

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

THE MESSENGER

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

March 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

Examining MySelf-ie

We recently took Nicholas to Disney World and while walking around the park, I saw many people taking “selfies”, photographs of themselves or with a few friends. Many of them had the camera at the end of a stick that they held several feet away from them, farther than their mere arm would reach. It was actually kind of funny. If you didn’t know what you were looking at, from a distance, you would have thought that this was a convention of drum majors, with so many people holding long sticks out in front of them. I asked Lisa, “what do they call those things, ‘selfie sticks’?” Then we looked that up on our “smart phones” that they actually are called “selfie sticks.”

Indeed selfies have come a long way. In the old days, we held a camera out in front of us, and we would press the button to shoot the photo, not having any idea what would come out. We’d develop the film and we’d find half of our face in the photo. Then, with the new smart phone technology, we could hold the camera out and at least see what would end up in the picture we were taking. However, our arms are only so long. With the selfie-stick, we can now take an even better picture of ourselves. But you know that best way to get a picture of yourself is? The best way to have a picture of yourself taken is still to have that picture taken by someone else. And even better, is to have this picture taken by a professional photogra-

pher. That is how one gets the best picture of oneself.

Many people are accustomed to take “spiritual selfies.” They look at themselves and examine themselves and are quick to pronounce themselves spiritually okay. Makes me think of the old days when we would try the “selfie” with the camera which needed the film developed—we’d point and click and say to ourselves “I think that came out okay.” And if it was something really important, we’d take a deep breath and say “I hope that came out okay.”

O Confess to the Lord for He is Good

One of the greatest benefits of being an Orthodox Christian is the opportunity to participate in the sacramental life of the church. We have access to Holy Communion on a weekly (and usually, especially during Lent, more often) basis. We have a tradition of worship that has withstood the test of time, has remained refreshingly consistent, a tradition of worship that challenges us while at the same time comforting us. And we also have access anytime that we need it, for the sacrament of confession, which is not only an emptying out of our sins, but an opportunity for spiritual examination, done by a priest who is experienced in guiding people not only towards Christ, but towards a better understanding of how to live a Christian life.

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Psalm 135:1 reads “O Give Thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endures forever. Our choir actually sings this Psalm as a hymn occasionally. If you know Greek, you’d notice that what the Psalm actually says in Greek is “Exomologithe to Kyrio” which translates, “Confess unto the Lord.” In Greek, the word that we translate in English as “confession” is the word “exomologeses.” “Exomologo” means “I confess.” In the last line of the Creed, when we say, in Greek, “omologo en baptisma eis afesin amartion,” we are saying “I confess one baptism for the remission of sins.” In the Creed, the word “confess” does not relate to what we’ve done wrong, but to what we believe. In the context of the Creed, we are individually “confessing” a faith that is personal to each of us. And yet it is not unique, because we are ALL confessing the same thing. So the Creed is personal, but not unique. In the sacrament of “Exomologeses,” confession, “ex” means to come out from us, and the “omologo” is what we believe. So “Exomologeses” is not just a confession of sins but a confession of our faith. It is a confession of “I believe in God, but I am falling short in certain areas and want to improve.” Going back to Psalm 135, we get the best reason to go to confession—“O confess unto the Lord for He is good, FOR HIS MERCY ENDURES FOREVER.” Every time we go to confession, we experience the enduring mercy of Christ, who, through this sacrament, forgives our sins and grants us a new beginning.

So, if we can confess to the Lord, why do we need to do it in the presence of a priest? Because trying to do it on your own is like taking a selfie with one of those old cameras—you really can’t get a good picture. And even if your life is going extremely well spiritually, just like even if you have the top of the line selfie stick, there are still some limitations. You’re still better off having someone take the picture for you. Perhaps people take selfies because they think no one can take a good photograph anymore. Or perhaps because they don’t want to bother people. From the perspective of a priest, it is never a “bother” when someone calls because they want to go to confession. And speaking for myself, I go to confession every year because I know that having a spiritual father take the responsibility for an examination of my spiritual life is a lot more comforting and spiritually responsible than doing it myself.

As I am writing this message, I’m scheduled to have a colonoscopy/endoscopy in a few days. By the time you receive this issue of the Messenger, I will hopefully have had the test done and received good results. Am I looking forward to this? NO. Am I looking forward to having this over with? YES. Will I be glad I did it once I get the results? YES. If the results are good, which they hopefully will be, I’ll be happy to know that I got a clean bill of health. And if the results are not good, and there are some things to deal with, I will feel glad to have a diagnosis and a path to healing, much better than letting a potential problem go undiagnosed until it is too late to do anything about it.

But today, I FEEL pretty good, and if I FEEL pretty good, why go through this at all? Because I have no idea how to diagnose a problem in any of the areas that are being examined. I am not a doctor. I don’t have any expensive medical equipment

that I know how to use. So, I will let a doctor examine me in a way that I cannot examine myself, and I will let him test the things that I cannot see myself. And then he will take the responsibility that I can’t possibly take by myself, and let me know whether I am “all good” or if there is some treatment I must undergo so that I can be “all good” once again. Confession works in the same way.

Now, if I had to evaluate what would I rather do, go to confession or get a colonoscopy, I’d have to really think on that one. I have a life-long fear of needles, but I also have a life-long fear of being embarrassed in front of someone else. I don’t like the discomfort of being in the hospital. I don’t like the discomfort of admitting my shortcomings. I don’t like doing the prep for the colonoscopy, which is really the hardest part. Because you have to drink this disgusting stuff and spend all day in the bathroom. And I don’t like doing the prep for confession because I have to look inwardly at all the disgusting stuff in my life.

The upside of the colonoscopy is that you get to lose a few pounds in preparation, and you usually end up with a clean bill of health, especially when you start going at a young age. And the upside to confession is that you get to lose the unwanted weight of past sins and failures. You also end up with a prescription for spiritual renewal, and a new start.

I encourage everyone in our church to go for the sacrament of confession. If everyone actually did that, I’d probably have time for not much else, as the responsibility for someone’s spiritual well-being is something I take very seriously, and do not rush with. But despite the fact that more and more people are coming for confession, and that I am more busy than ever, there is always time to get another one in. If for whatever reason, you don’t feel comfortable coming to this sacrament with me, please contact one of the other priests in our area for an appointment. There is an understanding amongst the priests of this area that people who do not necessarily attend their parish will be contacting them for this sacrament.

A Spiritual Examination May End with Confession but is starts with a Self-Examination

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, which we read recently in church, the key moment in the story was when the son “came to himself” (Luke 15:17), and HE decided he needed to journey back to his father. His father received him joyfully and without judgment. In fact he was so happy that his son came back that he hardly even listened to his apology. He was so overcome with joy that his son had returned. This is how a priest feels when people come to confession—the reason for your coming is actually secondary to the fact that you HAVE come!

For those who have done pre-marital counseling with me, we discuss, among other things, the keys to an effective marriage relationship. Now, the keys to an effective marriage relationship are not only essential to a good marriage, they are the keys to meaningful friendships, and they are also keys to our relationship with Christ. Below I will print the “keys” three times, asking that each of you spend a few moments taking the examination about your relationship with Christ, examining your relationship with other people, and for those who are married,

your relationship with your spouse. Rank each of what follows on a scale of 1-10, with one being poor, and 10 being great.

REALLY IMPORTANT NOTE BEFORE YOU EMBARK ON THIS EXERCISE

*No one, who is honest, is going to score a perfect 10 on every one of these. If you have some things that you don't score well on, ask yourself this **VERY POSITIVE QUESTION**, What can I do to improve my score? The good news is that for almost everything we may be deficient on, there is a way to improve it, and many of those ways to improve things are things we actually have some control over. So for each area where you score 8 or less, write down some goals for how to make it better. And under the section about your relationship with Christ, these are things to bring up in confession.*

Making an Examination of your relationship with Christ.

1. Respect 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Am I obedient to the commandments of God and the tenets of our faith?

2. Trust 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I believe that God has a plan for my life, and am I following that call?

3. Faith 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I trust in God at all times, even when times are tough in my life?

4. Patience 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I stay patient with God and consistent in my Christian journey at all times, even bad ones?

5. Communication 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I pray regularly? Do I read the scriptures regularly?

6. Forgiveness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I hold a grudge against God for things that haven't gone well in my life? Have I asked God to forgive me my shortcomings? Have I made a sincere effort to repent and change my bad habits? Do I easily forgive others?

7. Having goals 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I set spiritual goals for myself, with the idea of growing spiritually, growing closer towards Christ each year? Or am I stagnant in my practice of the faith?

8. Sacrifice 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I put aside things I'd rather do in order to stay faithful to Christ? Do I give sacrificially of my time, talent and treasure to support the work of Christ's church?

9. Compromise 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Am I rigid in my thinking about spiritual things, or is my heart open and malleable to better ways to live and express my faith?

10. Work 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I regularly work at my spiritual life?

11. Fairness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Have I given the faith a fair shot? Have I made an effort to try to grow in it?

12. Commitment 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Am I a committed Christian, and does my DAILY life reflect that?

13. Fun 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I derive joy from being an Orthodox Christian?

14. Honesty 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I look at myself honestly when it comes to spiritual things, or do I try to make myself better than what I really am, either to others or to myself?

15. Intimacy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I meet God on God's terms or on my terms? Do I accept Christ as my Savior, the source and center of my life?

16. Unity 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Is my life being lived congruent or incongruent to the scriptures and the tenets of our faith?

17. Humility 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I come to Christ with a sense of self-congratulations (how far I've come) or with a sense of humility (how far I have to go)? Do I make myself vulnerable in prayer, in confession?

18. Friendship 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
God is not our friend, so in this category, the question is, do we witness our faith to our friends?

19. Positive-Reinforcement 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do you speak positively to others about the faith? Do you give positive-reinforcement and encouragement to others about their faith? Does your witness of the faith affect the faith of others in a positive or negative way?

20. Love 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Christ said that the greatest commandments are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself. How is your love for God manifested in following these two commandments in your life? How would Christ rate you in this category?

As you finish this examination, as yourself, what can you do to improve in any of these areas.

Examining our Relationships with other People. This includes family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, anyone we have relationships with...

1. Respect 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I treat other people respectfully? Do I intentionally harm them? Do I go out of my way to help them or hurt them? Or am I indifferent to the feelings/needs of others?

2. Trust 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Am I a trusting person? Do I trust others? Am I worthy of the trust of others? Do I keep confidences when people confide in me?

3. Faith 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do I witness for the faith to my friends by my conduct? Do I speak about the faith with my friends?

4. Patience 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Am I patient with others? Am I moody or even-keel?

5. Communication 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Am I a good communicator - am I polite, firm, honest, respectful? Do people know what they can expect from me?

6. Forgiveness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I forgive, or hold grudges? Do I ask for forgiveness when I'm wrong or try to mitigate what I've done?

7. Having goals 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I seek to grow in my relationships?

8. Sacrifice 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I give of myself when my friend needs help, even if it is not convenient for me to do so?

9. Compromise 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
When there is a difference of opinion between me and someone else, do I always have to win?

10. Work 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I work to better my relationships with people, to be a better friend, co-worker, etc.

11. Fairness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I treat people as I want to be treated?

12. Commitment 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Am I loyal to my friends? Can I be counted on in a time of need? Do I stay in relationships even when they go through rough patches?

13. Fun 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I like to have a good time? Am I a complainer? Do I see the good in people?

14. Honesty 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I speak honestly about others, about myself, and do I speak honestly when speaking with others? Do I exaggerate the truth to bring attention to myself?

15. Intimacy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I let people in, or do I build a wall around myself and keep things at a surface level? Do I allow myself to be vulnerable? Do I try to minister to others when they are vulnerable? Do I take advantage of the frailties of others?

16. Unity 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I work toward a common good? Am I a uniter? A divider?

17. Humility 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I seek to serve others?

18. Friendship 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I make friends easily? Do I make it easy for others to befriend me?

19. Positive-Reinforcement 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I give more praise or criticism to others?

20. Love 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I build loving, committed relationships with people? Do I genuinely love my friends?

As you finish this examination, as yourself, what can you do to improve in any of these areas.

For those who are married, examining the state of your marriage

1. Respect 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I show respect to my spouse—do I speak kindly? Do I treat them as I wish to be treated?

2. Trust 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I trust my spouse? Do I do things that my spouse would be disappointed in if they knew I was doing them?

3. Faith 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Is Christ present in my marriage? Do we worship together? Pray together? Talk about the faith together? Go to church together regularly?

4. Patience 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I try to see my spouse's point of view, put myself in their shoes? Am I patient with my spouse's shortcomings?

5. Communication 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do we communicate well? Do we know how to argue constructively? Are we good at conflict resolution? Do we speak honestly but respectfully? Am I a good listener when my spouse is speaking?

6. Forgiveness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I forgive my spouse or hold grudges? When I do wrong, do I "own it" or make excuses about it?

7. Having goals 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do my spouse and I set goals and work towards them (these might be financial goals, having children, moving, traveling, etc.) Do we make and stick to plans that allow our goals to be achieved?

8. Sacrifice 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do I sacrifice for my spouse? Do I do it joyfully? Do I do things before my spouse asks me to do them? Do I do things for my spouse that are not important to me but might be important to them just because I know it makes them happy? Am I there for my spouse when it really counts?

9. Compromise 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do we try to work towards solutions that we can BOTH live with?

10. Work 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do we talk about the state of our marriage? Do we work at improving it? Do we desire a stronger marriage?

11. Fairness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Is there a good sense of give and take in the marriage? Do I always have to win?

12. Commitment 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Am I committed to staying in the marriage, regardless of what challenges present themselves? Do I make threats to leave? Am I willing to take steps to make our marriage stronger?

13. Fun 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do we have fun together? Do we go out on dates together?

Do we have fun and a good relationship outside of our children together?

14. Honesty 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do we speak honestly to one another? Are we afraid to speak honestly? Are we afraid we won't be heard if we speak honestly? Are we too ashamed to speak honestly?

15. Intimacy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do I accept my spouse wholly and entirely for who they are? Do I express my love to my spouse regularly? Do I seek to love my spouse more deeply as time passes? Am I affectionate towards my spouse?

16. Unity 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Are my spouse and I on the same page with most things? How do we resolve things when we aren't on the same page?

17. Humility 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do I seek to serve my spouse? Do I make myself vulnerable to my spouse? Do I always look like I have it all together, or do I show my spouse my weaknesses?

18. Friendship 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is my spouse my best friend? Do I enjoy hanging out with my spouse? Do I ever run out of things to talk about with my spouse?

19. Positive-Reinforcement 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do I praise my spouse? Do I give my spouse positive feedback? Do I see the good in my spouse, or am I always looking for the bad? Do I try to see my spouse as a glass that is more half full or half empty?

20. Love 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Read I Corinthians 13 before answering this one. St. Paul tells us that love is patient, kind, rejoices in the right and not in the wrong, that love hopes all things, believes all things, endures all things, love never ends. How would St. Paul rate your marriage?

As you finish this examination, as yourself, what can you do to improve in any of these areas?

If you are not happy with what you see in your "selfies" on faith, friendship and marriage, it is a good time to let someone else help you improve the picture. Yet another reason to sit down for confession or counseling. God wants the best for us. He wants us to score a perfect ten on every one of these things. But God knows that we, in our human frailty, are not going to score a perfect ten, even most of the time. That is why He gave us His Son, to give us hope and forgiveness and a pathway to the perfect 10. And He gave us the Church, to help us, to minister to us, to assist us in increasing our scores when they get low. Because the church is supposed to receive us not with judgment or condemnation, but with the joy that the father had for his prodigal son.

Sin is failure to do the right thing

The word "Amartia" is the Greek word for "sin." Most people think that to sin means to do wrong, to miss the mark. Sin is actually failure to do right, it is failure to hit the mark. So, it is not enough to only avoid things that are wrong. If you have an opportunity to do good and you are indifferent and don't do

good, that is a sin as well, the sin of indifference. It's like in a marriage, most people think of adultery as the sin of cheating on your spouse. But adultery is actually failure to remain faithful to your spouse, failure to stay checked in with your spouse. You don't need to cheat on your spouse to be unfaithful. One can be unfaithful by failing at any of the 20 things described above.

We all said "I Do" when we got baptized

Whether we are married to another person or not, we are all married to Christ through the sacrament of baptism. When you were baptized, someone said "I do," on your behalf, to the question of "Do you unite yourself to Christ?" If you were an adult when you were baptized, you said it yourself. If you were a child, or a baby, your Godparent said it on your behalf. And your parents allowed your Godparents to say it on your behalf. The most significant thing that can be said by someone or on behalf of someone is this phrase "I do," "I do unite myself to Christ." Because that statement comes with a sacred responsibility. If you are a baptized Christian who is reading this article, this phrase was said over you. No one would go into marriage, and say "I do" to marry another person with the plan to abandon them or cheat on them or be unfaithful to them. In like manner, those who have said "I do" to Christ have the obligation to be faithful to Him, and to not abandon Him or the church. Christ is faithful to us, He doesn't abandon us. He may be disappointed in us at times, but He doesn't abandon us.

And now an important note to those who baptize children in our church—many people who are baptizing their children have no plans to attend church regularly. They probably have that plan before the baptism occurs. Why would you allow this pledge to be made over your child, the "I do", if you have no intention to bring your children to Christ on a regular basis? Please think that over. If you plan on baptizing a child in our church, please fulfill that pledge that you are allowing to be made over your child. And if you have had your child baptized but are not faithfully attending church and imparting the faith to your child, please use this Lenten period as a way to get back to church, to reconnect with Christ, to reaffirm the "I do," and help your child learn and know what this means in their life. That is the most sacred responsibility that any parent has.

Lent is a great time to work on your examination of yourself and to seek improvement in the areas of your life that need improvement. With an increased emphasis on prayer, fasting and worship, Lent provides us a perfect impetus to make strides in these areas. By the time you receive this issue of the Messenger Lent will be underway, but not so much of it gone that you can't have a significant Lenten experience. So, give some thought to your "selfie examination" and give some thought to a spiritual examination through the sacrament of confession. Most important, do not let this time pass without an examination that leads to some kind of positive spiritual and personal growth for you! Wishing you all of God's blessings as we continue to make our way through this Lenten period, I remain,

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

Who Gives a Name? God Does.

By Charlie Hambos

The Israelites had been enslaved in Egypt for many years and were crying out to God. Meanwhile, Moses, a Jew, had escaped Egypt and was watching his father-in-law's animals, near Mount Horeb. Amidst it all, God revealed Himself to Moses in a bush that was burning but not consumed. "Moses, Moses!" God called. "Here I am," Moses answered. God said, "Don't come closer." "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this Moses covered his face, because he was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3:1-6)

This is where God called Moses to go rescue the Israelites from the hand of the Pharaoh. At one point or another, we have heard this story and we all imagine what it would be like to see a bush on fire but not actually being burnt. Who really gives a name? Right? Moses had the same reaction. Moses said, "Look, if I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is his name?' What am I to tell them?" God said to Moses, "I am he who is." Wait a minute, what kind of name is, "I am he who is." Hello, My name is Charlie. It's nice to meet you Charlie, I am, 'I am he who is.'

This name is called the divine name and as Orthodox Christians we are very familiar with this name. In Greek, the name is, "Ο ΩΝ." In every single Orthodox icon of Jesus Christ, his name is either spelled out just like that or His represented by the three-lined segments in his halo. Only Christ has the three-lined segment in his halo. One is directly on top of his head and the other two are directly to the right and left of his head. Usually, each one of the letters is spelled out or there are three dots in each part. The next time, you stare at Jesus Christ in the face, check it out.

So who is God? What is His name? Who really gives a name? God's name is everything. "I am the one who is." "I am the ultimate being." "I am the existence." "I am everything." God basically told Moses, don't worry about who I am because I am. Just think about it. When Moses arrived in Egypt to rescue the Israelites and they asked him, who sent you. Moses said, "I Am" sent me. I would probably laugh really hard and think what does that even mean.

At the Community Outreach, our church participates in, at First Presbyterian Church in downtown Tampa, each person who walks in for help, gets a name tag. Some of them actually put their names, but some choose other names. I remember greeting a man by the name of "Nobody's Perfect." I laughed, "Nobody's perfect." What a brilliant name! I asked him to explain his name. He said that nobody is perfect, only God is perfect. He said that he wasn't perfect so he didn't want to pretend to be. What a name and what a story. During the next Community Outreach, a month later, I arrived late and the homeless population was already waiting outside the gate. I was locked out but I ran across a tall homeless man who was telling me how to get in. I asked for his name. He told me, Antonio. Once

I got inside, I left the man outside. When the people began to come in to get food, I saw the same man. His nametag did not read Antonio. It read "Nobody's Perfect."

In the Old Testament, God called himself, "I m the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." "I am," "I Am the One Who Is," In the New Testament, he didn't change his name. His name became a blank check and He wrote on it whatever we needed Him to be. Specifically, in the Gospel of John, we get to learn more about His name.

In John 1:1-5 it says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him. What has come into being in him was life, life that was the light of men; and light shines in darkness, and darkness could not over power it." Jesus Christ is the Word of God. Before he became man, he was called the Pre-incarnate word. He was in existence all the time and before time.

In John 6:48-51, Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread which comes down from heaven, so that a person may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and they bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world."

In John 8:12, Jesus says, "I am the light of the world; anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark but will have the light of life."

In John 10:11, Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." He continues in verse 14, "I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep."

In John 14:6-7, Jesus says, "I am the Way; I am the Truth and Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my father too. From this moment you know him and have seen him."

In John 15:1-2, Jesus says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more fruit."

There is a quote in Greek over the doors of our church in the narthex and it reads, "Εγώ εἰμι ἡ θύρα: δι' ἐμοῦ ἂν τις εἰσέλθῃ σωθήσεται καὶ εἰσελεύσεται καὶ ἐξελεύσεται καὶ νομὴν εὕρήσει." This is from John 10:9, where Jesus says, "I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe; such a one will go in and out and will find good pasture."

Who is God and what is his name? He is the bread of life. He is the light of the world. He is the good shepherd. He is the Way. He is the Truth and Life. He is the true vine. He is the gate. He is who he is. Who do you say that he is?

Liturgical Schedule for March 2015

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

Monday, March 2

Great Compline

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 4

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

Friday, March 6

Salutations to the Virgin Mary 2nd Stanza 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 8

Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas

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

Altar Boys: Captains Only

Ushers: Brett Mourer, Demetrios Halkias, Amin Hanhan

Coffee Hour: AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Toulia Courialis, Jeanie Nenos; Ambassador: Helen Cauthorn; Caller: Sandra Pappas

Monday, March 9

Great Compline

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 11

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

Friday, March 13

Salutations to the Virgin Mary 3rd Stanza 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 15

Sunday of the Holy Cross

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, Chris Cojita)

Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas

Coffee Hour: Greek Independence Day Program

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Irene Kostaris, Julie Palios; Ambassador: Marenca Patrascoiu; Caller: Peggy Bradshaw

Monday, March 16

Great Compline

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 18

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

Friday, March 20

Salutations to the Virgin Mary 4th Stanza 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 22

Sunday of St. John of the Ladder Day Saints

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

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (Nicholas Alsina, Antonio Bavaro, Jonah Blankenbaker, Yianni Trimikliniotis, Gabriel Fallon)

Ushers: Mike Trimis, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis

Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Monday, March 23

Great Compline

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 25

Annunciation

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

Canon of St. Andrew 6:00 p.m.

Friday, March 27

Vigil of Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m. Divine Liturgy 8:15 p.m.

Sunday, March 29

Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt

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

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Kalliope Chagaris, Katherine Sakkis; Ambassador: Edie Kavouklis; Caller: Martha Kapetan

Monday, March 30

Great Compline

5:30 p.m.

GUIDELINES FOR GREAT AND HOLY LENT

The Lenten Services

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

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

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

They are being held as follows:

Wednesday, March 4	Sunday School
Wednesday, March 11	Philoptochos
Wednesday, March 18	Young at Heart-AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope
Wednesday, March 25	(We will chant the Canon of St. Andrew but no Lenten Dinner)
Wednesday, April 1	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 (Heretismoï) 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.

Canon of St. Andrew—The Penitential Canon of St. Andrew is traditionally chanted during the first week of Great Lent and on the fifth Wednesday of Great Lent. Many years, we have chanted this canon on the first day. This year, we will chant a portion of it on Wednesday, March 25, from 6:00-7:00 p.m. The entire Canon would take hours to chant. We will chant an abridged version. This piece of hymnology offers us a great opportunity to reflect on our own need to repentance. Service books for this service will be available in the narthex.

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

What We Celebrate on the Sundays of Triodion and Lent

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT - SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY - March 1

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

A grand procession with icons took place on March 11, 843 AD, marking the permanent triumph of icons. From this time, icons

were defined as objects to be venerated and not worshipped; only God is worshipped. They are spiritual mirrors through which we see the heavenly saints. Their restoration in our churches is a true victory for Orthodoxy.

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

Daylight Savings Time begins March 8

Don't forget to set your clocks one hour forward on Sunday, March 8.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT - St. GREGORY PALAMAS - March 8

On the second Sunday of Great Lent, which is called the "Sunday of Gregory Palamas", we commemorate the memory of St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Salonica. He dedicated his life to Christ, even though he was raised in the royal palace of Constantinople. He withdrew to Mount Athos, where he lived an exemplary life of asceticism and scholarship. He defended the Faith against Barlaam the Calabrian (who was against monasticism). He taught that divine grace is not created, but the uncreated energies of God are poured out through creation; otherwise, humanity could never have authentic communication with God. He was appointed Archbishop of Salonica in 1349 and served with distinction; he died at the age of 63 and his relics rest in Salonica.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT - VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS - March 15

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

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

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT - ST. JOHN OF THE LADDER DAY SAINTS - March 22

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

FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE VIRGIN MARY - Wednesday, March 25

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

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

VIGIL OF THE AKATHIST - Friday, March 27

It is the tradition of the Orthodox Church (practiced in monasteries and in a few parishes) that the Akathist Hymn is celebrated as part of an all-night vigil, culminating in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. A Vigil is when more than one service is held in sequence. I have always made it a practice in my ministry to celebrate the Akathist Hymn (the fifth Friday of Lent) and to immediately follow it with a celebration of the Divine Liturgy. So, as we do each year, we will begin the Akathist Hymn at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, March 27, followed by the Divine Liturgy at 8:15 p.m., with both services concluding by 9:30 p.m. This will afford us the opportunity to pray the Divine Liturgy together in a more subdued atmosphere (and how often do we get to celebrate Liturgy at night in our church?) and to receive Holy Communion on this very special feast day. For those who wish to receive Holy Communion, please **abstain from food after 2:00 p.m. on that Friday**

5TH SUNDAY OF LENT - ST. MARY OF EGYPT - March 29

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

Other Opportunities This Lent

Sacrament of Confession - Many people have already made appointments for their confessions to be heard, many for the first time in their lives. It is confidential. It helps you re-connect with God and unburden yourself of guilt. It helps you to make a new start in your spiritual journey and is an integral part of any successful Lenten journey. If you have questions about confession, please ask. There is no better way to prepare for Pascha than to receive this sacrament. Confessions will be heard up to April 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 or Charlie at 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: 3 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. 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.

Special Altar Boy Schedule for Lenten Services

Captians	St. Matthew	St. Mark	St. Luke	St. John
Aris Rogers, Director	Gregory Koutroumanis	John Karamitsanis	Christos Nenos	Nicholas Alsina
Nicholas Kavouklis	Harry Koutroumanis	Lukas Karamitsanis	Dean Mitseas	Antonio Bavaro
Yonatan Alem	John Palios	Andrew Mellon-Lynn	Nicholas Katzaras	Jonah Blankenbaker
Mihail Kaburis	Brigham Sibley	Dominic Garcia	James Katzaras	Yianni Trimikliniotis
Val Courialis	Benny Hidermichel	Demetri Karounos	Nicholas Yotis	Gabriel Fallon
George Hambos	James Kavouklis	Grayson Borgeas	Genaro Scarfogliero	
Savvas Ferekides	Andrew Patrasciou	Peter Chandler	Andrew Thatcher	
Peter Hanhan	Frankie Giallourakis		Chris Cojita	
Karter Lenardos				
Chris Scarfogliero				

Wednesday, March 4	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30p.m.	George Hambos, Savvas Ferekides and St. Luke
Friday, March 6	Salutations 6:30 p.m.	Peter Hanhan, Christopher Scarfogliero and St. John
Wednesday, March 11	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.	Karter Lenardos, Nicholas Kavouklis and St. Mark
Friday, March 13	Salutations6:30 p.m.	Yonathan Alem, Mihail Kaburis and St. Matthew
Wednesday, March 18	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.	Val Courialis, George Hambos and St. John
Friday, March 20	Salutations6:30 p.m.	George Hambos, Savvas Ferekides and St. Luke
Friday, March 27	Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m.	Peter Hanhan, Christopher Scarfogliero and St. Mark
Wednesday, April 1	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:30 p.m.	Karter Lenardos, Savvas Ferekides and St. Matthew

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SCHEDULE FOR 2015

ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΟΣ-2015

April 4- Saturday of Lazarus

Commemoration of the raising of Lazarus from the dead

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

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

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

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

April 5 - Palm Sunday

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

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

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

Procession of the Icon of the Nymphios

Theme: Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church; watchfulness

April 6 - Holy Monday

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

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

Theme: The Parable of the Talents

April 7 - Holy Tuesday

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

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

The Choir will sing the Hymn of Kassiane

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

April 8 - Holy Wednesday

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

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

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

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

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

April 9 - Holy Thursday

Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 9:15-11:00 a.m.

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

Reading of the 12 Gospels, Procession of the Crucified Christ

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

All-Night Vigil will follow the service

April 10 - Good Friday

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

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

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

Lamentations 7:00-10:30 p.m. Singing of the Funeral Lamentations and Procession with the Epitaphios

April 11 - Holy Saturday

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

Reading of Prophecies foretelling the Resurrection of Christ

Great Canon 11:00 p.m.

April 12 - PASCHA

The Service of the Resurrection of Christ-Midnight

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

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

AGAPE Vespers 11:00 a.m.-noon

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

Easter Egg Hunt for Children NOON

*Σαββατο, 4 Απριλίου **Σαββατο του Λαζάρου***

Ορθρος 8:30-9:30 π.μ.

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

Θεία Λειτουργία 10:00-11:15 π.μ.

*Κυριακή, 5 Απριλίου **Κυριακή των Βαίων***

Ορθρος 8:30 π.μ. Θεία Λειτουργία 9:45 π.μ.

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

*Δευτέρα, 6 Απριλίου **Μεγάλη Δευτέρα***

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

*Τρίτη, 7 Απριλίου **Μεγάλη Τρίτη***

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:30 μ.μ.

*Τετάρτη, 8 Απριλίου **Μεγάλη Τετάρτη***

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

Ακολουθία Ευχέλαιον για τα παιδιά 3:00-4:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 5:45-6:30 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία Ευχέλαιον 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

*Πέμπτη, 9 Απριλίου **Μεγάλη Πέμπτη***

Θεία Λειτουργία του Αγίου Βασιλείου 9:15-11:00 π.μ.

Ακολουθία Σταυρώσεως 6:30-10:00 μ.μ.

*Παρασκευή, 10 Απριλίου **Μεγάλη Παρασκευή***

Οι Βασιλικές Ωρες 9:00-11:00 π.μ.

Αποκαθηλώσις 3:00-4:15 μ.μ.

Επιτάφιος Θρήνος 7:00-10:30 μ.μ.

*Σαββατο, 11 Απριλίου **Μεγάλο Σαββατο***

Θεία Λειτουργία του Αγίου Βασιλείου 8:45-11:00 π.μ.

Ο Κανών 11:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία της Αναστασεως Μεσανυχτα

Θεία Λειτουργία της Αναστασεως 12:30-2:15 π.μ.

*Κυριακή, 12 Απριλίου **Αγιον Πασχα***

Μεγας Εσπερινος της Αγάπης 11:00 π.μ.

*Παρασκευή, 17 Απριλίου **Ζωοδοχος Πηγη***

Ορθρος 9:00 π.μ. Θεία Λειτουργία 10:00 μ.μ.

*Πέμπτη, 23 Απριλίου **Αγιος Γεωργιος***

Ορθρος 9:00 π.μ. Θεία Λειτουργία 10:00 μ.μ.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IN PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION

I am the Lord your God, and you shall have no other gods before me. Has God been the source, center and hope of my life? Have I put myself, others or things before God? Have I failed to trust in God's existence, love and mercy? Have I failed to pray to God, to worship Him and to thank Him for His blessings? Have I tried to serve God and keep His commandments faithfully? Have I murmured or complained against God in adversity? Have I praised and glorified God through my words and deeds?

You shall not make for yourself a graven image in order to worship it. Have I valued anyone or anything above God? Have I given to anyone or anything the love, honor and worship that belongs to God alone? Have I made an idol of any person, idea, occupation, or thing?

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. Have I blasphemed God's holy name in any way? Have I sworn a false oath? Have I broken any solemn vow or promise? Have I entered into an agreement, promise or contract against God's law? Have I cursed or used foul language? Do I speak of God to other people? Have I spoken negatively about the church or the clergy with others?

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Have I worshiped regularly on Sundays and major feast days and have I helped others to do the same? Do I come regularly late to the holy services? Does my attention wander during church? Have I worked unnecessarily on Sundays or major feast days or caused others to do so? Have I spent the Lord's Day in a wholesome and edifying ways? Do I use my time wisely or do I waste a lot of it? Have I contributed a sacrificial share of my time, talent and treasure to the church? Have I discouraged others from attending church or participating in the sacraments? Have I kept the prescribed fasts of the church?

Honor your father and mother. Have I loved and respected my parents as I should? Have I neglected them or failed to help them? Have I disobeyed them, deceived them or caused them pain by my words or deeds? Have I treated all my family members with patience and love? Have I neglected my children? Have I disrespected any member of the clergy?

Thou shall not kill. Have I caused the harm, injury or death of anyone? Have I wished my own or anyone's harm or death? Have I been cruel to animals or destroyed any life unnecessarily? Have I spoke badly about other people or harmed the self-esteem of others? Have I done things that are harmful to my own body such as excessive eating, drinking, smoking, drug abuse? Have I tried to prematurely end my life? Have I had an abortion?

You shall not commit adultery. Have I committed any immoral acts alone or with others? Have I caused others to commit immoral acts? Have I committed immoral acts in my heart? Have I honored my spouse? Have I been faithful to my spouse? Have I read or viewed inappropriate materials?

You shall not steal. Have I taken anything that was not mine from anyone or from anywhere? Have I cheated anyone? Have I caused others to steal or cheat? Have I tried to find the owners of lost things I have found? Have I damaged or destroyed anything that belonged to another? Have I defrauded anyone of rightful wages? Have I paid my debts? Have I given to the poor and to philanthropic causes in proportion to my means?

You shall not bear false witness. Have I given false testimony against anyone? Have I spoken evil, told lies or spread rumors about anyone? Have I disclosed to anyone the sins and faults of another? Have I made careless statements or done anything else to harm the name and reputation of another? Have I engaged in idle gossip?

You shall not covet. Have I looked with envy jealousy or hatred toward the possession talents or achievements of others? Have I desired the downfall or loss of others out of evil intent that I might benefit? Have I grieved that God has bestowed greater blessings on others than on me?

****Please highlight the ones you have done and make a list of the issues that need discussion.**

Leave the Church in Your Will

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

Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism - Sienna Adonia Sagy, daughter of David and Tonya Sagy, was baptized on Saturday, January 17. Georgienne Douropoulos, Alexia Burley and Bill Sagy, Jr. were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism - Konstantinos Michael Orfanakis, son of Michael Orfanakis and Michelle Baldwin, was baptized on Sunday, January 25. Chris and Julie Letsos were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Funeral - Katherine (Kay) Kladakis, passed away on January 28. Her funeral was held on February 2. May her memory be eternal!

Condolences to Lisa Alsina on the passing away of her aunt Anne Stamatellou. May her memory be eternal!

Condolences to Dory Passalaris, on the passing away his sister, Tina (Stamatina) San Fillippo. May her memory be eternal!

Ye Holy Krewe of Tampa raises record \$7,540 at Gasparilla Fundraiser

It is with great joy that we inform you of another successful Gasparilla Fundraiser for our church. Over the course of two weekends, we raised a record total of \$7,540. A special thank you for John Kokkas, captain of Ye Holy Krewe of Tampa for the 8th straight year, and his amities - Chris Mantzanas, Peter Theophanous, Mary Maas, Irene Kostaris, Alexandra Gerecke, Ed Gerecke, Kevin Fentress, George Chagaris, Mike Xenick, Lisa Alsina, and Brett Mourer - for an outstanding job!

Get Acquainted Sunday, March 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.

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, Saturday, March 21 and Saturday, April 18.

Greek Independence Day Luncheon

We will be hosting our annual Greek Independence Day Luncheon and program on Sunday, March 15, following the Divine Liturgy, in the Kourmolis Center. There will be a performance by our dance groups, singing of some folk songs and a tasty lunch. ALL proceeds will go to our church. More information will be available in the weekly bulletin. Thank you to the Kalojiannis family for again sponsoring and donating this luncheon.

GOYA

Meeting - The GOYA Meeting for March will be Sunday, March 29, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

Lenten Retreat - Our ELEVENTH Annual GOYA Lenten Retreat will be held from March 7-9. GOYAns from around the Tampa Bay area will join us for worship on March 6 (Salutations) and March 8 (Liturgy). On March 7, they will spend a day in retreat growing in their faith during the Lenten season. Any of the Tampa GOYAns who are interested in attending, please contact Elaine Halkias. You can reach her at 813-629-1843 or nybagel2@msn.com.

Oratorical Festival - The St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival is a public speaking contest for students in the 7th-12th grades. Our parish has had GOYAns participate in this for the past several years. It is a great opportunity to learn about our faith and get some public speaking experience. The local level competition for our parish will occur on Sunday, March 22, after Divine Liturgy. For more information, please contact Peggy Bradshaw at peggyk65@verizon.net.



Please join us for the Tenth Annual Lenten Retreat
At St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Tampa

Philippians 4:13

I Can Do All Things Through Christ who Strengthens Me

Saturday, March 21st 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

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

Retreat Leader: Father Stavros Akrotirianakis

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

Adults only please

Please RSVP to 813-876-8830 or officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com by March 16th.

Registration forms will be in the church by the Baptistry.

Orthodoxy 101 Class to begin in March

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

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

The classes will be part lecture, part discussion, with lots of time for questions and answers.

The three sessions will be done as follows:

1. **Monday, March 9** A Tour of the Orthodox Church: What we see in the Church and what it means
2. **Monday, March 16** Orthodox Spirituality—The Seven Sacraments and the Divine Liturgy
3. **Monday, March 23** Orthodox Traditions—fasting, icons, prayer and separating Theology from “yiaiyalogy” (what our grandparents taught Us wasn’t always right)

Classes will be held on these three Mondays from 6:30-8:30 p.m. and will be held in the CHURCH Sanctuary.

Atlanta Metropolis Philoptochos - 9th Annual Spiritual Retreat

March 20 - 22, 2015

Located at the beautiful Diakonia Retreat Center in Salem, South Carolina.

Growing Spiritually in America Today!

All women of the metropolis are welcome! Share in worship, education and fellowship on 210 acres of water, trails and scenery that reveal the beauty of God’s Creation.

Contact Dee Nicolaou for more information at cnicolaou@tampabay.rr.com.

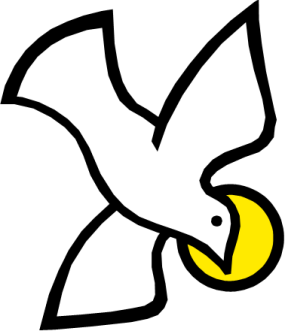
Hope/Joy

Souper Bowl of Caring

Hope/Joy youth ministry thanks our community for participating in the "Souper Bowl of Caring" fund raiser held on Feb. 1st. It was a close race here at St. John the Baptist, but just like the super bowl, the Patriot fans inched ahead of the Seahawk fans by a few dollars! Our Hope/Joy team of Toulia and Nathan cheered on the Seahawks collecting \$264 with John and Aiden cheering for the Patriots collecting \$273.

The BIG winner in our collection was the Hope Children's Home. A total of \$537 in cash and 121 lbs of food was donated to the children living at Hope Children's Home! THANK YOU!

Great and Holy Friday Youth Retreat



Friday, April 10, 2015

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

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

Please join us for a day of crafts, activities, music, reflection, and worship with your Sunday school friends Lunch and snacks included

Please register your child by Friday, April 3, 2015

Call or email Debbie Nicklow at Debbienicklow@hotmail.com or 813-920-0892

All parents are encouraged to attend the Descent from the Cross Service at 3:00 p.m.

Students should dress appropriately for Church and also for comfort during the retreat (or bring a change of clothes.)

Parent volunteers are needed for any part of the day!

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

Pre-Order Suggested

St. John the Baptist Philoptochos Bake Sale Sunday, April 5th

Tsoureki - Easter Bread, A Glazed Bread Topped with slivered almonds \$7

Koulourakis - Greek Butter Twist Cookies \$5 Bag

Spinach Pie Triangles, Frozen (48 Pieces) \$25

Cheese Pie Triangles, Frozen (48 Pieces) \$25

South Tampa Sugar Mama* Easter Sunday Cookie \$3 each

Paximathia - Biscotti Type Cookie with Ground nuts Cinnamon & Powdered Sugar \$5 Pkg.



Name _____

Phone _____

Qty.	Description	Unit Price	Line Total
	Tsoureki	\$7.00 each	
	Koulourakia	\$5 bag	
	Spinach Triangles	\$25	
	Cheese Triangle	\$25	
	Sugar Mama Cookie	\$3	
	Paximathia	\$5 Package	

Email order to: Jshartung@verizon.net

Fax order to: 727-784-8019 or Call: 727-432-0228

Total :

"To promote charitable, benevolent and philanthropic outreach to preserve the sanctity of life and family and the perpetuate and promote our Orthodox faith and traditions."

***Graciously donated by South Tampa Sugar Mama**

JUST SAY YES!

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

BELIEVING GOD

I would be a busy season for the angel Gabriel. He had to tell Mary and then Joseph the good news they were about to be God's parents. Earlier he has the delightful duty of shocking an old priest in Jerusalem as he burned incense before the Lord.

Imagine what that day must have been like for Zechariah! He hadn't expected to be chosen for the yearly honor of sacrificing to the Lord. To actually be in Jerusalem and on duty in the temple was one thing. To be chosen to enter the Holy of Holies—that was quite another. Hundreds of priests lived and died without experiencing such a tremendous privilege.

But then to have an angel appear just as he is about to light the incense—that in itself was enough to give an old man a heart attack.

"Don't be afraid Zechariah," the angel said. "Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear a son, and you are to give him the name John" (Luke 1:13).

Of everything one might expect an angel to say, this must have been the last thing Zechariah expected to hear. In fact, he demanded proof. "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years" (verse 18).

While I am touched by Zechariah's careful wording concerning this wife's age, Gabriel wasn't impressed by his answer at all. Who was Zechariah to question God's ability—and demand a sign?

"Now you will be silent and be able to speak until the day this happens," Gabriel told the priest, "because you did not believe my words" (verse 20).

"You want a sign, Zechariah?" he was saying. "We'll give you a sign."

Bam! For the next nine months, the priest was literally speechless. Unable to communicate except in writing. Completely mute.

You see, when we doubt God's ability to fulfill His promises to us and through us, no amount of explanations on His part, no signs and wonders performed for our benefit, will ever satisfy us. And God knows that. So sometimes instead of putting up with all the questions, the cynicism, and the theological debate, He simply puts His hands over our mouth and shuts us up—though not quite as literally as He did with Zechariah.

"Shh...just wait," He tells us. "You'll see."

Which raises a point. Mary had questioned God too, remember? Why didn't he silence her?

One possibility is that she wasn't asking if God could accomplish what He had promised. Her question was an innocent inquiry about how God would bring it to pass—and the angel answered her reassuringly (Luke 1:35-37). But I think the real difference between Mary's response and Zechariah's is found in the prophetic word Mary's cousin Elizabeth used to greet her when she came to visit. Luke 1:42-45 (emphasis mine) tells the story:

Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!

"Blessed is she who has believed"—that's the key. Believing God is who He says He is and that He can and will do what He says He will do. That kind of faith releases the impossible. It gives God permission to work uninterrupted and unhindered in our lives. Best of all, that kind of faith releases blessing. And the wonder of this is all made Mary sing! Luke records her famous Magnificat, or song of praise, a testimony of God's love sung from a heart filled with gratitude and humble awe:

My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit in rejoices God my Savior, for He has been mindful of his humble servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—Holy is His name. (Luke 1:46-49)

Stewardshipa little of this and that

Sandra Pappas – Stewardship Co- Chair

“It does not matter how much we give, but how much love we put into our giving.” Mother Theresa

We have an abundance of love bestowed upon our St. John the Baptist Church Community as evidenced through our Ministry Programs and the efforts of many individuals giving of their Time and Talent.

In April, we will begin a new occasional article titled the 'Spirit of Stewardship'. The idea is to present a Ministry or individual who exemplifies what it means to be a good steward of our church, and to share their thoughts on stewardship and their faith. Or simply tell the story of one of our founding members or families. We will start with our Sunday School Ministry and it's vibrant growth, as these children represent the future of our church! We are open to suggestions on a ministry or parishioner you feel would be ideal to highlight. And we welcome any interested 'talents' in writing an article from time to time!

We are blessed with a diverse blend of individuals & families that makeup our church - founding members, decade old members (or somewhere in between) and many, many new members! These columns will help us know and understand one another even more including the history of our church.

Please feel free to share your thoughts to the office email - officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com or speak with Fr. Stavros, Pete Trakas or Sandra Pappas -Stewardship Co-Chairs.

	2015*	2014 Y/E
Stewardship Goal	\$470,000	\$400,000
Pledged	\$322,036	\$387,981
Received	\$63,238	\$370,000
Shortfall/Gain from Goal	TBD	-\$30,000
Average Pledge	\$1,533	\$1,251
Median Pledge	\$900	\$600
# of Parishioners Pledged	209	310

*Based on YTD as of 2/10/15

Thank You for your continued support of our church. If you have not made a pledge for 2015, please do so today. If you need a pledge form, please contact the church office and we'll be happy to send one.

Friends of St. John the Baptist - 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 the Baptist". 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 the Baptist", please fill out and return the form below. Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

Friends of St. John the Baptist

Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA
William J Camarinos - Alexandria, VA
Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC
Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL

Friend of St. John the Baptist

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

Sunday School News

Congratulations to our Sunday School Perfect Attendance Recipients for the Month of January 2015:

Pre-K: Santino Bavaro

1st Grade: Gianni Bavaro, Maria Nicklow, Katerina Sotiropoulos

2nd Grade: Ariana Clifton, George Xenick, Panos Zelatis

3rd Grade: Niko Bavaro, Eleni Katzaras, Isabella Kokkas, Demetri Passalaris, Kaitlin Zelatis

4th Grade: Lola Bavaro, Vasili Sotiropoulos, Yanni Trimikliniotis

5th & 6th Grades: Antonio Bavaro, Elizabeth Xenick

Middle School: Sophia Crassas, James Katzaras, Nicholas Katzaras, Artemis Xenick

Our February YOUTH SUNDAY took place on Feb. 8th. We need to thank our children who are singing louder and more beautiful than ever. We also would like to thank our Epistle Reader, Larissa Krinos. She did an exceptional job. The Prospora was delicious as usually and we would like to thank our Pre-K, Kindergarten and 1st grade for making it on Feb. 15th. Our children are truly great stewards of St. John the Baptist.

Also on February 15th, the Sunday School sponsored a Pasta Luncheon to support our Sunday School Retreats. We would like to thank Donna and George Hambos for preparing this delicious lunch. We would also like to thank all of our Church families for supporting our Sunday School and SOUPER BOWL of Caring event that took place on Feb. 1st. We can always count on our generous families to support the less fortunate.

On February 22nd the Sunday School held their Pre-Lenten Retreat which took place instead of our regular classes. Our areas of study were how and why we make Kolyva, Saturdays of Souls, the Lenten Covenant, our Activities Calendar, Forgiveness Sunday and other important dates during Lent/Holy week. Other Sunday School topics in February were the Presentation of Jesus, Fasting and the Publican/Pharisee, and the Prodigal Son.

One of the best ways to prepare for Pascha is to participate in the Sacrament of Confession. Each Sunday School class had the opportunity to participate in this important Sacrament. On February 1st, our 1st and 2nd Graders attended and on February 15th, our 3rd and 4th graders went to Confession. Our 5th and 6th graders will participate in this Sacrament on March 1st and our 7th - 12th graders will go during their GOYAN Lenten Retreat. We would like to thank Father Stavros for hearing the confessions of these young children. It is a wonderful thing to see our children going to Confession year after year.

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

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

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 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. Contact Charlie Hambos for questions.

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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AHEPA FAMILY NEWS - March 2015

AHEPA SCHOLARS

The AHEPA FAMILY including Ahepa Lycurgus Chapter 12 and Daughters of Penelope Alcmaeon Chapter 167 have awarded scholarships to deserving students since 2010. The students who have received scholarships are designated as Ahepa Scholars. We are very proud of our Ahepa Scholars and will be having updates on their progress and accomplishments every month.

AHEPA SCHOLAR UPDATE

The first update from an AHEPA Scholar is from **Imad Hanhan**.

The following is a quote from Imad who was a recipient of the AHEPA Family Scholarship in 2011.

"Since I received the AHEPA scholarship in 2011, I have continued studying engineering and have begun working in an Aerospace research laboratory. I have really followed my passion for Aerospace Engineering. I'm excited to share that I was able to travel to the Canadian Light Source to conduct X-Ray diffraction research at their particle accelerator, and I've traveled to Purdue University to conduct research in an Aerospace Lab for advanced materials there as well. I have also been published in a scientific journal for my work in advanced aerospace sensing and materials.

Now I am awaiting reply from graduate programs for MS/PhD in Aerospace Engineering. I have already been accepted to Purdue University and I am awaiting more replies!

The support I received from the AHEPA scholarship has made a big difference for me as an undergraduate student. Thanks again for all your support."

Congratulations to Imad from the AHEPA family. We and the entire Tampa community are proud of his accomplishments.

AHEPA

Ahepa Florida Legislative Day

AHEPA Legislative Day has received the support of Rep. Dana Young and has been approved to receive guided tours of the Capitol on March 27. A block of rooms has been secured at a Tallahassee hotel and reservations have been made for the dinner on Friday night. Congressman Gus Billirakis and Supreme President Phillip Frangos have offered their support. 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 event is being organized by Lycurgus Chapter 12 for the District Lodge and will involve all Ahepans in the State.

DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE.

Given With Love – A Daughters of Penelope Project

The Daughters of Penelope have made heart shaped pillows which they will distribute to cardiac patients, both adults and children, for Valentine's Day. They will personally deliver them to Tampa General and Saint Joseph's Hospitals in Tampa. All the DOP members have participated in this project.

Valentine's Baskets Project

The Daughters prepared Valentine's baskets which they sold as a fund raiser for the AHEPA Family Scholarship. Thanks to all the Daughters who put their creative efforts into making the fabulous Valentine's Creations.

MAIDS OF ATHENA

The Maids of Athena have had their organizational meeting and selected officers for the balance of this year. They include the following members:

President: Arianna Krinos

Vice President: Nedi Ferekides

Secretary: Laura Paloumpis

Treasurer: Larisa Krinos

Congratulations to the new officers!

SONS OF PERICLES

The Sons of Pericles have had their organizational meeting and selected officers for the balance of this year. They include the following members:

President: Aris Rogers II

Vice President: Corin Agoris

Secretary: Savvas Ferekides

Treasurer: Hristos Daphnopatides

Congratulations to the new officers!



Are you between the ages of 14 and 23 with an interest in Hellenism, education, philanthropy and friendship?
Check out the many opportunities the Maids of Athena has in store for you!

The Daughter's of Penelope are welcoming new members!

Please contact Edie Kavouklis at 813-758-0305 if you are interested in learning more about this AHEPA ladies organization.



Our reflections on Cuba

By Brett Mourer

On January 11-15, 2015, Ana and I were blessed to be able to visit the island nation of Cuba. This Greek Orthodox Christian pilgrimage was led by His Eminence Metropolitan Nikitas, Director of the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute in Berkeley, California.

We were surprised to learn that there are approximately 8,000 Orthodox believers in the capital city of Havana, 50 of whom are of Greek ethnicity, and a total of an estimated 16,000 Orthodox believers in the entire nation. There are three Greek Orthodox churches on the island and a fourth one is being built. The presence of the Greek Orthodox Church is not new as it was established in Cuba at the beginning of the 20th century.

We were blessed to be able to visit the Orthodox Cathedral St. Nicholas of Myra (the protector of sailors) in historic Old Havana. The church is located on prime real estate in downtown Havana. The priest who met us at St. Nicholas Church is named Father Athenagoras. He is of Cuban descent and he serves Cuba along with three other priests. He learned Greek and he spoke in Greek to us. He told us how this church came to be.

In 1997, American-born Metropolitan Athenagoras of Mexico City, the Metropolitan of Mexico, Central America, Columbia, Venezuela, and the Caribbean Islands, which includes Cuba, visited Havana. He asked to be received by officials of the Office of Religious Affairs to ask for the return of the Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Havana to its rightful owners—the Greek Orthodox Metropolis. A high-level Government official second in command after President Fidel Castro, developed a relationship with Metropolitan Athenagoras and took a likeness to the Orthodox faith. The high-level Cuban official was in charge of the restoration of old buildings in Cuba.

Sts. Constantine and Helen was built in the 1950's prior to the revolution, but after President Castro took over, the church was empty for a long time and eventually became a performing arts theatre for children even to this day. Sts. Constantine and Helen has not yet been given back to the Greek Orthodox Church, but we did find out they are still working on that. However, the high-level Cuban Government official persuaded President Castro to give us another piece of land where the present church (i.e., St. Nicholas) was built in 2003. This beautiful Greek Orthodox Church in a prestigious neighborhood of Old Havana was built entirely with Cuban Government funding as a "gift from the Cuban people." It was built in a garden of the Basilica Minore of St. Francesco de Assisi, at the port side in Colonial Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1982. The Byzantine-style cathedral is decorated with Greek mosaics, icons and candelabras, and has a hand-carved wooden altar.

When it came time for consecration of the church in 2004, the high-level Cuban official requested that Metropolitan Athenagoras have Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople conduct the consecration ceremony. Metropolitan

Athenagoras replied that he would bring the Ecumenical Patriarch to Cuba if the high-level official would bring President Castro to the consecration ceremony.

So, on January 25, 2004, His All Holiness Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, walked into the church and President Fidel Castro followed directly behind him during the consecration ceremony. Thus, the first church that President Castro walked in as President of Cuba (officially an atheist nation for approximately 30 years after the revolution) was this Greek Orthodox Church. At the consecration, President Castro handed the keys of the church over to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the 270th successor to the Throne of the Apostle Saint Andrew, founder of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. A picture plate commemorating this miracle is prominently displayed on a wall near the church. The consecration was a five-hour event and it marked the official recognition by the Cuban government of the Orthodox community on this Caribbean island nation.

We were reminded of Proverbs 8:15-16 which state: "By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, all the judges of the earth." King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, learned this lesson for all of us via a dream given to him by God, which Daniel interpreted as recorded in Daniel 4. In Daniel 4:17, King Nebuchadnezzar, the mightiest king on the earth at that time, stated that the dream was given to him "in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men." His son, Belshazzar, learned of the end of his kingdom by the infamous handwriting on the wall (Daniel 5:13-31) as he was replaced by a new Persian king (i.e., Cyrus) who was established, and even named, by God several hundred years before his birth.

The events in Cuba with the establishment of the St. Nicholas Church along with the above Scriptural passages should bring all of us as Orthodox believers great comfort. We should be encouraged by knowing that the Most High God reigns over the affairs of rulers and nations. Ana and I were certainly reminded that God is still in control of the universe and He steps in periodically to remind us of His sovereignty even concerning a dictator like President Fidel Castro.

P.S. In case you are wondering, we had been planning this trip since September 2014 and we were able to enter Cuba because it was a "religious visit." President Barack Obama's announcement that the U.S. will normalize relations with Cuba had no effect on our visit.



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.

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

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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

Study Topic: The Book of Isaiah

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

March Meeting Dates: March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

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

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

Group Leader: Donna Hambos

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

March Meeting Dates: March 3, 17 and 24 (Attend Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday, April 1)

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 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.

March Meeting Dates: March 4, 11, 18, and 25 (Attend Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday, April 1)

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

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

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

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

March Meeting Dates: March 3, 17 and 24 (Attend Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday, April 1)

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

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

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

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

March Meeting Dates: March 3, 17, 24, 31

Young Adult Group (for adults ages 18-40)

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

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

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

March Meeting Dates: 5, 12, 19 and 26 (Attend Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday, April 1)



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

March 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1** Sunday/Orthodoxy Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Get Acquainted Sunday	2** Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	3** WBS 9:30 a.m. BSE 6:30 p.m. BSS 6:30 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	4** Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner 7:15 p.m. Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	5** Young at Heart 11:30 a.m. Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Adult Greek School 6 p.m..	6** Salutations to the Virgin Mary 6:30 p.m. 2 nd Stanza GOYA Lenten Retreat	7** GOYA Lenten Retreat
8** St. Gregory Palamas Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Philoptochos Meeting	9** Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m.	10** Basketball 8:00 p.m.	11** Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner 7:15 p.m. Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	12** Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Adult Greek School 6 p.m.	13** Salutations to the Virgin Mary 6:30 p.m. 3 rd Stanza	14**
15** Holy Cross Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Greek Independence Day Program/Luncheon	16** Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m.	17** WBS 9:30 a.m. BSE 6:30 p.m. BSS 6:30 p.m. Basketball 8 p.m. Parish Council 7 p.m.	18** Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner 7:15pm Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	19** Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m. AHEPA/DOP Mtg. Adult Greek School 6 p.m.	20** Salutations to the Virgin Mary 6:30 p.m. 4 th Stanza	21** Community Outreach Adult Lenten Retreat
22** St. John of the Ladder Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Tarpon Greek Independence Day Parade Parish Oratorical Festival Competition	23** Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m.	24** WBS 9:30 a.m. BSE 6:30 p.m. BSS 6:30 p.m. Basketball 8 p.m.	25** Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Annunciation Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Canon of St. Andrew 6:00 p.m. Choir Practice 7:15p.m.	26** Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Adult Greek School 6 p.m.	27** Vigil of Akathist Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m. Liturgy 8:15 p.m.	28**
29** St. Mary of Egypt Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Get Acquainted Sunday GOYA 5:00 p.m.	30** Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	31** WBS 9:30 a.m. Basketball 8 p.m.	**Fast Day GOYA luminaries 3/22, 3/29, 4/5 WBS-Women's Bible Study BSE-Bible Study East Tampa BSS-Bible Study South Tampa			

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

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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:

Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867

Mike Xenick, Vice President 813-340-8737

Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747

Ed Gerecke, Treasurer 813-229-4306

George Chagaris 727-420-1920

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947

Skip Higdon 813-831-9021

Catherine Mistseas 813-571-0658

Bryon Nenos 813-789-0729

Despina Sibley 813-758-0520

Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534

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:

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

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

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