

# 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

## November 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**

### **We're More Old Testament Than We Think**

At the end of my Message, you'll find an "Advent Challenge". But before you read about the Advent Challenge and consider doing it, please read through my lengthy article. It will prepare you to understand and hopefully accept the Advent Challenge.

**I**t is a sad fact that most of us do not read the Bible on a regular basis. Why is that? It's not how we were raised. It turns out that there are lots of other things we were raised to do or not to do in our Orthodox faith, and these things really hamper what we could be as Orthodox Christians, and what we could and should be as an Orthodox Church Community. Many of us are not living up to our full potential as Orthodox Christians. There is certainly a ways to go as a parish to reach our full potential.

Our small group Bible studies this fall have been studying the Old Testament. Even for those who read the Bible regularly, most of us have never read the Old Testament. So, for many group members, we are on new (and challenging) ground.

### **The Old Testament**

Here is a brief summary of the Old Testament—its very brief and it doesn't mean don't read the Old Testament.

In Genesis 1-3, we read that God (in Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit) created the world. God created the world perfect. God created the human being perfect. God intended for the human being to live in perfect harmony with God. God gave man free will, the ability to choose God or to go away from God. Man chose to go away from God. This resulted in the fall of man. The perfect creation became chaotic.

I have often wondered why God didn't just send Jesus Christ to redeem the world right after the Fall. Why not fix it right away? We read in the book of Galatians that God sent His Son into the world "when the fullness of time had come." (Galatians 4:4) God chose a special time to send His Son into the world. Why exactly was that 2,000 years ago and not 1,500 years ago or 2,500 years ago is something we may not ever know.

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As I am reading the Old Testament though, I am getting some ideas. God set about to help His Creation back to the fullness of God by finding people who could lead God's people. He found Abraham, who we read about in Genesis 12-18, and God made a covenant with Abraham, that God would be the God of Abraham and Abraham's descendants and Abraham would trust in God. But Abraham had flaws—his wife encouraged him to have an illegitimate child through a slave-woman. Yet God saw the goodness in Abraham, and Abraham saw the love of God, and despite his wrongs, Abraham had a son by his wife Sarah in old age, and Abraham became the father of the Jewish faith. Jacob, Abraham's grandson, stole the birthright and blessing of his older brother Esau but deceiving his father Isaac. And God still worked through Jacob, blessing him with twelve sons, whose names would later become the 12 tribes of Israel.

And still there was chaos in the world. The sons of Jacob eventually ended up in Egypt, where their descendants were enslaved by the Egyptians. God called Moses to lead the people out of Israel. This is the same Moses who as a young man killed an Egyptian man. This is the same Moses who when he was first called by God, did not trust or obey God. This is the same Moses who complained bitterly during 40 years of wandering in Egypt. ***It is very comforting, however, to see that God worked miracles through Abraham, Jacob and Moses, despite the fact that they had some glaring flaws and some serious sins in their life records.***

God gave Moses and the people of Israel a structure to live out their faith in—it was called the Law. The Law included the Ten Commandments, the ones most of us know. It also included 613 other commandments, many of which are not known by us (they are in the books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, which in many places read with the dryness of a legal textbook.). There were instructions to build a Temple (in fact if you read Exodus chapter 26-31, if you didn't know any different, you'd think this passage was describing an Orthodox Church. As you can see, much of our Tradition comes from the Old Testament.), and there was the establishment of a religious office called the priesthood. Priests had to be from the tribe of Levi, and there were certain duties, obligations and privileges of the priests. And among the things the priests were doing was that they were "compliance officers", making sure that people followed the Law, oftentimes to the letter. It was very rare for the priests to show mercy and compassion as the people struggled to follow all 613 tenets of the Law. In fact, they were often tyrannizing, you could say, the people, who no matter how hard they tried, could not follow the Law.

Along the way, people's understanding of God became skewed (sound familiar—so much of the Old Testament is still being played out in the world today). People believed that God resided in the Temple, and the only place one could worship God was in the Temple. So when the Temple fell and the people of Israel was exiled into Babylon, not only were they sad that they lost their temple, their city and their freedom, but they were distraught because they thought they

had lost their God. But God never abandoned His people, even in all of their chaos and misunderstanding of God. Prophets were sent by God to comfort the people while they were in exile. And when the people of Israel returned to Jerusalem, they rebuilt their Temple and again gained the confidence that their God was not dead, but was very much alive, the beginning of an understanding that God did not reside in the Temple, and that one could worship God outside of the Temple. Without this understanding, how could God incarnate His Son Jesus Christ, who would claim to be one with God, how could that happen if people's understanding of God was that He was restricted to the Temple? So, after centuries of exile and then return, after centuries of struggling to obey the Law and always failing, after centuries of Prophets foretelling of the coming of Christ, this is when God sent His Son into the world.

## The New Testament

Thus with the Incarnation of Jesus Christ in the flesh, the New Testament begins. And with the New Testament, a New Covenant. The Old Covenant was the Law, an oppressively legalistic system of do's and don'ts. Jesus did not completely throw out the Law, but He showed that the Law had a lot of shortcomings. The Law was necessary because it provided structure, and it provided the backdrop for Christ's ministry to be accepted. But the Law was not faith in itself, the Law was structure. People couldn't worship the Law—they were supposed to be worshipping God. And faith and God were not supposed to be associated with oppression, but with LOVE. So, Jesus ministered in LOVE. He summarized the 613 commandments into two commandments—Love the Lord and love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22:37 and in many other places) When people wanted to stone an adulteress woman, when they wanted to kill a sinful person, as the Law required, Jesus told them "Let the one without sin cast the first stone." (John 8:7) Jesus said He did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill the Law. (Matthew 5:17) God's purpose in the Law was for people to love one another, to create a moral code which promoted love of God and love of each other. The Ten Commandments were about Love—loving the Lord (no other gods, remember the Sabbath, etc.) and loving your neighbor (thou shalt not commit murder, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, or covet, honor your parents, etc.). But people couldn't keep these laws in love—they kept them in fear and oppression.

Jesus personified love and love is based on trust, and trust is based on understanding and understanding is predicated on the ability to forgive and to serve. So Jesus was all about forgiving and serving. He spent His ministry teaching about love and service. He spent His ministry healing those who were sick, fulfilling Messianic signs that had been written about by the Old Testament prophets. And He ultimately gave His life by being crucified on the Cross for our sins—He balanced the equation that had fallen out of balance when the human race fell from God. In Ephesians 2: 13-16, we read

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off*

*have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end.*

Jesus Christ established the church when He instituted the Eucharist, the New Covenant. He showed to us that there could be life after death, by His Resurrection from the dead. And He taught us that when we die, we will live with Him in a NEW Kingdom. This should be then a cause for JOY. We should be living in JOYFUL expectation of that Kingdom to come. But the Kingdom is not just a far off reality, we can live in the Kingdom in present day life as well.

### **We Can Live in the Kingdom of God NOW, in This Life**

Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry, and to this day, through His guidance of the Church, have given us glimpses of what it is to live in Christ, right here, and right now. Properly celebrated, the liturgy gives us a glimpse into the Kingdom of God—when we celebrate the Liturgy, we are temporarily leaving our earthly life behind and entering into the Kingdom of Heaven. And it's not because we enter a beautiful church, it's because we enter a beautiful UNION with God and with our fellow man.

This union is possible when we are active, rather than passive, in what we are doing. So, to truly worship, we must open our mouths and praise God, be an active participant, and not just a spectator. We need to open up our Bibles and read them, not just wait for Sunday to come to hear what the priest is going to read to us. We need to pray not only FOR one another but WITH one another, opening up our mouths on behalf of our fellow man, in the presence of our fellow man. And we need to come to worship, not because it's Sunday and we feel like we need give God His due, but because WE feel the need to worship God. This is what Christ has given us. This is how we are to worship in the New Covenant.

As I think more and more about it, I realize that we are living out an "Old Testament Christianity." What do I mean by that? We've made our practice of Orthodoxy Christianity about do's and don'ts, about rites and rituals. We've made fasting about ingredients, rather than about self-control. We don't experience the joy of Christ because we're trying to get the rubrics down. A careful caveat here though—There is nothing wrong with our services, our rituals, and our Traditions. Without some structure there would be chaos. But we worship the Lord, not the structure. I am a Christian who happens to be Orthodox, not an Orthodox who happens to be Christian. I'm a Christian because of WHAT I believe. I am an Orthodox Christian because of how I practice what I believe.

### **Old Testament "behaviors" necessarily precede New Testament "behaviors"**

Just like Christ could not come immediately after the Fall, because the "fullness of time" had not come and He would have come into a world unable to understand Him at all, so it is difficult to enter the church first with a "New Testament" understanding of Christ. Think about how we teach our children the faith. When our son was a baby, we taught him the do's and don'ts of church—stand up, sit down, stay quiet, open your mouth for Communion, make the sign of the cross at certain times, light a candle, "say" your prayers, etc. It would have done no good to tell him about the sacramental life, or that Communion is the Body and Blood of Christ, that doesn't go anywhere with a 3 year old. As he gets older, however, we have to move away from the rules and regulations of church to the beauty of the Christian life, and the power of Jesus Christ to change and to save lives. But what would happen if we kept our son at the three year old level of understanding of the church—light your candle, stand up, sit down, etc., he would quickly lose interest.

I said on a recent Sunday in church, imagine if we were a group of strangers, 300 people sitting in church and none of us knew anyone in church. For me to say "Love your neighbor," would be unrealistic. How can I love my neighbor if I do not even know my neighbor? My neighbor could be a thief or a murderer. If there was a group of strangers and we were all together, the first thing to do would be to establish some rules, boundaries and guidelines for behavior. That way we would know we are all safe, and respected. Then people would become familiar with one another, then they would develop rapport, then trust and ultimately, hopefully love. But what would happen if I took this group of strangers and said, don't talk to one another, don't hurt each other, but don't really get to know anyone. Everyone would be safe, but there would be no love, because there would be no trust, because there would be no rapport.

And herein lies a challenge for us. By and large, we live, in my opinion, an Old Testament Christianity in the Orthodox Church. Many of us were raised to see the church as a list of do's and don'ts. Why do so many of us come habitually late to church, and why do some come only on Christmas and Pascha? Because for many people coming to church is like "giving God His due." Many don't come to worship, they come to be counted, as if God is counting us. I mean, you can't really say the person who comes only once a year comes to worship, because one who truly "worships" knows that "love for worship" is intrinsically part of worship, and if one loves to worship, he worships all the time, not just on the great feasts. God doesn't need us to come to church. He doesn't need our praise and worship. WE need these things. And when we adorn our church with more and more icons, this may please us, but it doesn't please God. God doesn't need the expensive adornments of our church—that is very Old Testament! God desires the rich spiritual adornment of our hearts!

People limit their exposure to the scriptures exclusively to church. How Old Testament of us! The scripture can be read by anyone, anywhere, anytime.

We stand silently during the services, content to be spectators as the priest and the choir do the worship for us. Again, how Old Testament of us! Because in the Old Testament, the high priest was going into the holy of holies and only once a year and people had no idea what he was doing. (Hebrews 9:7) He was doing whatever he was doing on their behalf and they waited outside the curtain for him to come out, passive observers.

People in the Orthodox Church wait for the priest to pray for them, as if only the priest can do this. Again, how Old Testament of us! In the Old Testament the priest was lording power over the people. He wasn't their leader but their dictator, maybe even their oppressor. **There is no question** that we will always need priests to lead our worship, and to pray over us, to teach us and to guide us as our spiritual father. But we need to start to learn to pray for each other.

And because many see the church as a list of do's and don'ts, many people are leaving the church, precisely because our lives are already filled with do's and don'ts—we don't need anymore. None of us has enough joy in life, and this is what the church is supposed to be, a "refuge of joy." So, we've got to change some things. We are not the church of the Old Testament, we are the church of the New Testament. And we need to make ourselves that!

### Taking Chances

Nothing worthwhile in life ever comes without taking a chance. Anyone who went to college took a chance and went to a new school. Anyone who has ever had a job has taken a chance. Getting married involves taking a leap into the unknown. Same thing with being a parent, a first-time home-owner, buying a car, etc. But we take chances because without taking some chances, we wouldn't really know what it is like to "live". That doesn't mean our chances have to be high leverage or risky ones. Not everything worthwhile necessarily comes at great risk. However, with no risk, there is no reward.

I was recently visited by a friend from a neighboring parish. It wasn't someone that was a stranger to me, it was someone I know and consider a friend. We were talking, and we got to talking about prayer. I asked him if he ever prayed out loud. He said, Yes, I say prayers like the Lord's Prayer or maybe with my children at night before bed. So I asked him, "do you ever say your own words of prayer, and pray with someone else in their presence?" And then I mentioned to him how I do this with some people in the church, and how a few people in the church actually do this with me as well occasionally, and how powerful it is to hear your name in prayer when you are present. It's not just something that laypeople like, but priests like this as well. We just don't get to hear prayers as often since we are usually the ones offering them. This person mentioned to me that the only prayer

he really ever says is the Lord's Prayer and a prayer before meals. I asked if he ever prays with anyone, i.e. a spouse, a parent, etc. Not surprisingly, the answer is no. Of course, it is no, we weren't raised like this, none of us, including me. At the end of our conversation, as I try to do with everyone who comes into my office, I asked if I could offer a prayer for him and his family. Of course, he said yes, everyone does. So, I prayed from my heart, a few words for him and his family and his job, etc. Then when I finished, he said "wait Father, I want to try praying for you." And he did, he offered a beautiful prayer, I felt uplifted hearing it. Afterwards, I thanked the man for his prayer. He said "Father, I was so nervous, I'm not even sure I said a good prayer." I answered "Your prayer was great, because it was from the heart and what better kind of prayer can there be than that?"

At our recent GOYA meeting, I decided that I wanted to include an out loud prayer for our closing prayer. We gathered around one of the candle-stands in front of the church, and each of us held an unlit candle. I told them that we were going to offer a prayer and everyone was going to say something out loud. We would each light a candle, pray for something or someone, out loud, and then everyone else would respond with "Lord have Mercy." So, I started the prayer, made my "petition", lit my candle and everyone said "Lord have mercy." Then Charlie did the same. Then each teenager in turn did the same. Some hesitated and waited until the end but without a few minutes, all 25 of them at the meeting had offered a prayer out loud. When everyone was done, I asked them "who felt awkward doing this?" Every hand went up. I asked "Who thinks this was a worthwhile thing to do?" Again, every hand went up. Then I asked "Who thinks we should do this again?" And every hand one up, and one person said "we need to be doing this at every meeting." Everyone put forward a name or a need and we all lifted that person in prayer together. What a powerful moment!

I shared this story with one of our Small Group Bible study leaders, who used the same idea to get everyone in that group to pray out loud. I'm going to encourage all of our ministries to do this. Will it be awkward? YES. Will it be rewarding? YES. Will you/can you become comfortable at this? YES!!!

Why is this a good idea? Because no Christian is an island. Every Christian exists in the context of community. At home, your community is your family. At church, the congregation is your family. In your small group Bible study, that is a small community family. Same thing at Philoptochos, GOYA, choir, etc. St. Paul tells us in the letter to the Galatians, that we are to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2) I remember 5 years ago that I was about to have a medical procedure. I had a lot of anxiety about that. Many people are very private about their struggles. And sometimes I am as well. But in this particular situation, I asked people to pray for me. As I was going to the hospital, I received so many texts and messages that people were praying for me, it was really comforting to know that many people were lifting me up in prayer at that

Not only do we need to move ourselves in prayer, we have to move in our thinking in other areas as well -

### **In worship, we need to move**

**From:** Come when you want because we're just giving God His due.

**To:** I am entering the kingdom of God each time I come to worship, so I'll worship early and often.

### **In singing, we need to move**

**From:** The choir sings while I'm a silent spectator.

**To:** I will call upon the name of the Lord with my whole soul, beginning with a mouth that will chant His Praises along with the choir.

### **In outreach, we need to move**

**From:** I'll bring a few canned goods in (please continue doing that) or write a check.

**To:** I'm going to the Community Outreach and come face to face with the homeless person in his environment.

### **In giving financially to the church, we have to move**

**From:** I'll give what is comfortable.

**To:** I'll give sacrificially.

### **In our church budget, we have to move**

**From:** We're just trying to stay in business

**To:** We're going to support even more diverse and beneficial ministries, both inside and outside of our community.

### **In the mission of our church, we have to move**

**From :** This is my social group

**To:** These are my traveling companions on the road to Paradise. And I have to take care of them. Their spiritual journey has to matter, not only to them, but to me as well.

### **In leaving your comfort zone, you have to move**

**From:** I'm only doing what feels comfortable

**To:** When I make myself vulnerable I work up another rung on the ladder to heaven. And I can only grow when I push myself.

Overall, as a community, we are doing great. Our church is filled to capacity nearly every Sunday. I'm working harder than ever. The additions of Charlie to the ministry and Monica to the office have done wonders for our community. But we can do better. We can all do better. I can do better. We've still got a lot of work to do to move our community, individually and collectively from an Old Testament Church to a New Testament Church.

Because we can't keep coming late, not singing, struggling to pray, living hand to mouth financially at the church, relying on the festival for income and always putting a tray in front of people. We've got to move to a place where there is always a prayer, always an act of kindness, always something that brings us closer to Christ, even when it's just good, wholesome fellowship.

### **The Festival**

Our Annual Greek Festival is coming up in a few days. This is the major fundraiser for our church, so it's important that everyone get involved. But as we did last year, the primary focus is not going to be on money, it's going to be on Christ. Last year, the five guys who ran the festival came in church every morning, and we prayed together. Last year, on all three days of the festival, we celebrated the Liturgy, to call the Holy Spirit down upon us, upon our whole community. We prayed over, around, before, during and after the Festival. It was truly done in a spirit of prayer and of community. We are going to do the festival covenant again this year. Why? Because in signing that covenant, we all agreed to raise the standard of our behavior. And we all did. And those covenants, I kept them in the altar for the three days of the festival, praying for each name at each Liturgy. This year, we are going to celebrate the Liturgy on all the days of the festival again, so that we can again, call for the Holy Spirit to come down on all of us during this special time. The festival will be fun. Hopefully the festival will be profitable. But most of all, I hope that the festival is meaningful, because the meaningfulness of the festival will last a lot longer than the laughs and the profits.

### **Thanksgiving Projects**

Again this year, there will be several projects revolving around community outreach. JOY/HOPE will again do the boxes of hope, providing food for needy families. We will again have an outreach event at Metropolitan Ministries during Thanksgiving week. And we will again offer the Divine Liturgy on the Eve of Thanksgiving, so that we can properly thank God, so that our day of feasting is also a Feast Day—the altar table set for the Eucharist!

### **The Advent Retreat**

For the 9<sup>th</sup> time in my 11 Advent seasons, we are going to have an adult Advent Retreat. Advent begins on November 15 - it is meant to be a 40 day journey to the Nativity. Though not as widely practiced as our Lenten journey, the journey of Advent is supposed to be a spiritual journey as

well. For most people in our country, Advent is a time of great stress—shopping, decorating, baking, writing cards, wrapping gifts, watching our credit cards go up. Let's make sure we leave Christ in the Christmas season. We will have our annual retreat on Saturday, November 22 (see separate flyer). The Theme of the Retreat will be "Restore Unto Me the Joy of Your Salvation: Making Prayer and Worship More Meaningful Experiences in My Life." This retreat will be like no other we've ever had at St. John. If it goes the way I'm planning, it will be a day that will make people come out of their comfort zones, but it will be a day that will launch them on a deeper understanding of prayer and a greater joy in praying alone, praying with another person, and worshipping. (corporate prayer)

### Stewardship

Stewardship Sunday is set for December 7. Stewardship materials will be coming to you in the mail during the month of November. Our stewardship has its most ambitious goal ever. But that's a good thing—it's in line with the more ambitious spiritual goals I've written about in this message. More information forthcoming on that. But stewardship, like prayer and so many other things, is something that if you take that leap of faith, that risk of leaving what is comfortable, there comes with that great reward. So, as you receive the materials, prayerfully and carefully review them, and make a contribution that challenges you. Because it's in the risk where we find the reward, and it is in our faith that God rewards us.

### The Advent Challenge

Over the summer, many of us participated in the Ice Bucket Challenge for ALS. The way the challenge worked was that a person was challenged to have a bucket of ice water dumped on their heads or pay money for ALS research, or both. Each person in turned called out and challenged other people to do this, so that thousands of people participated

and millions of dollars was raised for ALS research. When a cure is found for ALS, no doubt that the \$50+ Million dollars raised through the ice bucket challenge will be a significant part of that.

So, here is an Advent Challenge, but it doesn't involve ice, water, or money. It involves prayer. I'm challenging you, my parishioners, to find three people, at least two of them NOT in your family, and in the course of a conversation, to ask if you can pray with them. Tell them that they don't have to do anything, just bow their head and let you pray for them. And when you pray, you can pray for anything—health, peace, joy, for them, for their family, for your friendship with them, whatever comes to your heart. Now, if you take this challenge, whoever you pray with IS going to appreciate your prayer. Because INNATELY people have a great desire to be remembered in prayer. And after you pray with them, tell them why it is important to pray for people, tell them why you chose them, tell them about the Advent Challenge, and challenge them to try to pray with three other people. And tell them one of those people can be you. If this goes well, you will have found someone you can pray with, who will pray with you, who you can lean on to help with the life struggles and spiritual struggles we all face.

My challenge for myself is to remember to pray for and with everyone who comes into my office and to extend as many prayers as possible during Advent and well after.

It's time to move ourselves from the Old Testament to the New Testament! St. Paul tells us in the letter to the Galatians, that we are to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

Are you up to the challenge?

With love in the Lord,  
+Fr. Stavros

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### Leave the Church in Your Will

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

# The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ

by Charlie Hambos

Imagine you are holding a clear incandescent light bulb. Peer through the glass and look at the two very thin wire rods coming from the bottom. Now look at the filament connecting those two wires at the end in the middle of the bulb. Don't screw it in to the lamp just yet. Imagine what happens when electricity is connected to the bulb. The mostly invisible force, called electricity, runs up the rod and makes the filament burn brightly lighting up the bulb and creating heat. Now, screw it in and twist the nob allowing the electricity to flow. At the same time say, "Let there be light." Boom! Light!

Grace. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with all of you." This is said by the priest right before we lift up our hearts to the Lord and before we sing the victory hymn, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of your glory." At the end of virtually every set of petitions, the priest or the deacon will say, "Help us, save us, have mercy upon us, and protect us, O God, by Your grace." In the inaudible prayer said by the priest before the Trisagion hymn, there is a line which says, "You have created man and woman in your image and likeness and adorned them with all the gifts of your grace." The word grace can be found throughout the Divine Liturgy.

Grace. Paul states "For by grace are you saved through faith, it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9)." In the Gospel of Luke, speaking about Christ, it says, "And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him (Luke 2:40)." In the Gospel Reading after the Resurrection service, we read, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14)." Three verses later, "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

Grace. The Merriam-Webster dictionary online defines grace as, an unmerited divine assistance given humans for their regeneration or sanctification, a virtue coming from God, or a state of sanctification enjoyed through divine grace."

Grace. Grace comes from the Greek word, *χάρις*. In Luke, according to the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, *χάρις* "characterizes the message of salvation, or the message as a message of salvation." St. Paul uses to describe the act of salvation. In the Gospel of John, grace is a gift given to us through the incarnation of the Word of God,

Jesus Christ. The power from grace is what makes overcoming sin possible.

How's the light bulb? Still burning? Ok, don't stare at it too long, you will hurt your eyes. Now, imagine that the light bulb and the inner workings are your body and the grace of God being the electricity coming from the great source of power God the Father, conducted by the Holy Spirit. This is just a metaphor. I am not trying to understand the mysterious ways of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In fact, for us as humans it is impossible to comprehend.

Grace is given to us. Grace is everywhere around us. We cannot see it. Grace is given to everyone. It is a power that moves us closer to God and further into communion with him. The only thing that gets in the way is us and a serious disease called sin. "It is a dynamic and shifting reality which varies according to the fluctuations of the infirmities of the human will. All members of the Church who aspire to union with God are more or less in grace; all are more or less deprived of grace [because of sin]."<sup>1</sup>

So what is grace according to the Orthodox Church? Grace "is a general term referring to the uncreated Energies of God Himself, which are ministered to us by God the Holy Spirit both externally and internally."<sup>2</sup> In another similar definition, "by grace—for by this name that we know the deifying energies which the Holy Spirit communicates to us."<sup>3</sup> So as Orthodox Christians we believe there is external and internal grace. The external grace is surrounding everything and moves all of humanity closer to God if they allow. The internal grace is what is bestowed upon us, as Orthodox Christians, first by baptism and chrismation and then through the sacramental life of the church. We are then given access to God. "We remain creatures while becoming God by grace, as Christ remained God in becoming man by the Incarnation."<sup>4</sup> St. John Cassian says the grace of Christ is given to us on a daily basis, while it "willeth all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth," calleth all without any exception, saying: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

Back to the light bulb. What happens if the light bulb is good but there is a problem with the flow of electricity to the bulb itself? Maybe the lamp isn't plugged in or there is a break in the wire or there is corrosion on the connections. The light will not work. This is sin. In order to fully get the energy of the grace of God we must repair ourselves through continual



prayer, repentance and serious participation in the sacramental life of the church. The bottom line is that we are still humans. We have a human will which is of this world and as Christians we must allow the will of God to also work within us. "On the one side there is the divine and deifying will granting grace through the presence of the Holy Spirit in the human person; on the other side there is the human will which submits to the will of God in receiving grace and making it its own, and allowing it to penetrate all its nature."<sup>5</sup>

The Orthodox Christian faith does not separate the grace of God and the free will of humanity. They must work together in order to achieve salvation. Christ was the perfect example of this harmony of the divine nature and the human nature. St. Gregory of Nyssa describes this delicate balance by saying, 'As the grace of God cannot descend upon souls which flee from their salvation, so the power of human virtue is not of itself sufficient to raise perfection of souls which have no share in grace...the righteousness of works and the grace of the Spirit, coming together to the same place, fill the soul in which they are united with the life of the blessed.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lossky, Vladimir. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. SVS Press. 1976. Pg 180.

<sup>2</sup>"What We Believe: Grace"

<http://www.rochesterorthodoxchurch.org/what-we-believe/#Grace>

<sup>3</sup>Lossky, 86.

<sup>4</sup>Lossky, 87.

<sup>5</sup>Lossky, 127.

<sup>6</sup>Lossky, 197.

May we be thankful for the overflowing of God's grace on our life. Please do not hesitate to e-mail or come visit me with any questions about this article. As Archbishop Demetrios told us, "You may think that now is the time at the end of your studies to close the books. It is the opposite: now is the time to open them." I want to inspire the richness of our faith with everyone in our community and beyond. Please let me know how I can inspire you.

E-mail me at [charlie.hambos@gmail.com](mailto:charlie.hambos@gmail.com). Call me at 813-843-8471 or just stop by my office for coffee anytime.



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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.

**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**

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**Friday, November 7 – Sunday, November 9, 2014**

**Friday & Saturday: 11 a.m. – Midnight**  
**Sunday 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.**

Please note that Divine Liturgy will be held from 9:00-10:15 a.m.  
on Sunday, November 9.

## **Festival News – Volunteers Needed**

We Still Need **YOU** for our Annual St. John Greek Festival! We have many open time slots and also need help on Wednesday, November, 5 and Thursday, November, 6 to help Set-up and Monday, November 10, to clean-up!

Follow the Volunteer Link on [Tampagreekfestival.com](http://Tampagreekfestival.com) or stop in the Church Hall after services to pick up a Signup Form. A final sign-up day will be Sunday, November 2 at the Church, but you may still go on-line to make additions and changes.

THANK-YOU in advance for your time and effort on festival day! If you've only signed up for one shift please consider adding a second or third. Once you get there you may not want to leave!

If for some reason you did not sign up (but find yourself able to volunteer Festival Weekend), just stop at Volunteer Check-in – WE will find a place for YOU!

If any questions please email [greekfestival2014@gmail.com](mailto:greekfestival2014@gmail.com) or call Sandra Pappas – 813-785-3747

### **Festival as a Community Building experience**

Hopefully you will receive this issue of the Messenger before our Greek Festival begins November 7-9. We all know that the festival is important for financial reasons—it is the biggest single fundraiser we have in our church community! We all have a lot to do with the raising funds—whether it is selling festival tickets, donating something, or buying a raffle ticket. But the biggest source of revenue from the festival comes from our patrons. So, we don't want to put all of our focus on money because most of the money we cannot control. Here are some other things you can do for the festival that will be a great help:

#### **THE OBVIOUS:**

1. Buy a raffle ticket
2. Give the festival tickets you received to your friends and neighbors and send the church a check to cover the cost.
3. Donate towards the cost of the food expense
4. Eat lots of food and spend lots of money during the festival weekend

#### **And now for the SHOULD BE OBVIOUS:**

1. Pray for the success of the festival. For those who are able, attend Divine Liturgy each day of the Festival and offer your prayers.
2. Introduce yourself to parishioners during the festival who you do not know well. This is a great opportunity to get to know other people.
3. Keep all interactions positive—both with co-workers and festival patrons. Give praise, not criticism. If you need to correct someone or disagree, do it with respect and kindness.
4. Watch your language—profanity is not necessary when expressing ourselves. In an area full of Orthodox Christians, and visitors who are watching Orthodox Christians, we should not be using profanity, so keep the language clean.
5. Don't overindulge in alcohol—there is no need to ever overindulge in alcohol. We want our work environment to be alcohol-free. But if you are not working and want to have a drink, make sure it is one or two drinks, not more than that. Again, we are Christians, and people will be looking at what kind of Christians we are.

Let's put the best face forward for our community, both in our church community and for the greater Tampa community. Let's use the festival not only as an opportunity to make money but to model Orthodox Christian behavior to our visitors and to make new friends among ourselves. This is an opportunity to grow and strengthen the community!

**They will know we are Greeks by our food and dance!**

**They will know we are Christians by our love, our character, our behavior!**

# Liturgical Schedule for November 2014

**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, Genie Carter; 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

**Friday, November 13** **Feast of St. John Chrysostom**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Sunday, November 16** **St. Matthew**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Matthew (Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, John Palios, Brigham Sibley, Denny Hidermichel, James Kavouklis, Andrew Patrasciou)  
**Ushers:** Mike Trimis, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis  
**Coffee Hour:** Festival Appreciation Luncheon  
**Welcoming Committee:** Greeters - Betty Katherine Katsamakis, Perry Katsamakis; Ambassador - Christene Worley;  
Caller - Vicki Peckham

**Friday, November 21** **Feast of the Entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Temple (Ta Eisodia)**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Sunday, November 23** Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Mark (John Karamitsanis, Lukas Karamitsanis, Andrew Mellon-Lynn, Dominic Garica, Demetri Karounos, Grayson Borgeas, Peter Chandler)  
**Ushers:** Florin Patrasciou, Kevin Fentress, John Christ  
**Coffee Hour:** AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope  
**Welcoming Committee:** Greeters - Donna Hambos, Jeanie Nenos; Ambassador - Genie Carter; Caller - Peggy Bradshaw

**Tuesday, November 25** **Feast of St. Katherine**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Wednesday, November 27** **Evening Divine Liturgy for Thanksgiving**  
Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

**Sunday, November 30** **Feast of St. Andrew**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
**Altar Boys:** Anyone attending may Serve  
**Ushers:** Nick Kavouklis, Perry Katsamakis, Peter Theophanous  
**Coffee Hour:** Young at Heart  
**Welcoming Committee:** Greeters— Maria Xenick, Skip Higdon; Ambassador - Jenny Paloumpis; Caller - Helen Cauthorn

**Thursday, December 4** **Feast of St. Barbara**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Saturday, December 6** **Feast of St. Nicholas**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m..

# Feastdays in November

## Why are we celebrating Liturgy on these days?

**November 7-Beginning of our Festival**-The Divine Liturgy can be celebrated any day of the year except Good Friday. As explained above in Father Stavros' Message, we will be celebrating the Liturgy all three days of the Greek Festival, to ask the Holy Spirit to come down upon us and upon the Holy Gifts on what is an important weekend in the life of our parish.

**November 8 Feast of the Archangels**-This feast commemorates the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and all of the "bodiless powers" of heaven, all of the angels.

**November 9 Feast of St. Nectarios**-St. Nectarios is a "modern day" saint, a saint of the 20th Century, (Died in 1920, Canonized as a Saint in 1960), who was a bishop in Greece. St. Nectarios is the patron saint of cancer patients and is considered one of our "healing" saints, meaning that we invoke his intercessions when we are praying for those who are sick. Cancer sufferers and survivors are urged to attend this Liturgy in order to pray for continued healing through the Intercessions of St. Nectarios. Father Stavros has oil from the tomb of St. Nectarios in Aegina, Greece, with which he will anoint the faithful in attendance at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on November 9

**November 13 Feast of St. John Chrysostom**-St. John Chrysostom lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. He was a Bishop of the Church and is recognized as one of the Three Hierarchs (together with St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory the Theologian). He received the title "Chrysostomos," meaning "the Golden Mouth," for his great ability in oratory. St. John Chrysostom authored the Divine Liturgy that we celebrate on most Sundays. Therefore, we offer the Divine Liturgy on this day in honor of St. John Chrysostom.

**November 21 Feast of the Entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Temple**-The Entrance of the Virgin Mary (Ta Eisodia) Commemorates when the Virgin Mary entered into the Temple at age two to begin a life of service to God, in preparation for the awesome role she would play in the history of humanity as the Theotokos. This is one of the 12 Major Feastdays of the Orthodox Liturgical Year.

**November 25 Feast of St. Katherine the Great Martyr**- St. Katherine was born in Alexandria, Egypt in the third century. She was very wise and eloquent, successfully arguing for Christianity in the face of tyrannical rulers and philosophers. She was martyred in the year 305 and her relics were taken by Angels to Mount Sinai where they were discovered many years later. St. Katherine has the title "Pansophou" the "All-Wise."

**Evening Liturgy for Thanksgiving on November 26**—In Greek the word for Thanksgiving is "Eucharistia," so the Holy Eucharist is the "Holy Thanksgiving." As we celebrate Thanksgiving with turkey and the Dallas Cowboys on Thursday, set aside Wednesday to receive the Holy Thanksgiving. As is our custom at St. John, we will celebrate Divine Liturgy for Thanksgiving on Wednesday, November 26 at 6:00 p.m.

**November 30 Feast of St. Andrew**-St. Andrew is the first-called of the Apostles. He is also the patron saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate



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# Community News

## Parish Registry

**Baptism** - Louis Daniel Mantzanas, son of Chris and Nicole Mantzanas, was baptized on Saturday, October 11. Godparents were Demetrios and Mary Ann Konstas. **Na Sas Zisi!**

**Baptism** - Zoe Katherine Sengsouvanna, daughter of Sayproseut and Sarah Sengsouvanna, was baptized on Saturday, October 11. Godparents were Alex and Sarah Calamunci. **Na Sas Sizi!**

**Wedding** - Jorge Yero and Christina Kouimanis were married on Saturday, October 4. Koumbara Mary Frances Papadakis. **Congratulations!**

**Wedding** - David Voykin and Amy Johnston were married on Saturday, October 11. Mary Nenos was the Koumbara. **Congratulations!**

**Wedding** - Peter Lagios and Angela Karamitsos were married on Sunday, October 12. Arthur Kallinosis was the Koumbaro. **Congratulations!**

**Condolences** - Panagiota Kaburis, sister of George Kaburis, passed away in Greece on September 28. **May her memory be eternal!**

## Get Acquainted Sunday - Sunday, November 2

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

## Greek Festival Appreciation Luncheon Sunday, November 16

Though this edition of the Messenger is being written prior to the Festival, we invite all festival workers to come join with us the Sunday after the festival for a festival appreciation luncheon, sponsored by the Festival Committee Tampa.

## Monday Night Bible Study



Charlie Hambos is leading Bible Study this fall. We are studying the book of Romans. Every Monday, we meet from 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. in the administration building. Bring your Bible and come join Charlie for Bible Study. **Everyone is welcome!**

## Community Outreach

Thank you to everyone who continues to support our Community Outreach ministry to serve the homeless and those in need. In addition to supporting First Presbyterian Church's breakfast for the homeless on the 3rd Saturday of each month from 8:00am-10:30am on November 15th and December 20th, in November and December we will have opportunities to work in the Metropolitan Ministries' Holiday Tent.

On **Saturday November 22 from 3:30-6:30pm**, we will need **35 volunteers** to help distribute food to families in need for **Thanksgiving in the Metropolitan Ministries Holiday Tent** just north of downtown Tampa. Volunteers in the Holiday Tent do a wide variety of tasks, including sorting canned goods, assisting families with registration on the computer, or walking families through the food shopping area (just to name a few). This is a great opportunity for families with children over the age of 8. Last year, approximately 30,000 families were served in the Holiday Tent with food for Thanksgiving. The Joy/Hope "Boxes of Hope" food drive supports the families who come to the Holiday Tent.

**Please also save the date to volunteer in the Metropolitan Ministries Holiday Tent for Christmas on December 21st from 2:00pm- 4:30pm.** We will need 50 volunteers on the 21st (which will be right after church). You won't want to miss this fun church-wide opportunity to give back and get in the Holiday spirit!

If you would like to get more information about these events or to sign up, please contact Betty Katherine Katsamakias at [bettypalios@gmail.com](mailto:bettypalios@gmail.com) or 813-468-1596. You can go to the online sign-up page directly by going to:

<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0E4EA8AE2DAB9-community1>

## GOYA

The Next GOYA meeting will be Sunday, November 16 at 5:00 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner will be provided.

## HOPE/JOY

**Successful Pre-Teen Retreat Held**—Over 80 pre-teens and their parents attended our third pre-teen retreat on Sunday, September 28. Father Stavros, Charlie Hambos and Maria Xenick led session on making good choices, communications skills and the challenges/dangers of modern technology.

Fall Food Drive the entire month of November! Stay after church on Sunday, November 23 to help fill the Boxes of Hope.

## REAL (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. #liveorthodoxy



## 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.**



## Young at Heart

## Mark your Calendar! November 30th

Young at Heart is planning a Christmas Bazar Table at the next coffee hour. Find a treasure at a very low price for a gift or for yourself. We will have our traditional "Beer Bread" and other goodies too! All proceeds will go to the church.

The Next meeting for will be on Thursday, November 13, at 11:30 in the Zaharias Room.

**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:

Thank you for the great start to our 2014-2015 Sunday School year. We've having record attendance thanks to all the teachers, parents, and children who are committed to our program.

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

Pre-K: Santino Bavaro, Evangelina Chandler, Maggie Trakas

Kindergarten: Teddy Kafantaris, Zachary Carter, Nathan Moran, Ava Marcella Sanchez

1st Grade: Gianni Bavaro, Michael Meadows, and Maria Nicklow

2nd Grade: Nicholas Akrotirianakis, Emory Brewer, Nicholas Carter, Calliope Kafantaris, Emily Nicklow, Maria Palios, George Xenick, and Panos Zelatis

3rd Grade: Niko Bavaro, Zack Chandler, Makis Crassas, Helen Fentress, Mia Marissa Findlay, Ariana Karounos-Shaun, John Nicholas Krinos, Abby Moran, Demetri Passalaris, Toulia Trakas, and Kaitlin Zelatis

4th Grade: Lola Bavaro, Peter Chandler, Alex Findlay, John Palios, Gennaro Scarfogliero, Vasili Sotiropoulos, and Yanni Trimikliniotis

5th & 6th Grades: Sophia Garcia, Dimitri Karounos-Shaun, James Kavouklis, Madeline Moran, Elizabeth Xenick, Antonio Bavaro, and Hannah Passalaris

Middle School: James Katzaras, Artemis Xenick, Nicholas Yotis, Joseph Hambos, Nicholas Katzaras, and Natalia Pessemier

High School: Savvas Ferekides, Karter Lenardos, Dean Mitseas, Christos Nenos, George Hambos, Larissa Krinos, Andrew Mellon-Lynn, Nedi Ferekides, Eleni Pessemier, Arianna Krinos, and Katina Smith

This school year we will acknowledge students with perfect attendance on a monthly basis. Every student should be able to achieve this goal at least once. We will keep track of Perfect Attendance for the year and award those students at our Graduation Ceremony.

We are very excited about our Weekly Topics that each classroom will include into their curriculum/program this year. The topics covered as of this publication are: ELEVATION OF THE CROSS, PRAYER, THE LORD'S PRAYER, HOLY COMMUNION, AND THE CREED. We would like to thank Fr. Stavros for supporting our Sunday School and Charlie Hambos for his visits to our classrooms. The first half of the year Charlie will be conducting a lesson on our Church Vessels in each classroom. He will also do a children's sermon on Youth Sundays.

Our children sang beautifully for our first YOUTH SUNDAY SERVICE on September 28th under the direction of Maria Xenick. We would like to thank our children for singing and George Hambos for reading the Epistle. Our Fifth and Sixth Graders also learned about and made Prospora for our church. The congregation of St. John's is truly blessed to have such wonderful children.





# JUST SAY YES!

We will continue with part four 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.

## DON'T MISS THE BLESSING

Zechariah doubted. But—and this amazes me—God still worked. God's plans and purposes were nevertheless accomplished. The sad part is that Zechariah, a man who truly loved the Lord, missed the joy of cooperating, of willingly stepping back and letting God have His way. Zechariah saw the miraculous, but he was unable to sing the song. Until the day he agreed with God.

When Elizabeth finally gave birth to their long awaited son, the entire village rejoiced with the priest and his wife. Surely God was good to show such mercy after so many years. Eight days later, when it came time to circumcise the baby boy, everyone was ready to call him by his father's name.

"No! He is to be called John," Elizabeth insisted, wanting to be obedient to the angel's instructions (Luke 1:60).

A murmur probably ran through the crowd, and a few eyebrows probably raised. There was no one in the family by that name. What could that possibly mean?

But when the neighbors and relatives went to Zechariah, the old man took out a tablet and firmly wrote, "His name is John" (verse 63).

And when he did, Zechariah's angel-imposed silence immediately ended. His "mouth was opened and this tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God" (verse 64). See the progression here?

With Zechariah's obedience to God's instructions came deliverance. And with deliverance came a song. A blessing.

So, filled with the Holy Spirit, Zechariah began to prophesy:

Praise to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and redeemed his people... And you my child, will be called prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through forgiveness of their sins. (Luke 1:68, 76-77)

Mary willingly said yes to the extraordinary, even though she didn't fully understand it. As a result, I believe she spent her nine months cradled in God's tender hand. Zechariah's practicality and the age on his driver's license demanded a flow chart and thought-out business plan. So he spent his nine months cloaked in silence, shut up, forced to wait and wonder as God's perfect plan unfolded.

It's a lesson we should take to heart. When God comes to us, when He asks us to join His great plan of salvation and redemption, we may doubt and we may question. But if we persist in unbelief, we will miss the blessing.

So I say this to myself as well as to you: Don't let your chronic attachment to facts and rationality cause you to miss the miraculous things God wants to do in your life. Don't be addicted to details that you miss the opportunity to join God on great adventures.

When His Spirit speaks to you, say yes.

Choose to believe God will accomplish what He's promised.

Rejoice in it.

Then trust God to handle the rest.



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E-mail: KSakkis@gmail.com  
www.BestTampaRealEstate.com



# PHILOPTOCHOS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Annunciation Chapter

## Philoptochos Society of St John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Tampa, Florida

The Annunciation Chapter #501 of Philoptochos, St John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, would like to invite you to join us in our mission of outreach for the 2014-15 Membership year.

While the word “philoptochos” means “friends of the poor”, it does not begin to describe the many facets of the organization that chose this name. The Greek Orthodox Philoptochos are involved in all areas of philanthropy. Whether it be on a global scale helping victims of disaster or helping a local parishioner to pay a bill, Philoptochos seeks to help all those in need.

YES! I would like to offer my love and service by joining the Philoptochos Society in its philanthropic efforts! Please accept my \$30 stewardship contribution.

Please make checks payable to: Philoptochos

Name_____	Date_____
Street Address_____	
City_____	State_____ Zip_____
Home Phone_____	Cell_____ Work_____
E-mail address_____	

...for I was hungry and you gave Me food; for I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.

...in as much as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

Matthew 25-36; 40

Please return form to: Melissa Krinos, 8728 Hickorywood Lane, Tampa FL 33615 or the Philoptochos mailbox in the church office

### Philoptochos Important Date 2014-2015

#### General Meetings

December 14  
February 1  
March 8  
May 3 - Elections

#### Coffee Hours

November 2	April 5
December 7	May 17
January 6	June 7
February 8	August 2

#### Activities

Shoe Drive for Needy schools  
IOCC Luncheon  
Christmas Bake Sale  
Pascha Bake Sale  
Other Outreach

# Hope/Joy Fall Food Drive

“HOPE starts with a MEAL. HOPE starts with YOU!”

"During the Holiday Season, a box of food turns into a Box of Hope. Your family can be part of that hope by providing a family of four with food for the holidays.  
One family reaching out to one family."

Please join St. John's Hope/Joy ministry in providing a meal to families in need through Metropolitan Ministries. Make this your family project for the month of November and help us put together 50 Boxes of Hope filled with all the items needed for a Thanksgiving Dinner. There are many ways you can help provide a Box of Hope for these families in need.

- Shop for the items below over the next few weeks and bring them to church by Sunday, November 23 and the kids will sort them and fill the Boxes of Hope.
- Take an empty box home with you over the next few weeks and bring it back on Sunday, November 23 filled with all of the items on the list.
- Donate \$25 and we will purchase a Box of Hope for you.
- Stay on Sunday, November 23 and help fill the boxes – every age is welcome – even the smallest child can help us sort cans!

## **BOX OF HOPE contains:**

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| • 1 turkey or \$15 gift cert. for turkey | • 2 cans of black beans             |
| • 1 box of cereal (hot or cold)          | • 2 cans of cranberry sauce         |
| • 1 can of fruit                         | • 1 bag of dried beans              |
| • 1 loaf of fresh bread                  | • 1 box or bag of rice              |
| • 4 cans of vegetables                   | • 1 can or packet of gravy          |
| • 2 cans of yams                         | • 1 box of dessert mix              |
| • 1 bag or box of stuffing mix           | • 1 package of cookies or pastries  |
| • 1 box or can of potatoes               | • 1 family box of Jell-O or pudding |

Items will be accepted any time during the month of November through Sunday, November 23rd.

Boxes will be picked on November 25th.

**"He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and He will reward him for what He has done." Proverbs 19:17**



## Parish By-laws On Line

The Parish By-laws and the Uniform Parish Regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America are now available for you to read on our parish website if you wish to. They can be found at [http://greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com/?page\\_id=45](http://greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com/?page_id=45)

## Policy on Reserving Pews

Even with extra seats added to the front of the church, on many Sundays, we have standing room only by 10:30. Effective immediately, pews reserved for memorials or guests will be “unreserved” and open for general seating each Sunday at 10:30. We can’t justify having empty pews and people standing in the aisles. If you are planning on sitting in a pew reserved for a memorial service or other occasion, please get to church by 10:30 a.m. Thank you.

## 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.

## Stewardship

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

	October 15, 2014	October 15, 2013
<b>Number of Steward Families</b>	320	289
<b>Amount Pledged</b>	\$ 382, 992.30	\$316, 868.00
<b>Amount Collected</b>	\$ 274, 127.31	\$224, 849.74

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**

# Small Group Bible Studies

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

## **A Testimonial from someone who goes to small groups each week.**

I am doing well but somehow manage to stay very busy. But, there is one thing I do all week that I truly love and that is bible study. I just love studying the bible with fellow Christians and going to the study helps to get from one Sunday to the next. I can think of no better reason to use my time and energy. My group has been small and I would like to see new people. Just a few hours a week off-line, out of stores and traffic are wonderful. Not to mention one less night to think about dinner and sharing a delicious one as well.

**In November, our groups will be finishing the unit on figures of the Old Testament and will study the Old Testament prophecies of the Nativity, a great way to prepare for the feast of Christmas!**

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

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

**Group Leader:** Donna Hambos

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

**November Meeting Dates:** November 4, 11, 18

**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 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.

**November Meeting Dates:** November 5, 12, 19

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

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

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

**Meeting time:** Tuesday evenings from 7:00-8:00 p.m.

**November Meeting Dates:** November 11, 18

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

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

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

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

**November Meeting Dates:** November 11, 18

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

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

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

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

**November Meeting Dates:** November 13, 20



Please join us for the Ninth Annual Advent Retreat

***Restore Unto Me the Joy of Your Salvation: Making Prayer and Worship  
More Meaningful Experiences in my Life***

*Do you feel like your spiritual life suffers during the hectic holiday season?*

*Do you feel like you aren't getting enough out of prayer and worship!*

*Come join us in reviving your spirit as a community just in time for Christmas!*

**Saturday, November 22<sup>nd</sup> 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

**St. John Greek Orthodox Church  
2418 W. Swann Avenue~Tampa, FL~33609-4712  
813-876-8830**

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| 9:00 a.m.  | Registration/Refreshments   |
| 9:30 a.m.  | Morning Prayer Service  |
| 10:00 a.m. | Session One What God intended/What we are doing                         |
| 11:15 a.m. | Session Two How to create a meaningful experience in prayer and worship |
| 12:30 p.m. | Lunch   |
| 1:30 p.m.  | Bearing one another's burdens – praying with others                     |
| 2:30 p.m.  | Closing Prayer  |

There will also be ample time throughout the day to ask questions pertaining to prayer and worship as other general questions about our faith and our church.

**Cost is \$15 per person. Lunch will be provided.**

Adults only please.

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Please return this registration form by mail or take it to the Church Office by

November 15. We look forward to seeing you there!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Will you be attending with other family members? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, please list:

\_\_\_\_\_



# A Letter to our Parishioners Regarding New Policies Related to Youth Protection

October 2014

Dear Parishioners,

Several years ago, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America instituted policies and procedures for volunteers with direct responsibility over children, in order to better identify and prevent child abuse. A core requirement in these policies is a background check. In addition, they issued a Youth Protection Manual, which defines the Archdioceses' expectations for volunteers' interactions with children.

These policies and procedures have been instituted on both Archdiocese and Metropolis levels. For instance, every counselor and staff member of St. Stephen's Summer Camp has had both a criminal background check as well as completed an online training program and been given a Youth Protection Manual. Across the Archdiocese, the Youth Protection Program has made camps and other programs for youth much safer.

We are bringing the Youth Protection Program to our parish. This means individuals who work with children, individuals with direct responsibility over children, and any volunteers, ministry leaders, who may interact with children will comply by our Youth Protection Policy.

This Policy consists of the following:

- Volunteer must be a member of the Church for six consecutive months.
- Complete Youth Protection Online Training (one hour video watched once every two years.)
- Level One or Three-Background Check (conducted once every two years)
- Signed Covenant
- Review Youth Protection Manual with Ministry Heads (at start of each season.)

The Youth Protection Online Training is designed to better identify and prevent child abuse. Employees and volunteers background screenings are to ensure that there are no past criminal issues involving children.

*Who will be checked at what level?*

Level Three

Sunday school teachers, dance group directors, GOYA advisors, JOY/HOPE advisors, Junior Olympics volunteers and coaches, Oratorical Festival Chairperson, Parish Council and employees of the Church.

Level One

Lead altar-boys older than 18 years-of-age and Gasparilla Parking Chairperson.

*Why are we doing this?*

- Many churches have successfully implemented these practices already.
- These policies will align with our insurance carrier's expectations
- They reflect the best practices recommended by experts in the field.
- We all value keeping our children safe from any potential sexual abuse.

*Who will pay for this?*

The Church will pay for both online training and background checks. However, if you wish to pay for it yourselves, we will gladly accept.

*Who is Exempt?*

No one who wishes to interact with or oversee children's activities

*What if I have a current background check?*

For consistency purposes, all volunteers will use ours.

**In the next couple of weeks, all of the people identified above for background checks will be contacted. We are targeting November 16 as a day to get everyone who requires a background check to sign a release and receive the paperwork required for service. We will be doing this in the hall after church services on November 16.**

So, I am asking for everyone's patience, support and cooperation as we institute these new procedures. We will systematically go through our lists of ministry heads and volunteers, so please stay tuned for more information. These steps will make our church a much safer place for everyone.

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis  
Proistamenos

# A Powerful Testimony on Prayer

## by One of our Parishioners

*Editor's Note: What follows below is an email I recently received from a parishioner. With this parishioner's permission, I am reprinting it below. It is one of the most inspiring and humbling emails I've ever received, showing that indeed some of our parishioners have found the real beauty and power of prayer. All identifying markers have been removed. But this is someone who is an average parishioner, with an average job, in an average family. This can (and should) be anyone and everyone of us.*

I've been meaning to send this to you for some time now, and your story about the guy you were talking to who said he didn't know how to pray outside of saying the Lord's Prayer inspired me to remember this time. I was in the same boat as him several years ago, as I only really prayed in church and at meals. I just didn't know any other way. I feel truly blessed to have evolved my prayer life from that bare bones, occasional approach to conversing with God to where I am now. It evolved over a period of time mostly because of life circumstances that both inspired and caused me to lean on God more. I hope and pray that my prayerful evolution continues to grow.

I guess I've also been a bit hesitant to send this to you because I didn't want it to seem boastful of how much I pray, or that I created my own morning prayers, however I really do want to share this with you as my Spiritual Father and perhaps someone can benefit from parts or all of it. I also feel blessed to have gotten into the habit of praying every morning, which starts right after I hit the Snooze button for the final time, with my knees reaching the floor first, and I say this simple quick prayer before doing anything:

Dear Lord,

- Thank You for seeing me through to another day;
- Thank You for all of my blessings and for everything good in the world.
- Thank You for the opportunity to glorify Your name today and every day. Amen"

In addition to reading the Daily Readings from the Archdiocese and some of the morning ritualistic prayers I've memorized in the Orthodox Study Bible, I also have sort of mixed and matched other prayers I've read and some of my own prayers and recite the following typically on my drive to work each morning (I've left specific person's names out and replaced with a description of those I pray for):

Dear Lord,

Thank You for this day. Thank you for all the blessings You bestow upon my family and friends, and I ask and pray that You always bless them. I especially ask and pray that You be by my [names of parents, brothers and sisters, including in-laws], [names of all close friends], [names of groups and teams you're a member of], [names of all of those you know are sick and in need of healing], with their various infirmities and that You heal them, comfort them and ease them from any pain.

I also ask and pray, Lord, that You be by [name of spouse], [name(s) of children] and me in every aspect of our lives and that You help us to live according to Your will by showing us the way of Your will; that You be by [name of spouse] and me as we raise our sweet little children and help us to make all the right parenting decisions and inspire us, Lord, to raise them with a deep love, appreciation and knowledge of You!

I thank You, Lord, for all of our blessings, especially our miracles of life (our children). Thank You for bringing them to us healthy spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally, and ask and pray that You help them to continue developing strongly in each of those respects.

I ask and pray, Lord, that You be by us financially. Help us to continue to find ways to provide for our family. I thank You for the opportunity with [name of employer] and ask and pray that You continue to motivate, guide and inspire us to operate and grow the company in accordance with Your will, to do our best and give us all the tools necessary to be successful; and that you help us and lead us toward those opportunities, relationships, and all other paths that are pleasing to You, and away from those things that are not.

[Add any special prayers for other specific family, friends or others in need]

I ask and pray, Lord, that You be by our troops and interests everywhere, keep them free from harm and return home safely to their families, and please work through them and all Your other means to help us achieve peace and for good to triumph over evil.

I ask and pray, Lord, that You be by Father [Name of Spiritual Father/Parish Priest] and Your Church and that You help us to strengthen our community and our faith, and that You be by Father and his ministry here in [Name of City] and to all those he ministers to.

Please be by those in the Church, Lord, who do not know, do not understand, or do not wish to follow the ways of Your Church, and I ask and pray that You inspire them to do so.

I ask and pray, Lord, that You be by me today in every phone call, meeting, task, email, encounter, conversation and decision, and that You grant me the knowledge, intelligence, ingenuity and fortitude to be successful for the glory of Your name.

(Raise up your arms and eyes to heaven) Lord, I ask and pray that You send down Your Holy Spirit upon all of my encounters and all those I encounter - take our hands and lead us down the path of Your will.

I ask and pray, Lord, that you guide and direct every outcome, decision, problem and issue in my life. I lay my mind, my heart, my body and my soul at Your feet, and I ask and pray that You do not forsake me, but that You have mercy upon me, and that You forgive my transgressions, voluntary and involuntary; in word, deed or thought; both known and unknown, and that You keep my eyes, thoughts and actions away from evil.

I thank You Lord, I love You. I ask and pray all these things in Your most precious and ever holy name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen."

Again, I hope this doesn't come off as vain or boastful, however I just felt compelled to share it with you. Thank you for reading this.

*Editor's Note: I hope you can see why I chose to reprint this. Wow! This is inspiring. And THIS can be any of us. All we've got to do is set aside a few moments, turn off the noise and pray. This prayer is not from a prayer book but from someone's heart. This person has memorized this prayer. But create a prayer for yourself, something that speaks specifically about your life, and your needs, and make it part of your daily routine. Notice how this person prays in the morning and on the way to work, and also they incorporate some traditional prayers as well as scripture reading into their daily life.*



~ November 2014 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
WBS-Women's Bible Study	BSE-Bible Study East Tampa BSS-Bible Study South Tampa	**Fast Day	Car Raffle Fundraiser from 9/28-11/2			1
2 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Get Acquainted Sunday Boxes of Hope Collections Glendi Dance Practice	3 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	4 BSE 6:30 p.m. Festival Set Up	5**Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Festival Set Up REAL 6:30 p.m.	6 Festival Set Up Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	7** Orthros 8:00 a.m. Liturgy 9:00 a.m. GREEK FESTIVAL 11 a.m.-midnight	8 Archangels Orthros 8:00 a.m. Liturgy 9:00 a.m. GREEK FESTIVAL 11 a.m.-midnight
9**St. Nectarios Orthros 7:45 a.m. Liturgy 9:00 a.m. GREEK FESTIVAL 11 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	10	11 WBS 9:30 a.m. BSE 6:30 p.m. BSS 6:30 p.m. Parish Council 7:00pm	12**Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. REAL 6:30 p.m.	13 St. John Chrysostom Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Young at heart 11:30am Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	14 **	15** Beginning of Nativity Fast  Community Outreach Wedding 4:00 p.m.
16**St. Matthew Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Festival Appreciation Boxes of Hope Collections GOYA 5:00 p.m.	17 ** Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	18 ** WBS 9:30 a.m. BSE 6:30 p.m. BSS 6:30 p.m.	19**Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. REAL 6:30 p.m.	20** Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	21** Entrance of Virgin Mary Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	22 ** Adult Advent Retreat 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.  Metropolitan Ministries Holiday Tent 3:30 p.m.
23 **Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  Boxes of Hope Assembly	24 **	25** St. Katherine Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	26** Thanksgiving Services Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.	27 Thanksgiving Office Closed	28 **Office Closed	29 **
30**St. Andrew Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. No Sunday School Philoptochos Spanakopita Sale						

# St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

**Office:** (813) 876-8830      **Fax:** (813) 443-4899

officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com

www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

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PERMIT NO. 461

## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

### *Timetable of Services*

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

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

813-876-8830 (Office) 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
Nick Antonakakis	813-264-7513
Catherine Mistseas	813-571-0658
Ed Gerecke	813-229-4306
Skip Higdon	813-831-9021
Mike Kafantaris	727-821-0193
David Voykin	727-415-5603
Mike Xenick	813-340-8737

**Office Staff:**

Monica Gjerde, Office Manager	813-876-8830
officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com	
Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper	
debstjohnntpa@gmail.com	fax 813-443-4899

**Adult Greek School:**

Magda Myer	813-909-2327
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**AHEPA:**

Gus Paras	813-254-6980
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**Altar Angels:**

Engie Halkias	813-932-5859
Sia Blankenship	

**Bible Study:**

Charlie Hambos	813-843-8471
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**Bookstore:**

Bill Manilkas	813-716-8185
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**Chantor:** Nick Andreadakis

813-516-6081	
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**Choir:** Artie Palios, Director

813-831-1294	
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Jim Leone, Organist

813-254-7844	
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**Community Outreach:**

Betty Katherine Katsamakis	813-468-1596
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**Dance Groups:**

H XAPA ΜΑΣ Alexandra De Maio	813-340-9668
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Marina Coundas	813-877-6136
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Glendi Jenna Mingledorff	813-610-7365
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Panigyri Vanessa Anviles	813-221-2194
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**Daughter of Penelope:**

Edie Kavouklis	813-758-0305
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**Finance Committee:**

George Chagaris	727-420-1920
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**Food Pantry:**

Mick Scharbach	813-458-1620
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**Gasparilla Parking:**

John Kokkas	727-992-4165
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**GOYA:**

Elaine Halkias	813-629-1843
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**Hope/Joy:**

Amy Kafantaris	727-743-1297
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Debbie Nicklow	813-690-0671
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**Jr. Olympics:**

Byron Nenos	813-789-0729
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**Oratorical Festival:**

Peggy Bradshaw	727-244-1374
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**Philoptochos:**

JoAnn Hartung	727-432-0228
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**REAL:**

Charlie Hambos	813-843-8471
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**Small Groups:**

East Donna Hambos	813-843-8412
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Men, Fr. Stavros	813-394-1038
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South, Bessie Palios	813-523-0347
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Womens, Debbie Kavouklis	813-258-5571
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Young Adult, Mary Ann Konstas	813-215-9862
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**Stewardship:**

Pete Trakas	813-505-2193
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**Sunday School:**

Vicky Peckham	813-406-5626
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Tammy Christou	813-957-0835
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**Ushers:**

Tom Georgas	813-985-0236
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**Welcoming Committee:**

Maria Xenick	813-765-3587
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**Young at Heart:**

Carole Fotopoulos	813-982-0947
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Mary Nenos	813-935-2096
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The Messenger of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is published on monthly basis. Publican is the first of each month. Deadline for notices and announcements for The Messenger is the 10th of each month. You may send announcements to the church office through email at officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com.

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