 years old, in college, grad school, recently graduated or just starting your career and not quite sure which group is for you? Choose this one. There will be no set curriculum. Just trying to live Orthodoxy in a not-so-Orthodox world. Meeting locations will vary each week. The group leader is Charlie Hambos, who can be reached at 813-843-8471 or at [charlie.hambos@gmail.com](mailto:charlie.hambos@gmail.com). Please contact Charlie with any questions or he will contact you.



## Scholarship Opportunities

St. John's Greek Orthodox Church is pleased to announce the AHEPA and Daughters of Penelope Scholarship Committee are now accepting applications. The scholarship's purpose is to promote, encourage, and advance education at the college, university and graduate school levels.



Please contact Edie Kavouklis at 813.758.0305 or Marina Paras at 813.966.9527 for additional information.

The deadline for submission is November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

**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!

**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.

**Live Streaming of Divine Liturgy**—We are now live-streaming the Divine Services of the Church. If you go to our website, [www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com](http://www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com) and find on the menu bar the live streaming option, you can easily tune into the Liturgy if you are unable to attend. Please bear in mind that watching a service on your computer is not a substitute for coming to church. You should attend church in person. However, for shut-ins, people who have a hard time getting to night services, parents with babies, if you are at home on a week-day and want to hear a week-day service, if you are sick, or can’t make the service for some reason, or if you are out of town, please feel free to tune in. The services are live-streamed only and will not be archived.

**Connection Cards**—We now have what are called “Connection Cards” in the pews of our church. Obviously we want everyone to be connected to our church. If someone is new to our church, we should encourage them to fill out a connection card and join our church. **If your contact information has changed, please fill out a connection card and send it to the office so we can update your address, email, etc.**

## SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS:

The Sunday School Staff at St. John's Greek Orthodox Church is looking forward to another great year. All children ages three to eighteen are invited to attend our program.

### A Few Announcements:

All children will remain in church through Holy Communion.

The teachers will escort your children to their classrooms and parents of 3RD GRADERS and YOUNGER should pick up their children after church, in their classrooms.

### Room Assignments:

**\*\*Nursery/Preschool** – 1st door on right, before Father Stavros' Office.

**\*\*Kindergarten** is in the school administration building.

**\*\*1st through 6th grade** is on the first floor of the school building.

**\*\*7th and 8th Grade** is on the SECOND FLOOR of the school building. (Second classroom on the left.)

**\*\*High School** is on SECOND FLOOR of the school building. (Third classroom inn the left.)

We will continue the Music Program and our 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> graders will report to the Zaharias Room after Communion. Pre-school, Kindergarten, 7th & 8th Graders and High School will have their program in their classrooms.

Our Nursery is open at 10:00 for your convenience. You are welcome to enjoy this room with you child.

If you have not registered your child, please do so today. One reason we need this information is for communication. Please contact Vickie Peckham at 406-5626 if you have any questions or comments. Thank you for your cooperation.

### OUR 2014-2015 SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS:

We would like to thank our dedicated staff for their commitment to the children of St. John's. Together, with the help of the parents, we will strive to strengthen the faith of our students.

Director of Sunday School: Victoria Peckham

Director of Administration: Tammy Christou

Music Teacher /Pageant/Retreat: Maria Xenick and her Music Assistant: Pam Irwin

Pre-K (3 and 4 year olds): Alexis Scarfogliero – Teacher and Bessie Palios - Assistant

Kindergarten: - Debbie Nicklow

Grade 1: Melissa Krinos

Grade 2: Marina Choundas and Heidi Borgeas - Co-Teachers

Grade 3: Stamie Garcia and Amy Kafantaris - Co-Teachers

Grade 4: Debbie Ferekides

Grade 5 and 6: Vickie Peckham

Grade 7 and 8: Kara and Stefan Katzaras - Co-Teachers

High School: Peggy Bradshaw and Isidoros Passalaris – Co-Teachers

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# JUST SAY YES!

We will continue with part three of a monthly article to the Messenger to encourage and inspire you to continue to Just Say Yes! The following is an excerpt from the book Having a Mary Spirit: Allowing God to Change us from the Inside Out, by Joanna Weaver. The monthly excerpts will come from a chapter of the book titled *A Willing Spirit*. It is a beautiful study on both the Virgin Mary and the concept of saying Yes to God.

## THE ART OF PONDERING

Tradition tells us that when some ancient artisans portrayed Mary in stained glass, they used clear material. No dyes, no colors, just transparent-as-water glass. The reason was that, when Mary offered herself to God, she offered herself unreservedly and completely. "There was nothing of her to affect the light that came through," says pastor and author Ben Patterson. "She could not advance herself and advance the work of God."

Mary was that rare kind of woman who knew her part and did it without trying to do anything more. She had a submitted, trusting spirit. She let God call the shots and then went along for the ride.

When the shepherds came to worship Jesus, telling Mary and Joseph what the angels had said, the Bible tells us that "Mary treasured up all things and pondered them in her heart." (Luke 2:19).

Do you get that? Instead of talking about what was happening, Mary pondered. She thought about it. She held events in her heart rather than blabbing them at the well or in the village marketplace.

I've already told you, that's so not me. Had I been in Mary's place, I'm afraid I would have been tempted to interrupt, tell of my angelic encounter, and fore my husband to share his story as well. After all, the shepherds were already spreading the news to everyone who would listen. Adding our stories to the mix would only substantiate what they were saying. *Dateline, 60 Minutes, Live with Larry King*—they'd all be begging us for an interview. With such a spectacular mix of advance publicity, our baby could be crowned king of Israel within the week!

But Mary refused to pander to the public. Instead she pondered in private. And I wonder if we wouldn't be smart to follow her example. For too often, when God invites us to join Him in His work, we run ahead trying to help Him out. Rather than allowing the Lord to work out His plan in His own time, we pull out our penknives and try to force open the bud before it was meant to bloom.

And whatever we do, we cause trouble.

Just ask Joseph. Not Mary's husband Joseph, but Jacob's son in the Old Testament. He pondered and treasured his dreams rather than parading them in front of his brothers, his journey to Pharaoh's palace might not have required a side trip to the pit and thirteen years in the slammer.

Just ask Jacob's mother Rebekah. Had she trusted God to keep His promise rather than tricking her husband, Isaac into blessing their younger son, she would have spared the entire family a great deal of pain.

While I know God used Joseph's slavery and Rebekah's trickery to accomplish His purposes, I can't help but wonder what would have happened had they chosen to wait and ponder instead of rushing ahead. My own experience as a recovering Martha has taught me that a submitted heart says yes to God, but it doesn't demand a time frame or a money back guarantee. After all, sometimes agreeing to God's will means saying no to the right to make it happen as we'd like and saying yes to trials and hardships, heartache and suffering, terrible loss and great pain.

Just ask Mary, Thirty-three years after the prophet Simeon held her baby son in his arms, blessed Him and prophesied over Him, she learned that the old man's prophecy had been right on the mark (Luke 2:35). For with every blow of the hammer that drove spikes in the body of her precious firstborn, a sword pierced Mary's soul. Breaking her heart as she watched Jesus die on the dark hill of Golgotha.

The truth is that saying yes to God brings blessing, but it can also bring pain. That's why we need a submitted heart that keeps believing, even when it hurts.



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# Ministries

## Adult Greek School

The Adult Greek School program will start at 6:00 – 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 9, 2014. The teacher Mrs. Magda Myer will use the same text book for beginners. Those interested in learning Greek, please contact Mrs. Myer at (813) 909-2327, [aspis69@aol.com](mailto:aspis69@aol.com) or contact the church office at (813) 876-8830.

## Bible Study with Charlie Hambos

Bible Study, with Charlie Hambos, meets every Monday night from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the Administration Building. We are studying the Book of Romans. So bring your Bible and come join Charlie for Bible Study.



## Choir

Sunday, October 5<sup>th</sup> is Church Musicians Sunday. On this day, the feast day of St. Romanos, the patron saint of music, all choir members and psaltis are honored and recognized. We sincerely thank our choir, under the direction of Artie Palios, as well as Nick Andreadakis, our chanter, for their tireless work in chanting the beautiful services of our church. The Choir will also sponsor the coffee hour.

## 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, October 18 and Saturday, November 15. For more information or to sign up to serve one Saturday, please contact, please contact Betty Katherine Katsamakakis at [bettypalios@gmail.com](mailto:bettypalios@gmail.com) or 813-468-1596.

## GOYA

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

**Volleyball Tournament in St. Pete**-St. Stefanos Greek Orthodox Church in St. Petersburg is sponsoring a volleyball tournament from October 24-26. Our GOYAns will be attending. Please bring your registration forms to the GOYA meeting on October 12.

## HOPE/JOY

Fall Harvest Festival-On October 19, our HOPE/JOY (ages 3-6<sup>th</sup> Grade) will have a fall harvest festival.

## *Young at Heart*

Some of us just returned from a wonderful cruise with Norwegian cruise lines to the eastern Caribbean for seven days. It was wonderful! While we were gone the rest of our gang under the expert leadership of Bob and Nancy Vallianato, gave the coffee hour a big twist by holding a "Taco" event that thanks to all of the St. John's family was a big success!

### Thank you to everyone!

The next event we will be having is the first of what we are calling "Sunday in Santorini" The charge will be \$10 for adults and children free. There will be good food, music and dancing? We all hope that you are enjoying our efforts to enjoy the fellowship and fun we have here at St. John's and that you will join us! Every dollar that we raise goes to helping make our church a better place to gather in worship and fellowship in our community. We just love doing this and hope that you enjoy our efforts.

**Watch the bulletins for further news about the "Sunday in Santorini".**



# Hope/Joy Fall Harvest Carnival

Sunday, October 19<sup>th</sup>  
4:00 – 6:00 PM

Day School Lunch Patio

(In case of rain we will be in the Kourmolis Center)



Please join us for an afternoon of  
fun, food, and fellowship!

ALL children  
pre-k through grade 6  
are invited to attend.

Moms, dads, grandparents,  
friends – please sign up to help!

Please come in costume!  
*(no witches or devils please)*

We will have games, crafts, prizes for all!

Dinner will be served

RSVP to Debbie Nicklow at [debbienicklow@hotmail.com](mailto:debbienicklow@hotmail.com) or 813-920-0892.



# Small Group Bible Studies

We kicked off our Small Group Bible Studies in September and at present we have SIX Small Groups that are meeting each week. If you haven't joined a group yet, you may do so at any time.

## **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](mailto:dkavouklis1@verizon.net), or call her at 690-0155.

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

**October Meeting Dates:** October 7, 14, 21, 28

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

**Location:** St. John Greek Orthodox Church in the Administration Building in the meeting room—there will be signs the first week directing you where to go

**Group Leader:** Father Stavros for the first one but we are going to rotate this among group members. Please email Fr. Stavros at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com) or contact him at 813-394-1038.

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

For this early morning group, bring your own coffee or breakfast food if you wish—we will not be providing these things.

**October Meeting Dates:** October 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

**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](mailto:hcauthorn@chubb.com)

**Group Leader:** Bessie Palios—Her email is [bmp1126@yahoo.com](mailto:bmp1126@yahoo.com), and her cell number is 813-523-0347.

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

**October Meeting Dates:** October 7, 14, 21, 28

**North Tampa Mixed Group** (for any adults) Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient for those who live in North Tampa/Hillsborough County area.

**Location:** Rotating. Please call Toula Courialis at 773-415-8589, or Debbie Wade at 813-385-2285 with any questions and location for each week or email Toula at [tg1583@att.com](mailto:tg1583@att.com), or Debbie at [ddrdh@yahoo.com](mailto:ddrdh@yahoo.com).

**Group Leader:** Rotating. Contact Toula or Debbie with any questions.

**October Meeting Dates:** October 7, 14, 21, 28

**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](mailto:dhambos@msn.com)

**Group Leader:** Donna Hambos

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

**October Meeting Dates:** October 7, 14, 21, 28

## **Young Adult Group** (for adults ages 18-40)

**Location:** At the home of Betty Katherine and Perry Katsamakakis 4301 Tacon St, Tampa, FL 33629

**Group Leader:** Mary Ann Konstas. Please contact Mary Ann at 813-215-9862 or at [mapkonstas@gmail.com](mailto:mapkonstas@gmail.com).

**Meeting Time:** Thursday Evenings at 7:30 p.m.

**October Meeting Dates:** October 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

# **Parish Council Elections**

Even though it is October, it will be time to start thinking about Parish Council Elections. On October 26, earlier than in previous years, we will hold our fall Parish Assembly and open up nominations for the Parish Council. This year, there are six (6) positions coming up for election for a two-year term. According to the Parish By-laws, nominations for the Parish Council will be closed following the Parish Assembly Meeting on Sunday, October 26. If you wish to be nominated for the Parish Council, please plan to attend the meeting on Sunday, October 26 and have someone nominate you, or send a letter to Fr. Stavros by Friday, October 24, stating your wish to be nominated for the Parish Council and he will read it at the meeting and have someone nominate you. Parish Council Elections will be held on Sunday, December 14, following Divine Liturgy. A mailing to all eligible voters will occur following the close of the nominations period which will have the names of the candidates, a picture of each candidate and a statement by each candidate.

In preparation for nominations and elections, please keep in mind the following:

1) Regarding eligibility to be a candidate for the Parish Council: Uniform Parish Regulations (UPR) Article 18, Section 1:

## **PARISHIONERS**

Section 1: Every person who is baptized and chrismated according to the rites of the Orthodox Church is a parishioner. The religious, moral and social duties of a parishioner are to apply the tenets of the Orthodox Faith to his/her life and to: adhere to and live according to the tenets of the Orthodox faith; faithfully attend the Divine Liturgy and other worship services; participate regularly in the holy sacraments; respect all ecclesiastical authority and all governing bodies of the Church; be obedient in matters of the Faith, practice and ecclesiastical order; contribute towards the progress of the Church's sacred mission; and be an effective witness and example of the Orthodox Faith and Traditions to all people.

A parishioner in good standing practices all the religious and moral duties as described in this Section 1. At a minimum, a parishioner in good standing must: be eighteen years of age or over; be current in his or her stewardship and other financial obligations to the Parish, abide by all the regulations herein stated and the Parish Bylaws; and cooperate in every way towards the welfare and well being of the Parish. (Stewardship is recommended to be ten percent (10%) of one's annual income as stated in Holy Scripture to help meet the financial obligations of the Parish, the Metropolis and the Archdiocese.)

2) Regarding Election of Parish Council: UPR Article 25, Section Two

Section 2: A candidate for the Parish Council must be a parishioner in good standing of the Parish for at least one (1) year immediately preceding the date of the election and must live his or her life in accordance with the Faith and canons of the Church. The Priest determines whether the Parishioners are in canonical and financial good standing as specified in Article 18, Sections 1 through 3.

Section 3: Candidates for election to the Parish Council shall be nominated in accordance with the provisions of the Parish Bylaws.

A. All candidates shall attend a seminar conducted by the Priest prior to the election at which the Priest shall discuss and explain to the candidates the Uniform Parish Regulations, and the significance of the affirmation of office.

B. At the discretion of the respective Hierarchy, such seminar may be held locally or regionally, provided that candidates are given appropriate advance notice and more than one reasonable opportunity to attend the seminar in a location within close proximity to the applicable Parish.

C. In the event that an otherwise eligible candidate(s) cannot attend the scheduled seminar(s) for justifiable cause, the Priest shall meet privately with such individual(s) to provide the seminar.

D. At the conclusion of the seminar all candidates must sign a statement acknowledging that they understand the Regulations and will abide by them and the affirmation of office. If a candidate for the Parish Council does not attend a seminar and sign the statement, his/her name shall be deleted from the list of candidates.

~ AS WE HAVE DONE IN YEAR'S PAST, ALL PARISH COUNCIL CANDIDATES, regardless of whether they have served before or not, will be required to meet with Father Stavros prior to December 1, for a one hour meeting at the office at a time of their choosing. Any candidate who does not attend this one-hour appointment will be taken off of the ballot. There will be no exceptions. The reason for this is to establish a good working relationship between priest and potential parish council member, and to understand what is involved in being a Parish Council member at St. John. This meeting with Fr. Stavros will address the particular needs and expectations of a Parish Council member at St. John.

~Each candidate is asked to write a half a page on why they want to run for the Parish Council and to supply a recent photograph that is able to be photocopied well. The statement and photo need to be to the church office no later than December 1.

Thank you for your interest in being a Parish Council candidate. If you have any questions on any of the above, please feel free to contact me at any time. +FR. STAVROS

# Stewardship Update

Greetings from the St. John's Stewardship Committee! The stewardship committee has been hard at work over the last several months revamping and upgrading our stewardship process and database. We have recently partnered with Parish Data Systems (PDS) to implement a stewardship database that will help to streamline the stewardship process for the church. We are currently testing the database and plan to go live with the system on October 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. In the November issue of the Messenger I will talk more on the database and the next steps for it.

Most importantly is the open pledge drive that we are going to be undertaking in the next few weeks. By now, you should have received a reminder letter and a copy of your pledge statement. Please take a moment to review this and make sure it is accurate. If there is an open balance, please make an effort to fulfill that pledge as soon as possible. Also, just a reminder, in order to be eligible to run for Parrish Council and vote in the upcoming election you must have been caught up on your church stewardship by September 26, 2014.

This is an exciting time for the Stewardship Committee! There will be some growing pains as we transition from the antiquated excel spreadsheets that have been used to manage this information to a more comprehensive system that will, in the long run, make things much better. It will take some time, so please stick with us. We will get there!

If you have any questions about your stewardship pledge, the transition to the new system or anything else fund raising related please do not hesitate to contact me at (813) 505-2193 or via e-mail at ptrakas@gmail.com

Regards,



Peter Trakas

## Stewardship

### Will You Help Put us over our goal of \$400,000

	September 15, 2014	September 15, 2013
<b>Number of Steward Families</b>	311	277
<b>Amount Pledged</b>	\$382,600	\$308,731
<b>Stewardship Goal</b>	\$400,000	\$300,000

For those who have pledged this year, thank you for your generous support of St. John Greek Orthodox Church. For those who have not pledged, please send in your pledge form today. Extra forms are available in the church office. **As you can see, we haven't quite achieved our goal for 2014. So, if you haven't pledged for 2014, please do so today. If you are new in the community, it is important to pledge for the remainder of 2014.** Remember, the church relies on your generosity to not only keep it's door open, but to offer it's many ministries. We all benefit from the church. We all must do our part in support of our church!

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF ST. JOHN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH IN TAMPA**

# Living in a Material World

By Father Anastasios Gounaris

**A**lbert Einstein once said “It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity.” And this was before the technology explosion that often has us living more in a virtual world than a physical one.

Much of our life exists more on the virtual plane than the physical one. We organize relationships and communicate via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other social media. Schedules, documents, accounts, music, photo albums and much of our personal life resides on our hard drives or in the cloud rather than in our homes.

Many of us read or were read to from physical books when we were little. We passed playtime digging in the dirt, with action figures or dolls, playing sandlot ball and riding bicycles – even at the risk of skinning our knees. Today infants and toddlers stare constantly at screens and are at far less risk of skinning their knees or getting dirt under their fingernails because they are totally enmeshed in their virtual educational and game world and may rarely play outdoors.

When we are with others – over meals in restaurants or at home, at work, school or even at church functions – we constantly check our statuses and our e-mails. We are more attentive to our ubiquitous and all-knowing screens than to those around us. The British newspaper, “The Guardian,” recently reported that 67% of Americans agreed with the statement: “I am constantly looking at screens these days.”

To be sure, our ecclesiastical world has not been immune to these changes. One can now find a multitude of liturgical service texts and church music on the Internet. There is OrthodoxWiki to answer our every church-related question and the Liturgy and other services are streamed live for the convenience of those who are homebound or live far from an Orthodox community.

Yet, thank God, a visit to Saint Nicholas or any other parish confirms that Orthodoxy still has its feet firmly planted in physical reality. Just this past week we blessed and distributed real grapes for the Feast of the Transfiguration. This coming week, on the feast of the Dormition, we will have the Epitaphio of the Theotokos ensconced within the very substantial carved, wooden kouvouklion. At the celebration of *αγιασμό* or *ευχέλαιον* we are sprinkled with real water or anointed with actual olive oil. When we receive the Eucharist – *Θεία Κοινωνία* – we have a real spoon placed into our mouths and receive the material Body and Blood of Jesus Christ into our bodies. Real candles burn in our narthex and *καντήλια* before our iconostasis, where we venerate tangible icons of Christ, the Theotokos and the saints. If Madonna is nicknamed the “Material Girl” then perhaps the nickname for Orthodox should be “Material Christians.”

Does that mean we’re materialistic? No! It means that typically weak human faith requires tangible, material objects to serve as foci for our faith and as vehicles for receiving God’s Grace. God designed and created us to live in a material world. In John 9 Jesus – who otherwise healed and raised the dead through a mere word – found it necessary to spit on the ground and make mud with his saliva and spread the mud on a blind man’s eyes and to then tell him to go and wash in the

pool of Siloam.” Now, in almost all of His healings Jesus asks a version of the question “do you believe (that I can make you well)?” - which emphasizes that even God’s power relies on human faith. Could it be that, in this case, the Lord knew that this man’s faith needed a boost from the “placebo ef-

fect?” Perhaps the man – or the onlookers – attributed a special curative effect to this mud that, after all, was made with the saliva of the healer Jesus. Is it possible that the man’s faith – without the crutch of the mud placebo – would not have been sufficient to partner with Jesus’ power and effect his cure?

Who of us has perfect faith, that is sufficient to help us bridge the temptations and distractions of the world and to approach Christ? Very few of us do. The real objects and substances all around our churches and homes – gospels, icons, crosses, relics, water, oil, bread, wine, etc – serve not only as vehicles for our reception of God’s Grace, but also as comfort when our faith is insufficient for us to visualize Christ’s presence in our lives.

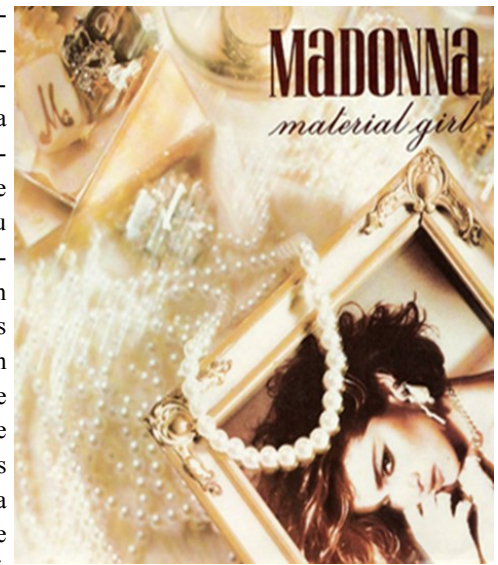
I am not saying that we should reject technology and all of the benefits that this gift of God brings to our lives. Yet all of God’s gifts to humankind – food, alcohol, dancing, drugs, our sexuality, science and technology – must be used with moderation. Otherwise they carry within them the potential for harm when abused or, as Einstein put it, when our technology exceeds our humanity.

So let’s not forget that God created us to live in and to have contact with and to be sustained by His material Creation, of which humankind is a part. God created us to live in and interact with a material world just as surely as he created fish to live in water. Just as taking fish out of water leads to their slow death, completely trading the material for the virtual world will just as surely lead to our emotional, spiritual and even physical death.

So when it comes to our screens – both large and small – let’s follow the advice of the old Greek adage: *παν μέτρον ἄριστον*. Amplified, in English, this means that nothing is intrinsically evil or forbidden to us – but that everything must always be partaken of in good measure.

It is important to use technology and the virtual world to help make our lives more efficient. But it is just as important to our spiritual, emotional and interpersonal life that we never lose our connection to the tangible, material world.

*Father Anastasios Gounaris is the Dean of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Tarpon Springs, FL.*





~ October 2014 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
BSN-Bible Study North Tampa BSE-Bible Study East Tampa BSS-Bible Study South Tampa	WBS-Women's Bible Study	**Fast Day  Car Raffle Fundrais- er from 9/28-11/2	1**Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Adult Dance Practice 7:00 p.m.	2 Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	3	4
5 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Get Acquainted Sunday Glendi Dance Practice Philoptoschos Meeting	6 Festival Baking 9:00 a.m.  Bible Study 6:30 p.m.  Orthodoxy 101-pt 2 6:30 pm	7 WBS 9:30 a.m. Festival Baking 11:30 a.m. (if neces- sary) BSE 6:30 p.m. BSS 6:30 p.m. BSN 6:30 p.m. Parish Council 7:00 p.m.	8 **Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Sacrament of Holy Unction 9:30 a.m. Adult Dance Practice 7:00 p.m.	9 Young at Heart 11:30 a.m.  Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m.  Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	10	11
12 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday AHEPA Founder's Day GOYA 5:00 p.m.	13 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.  Orthodoxy 101-part3	14 WBS 9:30 a.m. BSE 6:30 p.m. BSS 6:30 p.m. BSN 6:30 p.m.	15 **Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Festival Baking 9:00 a.m. Adult Dance Practice 7:00 p.m.	16 Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m.  Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	17	18 Community Outreach
19 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. AHEPA/DOP Mtg. Glendi Dance Practice JOY/HOPE Fall Festi- val	20 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	21 WBS 9:30 a.m. BSE 6:30 p.m. BSS 6:30 p.m. BSN 6:30 p.m.	22**Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Festival Baking 11:00a Evening Liturgy St. James Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Adult Dance Practice 7:15 p.m.	23 Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m.  Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	24 St. Stefanos GOYA Volleyball Tournament	25 St. Stefanos GOYA Volleyball Tournament
26 St. Demetrios Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Glendi Dance Practice Parish Assembly	27 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	28 WBS 9:30 a.m. BSE 6:30 p.m. BSS 6:30 p.m. BSN 6:30 p.m.	29 **Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m.  Adult Dance Practice 7:00 p.m.	30 Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m.  Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	31	

# St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

### *Timetable of Services*

**Sundays:** Orthos 8:30 a.m.      Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.  
**Weekdays:** Orthos 9:00 a.m.      Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

**Parish Priest:** Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-394-1038 (Cell)

frstav@gmail.com

**Pastoral Assistant:** Charlie Hambos

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-843-8471 (Cell)

charlie.hambos@gmail.com

**Parish Council:**

Alkis Crassas, President      813-690-3867

Carole Fotopoulos, Vice President      813-982-0947

Sandra Pappas, Secretary      813-785-3747

Dante Skourellos, Treasurer      813-765-9534

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“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.