

# 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

## February 2015

### Mission Statement:

St. John the Baptist 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

## Will You Join Our Lenten Prayer Team?

**P**rayer. It should be simple, right? I recently read a book on prayer entitled *Before Amen The Power of a Simple Prayer* by Max Lucado, a prominent Protestant pastor and writer. In it, he speaks of the struggles we all face when trying to pray. He does a beautiful job demystifying prayer – “*We speak. He listens. He speaks. We listen. This is prayer in its purest form. God changes His people through such moments.*” (pg. 9) As I grow in my priesthood and in my own Christian journey, I see more and more the value of prayer, even as I personally struggle at times to pray. One area in which I have found greater joy is praying with other people. I really enjoy praying with members of this congregation. And it doesn't have to be in confession or in the hospital or in any sort of crisis. I enjoy praying with parishioners on any occasion, on ordinary days.

More and more people are asking to pray together, and this is a wonderful thing in my ministry and in the life of our church, because more and more people are coming to Christ in this beautiful way. In small groups this year, in GOYA, at our fall retreat, at a special service at Christmas, with the Sunday school teachers recently, and coming soon to whatever groups I find myself in, I am taking groups in the church, and praying with them, and asking them to pray for one another, and we

are finding that this experience is, at first awkward, though when we were finished, it also was something everyone really enjoyed. Prayer brings more cohesiveness and closeness among our church family and at the same time, reveals that just about everyone in our church is struggling with something. I can see that praying together is motivating more people to pray for one another, and this is what the church is all about “bearing one another's burdens and thus fulfilling the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2)

We know that intercessory prayer is utilized frequently in the Orthodox Church. At every service, we are calling upon the saints to intercede for us. This is why we adorn our churches with icons, so that we remember at all times that we are not alone, that we are surrounded by the saints and angels who are praying and interceding for us.

We should remember that we are also surrounded by one another, and we are supposed to pray for one another, intercede to God for one another, and bear one another's burdens. I have heard many times in various churches about the concept of a **Prayer Team**, where many people commit to praying for something or someone. I was reminded of it again when reading *Before Amen*. Lucado describes an idea that I would like to try this Lent. Here is an excerpt on this subject from the

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book, and I'll put some thoughts below:

*Intercessory prayer isn't rocket science. It acknowledges our inability and God's ability. We come with empty hands but high hopes. Why? God is "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). He "will supply all [our] needs according to His riches." (Phil 4:19) When God gives, He gives a gift that is "pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over and poured into your lap. (Luke 6:38)*

*We have experienced the power of intercessory prayer in our church. In the early nineties, when I was new to the Oak Hills congregation, I had an opportunity to visit Skyline Church in San Diego, California. The minister, John Maxwell, invited me to speak. I agreed in exchange for his best advice for building a healthy church. He was quick to give it: Prayer. He specifically suggested that I recruit 120 prayer partners who would commit to pray daily for the church, me and my family. Upon returning to San Antonio I announced the plan to the congregation. Within a month exactly 120 people had volunteered to form the team. Six months later I was happy to send a report to John.*

- \*We had broken our Sunday attendance record twice.*
- \*We had finished the year with our highest ever average Sunday attendance.*
- \*We had finished the year well over budget.*
- \*We had nearly doubled our staff.*
- \*We had witnessed several significant healings.*
- \*Church antagonism was at an all-time low, and church unity was at an all-time high.*
- \*I was stunned! We felt God's wind in our sails and all we did was increase our resolve to pray for others.*

*Explanation? Prayer. As we (increase) our commitment to pray, God (increases) His promise to bless.*

From "Before Amen" by Max Lucado, p. 75-77

For this period of Great Lent, I would love to build a prayer team for our St. John Community. I invite as many of you who wish to become members of our prayer team.

## Will you join our prayer team?

**What does a Prayer Team do?** Our prayer team will commit to praying for our church, our church leadership and our congregation every day of Great Lent and Holy Week. I will also send encouraging messages from time to time. As Lent is a time where we seek to make changes and improvements in our spiritual lives, this provides an occasion to establish a new routine that hopefully will last long after Pascha.

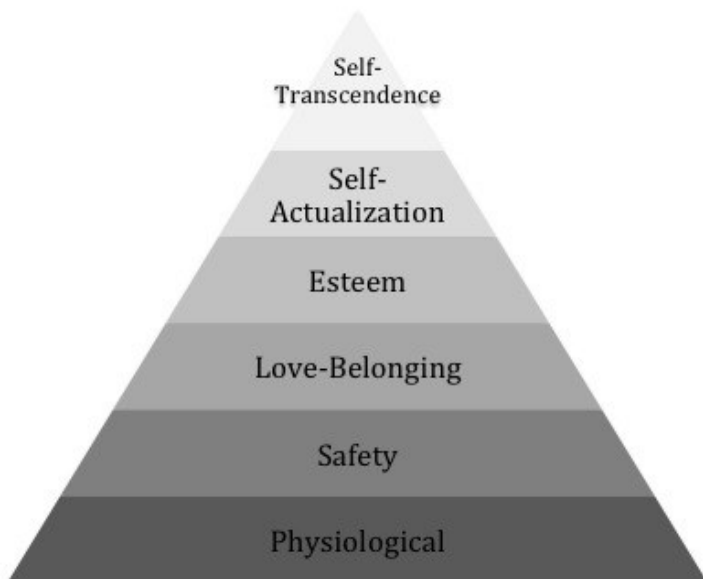
**How do I join our Prayer Team?** Just email me at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com) saying "Dear Father Stavros, I'd like to join the Prayer Team" and sign your name. I'll send you a short email back confirming that I've gotten your email and have added you to my prayer list. It's that easy!

**Is the Prayer Team going to be published anywhere?** **NO.** I will keep a list of our prayer team so that I can pray for you—that is my Lenten commitment. If you like, you can tell people that you are part of our prayer team and encourage others to join as well. The list of names will be known only to me.

**My commitment is to pray for you.** I will keep the names of every member of our Prayer Team. I will offer prayers for you daily in the altar when I am at church, and from home on my day off.

**What should I pray for?** Pray for our church. Pray for Fr. Stavros, our priest, and his family. Pray for Charlie, our pastoral assistant, and his family. Pray for each of our ministries and our parish leadership. Pray for guidance, for healing, and for forgiveness, for yourself and our parishioners. Say thank you to God. Whatever you are moved to pray for on any given day, do so, just include our church each day.

**I am excited to see what will happen when many of us commit to praying for our church every day. Please join our Prayer Team and we can find out together.**



## The Need for Intimacy with God

Most of us are familiar with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It was something we learned back in high school and college, the pyramid with the needs on it, which had as its apex the nebulous "self-actualization." The more basic needs were at the bottom of the pyramid, with the more complex needs at the top of the pyramid.

At the base of the pyramid are physiological needs, such as food, water and air, clothing and shelter. Without these things, the human body will not function and ultimately will fail. Thus these are the most basic needs.

The next level up is "Safety Needs." These are things like a safe environment to live—no war or violence or abuse. Economic safety also factors into this stage, as job security and income are part of feeling safe and secure.

The third level is "Love and Belonging," a sense of loving others

and feeling loved. This is expressed in friendship, in intimacy and in family. I will come back to this point later in the article.

The fourth level is “Self-Esteem,” how one views oneself. This includes how we are viewed by others, as well as how we view ourselves, our self-confidence. There are psychological complexes which affect our self-esteem, which include depression, inferiority complex, or narcissism.

The fifth and highest level on the pyramid is self-actualization, developing a person’s full potential. Maslow believes that self-actualization is only achieved when the previous levels of needs are not only met, but mastered.

Now, I’m going to stop here for a minute and make a disclaimer. I have been a vocal critic of the hierarchy of needs, because the apex of the pyramid seems egotistical, the highest need of the human life, the greatest achievement according to this theory, is a mastery of ourselves, where we understand ourselves and benefit from that understanding of ourselves. In other words, the greatest goal in life seems to be an egotistical pursuit.

What I didn’t realize until I started reading on the Hierarchy of needs in order to write this article, is that in his later years, Maslow explored a further dimension of needs, and in fact, criticized his own original apex of self-actualization. In latter years (and they don’t teach this unfortunately in schools), Maslow made a SIXTH level to his hierarchy (which incidentally, I found out, he NEVER depicted as a pyramid, that came later by other people) which he entitled “Self-Transcendence.” Which means that the highest goal is not self-actualization, but going outside oneself, in altruism and spirituality, recognizing that there is something greater than yourself. It actually makes me sad that we were never taught about “Self-Transcendence” any time this hierarchy has been mentioned.

Having now done some research, I am now a supporter of the SIX-TIER Hierarchy of needs, not the five-tier one. Yes, the most basic need in human life is simply being able to sustain that life—that is food, water, air, shelter, clothing. It’s accurate to say that most Orthodox Christians in our country have met or mastered that need. Many people in our world have not met even that need, which is why it is incumbent on us to continue to offer things like a food pantry, or participate in Community Outreach, because this helps each human being attain the most basic rung of this hierarchy. For me anyway, I think I’ve met this stage.

The second stage is somewhat more difficult to attain, because it involves certain things that are beyond our control. We can move out of a bad part of town, but that doesn’t mean we can be guaranteed any sense of safety. A drunk driver, a robber, or a bad storm or a freak injury can take away our sense of safety no matter where we are. That being said, most of us do not go through our day to day routine in fear of our lives. While it is a possibility that I’ll be killed in a car wreck on the way home tonight, I am not worried about that. I feel reasonably safe in my day to day activities. As with stage one, I feel like I’ve mastered this stage, as much as one can master a stage where one can’t exercise absolute control.

### Stage Three-Where the Real Challenge Begins

The third stage is where the real challenge begins. I believe that many people never master the third stage. And I also believe that mastery of the third stage sets in rapid motion the achievement of the stages above it. Stage three is entitled “Love and Belonging” by Maslow. According to Maslow, the human being needs a sense of belonging and acceptance. This can come from a large group, such as a sports team, club or organization. And it can also come in a small group—a few friends, in marriage, in a family context.

The third stage includes not only friendship and family, but included “intimacy.” Most people think of intimacy as sexual relations between a husband and a wife. And certainly, that is true. But intimacy, in its truest meaning, is not confined to sexuality or even to marriage. (and for the rest of this article, I will use the word intimacy with a non-sexual connotation) Intimacy, by its definition, is a close, familiar and loving personal relationship with another person or group. It is interesting that the definition of intimacy can also be attached in non-human terms—for instance, a close association with or detailed knowledge or deep understanding of a place, subject or period of history. (i.e. one can be intimately familiar with the battles of the American Revolution.) And in the Christian context, one can attach the word “intimacy” to concepts such as “Communion” and “Prayer.”

What is the most intimate thing a person can do in life? Prayer actually. What could be more intimate than getting on your knees and privately communicating with God. We’ve all seen images in movies of the hero kneeling in some empty, abandoned church with light coming into the window and asking God for help. What an intimate moment! There is an intimacy in Holy Communion—in partaking of Holy Communion, we touch God, and God touches us. So then what is more intimate, holding your spouse or your child, or when you touch God and God touches you! Christ tells us “Where two or three are gathered in My name, there I am also in the midst of them!” (Matthew 18:20) This is one reason why the church does not let us “take Communion” home and enjoy it privately. Because the church, in the context of Holy Communion, requires that two gather in His name—the priest distributing Communion and the person receiving it—so that He (our Lord) can stand at that moment in the midst of us. This is why distributing Communion is something I do not rush through (at least I try not to) because this is one of the most intimate things that a person can do, receive Communion.

And as for gifts, or expressions of love that you can offer a person, there are two that stand out among the rest. The first is to pray with someone. What could be a more intimate expression than praying with someone in their presence, offering their name and their needs to God but sharing the moment with them! (This does work privately as well, we are supposed to have a private personal relationship with God, and pray for others in our private prayers—what a joy, however, to share the intimacy of prayer with someone else. And secondly, offering encouragement is an intimate act. And how does one offer encouragement—There are many ways—first, thanking someone. When you thank someone, you are saying that

something they have done, something about them, is valuable to you, that you find value in them. This need not be done with pomp and circumstance in a public venue. A sincere face to face thank you, a phone call or a note generally have the same effect. Secondly, one can listen—making time to listen to someone is again a statement that they hold value for you, enough for you to stop what you are doing and listen to them. Third, you can offer positive reinforcement and reassurance—this tells someone that what they are doing has value, that what they are doing is correct and is appreciated.

Intimacy, however, is largely missing from the world today, and that is because people are self-absorbed, which leads them to be selfish, which leads them to be dishonest. Because we are encouraged to gossip by our peers, we are not encouraged to keep confidences, and this creates an atmosphere of distrust and ultimately dishonesty. If we think someone is going to repeat what we say, then we will say something that sounds good repeated, either a non-truth, or an exaggeration of the truth. And then a bad cycle ensues. When there is an environment of respect, that leads to honesty, which leads to trust, which leads to proper, loving personal relationships. Step one in creating an environment of intimacy is respect in keeping a confidence, respect in lending a sympathetic ear, respect in lending a helping hand. This leads then to an environment where people are not afraid to be honest, where they know there is acceptance. Which then leads to trust, which is the ability to venture into new waters, broaching subjects where one feels a little vulnerable. You can't have a real relationship with anyone without being at least a little vulnerable. I mean, if two people meet at random and they say "Hi how are you?" "I am fine." "How are you?" "Fine." "Have a great day!" that conversation is ultimately going to lead nowhere. The relationship is built when it goes like this: "Hi, how are you?" "Not good today." "How can I help?" Because now someone has shown some vulnerability, and in doing so, the first "intimate" conversation happens. And from this is where there develops friendship, then trust, then love. Again, in order to achieve this state, one has to take down walls and let other people in. And in our society, sadly, we are building walls around our hearts, and we are encouraged or expected to do so it seems. There are many people who feel they simply cannot afford NOT to put up a wall. Ironically, what we ALL REALLY WANT is this intimacy with other people, the ability to tear down walls and be who we are, be accepted for who we are. We are somehow, however, afraid to do that. And why? Many times we feel we can't afford to. We can't confide in someone for fear they will repeat what we said and use it against us. And that is truly sad!

## **An Intimate Relationship with the Lord**

Leaving our interpersonal relationships with people aside for the moment, let's talk about an "intimate" relationship with Christ. What is that and how does one get to that state? Well, an intimacy with Christ is found when one is able to come to Christ without agenda, but rather with gratitude and with joy. This happens when prayer and worship, and even stewardship, become not a burden but a joy. Many times we are praying and are unsure of how to pray, or what to offer. Oftentimes,

our prayers are centered around material gain or in panic over some unfulfilled need. Many times our prayers can go much like our conversations—they can be surface level and without depth. Sometimes our prayers might include thoughts of justification—like the prayer of the Pharisee—"Thank you God that I am not like other people," the prayer of self-congratulations. (Luke 18: 10-14) The prayer of the Pharisee was the epitome of narcissism, as we are told that he prayed "with himself," stopping only long enough to offer up his self-congratulations in prayer.

The prayer of the tax collector (Luke 18: 10-14) was more intimate—"God have mercy on me the sinner." That is to say, in essence, "even though I am not entitled to it, can you Lord, through your great mercy, extend some pity to me, as I realize that I am a sinner, and in no way righteous, and can, in no way, become righteous, except through the mercies of the Lord." To offer this prayer, there had to have been a trust that God would accept even him.

The prayer of the Centurion was an intimate prayer: "Lord I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word and my servant will be healed." (Matthew 8:8) Here the centurion, a man of authority, bowed His head to Christ, that HE, the man of authority, couldn't have this simple carpenter come into his home. He was not worthy to have Christ in his own home. There was no pretense there, just a complete emptying of his pride and of himself to ask Christ to help his servant, to do for someone else what he was not required to do for that man.

The prayer of the thief on the cross was also intimate—in a man's dying moments, he reached out to Christ and said "Jesus, remember me in Your Kingdom." (Luke 23:42) His request was not desperate but humble—he recognized first that Jesus was greater than he. And he recognized that he was deserving of his punishment of death, that indeed he was a thief. But he also recognized a need for forgiveness and repentance and in his dying breath, reached out to the Lord and attained the kingdom of heaven.

Now, if vulnerability is required to achieve an "intimate" friendship with another person, then vulnerability is also required to attain an "intimate" relationship with Christ. We need humility and vulnerability to reach Christ, and this comes when we release all pretense, strip away pride, and come to Christ, as we are—honest, desiring a closer relationship with Him, and open to His commandments. After all, what good is it to say to another person, I promise to be 98% honest with you. 2% dishonest makes one dishonest. Same thing with God—To say "Lord I'll bring you 98% of me but I can't give 100%" means that one is being 2% dishonest with Christ. In terms of following Christ, if one says I'm faithful 98% of the time and unfaithful 2% of the time, then one is really not faithful. Just like if a husband says to his wife, "I'll be faithful to you 98% of the time" that means he is going to be "unfaithful" 2% of the time and how does that make for a good marriage."

Being faithful in a relationship does not mean being perfect, because we know that no relationship is perfect—only God's relationship with us is perfect. But us with Him, and us with

each other, none of that is perfect. Being faithful means being honest, it means giving an effort, it means owning up when we've done wrong, and seeking continual repentance, a continual closeness through continued improvement.

I read somewhere recently that it takes 20 years in the average marriage to achieve true intimacy—because it takes that long for spouses to accept each other as they are, faults and all. It takes spouses that long to learn what it means to truly serve and give to someone else without agenda, without expectation. It takes time to develop that. (That's why our youth are so confused, they think that intimacy and love is possible in the standard 30 minute sit-com which is why they confuse lust for love and behave inappropriately, often and quickly. More on this another time).

And it takes time to establish an intimacy of prayer with Christ. It doesn't happen in one service, or because you heard a good sermon, or because you read a good book, or even because you went to confession. These things are all tools and pathways to intimacy with God. The ultimate goal is to be able to accept Christ as He is, to meet Him with no agenda, to meet Him on His terms, so that when we meet Him at the end of our lives and stand before Him as our judge, He will take pity on the times we have fallen short and open His heavenly kingdom to us.

## **Lent is About to Begin**

As we approach this Lenten period, I want you to meditate on the word "intimacy" as it relates to your life. In your relationships with others, are you real or are you fake? Do your relationships, at least some of them, go to a deep level, or do they all remain on the surface? Do you let them go to a deeper level? Are you afraid to be vulnerable? And is that because you can't find anyone you can truly trust? When someone confides in you, can they trust you not to repeat the intimate details of the conversation? Are you close with the people you should be close to—your parents, your children, your spouse, your co-workers, your friends? Are there walls that need to come down so that you can have the fullest expression of honesty, trust and love with them? Do you need to reconcile with someone over a past failing? (Prayer is a great way to prepare for this, by the way, to ask God to remove barriers, open doors, and provide courage and wisdom to repair damaged relationships).

And as relates to Christ, is your relationship real, or fake, or even confusing? Does it go to a deep level, or just remain on the surface? Is prayer a source of joy or just an obligation, or a crutch? And in prayer, do you meditate and pray over your intimate relationships with other people? Do you pray for the people? Do you pray for the relationships? Do you need to reconcile with Christ over a past failing?

Every year, we should strive to set a goal for ourselves for Great Lent. Otherwise, we are just marking time, marking a season. Every year we should strive to grow in some way. Let us meditate on the concept of "intimacy" and strive to grow closer and more honestly in our interpersonal relationships and our relationship with Christ.

Going back to the hierarchy of needs that I began with, if you

negotiate successfully to the stage of intimacy—especially on the intimacy with Christ, that reaches the 6th level of the hierarchy, self-transcendence, the sense of altruism and spirituality greater than ourselves. If one can combine level three with level six, then the two stages in between—esteem and self-actualization, in my opinion, are easily negotiated.

Knowing that one is loved, and knowing that one has honest and loving relationships with others will bring about a higher sense of self-esteem and self-confidence. And when one has a relationship with Christ, and sees Christ as the source, center and destination of life, then one is able to actualize the self to the higher purpose of self-transcendence, and live IN Christ and live FOR Christ.

Great Lent is not merely a time to deprive oneself of food. It is a time of self-reflection and spiritual self-improvement. While the rest of the year should not be a time of complacency or even maintenance, as we should be striving to grow at all times, our greatest growth should be during this period of Great Lent. This is why the church has chosen a period of time each year for a greater spiritual intensity. In Lent we run a marathon. The rest of the year we are training for the marathon but not running the intense race of Great Lent.

Great Lent itself begins on February 23. The month of February, the four Sundays before Lent, which begins on February 1, is called the Triodion, which serves for us as the pre-Lenten period. It is a time to set goals and to begin to bring into focus what we want to achieve for ourselves spiritually this Lent. Slowly more services are introduced (Saturday of the Souls). For one week (the first week of Triodion, which is February 1-7), all fasting requirements are waved, there is no fasting. During the second week, February 8-15, it is a normal week for fasting. On February 16, we begin to abstain from meat. And on February 23, we begin the strict fast and the regimen of services for Great Lent.

One note on the services—I had a hard time this past December keeping the Advent Fast (for those who do not know, we fast 40 days before Christmas), and I spoke to other people who did as well. In addition to all the Christmas parties taking place amongst our non-Orthodox friends, there is also not much support through services. Many people told me that it is much easier to fast during the Great Lent because we have the services so often, and we are constantly in the mode of worship. If we worship only on Sundays, it is hard to keep the fast and the spiritual intensity of the season. This is the main reason why the church has put in the additional services (see separate article) on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, to HELP us maintain spiritual intensity and encourage spiritual growth. So, I encourage you to make your Lenten plan to include as many services as possible, so that your efforts can be encouraged through frequent worship, which affords us the opportunity to share fellowship with others who are making the same journey, and through the Pre-Sanctified Liturgies on Wednesdays, to receive Holy Communion during the week.

Combining now, this article on the Hierarchy of Needs, together with the Prayer Team Project, if you use them hand in hand this Lent, committing to pray, and striving towards a more intimate relationship with Christ and with one another, think about

how both can improve your life and our parish. The whole world, it seems at times, is full of superficiality. Our spiritual world, and the world of our close family and friends, should be a world of intimacy. I hope we can each focus this Lent on getting away from what is fake, and getting back to what is real. There is a hierarchy of needs in this life, with Christ being at the top of it. But in order to love Christ, we must love one another, and in order to do that, we need respect, patience, forgiveness, trust and a sense of intimacy, where the walls

come down, so the people can be built up.

I'm excited for the journey to begin. May God bless us as we journey to a greater understanding of ourselves and a greater understanding of Him. Kali Sarakosti! Have a blessed Lenten journey!

With love in the Lord,  
+Fr. Stavros

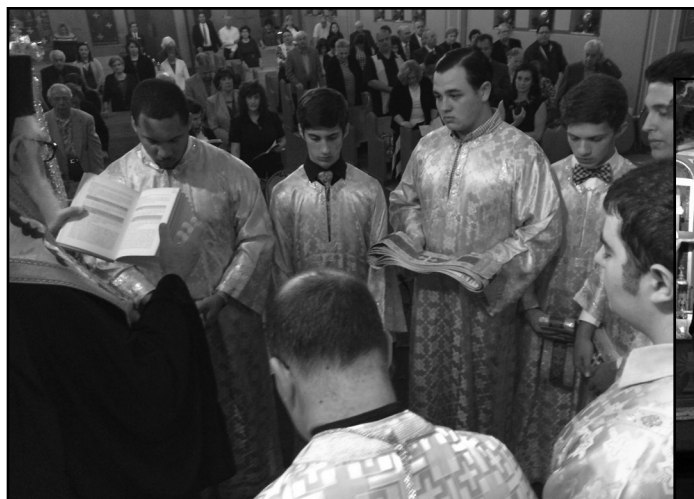


**D**uring His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios' Archpastoral visit to our community for our feastday, seven altar captains were tonsured readers of the church. **Congratulations to Aris Rogers, Chris Scarfogliero, Savvas Ferekides, Nicholas Kavouklis, Mihail Kaburis, George Hambos and Vasili Courialis.** They were blessed by the bishop, thus officially allowing them to read during the divine services of the church. A reader is the second-highest order in the minor order of clergy. The highest order of the minor order is subdeacon and the lowest is acolyte or altar boy. The major orders of clergy include the deacon, priest and bishop. Originally, the position of Reader was introduced because of the low literacy rates in the church. Today, literacy is relatively high so some say that Reader is obsolete. However, this is not true. One cannot be ordained a deacon unless he has been tonsured a reader. In the early church, the reader read the Old Testament and Epistle readings, chanted Psalms, helped organize the services, sing in the choir, and other leadership roles in the community.

The process of tonsuring itself is a sign of submission and obedience becoming a member of the clergy. This is separate from the ordination itself. The ordination to reader is through Cheirothesia – which means, "to place hands." For ordination of deacons, priests and bishops it is called - as opposed to Cheirotonia -

"to stretch out the hands." Generally, the reader is given a sticharion, similar to the altar boy robe without the stole. which he wears for his liturgical duties. The sticharion is a long-sleeved tunic that reaches all the way to the ground. It reminds the wearer that the grace of the Holy Spirit covers him as with a garment of salvation and joy. Once the bishop officially recognizes them, he proclaims Axios! which means "worthy" and everyone responds in the same manor. Here are some duties of the reader:

It is hoped that this tonsuring of our senior altar boys not only recognizes and inspires their service in the altar, but will lead to other roles in parish leadership in the years to come. **Axioti to our senior altar boys!**



# Let's Fast from "Fasting"

By Charlie Hambos

The time has come again, where we begin the fasting period of Great Lent. It always comes around so quick and by the time we start thinking about the fast, we look up and the Priest is coming out of the Holy Altar asking us to, "Come, receive the light" on Pascha. Or, we think about it ahead of time and plan our dietary restrictions. We stock up on fruits, vegetables and nuts; enough for the first week or two of Great Lent. By week three, we head to the grocery store and start looking at the ingredients. Can't eat this. Can't eat that. This bag or box of whatever was processed in a facility with eggs and milk, so that product is out of the question. Now, we become frustrated and start to kill our neighbor in our mind because they have a shopping cart full of meats and cheeses. Yes, abstaining from certain foods is a good thing. When we satiate our body with physical pleasures like food, there is less room for our soul to yearn for something beyond this world. In other words, the less time we spend eating, the more time we can spend with God.

Planning a meal during the fasting period can be very difficult. Definitely more difficult than the rest of the year. This is where we make our mistake. During the fasting period, the idea is to think less about what we are going to eat and focus more on Christ. Repeat. The idea is to think less about what we are going to eat and focus more on Christ. It is a time, to set aside time to prepare and to meditate upon Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. If it is taking longer for us to prepare a meal during Great Lent, because we want to make sure we are not using meat or dairy products, then we are missing the point.

It doesn't stop there. There are those of us who are following the fast as strictly as possible and we look at those who are not following at all or not as strict and we look down upon them. The title of this article is Let's Fast from "Fasting." Fasting is in quotations because we do not fast appropriately. Thus, we are not using this tool of the church to its best ability. The challenge for this Great Lent is to Fast from Fasting as we know it and start using our time more wisely so that we can meditate on things that require our full attention. In the end, it is about each of us individually and how well we prepared ourselves—versus judging the other.

During our Bible Study on Paul's Letter to the Romans, we stumbled upon some good points relating to what we do and how we should handle each situation.

*"Give a welcome to anyone whose faith is not strong, but do not get into arguments about doubtful points. One person may have faith enough to eat any kind of food; another, less strong, will eat only vegetables. Those who feel free to eat freely are not to condemn those who are unwilling to eat freely; nor must the person who does not eat freely pass judgment on the one who does—because God has welcomed him. And who are you, to sit in judgment over somebody else's servant? Whether he deserves to be upheld or to fall is for his own master to decide; and he shall be upheld, for the Lord has power to uphold him."* -Romans 14:1-4

In different times, our individual level of faith can be strong and we believe those who are weak in their faith cannot sit on the same level as us. Paul tells us to welcome those who are weak in their faith and to not argue over stupidities. Thus, causing the weaklings to feel weaker and the stronger to feel stronger. We have to remember that it was God who weakened himself to become one of us so that we could become like God. Those who follow the fast better than others shouldn't condemn those who do not. Why? God has welcomed both of us. Paul says, *"And who are you, to sit in judgment over somebody else's servant? Whether he deserves to be upheld or to fall is for his own master to decide; and he shall be upheld, for the Lord has power to uphold him."* No more explanation needed there. After another similar metaphor, Paul continues,

*"For none of us lives for himself and none of us dies for himself; while we are alive, we are living for the Lord, and when we die, we die for the Lord: and so, alive or dead, we belong to the Lord. It was for this purpose that Christ both died and came to life again: so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. Why, then, does one of you make himself judge over his brother, and why does another among you despise his brother? All of us will have to stand in front of the judgment-seat of God: as scripture says: By my own life says the Lord, every knee shall bow before me, every tongue shall give glory to God. It is to God, then, that each of us will have to give an account of himself. Let us each stop passing judgment, therefore, on one another and decide instead that none of us will place obstacles in any brothers way, or anything that can bring him down."*

-Romans 14:7-13

So, why are we alive? We are alive for Christ. We are not alive for ourselves. This is very difficult to fathom in the society in which we live. Society as a whole wants to live for itself only and to be too busy to do things that are most helpful to itself. This is to realize that we are alive for Christ. And even when we die, we die for Christ. Why? Because either way, we belong to the Lord. What Paul says next is so beautiful. It was for the exact reason that Christ both died and came to life again: so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. Let us think about that this Great Lent.

Why do we judge everyone around us? Paul asks the same question, "Why, then, does one of you make himself judge over his brother, and why does another among you despise his brother?" Why? Why? Why? We just want to feel good about ourselves. In the path of feeling good about ourselves, we throw the other down. The hope is that we realize way before the end, that we all will stand in front of the judgment seat of God. It is up to God to decide. He is the master of the living and the dead.

Now, that we have some things to ponder during Great Lent. Let's look at a really cool way to fast from the things which will help our soul get closer to Christ. There exists a wooden



cube. It is called the Fasting Prayer Cube. They are available in our church’s bookstore. The cube has six sides and each side gives us something to fast from. It’s nice and sturdy so we can roll it like a dice. Even if we don’t actually have the cube, the fasting options are great.

Here are the six options

- 1. **Fast from Discouragement** – Remember Jesus’ promise that He has a perfect plan for you.
- 2. **Fast from Complaining** – Instead of complaining, recall the moments of joy in your life.
- 3. **Fast from Resentment & Bitterness** – Work on forgiving the people who have hurt you.
- 4. **Fast from Hatred & Anger** – Give your family an extra dose of love every day.
- 5. **Fast from Overspending** – Try reducing spending by 10% and give those savings to people in need.
- 6. **Fast from Judging Others** – Before judging, recall how Jesus overlooks our faults.

Let’s spend our time this Great Lent fasting from these things. No joke though, we are going to have to dedicate some time. It’ll be worth it. It’s eternal life we are talking about here.



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

**Friends of St. John**  
Barbara Akrotirianakis—Whittier, CA  
Mary Hatzikazakis—from Bristol, TN  
William J Camarinos—Alexandria, VA  
Richard & Mickie Bass—Asheville, NC

FRIENDS OF ST. JOHN

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

*I wish to be a “Friend of St. John”. I am enclosing a contribution in the amount of:*  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$200 \_\_\_\_\_ Other

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

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.



# Liturgical Schedule for February 2015

## Sunday, February 1 Publican and Pharisee

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 Garcia, Demetri Karounos, Grayson Borgeas, Peter Chandler)

**Ushers:** David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas

**Coffee Hour:** Choir Brunch

**Welcoming Committee:** Greeters: Jenny Paloumpis, Jamie Broderick; Ambassador: Carole Fotopoulos;

**Caller:** Tammy Christou; Get Acquainted: Megan Rindone, Jeanie Nenos

Monday, February 2

**Presentation of Christ in the Temple**

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

## Sunday, February 8 The Prodigal Son

Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Luke (Christos Nenos, Dean Mitseas, Nicholas Katzaras, James Katzaras, Nicholas Yotis, Genaro Scarfogliero, Andrew Thatcher)

**Ushers:** Mike Trimis, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis

**Coffee Hour:** Philoptochos

**Welcoming Committee:** Greeters: Sandra Pappas, Marenca Patrascoiu; Ambassador: Genie Carter; Caller: Ewana Forde

Tuesday, February 10

**St. Haralambos**

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

Saturday, February 14

**1st Saturday of the Souls**

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

## Sunday, January 15 Judgment Sunday (Meatfare)

Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. John (Thomas Shearer, Nicholas Alsina, Antonio Bavaro, Jonah Blankenbaker, Yianni Trimikliniotis, Nicholas Oliver, Athanasios Oliver)

**Ushers:** Florin Patrasciou, Kevin Fentress, Tammy Christou

**Coffee Hour:** Sunday School

**Welcoming Committee:** Greeters: Edie Kavouklis, Skip Higdon; Ambassador: Julie Palios; Caller: Debbie Kavouklis

Saturday, February 21

**2nd Saturday of the Souls** (To be held at the Garden of Memories)

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

## Sunday, February 22 Forgiveness Sunday (Cheesefare)

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, Benny Hiermichel, James Kavouklis, Andrew Patrasciou)

**Ushers:** Nick Kavouklis, Perry Katsamakis, Peter Theophanous

**Coffee Hour:** AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope

**Welcoming Committee:** Greeters: Maria Karounas, Lisa Alsina; Ambassador: Donna Trakas; Caller: Christine Worley

Sunday, February 22

**Forgiveness Vespers** 6:00 p.m.

Monday, February 23

**Clean Monday**

**Holy Unction** 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, February 25

9th Hour 5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Friday, February 27

**Salutations to the Virgin Mary** 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, February 28

**3rd Saturday of the Souls**

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

## Sunday, March 1 Sunday of Orthodoxy

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

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

**Ushers:** Gregory Tisdale, Jason Pill, George Trimikliniotis

**Coffee Hour:** Young at Heart

**Welcoming Committee:** Greeters: Theo Panopoulos, Marisa Panopoulos; Ambassador: Betty Katherine Katsamakis;

Caller: Katherine Sakkis, Get Acquainted: Michael Palios; Bessie Palios

## FEAST DAYS IN FEBRUARY

**Presentation of Christ-February 2**-The Presentation of Christ is a major feastday of the church and commemorates the day, 40 days after the Nativity, when Christ was brought to the temple when He was 40 days old. According to the Law of Moses, every male child was brought to the temple on its 40<sup>th</sup> day, together with a sacrifice of pigeons or turtle doves by the parents, and the child was “consecrated Holy to the Lord.” Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the temple on His 40<sup>th</sup> day, because it was the law to do so. In the temple was a priest named Simeon, who was an older man, who had been promised by God that he would not die until he saw the Christ. When Simeon saw the baby Jesus, he knew in his heart that this was the Lord’s Messiah. He took the child in his arms and prayed “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light to enlighten the Gentiles and for glory to Your people Israel.” This prayer is recited over every child in the Orthodox Church when they are brought to church for the first time when they are 40 days old. That’s where this beautiful tradition comes from. February 2 is indeed a special day for all parents and all young children.

**St. Haralambos-February 10**-St. Haralambos was a Saint of the first century and lived in Greece. He was a priest who was martyred. Our parish has a special connection to St. Haralambos since his relics were interred in our altar table when the church was consecrated in 1986.

## GUIDELINES FOR GREAT AND HOLY LENT

### The Lenten Services

**Saturday of the Souls** - It is a Tradition in the Orthodox Church to offer prayers for the souls of all of our loved ones who have departed this life, in the hope of the Resurrection to Eternal Life. There are four Saturdays of the year that are dedicated specifically to this purpose. They are three Saturdays before and at the beginning of Lent and the Saturday before Pentecost. Everyone is encouraged to submit the names of their loved ones to be commemorated at the services. And you are all encouraged to attend one of these services (and bring Kolyva-boiled wheat) if you are able, as a way of honoring the people in your family who have passed away in church once a year. This year, the Saturdays of the Souls fall on February 14, February 21 and February 28.

**Special Liturgy to be held at Garden of Memories Mausoleum for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the Souls - February 21** - On Saturday, February 21, we will hold the Divine Liturgy at the Garden of Memories Cemetery at 4207 E. Lake Avenue in East Tampa. We will have Orthros at 9:00 a.m., Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m., and a memorial service at the end of the Liturgy. After Liturgy is concluded, Father Stavros will visit the graves of the relatives of all attendees of the Liturgy. This is the third year that we will be doing this liturgy out at Garden of Memories. Please come and join us praying for the souls of our loved ones, as we also pray for strengthening and inspiration for ourselves.

**Forgiveness Vespers** - The Period of Great and Holy Lent begins on Monday, February 23, a day called Clean Monday, or “Kathara Deftera” in Greek. Vespers is the service that ends one day and begins another, so Lent actually begins with a Vespers service on Sunday evening, February 22. We will celebrate the Vespers of Forgiveness and beginning of Great Lent on Sunday evening, February 22, at 6:00 p.m. This service lasts about an hour and marks the beginning of Great Lent, which is announced during one of the hymns mid-way through the service. During this hymn, the priest changes vestments from white to purple, the lights in the church are dimmed and the mood of the service becomes somber. In fact, it is the opposite of the Resurrection Service on Easter, where everything begins dark and goes to light. The service concludes with a prayer of forgiveness being read over the congregation and the exchange of mutual forgiveness among the members of the congregation. This service is an especially appropriate way to begin the Lenten season, and for those who attended last season, is one of the most moving services of the church year.

**Holy Unction on Clean Monday** - The Sacrament of Holy Unction is always offered during Holy Week on Holy Wednesday. But the sacrament can be done at any time of the year. The emphasis of this sacrament involved, spiritual healing, spiritual cleansing and repentance. Many churches offer this service on Clean Monday and we are going to add this service this year. What better way to begin Great Lent than the sacrament of Holy Unction. We will offer this service on Clean Monday, February 23 from 6:00-7:30 p.m. Please bring your Holy Week book to follow along.

**Sunday of Orthodoxy Icon Procession** - If anyone has new icons that have not been blessed, please bring them to church on Sunday, March 1, the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and place them in the windows of the church. They will be blessed with Holy Water during the service.

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

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

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

<b>Wednesday, February 25</b>	Choir
<b>Wednesday, March 4</b>	Sunday School
<b>Wednesday, March 11</b>	Philoptochos
<b>Wednesday, March 18</b>	Young at Heart-AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope
<b>Wednesday, March 25</b>	(We will chant the Canon of St. Andrew but no Lenten Dinner)
<b>Wednesday, April 1</b>	Small Group Bible Studies

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

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

### **What We Celebrate on the Sundays of Triodion and Lent**

**SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE** - February 1 - The focus this Sunday is on the Gospel of Luke 18:10-14, in which two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, an externally decent and righteous man of religion, and the other was a publican, a sinful tax-collector who was cheating the people. Though the Pharisee was genuinely righteous under the Law, he boasted before God and was condemned. The publican, although he was truly sinful, begged for mercy, received it, and was justified by God. . There is **NO** fasting this week, in preparation for our great journey.)

**SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON** - February 8 - On this Sunday in the preparation for Great Lent, Orthodox Christians are read Christ's parable about God's loving forgiveness (Luke 15:11-24). They are to see themselves as being in a foreign country far from the Father's house and to make the movement of return to God, where we truly belong. The parable gives assurance that the Father will receive them with joy and gladness in their journey through Great Lent, their journey home.

**JUDGMENT SUNDAY/MEATFARE SUNDAY** - February 15 - Judgment Sunday is also called - Meatfare Sunday because it is the last Sunday, according to the fasting canons, that the faithful eat meat before Easter. During the following week, we do **not** fast on Wednesday and Friday (except for meat, of course). On this Sunday, we call to mind something that has not even happened yet: the Second Coming of Christ. Our Lord has promised us that He will come again, "to judge the living and the dead, and His Kingdom will have no end" (*from the Nicene Creed*). We call to mind the "criteria" of our entrance into Paradise, as our Lord said in today's Gospel: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me."

**CHEESEFARE SUNDAY - FORGIVENESS SUNDAY** - February 22 - Cheese-Fare Sunday is the last day in which dairy products are allowed. The Monday after Cheese-Fare Sunday is the official beginning of the Great Lent; this Monday is also called *Clean Monday (Kathara Deftera)*. On Cheese-Fare Sunday the Church commemorates the sending away of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Paradise. Adam and Eve were in complete harmony with God, nature and themselves. They were tempted by the devil and they agreed to eat from the tree of knowledge, in order that they themselves might become gods. The result was fatal; they were cast out of Paradise and sin came into the world. The Holy Fathers selected this event to remind us of our obligations to God and about the laws of fasting and Christian behavior (Matthew 6:14-21).

### **Other Opportunities This Lent**

**Sacrament of Confession**-Many people have already made appointments for their confessions to be heard, many for the first time in their lives. It is confidential. It helps you re-connect with God and unburden yourself of guilt. It helps you to make a new start in your spiritual journey and is an integral part of any successful Lenten journey. If you have questions about confession, please ask. There is no better way to prepare for Pascha than to receive this sacrament. Confessions will be heard up to April 3, and then again after Pascha. I ask that you make your appointment as soon as possible, because I like to give people whatever time they need. As it gets closer to Holy Week and more and more people are coming, I'm forced to go quicker, and it is very important not to be rushed in this Sacrament.

**Interested in Reading during Lenten Services**—In years past, we've offered the opportunity to parishioners to read during the Lenten services on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings. If you are interested, you can sign up by calling the office and Father will tell you the times and dates that are available or email Father at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com) or Charlie at [Charlie.hambos@gmail.com](mailto:Charlie.hambos@gmail.com).

**Adult Lenten Retreat**—For the past nine years, we have held a Lenten Retreat for Adults during Lent. Our ninth annual adult Lenten Retreat will be held on Saturday, March 21, from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (Please see attached flyer). The theme of the Retreat is Philippians 4: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." In addition to the subject material related to the theme, there will be ample opportunity for general questions about our faith. Please sign up by sending the attachment from the flyer to the church office by March 16 or emailing Fr. Stavros at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com). This event is open to all adults in our parish, as well as surrounding Orthodox parishes of the area. Non-Orthodox friends and friends from other churches are certainly welcome.

# Community News

## Parish Registry

**Baptism** - Emma Evangelia Guarino, daughter of Paul Guarino and Jennifer Ramos, was baptized on Sunday, December 21. Emon Anthousis was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism** - Zachary Brendan Zaharis, son of Dino and Rachel Zaharis, was baptized on Saturday, December 27. John and Annessa Zaharis were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism** - Samuel Lenardos, son of Steven and Melissa Lenardos, was baptized on Saturday, January 10. Godparents were John and Jimena Mekras. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism** - Peter (Panayiotis) Konstas, son of Jimmy and Mary Ann Konstas, was baptized on Sunday, January 11. Godparents were Presbyteria Lisa Akrotirianakis and Kristina Pantelides. Na Sas Zisi!

**Wedding** - Louis Papaefstathiou and Joanna Konstantina Vourloumis were married on Saturday, December 27. Dimitrios Hanjis and Alexa Hanjis were the Koumbari. Congratulations!

**Wedding** - Edjir Celin and Nadin Kamal Shsukri Raheta were married on Sunday, December 28. Jamal Tadros was the Koumbaro. Congratulations!

## Introducing the 2015 Parish Council

The 2015 Parish Council Members are as follows: George Chagaris, Alkis Crassas, Carole Fotopoulos, Ed Gerecke, Skip Higdon, Catherine Mitseas, Byron Nenos, Sandra Pappas, Despina Sibley, Dante Skourellos, and Mike Xenick. Officers were to be elected at our January meeting, which was scheduled after the deadline for the Messenger. Officers will be listed in the weekly bulletin once they are elected. The Parish Council will be reviewing our various committees and asking for help from church members (those who have indicated an interest on their stewardship forms) to staff these committees to do the work of our parish. A big thank you, in advance for the important work that the entire Parish Council will be undertaking this coming year.

## Epiphany in Tarpon Springs

On Tuesday, January 6, Nicholas Kavouklis represented our parish for the diving for the cross in Tarpon Springs for the annual Epiphany celebration. Congratulations Nicholas!

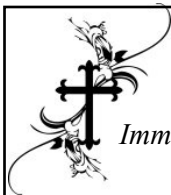
## St. John the Baptist Feastday

On January 6-7, we celebrated our annual Feastday of St. John the Baptist, the Patron Saint of our Parish. On January 6, His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios presided over the Vespers, assisted by Fr. James Rousakis (Vicar) Fr. Stavros, Fr. James Paris (Clearwater), Fr. Soteri Rousakis (St. Petersburg), Fr. John Bociu (Sarasota) Fr. Michael Marcantoni (Clearwater) and Deacon John Pantelis (St. Petersburg). Mary Nenos offered an Artoklasia, and also decorated our icons of St. John. The Philoptochos sponsored a reception following Vespers. During the Vespers Service, His Eminence tonsured seven of our Altar Boys—Aris Rogers, Nicholas Kavouklis, Mihail Kaburis, Vasili Courialis, George Hambos, Savvas Ferekides, and Chris Scarfogliero. Axioi to these young men! On January 7, His Eminence officiated at the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, assisted by Fr. James Rouakis, Fr. Stavros, Fr. Anastasios Gounaris (Tarpon Springs), Fr. James Parish, Fr. Soteri Rousakis, Fr. Michael Marcantoni and Deacon John Pantelis. The Parish Council sponsored a luncheon following the Liturgy. Special thanks to the Hambos family for cooking an excellent lunch!

**Thank you to all those who helped make our Feastday a success!**

## Get Acquainted Sunday, February 1

In an effort to get to know one another better, we are going to continue our “Get Acquainted Sundays” the first 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.



*The St. John Choir invites everyone to*

**Sunday Brunch**

**Sunday, February 1, 2015**

*Immediately following the Divine Liturgy in the Kourmolis Center*

*\$5 per person donation*

## Adult Greek School

The Adult Greek School meets every Thursday from 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. in Parish Council Meeting Room in the Administration Building of the church. Those interested in learning Greek, please contact our Greek School Teacher Mrs. Magda Myer at (813) 909-2327 or [aspis69@aol.com](mailto:aspis69@aol.com).

## 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 8:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, February 14 and Saturday, March 21.

**Father Stavros will be out of town February 17-19** to attend the clergy Syndesmos at the Diakonia Center in South Carolina. His Eminence asks that the priests of this Metropolis come together for a few days each spring and again each fall, to spend time together in prayer, fellowship and learning, as well as to be able to work in our small committees and to work with His Eminence. Father Stavros will be doing preparation work on summer camp during this time period, as well as attending the other events and presentations.

## GOYA

Our next GOYA meeting will be Sunday, February 8 from 5:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center.

## Hope/Joy

### SOUPER BOWL OF CARING - Sunday, February 1

February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 Super Bowl Sunday of course, but it is also "Souper Bowl of Caring" Sunday as well. This is a nationwide, youth-led initiative to tackle hunger across our country. Over 3000 Churches, youth groups, and other organizations will be collecting non-perishable items and monetary donations for local food banks. Several of our Sunday School students will be near the side door to collect these donations. You may bring any nonperishable food item or a cash donation. 100% of our collections will be donated to our own **St. John Food Pantry** and to **Feeding America Tampa Bay**.

#### Mission Statement:

Using the energy of the Super Bowl to mobilize youth in a united national effort to care for people in their local communities who are hungry and those in need.

#### Vision Statement:

Transform the time around the Super Bowl into the nation's largest celebration of giving and serving.

We believe:

- The idea for Souper Bowl of Caring is a gift from God
- Young people have the ability to serve and should be given opportunities to lead their communities in helping others
- Every dollar collected through Souper Bowl of Caring should be donated directly to a charity selected by each participating group
- People of all backgrounds and beliefs can work together
- Hunger and poverty have a negative impact on individuals and the communities in which they live, yet there is joy in serving and giving to those in need
- The excitement and energy surrounding the Super Bowl can be used to engage young people in service while producing lasting hope for all people.

Join us in support of this nationwide youth initiative to stop hunger in this country. We encourage the entire community to please bring a non-perishable food item or monetary donation to church on Super Bowl Sunday, February 1.

## Young at Heart

The next Young at Heart meeting will be Thursday, February 5 at 11:30 a.m. in the Zaharias Room. Young at Heart is also sponsoring an Apokreatiko Dinner Dance on Saturday, February 14 at 7:00 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center.

## **Philoptochos Missions Sunday - February 8**

As they do every year, Philoptochos is going to sponsor it's 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Missions Sunday to support overseas Orthodox missions. Markella Balasis from the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) in St. Augustine will be with us on Sunday, February 8. She will offer the homily and then Philoptochos will sponsor a luncheon to benefit missions work, with all proceeds going toward the Mission Center.

## **St. John the Baptist Philoptochos**

Will Host a Complimentary Luncheon

**Saturday, February 28, 2015**

11:00 a.m. in the Kourmolis Center

Featured Speaker Mary McDonald

Director of Development The Spring of Tampa Bay

Friends and Neighbors Welcome!

Please join us to learn about domestic violence and the recourses that are available in the Tampa Bay Area.

RSVP by Wednesday, February 25 to Lisa Alsina (813) 871-1094

## **Philoptochos 2015 Membership Drive!**

**We are on the MOVE!**

We Invite all women ages 18 to ??? To join the St. John the Baptist Philoptochos Annunciation Chapter!

Membership Drive: January Thru April, Suggested Stewardship is \$30.00. However, we accept whatever you have in your heart to give.

Your donation makes you a member of the National, The Metropolis and our Local Chapters of Philoptchos...

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E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

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



## **SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS:**

January was a very busy month for the Sunday School. Our topics for January were the Epiphany/ St. John the Baptist, the Vasilopita/St. Basil, and the Ten Commandments. Charlie Hambos also worked with our 4th and high school students this month and our 4th graders made Prosphora under the guidance of Melissa Krinos.

CONGRATULATIONS to Nicholas Yotsis for finding the lucky coin in the Sunday School Vasilopita on January 11th. We would also like to thank Melissa Krinos for making the Vasilopita for our Sunday School Children. The sweet bread was delicious and appreciated by all of our children. We would also like to acknowledge that HOPE AND JOY found the coin in their piece of the Church's Vasilopita. May God bless all the children of St. John's in 2015.

On Saturday January 10th, the Sunday School Teachers participated in a retreat with Fr. Stavros and Charlie Hambos. The Sunday School teachers are truly blessed to have both of them as our spiritual leaders of our Sunday School. Our Sunday School program would not be what it is today without them. We did some team building activities to strengthen our bond and of course learned more about our faith. As a result we were truly spiritually renewed and had fun at the same time. THANK YOU Fr. Stavros and Charlie for dedicating so much of your busy schedule to our Sunday School.

We also had our YOUTH SUNDAY on Jan. 25th. The children sang beautifully, our Epistle Reader did a fine job and the Prosphora, made by our students, was delicious as usually. Our children are truly great stewards of St. John's.

The next few month will be busy as usual for the Sunday School. Our older students are preparing for the Oratorical Festival and everyone is getting reading for Pascha. Each Sunday School class will have the opportunity to participate in the important Sacrament of Confession. We will also have a Pre-Lenten Retreat and a Retreat on Good Friday.

### **DATES TO REMEMBER:**

#### **February 1 TOPIC: Fasting (Gospel of the Publican and Pharisee)**

- Charlie Hambos - Presentation for the 7th and 8th Graders
- 1st and 2nd Graders will participate in the Sacrament of Confession

#### **February 8 TOPIC: Presentation of Christ**

- 6th Graders will participate in the Sacrament of Confession

#### **February 15 YOUTH SUNDAY**

- Charlie Hambos - Presentation for the 5th and 6th Graders
- 3rd and 4th Graders will participate in the Sacrament of Confession

#### **February 22 PRE-LENTEN RETREAT**

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

#### **Lenten Calendar**

As part of our Lenten Program this year, we present the Lenten Calendar for our Sunday School Students. It is attached in the

---

**PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE SATURDAY OF THE SOULS  
MEMORIAL SERVICES—February 14, February 21, February 28**

**In Memory of**

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

**\*\*You only need to write the first name of each person. Please mail to the church office by February 10.**

# Family Calendar For Great Lent

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>22-Feb</b> <b>Chesefare Sunday of forgiveness</b> Come to church and ask forgiveness	<b>23</b> Clean Monday <b>Great Lent Begins</b> <b>Holy Unction Service</b> <b>Great Compline</b> No TV today	<b>24</b> Call and wish your Godparents a "Blessed Lent/Kali Sarakosti"	<b>25</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> Say a special prayer for sick children	<b>26</b> Make a prosfora bread with your family to bring to church	<b>27</b> <b>Salutations to the Virgin Mary</b> Make a list of 5 things you are thankful for	<b>28</b> <b>Saturday of the Souls</b> Make a prayer list of those who have died and bring to church
<b>1-Mar</b> <b>Sunday of Orthodoxy</b> Bring an icon from home for procession Sing Kyrie eleisons	<b>2</b> <b>Great Compline</b> Help make your bed, clean up and dust your room	<b>3</b> Pray the Lenten prayer of St. Ephraim together with your family	<b>4</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> Receive Holy Communion / Sunday School Family dinner	<b>5</b> Collect some clothing or shoes to donate to a charity special to you	<b>6</b> <b>Salutations to the Virgin Mary</b> Help make a Lenten meal with your family GOYA Lenten Retreat	<b>7</b> Help your parents in the yard/garden Forgive someone who hurt you
<b>8</b> <b>St. Gregory of Palamas</b>	<b>9</b> <b>Great Compline</b> Help set the table and clean up after dinner	<b>10</b> Do something nice for your dad	<b>11</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> Say a special prayer for Sunday School teachers	<b>12</b> Collect some coins to bring to church on Sunday	<b>13</b> <b>Salutations to the Virgin Mary</b> Do something nice for your mother	<b>14</b> Read about the life of a Saint with your family Community Outreach
<b>15</b> <b>Holy Cross</b> Take home a flower from the cross	<b>16</b> <b>Great Compline</b> Say a special prayer for your priest	<b>17</b> Say a special prayer for your teachers	<b>18</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> Say a special prayer for your neighbors	<b>19</b> Buy and donate a food item for our St. John food pantry	<b>20</b> <b>Salutations to the Virgin Mary</b> Come Bless the icon of Panagia	<b>21</b> Read a favorite Bible story with your family
<b>22</b> <b>St John of the Ladder</b> Take 5 minutes of silence to pray about how much God loves you	<b>23</b> <b>Great Compline</b> Play with someone who feels left out	<b>24</b> Draw a picture of your saint or feast day by looking at an icon	<b>25 Annunciation</b> Say a special prayer for those who fought for your independence <b>Canon of St. Andrew</b>	<b>26</b> Choose a toy you don't play with and donate it	<b>27 Akathist Hymn</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> Sing Victorious Lady in your prayers one last time	<b>28</b> Ask for God to protect your house Tell someone you hurt that you are sorry
<b>29</b> <b>St Mary of Egypt</b> Sing Agios O Theos in Church today	<b>30</b> <b>Great Compline</b> Be kind to someone who needs your kindness	<b>31</b> Mail a card to your Godparents wishing them a Blessed Holy Week and Kalo Pascha	<b>1-Apr</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> Say a special prayer for your friends	<b>2</b> Make and bake some Lenten cookies with your family	<b>3</b> Make a list of all living and dead loved ones and bring it to church for the Proskomide	<b>4 Saturday of Lazarus</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> Receive Holy Communion Make palm crosses
<b>5 Palm Sunday</b> <b>Service of Bridegroom</b> Replace your old crosses and have parents burn any old crosses	<b>6 Holy Monday</b> <b>Bridegroom Service</b> Read the story about the prophet Joseph	<b>7 Holy Tuesday</b> <b>Bridegroom Service</b> Read the story of Kassiani the Hymnographer	<b>8 Holy Wednesday</b> Come and receive Holy Unction	<b>9 Holy Thursday</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> 12 Gospels Service Color eggs red for Pascha, think about Jesus on the cross	<b>10 Holy Friday</b> <b>Royal Hours Unnailing from Cross</b> Lamentations Attend Sunday School Retreat	<b>11 Holy Saturday</b> <b>Liturgy of St. Basil Resurrection Service</b> Come early Liturgy to see scattering of bay leaves
<b>12 PASCHA!</b> <b>Christ is Risen!</b> <b>You have completed Great Lent!</b> Attend Agape vespers to light your candle						

# Stewardship ....a little of this and that

Sandra Pappas – Stewardship Co- Chair

As we often hear, many words have Greek roots. The word for ‘Steward’ in Greek is ‘Oikonomos.’ It essentially means how the ‘house is governed.’ Fr. Stavros led Vasilopita Sunday on Jan 11<sup>th</sup> by asking how many of us take time to ‘do our housework’ and all that entails. Cleaning, Laundry, Paying Bills, etc. etc. After a long list of our many ‘Stewards’ accepted Vasilopita on this day, it was evident how much time goes into governing this house.

We have the gift of a second house to care for – God’s house and our home to support the work of Christ and the Church through the giving of time, service, and financial resources according to our individual ability, commitment and financial capability. Each of us can contribute to our parish in our own way depending on our God given talents and to the best of our ability given our personal circumstances.

The financial component is talked about (often) because it’s a critical reality to our long-term goals of keeping God’s house and our home open and growing for generations to come! We have a very special place to worship on a regular basis, but need to keep a focus on our goals to build an ample cash reserve fund, paying down our mortgage principle and maintaining long term lease income from the school building. **Our 2015 Stewardship Goal of \$470,000 is reachable!** With the help of our loyal Stewards and many new members, everyone, giving just a little more, goes a long way. Think of the possibility of our house without debt and a new world for ministry opportunities!

With God’s Grace and Blessings, our church has been open **since 1956** and continues to grow and flourish, with the help of our many Stewards! We have weathered difficult times as a Parish but continue to make progress year after year.

Last year a new Stewardship Committee was formed with a goal to revitalize this year. The Welcome Committee has been very successful in increasing our membership and more importantly making new people feel ‘at home’ in God’s house. Our Administration Committee made great strides with the rollout of internal software to better track our parishioners Time, Talent and Treasure. Going forward, our goal is to focus on the Time and Talents many of you have generously offered on your pledge forms, in addition to fundraising and directed gifts.

**With a grateful heart, THANK-YOU for supporting St. John’s Greek Orthodox Church. We are off to a very good start this year thanks to You! Please feel free to offer your suggestions and ask questions as this year progresses.** Our goal is open and honest communication about our Treasure/Financial Stewardship Goal, but more importantly, we want you to ‘feel at home’ and, in some cases, bring you back into God’s House to feel the connection with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

## Stewardship Good to Know

**Envelopes will be available in the Narthex** (Labeled Stewardship) for convenience if you regularly place Stewardship checks in the Trays and would like a sealed envelope.

**Please mark Stewardship 2015 in the memo line** if submitting a check. This helps us accurately identify your Pledge.

**Stewardship Pledge Forms really are critical.** They help keep us current on how much income the Church can expect to support our ministries and expenses. They also provide details on your family information and areas of interest so we can tap into your Talents and Interests! And lastly, pledge forms and current contributions meet the Uniform Parish Regulations (UPR) of our Archdiocese as well as our local by-laws to enable participation at Parish Assembly Meetings, Voting and Nominations for Parish Council or other leadership positions.

	2015*	2014
<b>Stewardship Goal</b>	<b>\$470,000</b>	\$400,000
Pledged	\$302,636	\$387,981
Received	\$31,375	\$370,000
Shortfall/Gain from Goal	TBD	-\$30,000
Average Pledge	\$1,590	\$1,251
Median Pledge	\$950	\$600
# of Parishioners Pledged **	192	310

\*Based on YTD as of 1/12/15

**\*\* Last Good Word** – We are only \$170,000 shy of pledges to hit our Annual Goal...at the beginning of the year! With 120 parishioners not yet committed (based on last years number) this works out to just \$118 per month per family unit. With some less and some more - we can DO This!

# JUST SAY YES!

We will continue with part seven of a monthly series 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.

## Yes to Little Things

We tend to think that saying yes to God's call on our lives involves the big issues—the dramatic “Here am I, Lord! Send me” events. But being available to be used by God can often be seen best in our willingness to do small things—the little yesses that may seem unimportant at the moment but make a big difference. Helping others, but more importantly, changing us.

Saying yes to inconvenience so someone else might be blessed.  
Saying yes to a backseat role though we're fully qualified to drive.  
Saying yes to overlooking faults and inconsiderate slights.  
Saying yes to patient listening though there's much to do and more to say.  
Saying yes to chores others should rightfully do.  
Saying yes when we'd rather say no.

*Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much.*  
*Luke 16:10*

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**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.**



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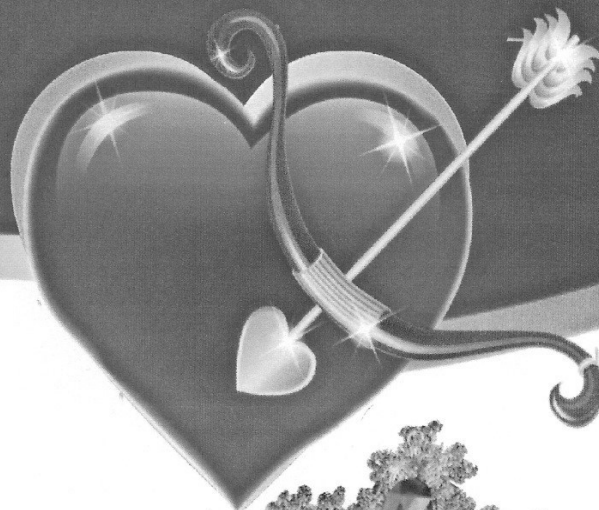
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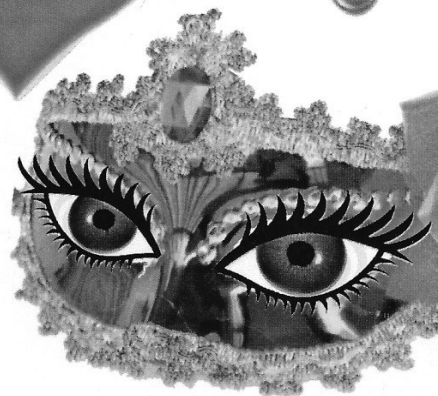
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St. John's Greek Orthodox Church



*Apokreatiko Glendi*

# *Valentine's Day*



February 14th, 2015 ♥ 7-11pm

## *Masquerade Dance*

**Adults \$35 ♥ 12 & under FREE**

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## AHEPA FAMILY NEWS

The Ahepa Family of Tampa, Lycurgus Chapter 12 and Alcmaeon Chapter 167 have had a busy season.  
We have accomplished a number of events and activities!

### Reactivation of Sons of Pericles and Maids of Athena Niki Chapter 39

Ahepa Lycurgus Chapter 12 and Daughters Alcmaeon Chapter 167 became the only Ahepa and Daughters Chapter to have established a complete AHEPA FAMILY in Florida and only about ten within the USA and Canada. That is an amazing accomplishment! Ahepa fathers and a grandfather and Daughters of Penelope mothers were proud to see their children and grandchildren become members of our AHEPA Family of Tampa which now has all four of the Ahepa family components. As part of the ceremonies each Ahepa or Daughters member presented their son or daughter with the pin signifying their acceptance into the Sons or Maids, a truly moving experience. Each group was initiated using the original ritual established at the founding of the National Order of Ahepa and the Daughters of Penelope, a truly beautiful experience. The initiations were carried out by the officers from the National and District Lodges assisted by the officers from the local chapters. After the initiations we held a social to congratulate the new members of the Sons and Maids. The event was held at the beautiful and historic Floridian Hotel in downtown Tampa

### Scholarships Awarded

On December 19, 2014 the Ahepa Family of Tampa awarded five scholarships at our annual Scholarship Dinner. The recipients were Nicholas Christopher Kavouklis, Katina Taman Smith, Sara Evanthia Barrett, Arianna Isabella Krinos, and Laura Catherine Paloumpis all of whom are members of Saint John Greek Orthodox Church. The recipients were outstanding students in their academic careers and in addition to their academic achievements they all had outstanding accomplishments in community service, giving many hours of their time to community based projects. In addition to the recipients, Aris Rogers II and Alexa Anna Alsina were present to attest to the value of having received an AHEPA Family Scholarship. Congratulations to all of the recipients both past and present, a total of 22 in the past 5 years.

### AHEPA Social and Dinner on Saint John's Day

In celebration of Saint John's Day and honoring the dignitaries present, a dinner was held on January 7, 2015 in the gorgeous main dining room of the Floridian Hotel. The Dignitaries who were honored and spoke included Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta, Phillip Frangos, Supreme President of the Order of Ahepa, Anna-Helene Grossomanidis, Grand President of the Daughters of Penelope and Adamantia Klotsa, General Consul of Greece. Numerous other Ahepan dignitaries were present some as far away as California. Brother Frangos spoke about his attendance at the historic meeting of the Pope and the Patriarch and how inspiring it was. He also spoke about attending the ground breaking of the Saint Nicholas Shrine at Ground Zero. Metropolitan Alexios spoke about many topics including the importance of Saint Nicholas Shrine at Ground Zero to the Greek Orthodox Church and his having been an Ahepan from his early days in Atlanta. Father Stavros introduced the Metropolitan giving an interesting and personal introduction. All present enjoyed the affair with comments about how inspiring the presentations were.

### Run for Alzheimer's

The Daughters of Penelope led by Maria Zabetakis spearheaded participation in the Alzheimer's run. On a cold and chilly day with the wind blowing Daughters and Ahepans braved the elements to raise money for this worthy cause and to be recognized in the community. Participants included Maria Zabetakis, Janet Holt, Debbie Galovic Sophis Nakis, Betty Nakis, Gerry Galovic and cheerleaders Gus and Marina Paras.

## FUTURE EVENTS

**A Golf Tournament** will be held this spring to raise money for our scholarships and to promote fellowship among our members and those of our community including non-Hellenes and non-Orthodox. It will be held at the WestChase Golf Club. Please put this on your calendar and plan to play. Date to be determined.

### AHEPA Florida Legislative Day

AHEPA Legislative Day will provide an opportunity for AHEPA family members including Ahepans, Daughters, Sons and Maids to go to Tallahassee for education about how our legislature works and for face to face meetings with legislators. The purpose will be to make our various legislators aware of all of our Ahepa Chapters throughout the state and to bring to their attention the good works of the Ahepa family. The event is being organized by Lycurgus Chapter 12 for the district Lodge and will involve all Ahepans in the State.

### Given With Love – A Daughters of Penelope Project

The Daughters of Penelope made heart shaped pillows which they will distribute to cardiac patients, both adults and children, during the month of February. They will personally deliver them to most hospitals in Tampa. All the DOP members have participated in this project.

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## Donations Needed for Lent/Holy Week

Great Lent begins February 23. We have many special celebrations during these weeks. We know that many of you would like to contribute to the decorating of our church and icons during this period. For your convenience, below is a list of items needed for the celebration of the Sacred Services of Lent and Holy Week. Please contact the church office to reserve your desired offering for the health of your loved ones or in memory of a deceased loved one. Payment may be sent to the church office. Checks should be made payable to "St. John Greek Orthodox Church" with "Lenten Flower Donation" on the memo line.

<b>February 27</b>	<b>Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 1<sup>st</sup> Stanza</b> (Flowers will be displayed on the first Sunday of Lent)	<b>Flowers for Icon of Panagia \$75</b>
<b>March 6</b>	<b>Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 2<sup>nd</sup> Stanza</b> (Flowers will be displayed on the second Sunday of Lent)	<b>Flowers for Icon of Panagia \$75</b>
<b>March 13</b>	<b>Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 3<sup>rd</sup> Stanza</b> (Flowers will be displayed on the third Sunday of Lent)	<b>Flowers for Icon of Panagia \$75</b>
<b>March 15</b>	<b>Veneration of Holy Cross</b>	<b>Flowers for Tray for Procession \$350</b>
<b>March 22</b>	<b>Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 4<sup>th</sup> Stanza</b> (Flowers will be displayed on the fourth Sunday of Lent)	<b>Flowers for Icon of Panagia \$75</b>
<b>March 29</b>	<b>Akathist Hymn</b> (Flowers will be displayed on the fifth Sunday of Lent)	<b>Flowers for Icon of Panagia \$75</b>
<b>April 5</b>	<b>Palm Sunday</b> Palm Sunday Palm strips/branches several donors needed (\$250 total) All of Holy Week Pillar Candles for windows (20) \$15 each	<b>Flowers for Icon of Palm Sunday \$75</b>
<b>April 5</b>	<b>Bridegroom Service Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex \$75</b> <b>Bridegroom Service Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom Tables on Solea \$75 for each (2 Needed)</b>	
<b>April 8</b>	<b>Holy Wednesday Holy Unction</b> Q-tips, Olive Oil, Flour-2 volunteers to make Prospora see Fr. Stavros	<b>Holy Unction Flowers for Icon of Last Supper \$75</b>
<b>April 9</b>	<b>Holy Thursday</b> <b>Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion \$75</b> <b>Wreath for Top of Cross \$250</b> <b>Wreaths for bottom of Cross (2) \$150 each</b> <b>Scattered flowers at base of cross \$50</b> <b>Candles for Top of Cross (3) \$15 each</b>	
<b>April 10</b>	<b>Good Friday</b> <b>8 Bags Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers \$50</b> <b>Flowers for Epitaphios several donors needed</b> <b>Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Apokathelosis \$15 each</b> <b>Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Lamentations \$15 each</b> <b>Icon of Extreme Humility \$75</b>	
<b>April 12</b>	<b>PASCHA</b> <b>Flowers for Icon of Resurrection \$75</b> <b>Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb \$75</b> <b>Silk Flowers for Royal Doors \$100</b> <b>Easter Lillies \$25 per plant</b>	

### Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim

O Lord and Master of my life, do not permit the spirit of laziness and meddling,  
the lust for power and idle talk to come into me.  
Instead, grant me, your servant, the spirit of prudence, humility, patience and love.  
Yes, Lord and King, give me the power to see my own faults and not to judge my brother.  
For you are blessed unto the ages of ages. Amen.

# Small Group Bible Studies

At present we have FIVE Small Groups that are meeting each week, in addition to the Monday night Bible Study.  
If you haven't joined a group yet, you may do so at any time.

## Monday Night Bible Study (for all parishioners)

**Location:** Meets in the Parish Council Meeting room in the Administration Building of the church.

**Group Leader:** Charlie Hambos, our pastoral assistant, 813-876-8830 or email him at [Charlie.hambos@gmail.com](mailto:Charlie.hambos@gmail.com)

**Study Topic:** The Book of Isaiah

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

**February Meeting Dates:** February 2, 9 and 16

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

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

**Group Leader:** Donna Hambos

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

**November Meeting Dates:** February 3, 10, 17 and 24

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

**Location:** Meets in the Parish Council Meeting room in the Administration Building of the church.

**Group Leader:** Father Stavros for the first one but we are going to rotate this among group members. Please email Fr. Stavros at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com) or contact him at 813-394-1038. **We are watching and discussing the video series: The Truth Project. One week we watch on chapter and the next week discuss it.**

**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:** February 4, 11, 18 and 25

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

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

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

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

**November Meeting Dates:** February 3, 10, 17 and 24

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

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

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

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

**November Meeting Dates:** February 3 (On February 10, Women will attend Liturgy for St. Haralambos), 17 and 24

## 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](mailto:mapkonstas@gmail.com).

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

**November Meeting Dates:** February 5, 12, 19 and 26



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.



Scan to like St. John on Facebook  
[facebook.com/StJohnGOCTampa](https://facebook.com/StJohnGOCTampa)

# February 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> <b>The Publican and Pharisee</b> Orthros 8:45 Liturgy 10:00 Philoptochos Meeting Choir Brunch Hope/Joy Souper Bowl	<b>2</b> <b>Presentation of Christ into the Temple</b> Orthros 8:45 Liturgy 10:00 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>3</b> Women's Bible Study 9:30 a.m. East Bible Study 6:30 p.m. South Bible Study 7:00 p.m.	<b>4</b> Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m.  Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	<b>5</b> Young at Heart 11:30 p.m. Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. Young Adult Bible Study 7:30 p.m.	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> <b>The Prodigal Son</b> Orthros 8:45 Liturgy 10:00 Philoptochos' O.C.M.C Guest Speaker AHEPA/DOP Gift Basket Fundraiser GOYA Meeting 5:00 p.m.	<b>9</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>10</b> <b>St. Haralambos</b> Orthros 9:00 Liturgy 10:00 Women's Bible Study will attend Church East Bible Study 6:30 p.m. South Bible Study 7:00 p.m.	<b>11</b> Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m.  Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	<b>12</b> Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. Young Adult Bible Study 7:30 p.m.	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> <b>1st Saturday of the Souls</b> Orthros 9:00 Liturgy 10:00 Young at Heart's Apokreatiko Dinner Dance Community Outreach
<b>15</b> <b>Judgment Sunday (Meat Fare)</b> Orthros 8:45 Liturgy 10:00 AHEPA/DOP Meeting	<b>16</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>17</b> Clergy Retreat Women's Bible Study 9:30 a.m. East Bible Study 6:30 p.m. South Bible Study 7:00 p.m.	<b>18</b> Clergy Retreat Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m.  Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	<b>19</b> Clergy Retreat Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. Young Adult Bible Study 7:30 p.m.	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> <b>2nd Saturday of the Souls</b> (At Garden of Memories) Orthros 9:00 Liturgy 10:00
<b>22</b> <b>Forgiveness Sunday (Cheese Fare)</b> Orthros 8:45 Liturgy 10:00 Pre Lenten Retreat <b>Forgiveness Vespers</b> 6:00 p.m.	<b>23</b> <b>Clean Monday</b> Holy Unction 6:00 p.m.	<b>24</b> Women's Bible Study 9:30 a.m. East Bible Study 6:30 p.m. South Bible Study 7:00 p.m.	<b>25</b> Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m.  9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner	<b>26</b> Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. Young Adult Bible Study 7:30 p.m.	<b>27</b> <b>Salutations to the Virgin Mary</b> 6:30 p.m.	<b>28</b> <b>3rd Saturday of the Souls</b> Orthros 9:00 Liturgy 10:00 Philoptochos Luncheon On Domestic Violence

## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

### *Timetable of Services*

**Sundays:** 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:**

George Chagaris 727-420-1920

Alkis Crassas, 813-690-3867

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947

Ed Gerecke 813-229-4306

Skip Higdon 813-831-9021

Catherine Mistseas 813-571-0658

Bryon Nenos 813-789-0729

Sandra Pappas, 813-785-3747

Despina Sibley 813-758-0520

Dante Skourellos, 813-765-9534

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

**AHEPA:**

Gus Paras 813-254-6980

**Altar Angels:**

Engie Halkias 813-932-5859

Sia Blankenship

**Bible Study:**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

**Bookstore:**

Bill Manilkas 813-716-8185

**Chanter:** Nick Andreadakis 813-516-6081

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

Jim Leone, Organist 813-254-7844

**Community Outreach:**

Betty Katherine Katsamakis 813-468-1596

**Dance Groups:**

H XAPA ΜΑΣ Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

Marina Coundas 813-877-6136

Glendi Jenna Mingledorff 813-610-7365

Panigyri Vanessa Anviles 813-221-2194

**Daughter of Penelope:**

Edie Kavouklis 813-758-0305

**Finance Committee:**

George Chagaris 727-420-1920

**Food Pantry:**

Mick Scharbach 813-458-1620

**Gasparilla Parking:**

John Kokkas 727-992-4165

**GOYA:**

Elaine Halkias 813-629-1843

**Hope/Joy:**

Amy Kafantaris 727-743-1297

Debbie Nicklow 813-690-0671

**Jr. Olympics:**

Byron Nenos 813-789-0729

**Oratorical Festival:**

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

**Philoptochos:**

JoAnn Hartung 727-432-0228

**REAL:**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

**Small Groups:**

East Donna Hambos 813-843-8412

Men, Fr. Stavros 813-394-1038

South, Bessie Palios 813-523-0347

Womens, Debbie Kavouklis 813-258-5571

Young Adult, Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862

**Stewardship:**

Pete Trakas 813-505-2193

Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747

**Sunday School:**

Vicky Peckham 813-406-5626

Tammy Christou 813-957-0835

**Ushers:**

Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

**Welcoming Committee:**

Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

**Young at Heart:**

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947

Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

The Messenger of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is published on monthly basis. Publication 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.