

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*

August 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

On August 1, we enter a last holy season of the Liturgical year. The Liturgical year begins on September 1 and ends August 31. We begin each year with the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary and the Feast of the Holy Cross in September. We celebrate the feast of the Entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Temple in November. In Winter, we celebrate Christmas, Epiphany and the Presentation of Christ. Spring is dominated by Great Lent and Pascha and in early summer we celebrate Pentecost. As we enter the final month of the Liturgical year, the calendar, two major feast days remain—the Feast of the Transfiguration of our Savior, which we celebrate on August 6; and the Feast of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, which we will celebrate August 15.

The feast of the Dormition is preceded by a 14 day period of fasting, which begins August 1. A service, called the Paraklesis service, is also held during these first 14 days of August. The Paraklesis is a service of supplication and intercession to the Virgin Mary. What do these two words mean, supplication and intercession? Supplication means offering up a need. When we pray in the Liturgy

for peace in the world, or for a perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless day these are prayers of supplication to God. They ask for something. Intercession is when you have a supplication to someone but use a third party in order to make your request. For instance, if I need something from the entire choir, I will probably go and ask Artie, our choir director, to intercede for me. She knows the entire choir better than me. In the case of the Paraklesis services, we address our supplications TO God but THROUGH the Virgin Mary. As she is the earthly mother of God, and as she sits closer to Him than we do, we ask her to intercede with Him on our behalf, to carry our supplications to Him on our behalf. Why can't we just go to God ourselves? The fact is, we can, and we should. But why go to God alone? Why not go to God together with the Virgin Mary, the angels and the saints? There is strength in numbers in just about every activity in life. So there is strength in prayer when prayer is offered by many. This is why we offer prayer corporately, in the church, as a church community. There is strength when hundreds of people pray together. And there is added strength when we add the Virgin Mary, the Saints and the

angels. If there is strength in hundreds of people, how about in millions of saints and angels praying with us and praying for us. Most of us have asked others to pray for us, when we are sick or when something significant is happening in our lives. This is intercessory prayer at its basic level. If we can ask others to pray for us, then why not the Virgin Mary and the Saints?

The Paraklesis Service also provides us an opportunity to pray for individual people and individual needs. In the Divine Liturgy, we pray corporately for everyone in generalities—for those who travel, for those who enter this holy house in faith, for deliverance from wrath, danger and necessity, for forgiveness of our sins and transgressions, etc. In the Paraklesis there is the opportunity to pray for individuals by name—our families, our friends, those who we know are in some kind of need and distress. In this issue of the Messenger, you will find a place to list members of your family that you would like the community to pray for at the Paraklesis services the next two weeks. We will hold Paraklesis services during the first 14 days of August (please see the Liturgical Schedule for dates and times). The service lasts about an hour each time it is done, and it is a beautiful composition of meditative hymns and prayers. Incidentally, Paraklesis is not limited to just the first 14 days of August—Paraklesis can be done at any time of sorrow or need—I try to offer Paraklesis periodically throughout the year. We have offered Paraklesis in time of natural disaster, after the terrorist attack on 9/11, or even more common, when families have been hit with bad news, or during an individual's health crisis. This is the service we are to pray, both individually, and as a community in time of sorrow or distress. And there are service books for you to use during the service as well.

Let's shift gears now and talk about prayer. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that many of us do not pray on a regular basis. Perhaps some of us do not even know how to pray, or why prayer is important.

Prayer is at the same time one of the most rewarding, yet most difficult parts of being an Orthodox Christian. Prayer requires time and it requires unplugging from distractions, two things that are increasingly harder to do in the world today. At summer camp, we all sit in silence for ten minutes a day, having only our thoughts and the sounds of nature to listen to. In Tampa, the sounds of nature are usually cars, lawn mowers or airplanes outside. And the opportunity to sit in silence for ten minutes eludes many of us as we try to balance work and children and responsibilities around the house. For our young people, silence is a non-entity. In a world of seemingly endless technological possibilities, morning prayers lose out to Facebook, the iPod, and texting. The average person of

any age sends 88 texts a day. I know I don't do that many, I may send 20. But that means that many people send hundreds of text a day. How many minutes or hours a day are spent on texting? And before you know it, 70 hours a week has been spent on our electronic devices and precious few minutes, if that, on prayer. Yes, 70 hours is the average amount of time that a teenager spends connected to some kind of electronic media. What's crazy is that when you take 168 hours a week, minus 8 hours a day for sleep and 35 hours a week for school, that's 77 hours left over, or about 1 hour a day that is NOT focused around the electronic media for our average teen. Adults aren't much better either.

Once one has made the decision to pray, and has found the few minutes of silence, having unplugged the distractions, the next challenge is, what to say in prayer. Some see prayer as a casual conversation with a friend. The problem with this is that God is not our friend, but our Lord, our Savior, our guide. Others open up their hearts to the Lord for guidance, for strength, to meet the pressing need of the day with their own words. This is good, nothing wrong here. Prayer is the ability to open up to God and completely empty our souls before Him. In fact, prayer is an emptying of self so that the self can be filled with God.

But what if we struggle to find the right words. What if in trying to think of what to say to God, we become either distracted and lose focus in trying to think, or we become discouraged because we can't figure out what to say? And here is the answer—we have a 2,000 year collection of prayers, services and scripture passages that sum up every emotion, every joy, every sorrow, every concern and every situation we can find ourselves in. So, do some research and find some prayers, scripture passages, or hymns that summarize how you are feeling and use them as prayer and meditation. One great way to pray is by praying the Psalms. The book of Psalms has 150 individual Psalms to the Lord. And these Psalms speak to every emotion that we have. There are Psalms to pray when you are angry, sad, lost, repentant and joyful. One good exercise is to read the book of Psalms, and write down on a piece of paper what emotion the Psalm evokes in you. That way you know which Psalm to go back to pray, depending on your mood and your situation.

Another wonderful prayer to offer are hymns from the Paraklesis. Whether you read them or sing them, or hear them sung, the results are the same—a sense of comfort and peace as these hymns speak to the human condition that we all share. Allow me to make a few quotes from this service:

*Assaults of the passions have shaken me,
My soul to its limits*

*Has been filled with much despair;
Bring peace, O Maiden, in the calmness,
Of your own Son and your God, all-blameless One.*

*A protection and shelter,
I have with you in my life,
You, the Theotokos and the Virgin,
Pilot me towards your port;
For you are the cause,
The cause of that which is good,
Support of the faithful,
The only all-praised One.*

*I entreat you, O Virgin,
Disperse the storm of my grief,
and the soul's most inward confusion,
Scatter it far from me;
You are the Bride of God,
For you have brought forth the Christ,
the Prince of Peace;
Only, all-blameless One.*

*With most serious ailments,
And with the passions so dark,
I am being tested, O Virgin,
Come and bring help to me;*

*For I have known of you,
That you are without fail
the endless treasure of cures,
Only all-blameless One.*

What images come to mind as you hear these hymns? For me, as I meditate on these hymns, I see the many areas in my life that resemble a storm - I can recall worries, stresses, and uncertainties. I see my life as a boat being tossed about in the waves. And then there is the phrase, "Disperse the storm of my grief," a prayer for deliverance from the storms of life. Another phrase "Pilot me towards your port," makes me think of the Virgin Mary as a light-house, a promising beacon of deliverance, to which I ask for direction in the dark times.

*Still the darkest of passions,
Calm the sea of errors
In your great peacefulness;
It was you who bore the guiding Lord,
And you who are the blessed bride of God.*

*Pure one, fill my heart
with a merriment, a happiness;
Bestow on me your spotless joy,
For you have given birth
to Him Who is the cause of joy.*

*Heal me from the ills
O Most Pure One which the passions bring,
Make me worthy of your guiding care,
And unto me grant health,
Through your intercessions and your prayers.*

Again images of calming the sea of errors that we all get caught in at times.

*My petition, I pour out to the Lord,
And to Him I will confess all my sorrows;
For many woes
Fill my soul to its limits,
And unto Hades my whole life has now approached,
Like Jonah, I pray to You,
From corruption, O God, now raise me.*

*I know you as the protection of my life,
A steadfast shelter and refuge, O Virgin;
Disperse the host
Of my many temptations,
And force away the demonic attacks from me;
I pray to you unceasingly,
From corruption of passions deliver me.*

*I lie now on a bed of infirmities,
And there is no healing at all for my body
Except for you,
Who has brought forth our Savior,
God, the healer of all our infirmities;
Of your goodness, I pray to you,
From corruption of sicknesses raise me.*

We've all had moments where we don't think we can take any more of the difficulty that life dishes out to us. We struggle to find the strength to continue the good fight. Surrounded by sadness, we try not to give into either despair or temptation, and many times we all fail and fall to one or to both. These prayers, sung as hymns in Paraklesis, are prayers we can offer ourselves, which bring images of comfort to the life that isn't going the way we had hoped it would.

*A shelter and protection
And a wall unshaken,
Become, O Virgin, for those who flee to you,
A sheltered cover and refuge,
And a place of joy.*

*Oppressed I am, O Virgin;
In a place of sickness, I have been humbled;
I ask you: bring remedy,
Transform my illness, my sickness,
Into a wholesomeness.*

*From the great multitude of my sins,
Ill am I in body, Ill am I also in my soul;
I am fleeing to you,
The one who is all-blessed,
The hope of all the hopeless,
Please come bring help to me.*

Lady and the Mother of Him who saves,

*Receive the supplications
Of the lowly who pray to you;
Mediate between us
And the One you brought forth;
O Lady of all people, Intercede for us.*

*With the hosts of Angels, God's messengers,
With the Lord's Forerunner,
And Apostles, the chosen twelve,
With the saints most holy,
And with you, the Theotokos,
We seek your intercession
For our salvation.*

And in the concluding hymns of the service, an assurance that we are not alone—we have the Virgin Mary as our mediator, as our advocate, before the Lord. When our souls have become dirty with sin, we still have as an advocate the image of purity and goodness, the Virgin Mary. And not only her, we have the hosts of angels, the Forerunner St. John the Baptist, the Apostles and all the saints, all going to bat for us before God.

The Paraklesis services are beautiful opportunities to pray these hymns as a community, to pray for one another as a community. But they are also a demonstration of what our prayer life is supposed to be like on a daily basis, on days that we do not worship as a community. Find pray-

ers that bring comfort to you. If you don't own a Paraklesis book, pick up on in the bookstore and use it not only at the services this month, but as a way to prayerfully reflect on your life throughout the year.

It is truly amazing that in an age where we are changing technology on a daily basis, where things are obsolete sometimes only months after they are brand-new, scriptures, prayers and hymns written hundreds of years ago need no revising. They capture the same human emotions and spiritual struggles that have been present for thousands of years. And they provide the same sense of direction and comfort just as effectively as they did centuries ago. So, for relief from the ever present assaults on our lives from our often cruel and secular world, start spending a few minutes a day emptying out your soul to God, so He can fill is with His light and direction. And if you can't find the words to say, meditate on a few verses from Paraklesis, or prayers from another prayer book, and take confidence and comfort that the Virgin Mary, the angels and the saints stand with you in your prayer, and before God as your mediator, your personal intercessor. All we have to do is pour out our petitions to God, and allow His Words and His saints to be our guides to the harbor of peaceful waters, away from the storms of our everyday lives.

With love in Christ,
+Fr. Stavros

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.

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An Invitation to Join the Prayer Team

Would you like to receive an inspirational message each morning on your phone?

Would you like to join a team of people who pray for our church every day?

Then our prayer team is just what you need!

Below is a sample “daily reflection” sent by Fr. Stavros to every member of the prayer team. If you want to join, just send an email to the church office at officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com (during the month of August) with the Subject Line “Please add me to the Prayer Team”. Over 200 people are now on the prayer team, and growing!!!



No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Matthew 6:24

Good morning Prayer Team!

Most of us have felt the tension of serving “two masters.” Anyone who tries to balance a job and a family deals with this on a daily basis. On a given day, priority goes to one over the other. Either your work is satisfied and your family is not satisfied, or you have a happy home life and work somehow suffers. There are other delicate balances—do I go home early or go to the gym? Do I spend time with one child, to the neglect (on a given day) the other? Do I call my family who lives out of state after the children go to bed, or do I give the time to my spouse? Do I stay up another hour and cheat my body of sleep, or do I go to bed and cheat something or someone else?

We all have “many masters” in our lives. Here is the thing though. When it gets down to it, if we see God as our Master, and serve Him, He will help us prioritize our responsibilities. He will bless us with wisdom and discernment, he will bring patience into stressful decisions.

And yet there seems to be tension between serving God and serving ourselves and our “passions” for ungodly things, be they gossip, or foul language, impatience, deceit, lying, jealousy, etc. That tension is even felt on some Sundays, when we spend the morning worshipping God as Master, only to go to the fellowship hall only minutes later and join in the gossip. Can you imagine if Jesus walked into the room at that very moment, walked up to you and said “Which master are you serving—God, or gossip?”

So, we need to evaluate carefully where we are putting our allegiance. We have to consider our priorities. If God is at the top of list, along with family, with work, is there even room for gossip on this list, or deceit, or anger. We’ve got to devote ourselves first to the Lord, and ask Him, as our Master, to help us discern how to best balance the other things that compete to be masters of our time and attention.

Lord, and Master of my life, help me to balance my many responsibilities. Give me wisdom and discernment so that I can effectively touch all the bases in my life—be they family, work, personal growth and health, and most important, my relationship with You. Help me always to hold You as the Lord and Master of my life. Take away temptations which distract me from seeing You as my Master and Guide. Help me to put you first in all things. For to You belongs all glory, honor and worship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Have a great day!

+Fr. Stavros

Liturgical Schedule for August 2015

Sunday, August 2 **9th Sunday of Matthew**
Orthros: 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve

Ushers: Mike Trimis, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Jenny Paloumpis, Skip Higdon; Ambassador: Peggy Bradshaw; Caller: Donna Trakas;

Get Acquainted: Betty Katsamakis, Perry Katsamakis

Coffee Hour: Philoptochos

Monday, August 3 Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, August 5 Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, August 6 **Transfiguration**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday, August 7 Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, August 9 **10th Sunday of Matthew**
Orthros: 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve

Ushers: Florin Patrasciou, Kevin Fentress, Tammy Christou

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Sandra Pappas, Elaine Halkias; Ambassador: Vickie Peckham; Caller: Christine Worley

Coffee Hour: AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope

Wednesday, August 12 Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.

Friday, August 14 Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, August 15 **Dormition of the Theotokos**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, August 16 **11th Sunday of Matthew**
Orthros: 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve

Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, Perry Katsamaksi, Peter Theophanous

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Genie Carter, Carole Fotopoulos; Ambassador: Debbie Kavouklis; Caller: Martha Kapetan

Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Sunday, August 23 **12th Sunday of Matthew**
Orthros: 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve

Ushers: Gregory Tisdale, John Christ, George Trimikliniotis

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Katherine Sakkis, Jeanie Nenos; Ambassador: Bessie Palios; Caller: Helen Cauthorn

Coffee Hour: Visitation Committee

Friday, August 28 **Beheading of St. John the Baptist –Evening Liturgy**
Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, August 30 **13th Sunday of Matthew**
Orthros: 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve

Ushers: Brett Mourer, Wayne Blankenship, Amin Hanhan

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Ewana Forde, Dwight Forde; Ambassador: Vanessa Aviles; Caller: Donna Hambos

Coffee Hour: TBD

Liturgical Notes for August

Paraklesis Services of Supplication to the Virgin Mary

The service of Paraklesis or “Intercessory Prayer” to the Most Holy Theotokos, the Mother of God, is chanted during the fast period of the first fourteen days of August, preceding the Feast of the Koimisis or “Falling Asleep” of the Virgin Mary, which is August 15. In this service we ask the Theotokos to pray for us and to intercede for us with her Son and our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not the Theotokos who saves us. God saves us. Thus we do not pray to the Theotokos, but we pray through the Theotokos, that through her intercession, we may find favor with God. The Paraklesis service is chanted not only for fourteen days in August, but can be chanted in at any time of the year, for those who are in need of prayer in time of sickness, despair, struggle, or any occasion, since any of life’s experiences provide us an opportunity for prayer. The Paraklesis Service consists of soft, melodic chants of supplication to the Virgin Mary, and lasts about an hour. It is also one of few services in the church where we commemorate individuals out loud during the service. Below you will find a place to write the names of you and your families, loved ones and friends (who are living) to be commemorated at the Paraklesis Services in August. Please mail these to the church office, or bring them to the services. **Paraklesis services will be held five times this August** - Monday, August 3; Wednesday, August 5; Friday, August 7; Wednesday, August 12 and Friday, August 14. All services will be from 6:00-7:00 p.m. The Feast of the Dormition will be celebrated with Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, August 15. We should all attempt to keep the fast, at least from meat, during the first fourteen days of August, and we should each plan to receive Holy Communion on August 9, 15 or 16.

Thursday, August 6 - Transfiguration of our Savior

We read in the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke, how Jesus was Transfigured on Mount Tabor in the presence of His Disciples. Matthew 17:2 says that “His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light.” Jesus was shown in the fullness of His glory as God, and standing beside Him were Moses and Elijah, the two greatest prophets of the Old Testament. This showed the Disciples that the man Jesus was indeed God as well, and pre-figured His glory at the Resurrection and Ascension. Right after the Transfiguration, Jesus began to tell His disciples upon His upcoming Passion and Resurrection. The event of the Transfiguration probably happened only a few weeks before Palm Sunday. But since this feastday is so important, so it would not be lost in Lent, the Church has placed it on August 6, 40 days before the Feast of the Holy Cross (September 14), since the feast is tied to the Passion and Cross of Christ. Also, on August 6, we bless grapes, because it is the season of the harvest, in both material terms—this is the time of the year we harvest grapes. But also in spiritual terms—this was the time Jesus, through His blood, was going to harvest His followers into His kingdom.

Saturday, August 29 - Beheading of St. John the Baptist – Evening Liturgy on Friday, August 28 - St.

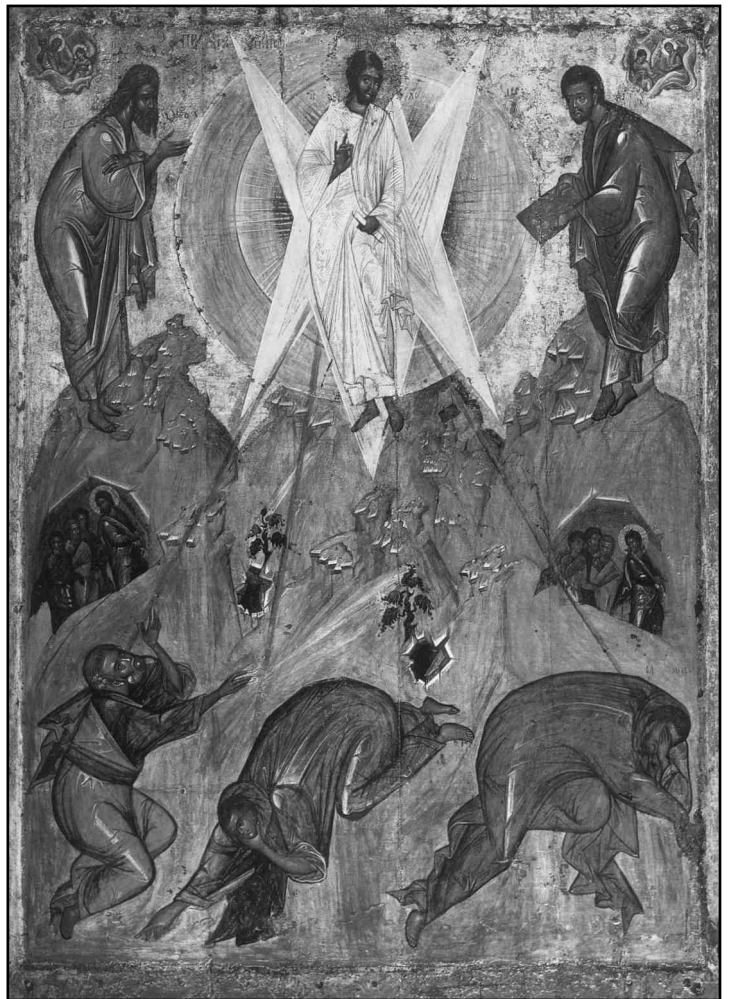
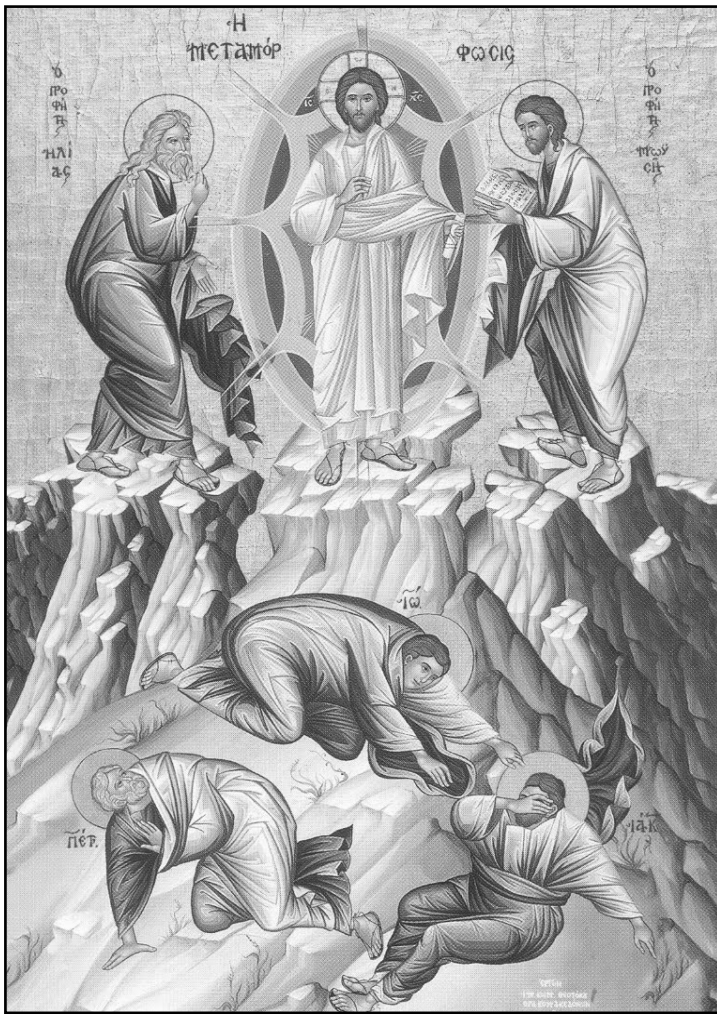
John the Baptist, according to the Gospel accounts, was beheaded in prison. We commemorate this event each year on August 29, which is also a strict fast day. As St. John the Baptist is the patron saint of our parish, we honor this feast day, and we pray for his intercessions over each of us and our parish. We will be having an evening Liturgy on Friday, August 28. Orthros will begin at 5:00 p.m. with Liturgy following at 6:00 p.m.

Names to be Commemorated for Paraklesis

Please write the names of all those whom you wish to be commemorated in the Paraklesis Services this August Monday, August 3; Wednesday, August 5; Friday, August 7; Wednesday, August 12; and Friday, August 14.

Please mail into the office or bring to church as soon as possible.

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



Let us ascend to be transfigured by Christ

By Charlie Hambos

The Webster's Dictionary definition for transfigure is "to change the appearance of something or someone." In Greek, the Transfiguration comes from metamorphosis. In science or in the field of zoology, metamorphosis is (in an insect or amphibian) the process of transformation from an immature form to an adult form in two or more distinct stages. In other words, it's when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. That is quite the change.

On August 6, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ or the Metamorphosis of Christ. He didn't exactly go from a caterpillar to a butterfly but like most things in His life, it was and continues to be for us. The Gospel accounts of this story can be found in Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36.

The Transfiguration happened at critical point in Christ's ministry. He was about to start His Journey to Jerusalem where he would experience torture, suffering, and eventually death for OUR salvation. Jesus needed to go pray. Imagine that, Jesus, the Son of God needed to go pray. He decided to bring his closest friend with Him: Peter James and John. They ascended Mt. Tabor. Christ began to pray and "he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as dazzling as light (Matt. 17:2)," "his clothes became brilliantly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them." (Mark 9:3). Then Moses and Elijah stood there with Him. Once Peter, James, and John saw this: one fell backwards, the other prostrated himself trying to cover his eyes, and the other wanted to build three monuments for each. They were a mess. Finally, a voice from heaven came saying, "This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to Him! (Matt. 17:5)" We have heard this before but there is a bit of metamorphosis here, a little bit of maturation, a bit of a change. At the Baptism of Christ, the Theophany, we hear the same voice say, "This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him." What's the difference? The voice from heaven adds, "Listen to Him!"

So, what's the big deal? Why did Christ have to go get Transfigured? For what purpose? In the Scriptures, it says that Christ needed to speak with Elijah and Moses about the future things. Presumably, Christ's passion and death. It appears that Christ needed a little pep-talk from the one representing the Prophets (Elijah) and the one representing the Law (Moses) because we know that Christ is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Christ did it in front of Peter, James and John because those were His closest companions and he needed to reveal his divinity to them to also give them the sustenance needed for the future. St. Gregory Palamas says this on the matter,

"Therefore, and precisely because of this, God manifests Himself upon the Mount, on the one hand coming down from His heights, and on the other, raising us up from the depths of abasement, since the Transcendent One takes on mortal nature."

In other words, here again we see another manifestation of the Holy Trinity. We have the Son, Jesus Christ, being transfigured by a bright light or cloud which is the Holy Spirit radiating out through Him and we have the voice of the Father. Christ ascends the mountain with Peter, James and John. The Holy Spirit descends and is transfigured. It is the exact same notion when St. Athanasius says, "Christ became man, so that man could become like God."

He had to show his glory to Peter, James, and John. This is the same glory he would appear in at the second coming. "There are some standing here who shall not taste death, until they have seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" (Mt 16:28). This is exactly how we say it in The Creed, "He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead." As He became at His Transfiguration, Christ will come again.

Now, it's time for our transfiguration. From Christ's baptism to this point, we are charged to "Listen to Him!" We fail to do this time and time again. We fail to stop talking and listen. Christ went off to pray by himself, just as we should. If Christ, the Son of God, had to go pray by himself, then we have no excuse. We are human but we must struggle. There is no point in blabbering non-sense to Christ. Just enter into His transfigured presence and stand in awe of his Divinity and Humanity. It is God who spoke and the creation came into existence. Christ is the "Word of God," we must Listen and let the "Word of God," penetrate our thoughts and minds. Let us change our appearance. Let us change our minds. This month, meditate on the icon of the Transfiguration.

Christ. He is the centre and focus of the icon. His right hand is held in a blessing and his eyes are directed at the observer of the icon. His clothes are as "white as light" as described by the Gospel writers. The Glory of God is depicted around him in the almond shaped Mandorla. The rays emanating from Christ reach each of the five visible figures present in the icon: Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, and John. Christ took Peter, James and John with him to the top of Mt. Tabor. He is pictured on his own mountain and Moses and Elijah on their own as well.

Moses. Moses ascended Mt. Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. In the icon of the Transfiguration, Moses is holding a book, representing the Torah (The Law)

and bowing in reverence to Christ. While Moses was on Mt. Sinai, he had a conversation with God and the presence of God came in the form of a cloud. Moses also wanted to see the face of Christ. The conversation Christ had with Moses during the Transfiguration shows that He is the fulfillment of the Law. Moses also represents the dead because he experienced death.

Elijah. Elijah ascended Mt. Horeb where he heard the voice of God in the “gentle breeze.” Elijah is depicted wearing animal skins like St. John the Baptist, representing the prophets and bowing in reverence to Christ. The conversation Christ had with Elijah during the Transfiguration shows that He is the fulfillment of the Prophets. Elijah also represents the living because he was taken up into heaven by a chariot of fire.

Peter. Peter is depicted on the bottom left of the icon. Christ chose Peter to join him on this trip up the mountain because of the love he had for Christ. As it is written in John 21:15-17, “When they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'

He replied, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Look after my sheep.' Then he said to him a third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, 'Do you love me?' and said, 'Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.’” Peter also declared at the Transfiguration, how great it was to be there and he offered to build three monuments, one each for Christ, Elijah and Moses.

James. James has fallen over backwards with his hands over his face. According to St. John of Damascus, “Christ took James as the one who before all the Apostles would die for Christ, to drink His cup and be baptized with His baptism (Acts 12:2).“

John. John is depicted in the middle fallen down prostrate. “Christ took John, as the virgin and purest organ of theology so that he, after having beheld the eternal glory of the Son of God has thundered these words: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God....”



2015 Archangel Michael Award Winners

Every year, the Metropolis of Atlanta recognizes one adult and young adult (or person who has made significant contribution to the youth) from each parish for their outstanding contributions to the life of their parish. They are recognized at a banquet and Divine Liturgy each November, which are held in Atlanta and presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios. This year, our award winners are Dr. Nicholas Andreadakis and Debbie Kavouklis.

Congratulations Nick and Debbie, and thank you for your outstanding contributions to our parish of St. John the Baptist!

**A big THANK YOU goes out to Byron Nenos for organizing the
30th Annual Junior Olympics, which was held on June 19-21.**

Over 130 GOYAns and advisors from around North Florida participated this year. Thanks to Byron for the many hours he spent organizing this wonderful and successful event. Special thanks go to Elaine Halkias, Christine Scourtes, Artie Palios, Mary Nenos, Peter Nenos, Paula Karagounis, Lisa Alsina, Dr. Angel Alsina, George Halkias, Demetri Halkias, Thanasi Halkias, Stamie Garcia, Kathy MacLaury, Pres. Carrie Linsinbigler, Doug and Bridget Stillian, Dean and Maria Koutroumanis, Donna Hambos, Melissa Lenardos, Ed and Terri Gerecke, Alexis Scarfogliero, Mike and Arty Giallourakis, Andria Mellon-Lynn, Cindy Xenick, Aime Crassas, Dory Passalaris, Alex Halikoytakias, John Mitchell, Stan Evdemon, Jeanie Nenos, Billy Nenos, Stefan and Kara Katzaras, Helen Katzaras, Mike and Maria Xenick and many, many others who helped run the venues, drive and work in the kitchen to make this event a success.



Community News

Parish Registry

Adult Baptism-Ari (Aristidies) Seth Cores, was baptized on Sunday, May 17. Godparent was Vasilios Politis. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Kion James Bass, son of James and Tina Bass, was baptized on Wednesday, June 17. Timothy and Kelly Georvassilis were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Andrew Christian Fellios, son of George and Zeina Fellios, was baptized on Sunday, June 28, 2015. Godparents were Deno and Sophie Milo. Na Sas Zisi!

Wedding-Petar Dimitrijevic and Alicia Elaine Geiger were married on Saturday, May 16. Stephen Geiger was the sponsor. Congratulations!

Wedding-Bradley Smith and Nicolette Tsambis were married on Saturday, May 23. George Tsambis was the sponsor. Congratulations!

Wedding-Ari Cores and Antonia Politis were married on Saturday, June 13. Diana Brenner was the sponsor. Congratulations!

Council of Ministries

We have now constituted the ministry heads into a more formal organization called the Council of Ministries. This group will not only grow our individual ministries but work together for the overall growth of our parish. There will be TWO meetings of the Council of Ministries in the month of August.

Calendar Meeting

August 9 immediately following the Divine Liturgy. We will have a meeting in the Zaharias Room to set up the parish calendar for the upcoming calendar year. All members will receive a draft of the calendar by email around August 1 to use as a starting point for important dates of the new school year. Please bring your ideas, your schedules, your plans, and your ideas about hosting coffee house to this meeting.

Council of Ministries Quarterly Meeting

We will have our quarterly meeting of the Council of Ministries on Monday, August 31 at 7:00 p.m. We will be discussing mission and vision statements of each ministry, relating them to the mission and vision of our community, talking about a strategic plan and the 60th anniversary of our church, among other things. Please plan to attend.

Community Outreach

Thank you to everyone who continues to support our Community Outreach ministry to serve the homeless and those in need. For those who don't know, we serve breakfast at First Presbyterian Church on the third Saturday of each month from 8:00-10:30 a.m. Upcoming dates are Saturday, August 29 (note it is the last Saturday of the month for August) and September 19. For more information or to sign up to serve one Saturday, please contact, please contact Betty Katherine Katsamakias at bettypalios@gmail.com or 813-468-1596.

Get Acquainted Sunday, August 2



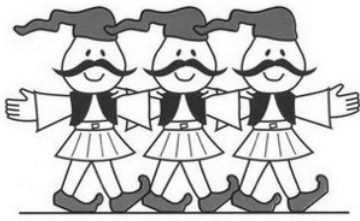
In an effort to get to know one another better, we are going to continue our "Get Acquainted Sundays" one Sunday of each month. We will have nametags and markers in the entry way of the Kourmolis Center and will ask that each person put one on during coffee hour and introduce yourself to at least one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

Our "Get Acquainted Sunday" for August will be Sunday, August 2.



GOYA

Our first GOYA meeting of the new school year will be held on Sunday, August 30 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner will be provided. One parent of each GOYAn is asked to attend the meeting. Also, there will be a parents' meeting with GOYA Advisor Elaine Halkias while the GOYAns meet with Fr. Stavros to go over procedures for the year, review the yearly calendar, fill out emergency forms and arrange for parents to sign up to do a meal for one of the meetings.



~Save the Date~

The Tampa Greek Festival is November 6, 7, & 8, 2015! Thank you to everyone who came with new ideas to the Festival Kick-Off Meeting that was held on June 29!

The newly remodeled Bookstore is looking for volunteers to work in the bookstore during the festival. If you are interested in volunteering in the bookstore, please contact Bill Mankias at manrou2000@yahoo.com or 813-960-3679.

Ministry of Mothers Sharing (MOMS)

MOMS meet in the Nursery at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, August 10, and August, 24. This is a ministry for mothers to gather together to form a network of mutual spiritual support. Is it for mothers with wisdom to share and mothers who are searching for answers and meaning in the vocation of motherhood. Our mission is to provide Biblical encouragement and support to women as they begin their journey of motherhood. Please contact Lindsey Skourellos (813) 503-7845 or Mary Ann Konstas (813) 215-9862 with questions.

Men's Basketball

On Tuesday nights at 8:00 p.m. the Kourmolis Center is open for men's basketball pick up games. If you are interested in joining the games, please contact Perry Katsamakis at 516-403-3118 or Jimmy Konstas at 813-220-7352 or just come to the gym and join a team! **No skills necessary.**

New Altar Boys

Anyone young man entering 4th grade this fall or older is eligible to serve in the Altar at St. John the Baptist. Please let Charlie Hambos know if you are interested by August 5. This coming year, there will be four teams. The new schedule will take effect on September 1. There will be a meeting for all altar boys on Sunday, August 30 following the Divine Liturgy. All altar boys are requested to attend to go over procedures for how to serve in the altar. This meeting will last approximately 1 hour.

Sunday School

Sunday School Teachers Seminar - Saturday, August, 22

Our Sunday School teachers are invited to attend a seminar on Saturday, August 22, beginning at 9:00 a.m. Fr. Stavros will lead sessions and answer questions, as we prepare for the beginning of the new Sunday School Year!

Sunday School Classes will begin on Sunday, September 13

Sunday School Registration will take place on August 30 and September 6 following the Divine Liturgy each Sunday.



Do you have the Messengers from the last year and not know what to do with them? Do you read the Messenger and just throw it away? Do you know you can be emailed the Messenger?

Do you want to Go Paperless?

You can read it on your computer, tablet, phone everywhere you go! All you have to do is email the office at officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com and let us know you want to be emailed the Messenger!

In the Subject Line just type: **Please Email Me the Messenger** and you will be emailed and not mailed the September Messenger!



Ladies

Philoptochos Society

2014-2015 Year at a Glance

Philoptochos - Annunciation Chapter, Tampa, Florida

As the 2 year term comes to an end, a huge thank you goes out to the following ladies who gave their time and talent.

President: JoAnn Hartung

Vice President: Melissa Krinos

Recording Secretary: Ellen Karaku

Corresponding Secretary: (the late) Kay Kladakis

Treasurer: Ana Mourer

Advisor: Cindy Xenick

Board Members: Lisa Alsina, Denise Badrane
Edie Kavouklis

Our annual \$30 membership fee and fund raisers enable us to fill commitments on a local, metropolis and national level. Here is a list of the philanthropic donations we have been blessed to support.

National Level

Academy of Saint Basil

Autism Assistance Fund

Hellenic College Holy Cross School of Theology

International Orthodox Christian Charities

National Sisterhood of Presbyteres Benevolent Fund

Orthodox Christian Fellowship

Social Services

UNICEF

Metropolis Level

Diakonia Center

Clergy Education

Youth and Summer Camps

Philanthropy Fund

Local Level

1st Presbyterian church – feeding the hungry

Alpha House

Champions for Children

Christmas Shoe Drive

Dover Elementary – incentive Program

Metropolitan Ministries

Philanthropy Discretionary Fund

Project Mexico

Retreat Curriculum Scholarship

St. John Food Pantry

St. John Stain Glass Project

Zoe for Life

Current Membership - 50

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Adult Greek School

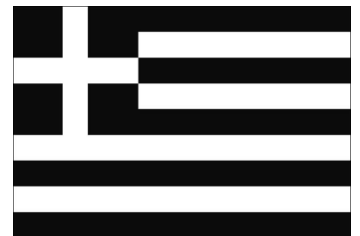
Want to Learn Modern Greek?

Teacher born, raised, and educated in Greece with over 17 years of experience teaching the Greek language. Adult classes for beginners taught at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Ave, Tampa, FL 33609. Classes are held at 6:00 p.m. -8:30 p.m. on Thursday evenings, starting on October 8, 2015. This will be the first of three sessions.

- **Speak Greek**
- **Read Greek**
- **Write Greek**
- **Basic Grammar & more.**
- **Some Greek History**
- **BOOK INCLUDED IN PRICE !!!**

Price per session is \$100 for church members and \$125 for non-members
Contact Ms. Magdalini Myer: at (813) 909-2327, aspis69@aol.com



St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!



Sermons on Youtube Channel Each Sunday

Father's sermons each Sunday are available on our YouTube channel. Just go to YouTube and type in "St John GOC Tampa" and you'll find them. If you miss a sermon or wish to hear a sermon again, you'll find it there!



Do you Like our Facebook page? Like our page and suggest it to your friends. Announcements are posted frequently so you are up to date with everything going on at St. John the Baptist. You can find our page at StJohnGOCTampa.

Constant Contact Emails - Our parish utilizes Constant Contact as a way of staying in touch with parishioners, particularly on subjects that are time sensitive. This is an effort not to clog your inbox but to keep you informed of the goings on in our parish. If you are not receiving Constant Contact emails and would like to, please email officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com with the Subject line "Please Add Me to the Constant Contact Emails."

Live Streaming - All of our services are being video recorded and are available on our Livestream page.

To access this page

1. Go to our Church's website: greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com,
2. Scroll the mouse over the "Multimedia" tab on the menu bar,
3. Click "View Liturgy,"
4. Then click on the link where it says, "Check out our live stream of the Divine Liturgy here <http://new.livestream.com/accounts/2454446>.



All of the services are available to watch at anytime.

Knitted Hearts

From Daughters of the King Daily Devotionals

"As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul," 1 Samuel 18:1, ESV

I love the story of David and Jonathan. As we see in our opening verse, God sometimes knits hearts together, like He did with them, and He puts people in our path because He knows we'll need them. Godly friendships are a wonderful force to be reckoned with. He uses our friendships as vessels, to encourage and strengthen one another. Jonathan loved David, believed in him, and sought God's best for him. Jonathan's friendship was what David needed to grow into the king and leader he was to become.

Friendships are vital in our walk with Christ because, in them, we are sharpened and are held accountable by one another. It's not about your win in this race; it's about a corporate win that makes this journey worthwhile. In Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 it says: "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: if either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up."

Truth: Never underestimate the power of two hearts knit together for God's purpose.

Point to Ponder: If you desire this type of friendship, are you leading by example?

In the midst of corrupted hearts, authentic, non-competitive, loving friendships do exist, but only God can supply such a thing. I didn't always have this mindset, especially after some friendship betrayals, but once I drew closer to God and allowed Him to work in my heart, I began to attract what I gave.

If you give love, you'll receive love! If you have compassion, you'll receive compassion! If you encourage, you'll receive plenty of encouragement! If you offer support, God will surround you with loving supporters! We call this, "sowing and reaping." You can't expect to receive what you never give.

Beyond common interests and a sense of humor, the aim of friendships are to sow into each other words of purpose, eternal life and blessings. When we do this, we refresh each other's spirit and strengthen each other's faith. A Godly friendship means you bear your own hurts along with those of your friend. You cry when they cry, laugh when they laugh, applaud them when they succeed and hold up their arms when the battle has made them weak.

Truth: You can't expect to receive what you never give.

Point to Ponder: Are you being the kind of friend you want to have?

Dear Heavenly Father, I ask that You heal every wound from past failed friendships. I deeply desire to have true friendships in my life, but I know I have to give in order to receive. So I pray that You help me be the Godly friend You expect me to be. Amen.



AHEPA FAMILY NEWS



WHAT A GREAT TWO MONTHS!

The AHEPA FAMILY including AHEPA Chapter 12 and Daughters of Penelope Chapter 167 have had a fantastic two months!

AHEPA and Daughter of Penelope Citrus District 2 Convention - June 11-13, 2015

At the Citrus District 2 AHEPA/DOP Convention held in Pasco County June 11-13, 2015 the following took place:

- AHEPA Lycurgus Chapter 12 was named the Outstanding AHEPA Chapter for 2014-2015.
We won out over 26 other chapters.
- AHEPA Lycurgus Chapter 12 was named the host chapter of the 2016 District Convention in Tampa.
- Mike Trimis was named Convention Chairman for the AHEPA and was commended for doing a great job.
- Maria Zabetakis was named Convention Secretary for the Daughters of Penelope and was also commended.
- Gus Paras was elected District Secretary of the AHEPA District Lodge
- Marina Paras was elected District Lt. Governor of the Daughters of Penelope District Lodge.
- Ourania Stephanides was elected District Treasurer of the Daughters of Penelope District Lodge.
- Gerald Galovic was named District Advisor to the Sons of Pericles.
- The Tampa Chapter 39 of the Maids of Athena, accompanied by Debbie Ferekides, the Advisor to the Maids attended on Saturday of the Convention and participated in activities with Maids from throughout Florida.
- Savas Ferekides, represented the Sons of Pericles Chapter 154, on Saturday, and spoke at the AHEPA Meeting.

Nedi Ferekides - AHEPAcademy

Nedi Ferekides was a participant in the AHEPAcademy this summer. AHEPAcademy is a small, select group of Greek-American high school students selected from throughout the country to participate in an interactive leadership and professional development program.

AHEPA and Daughter of Penelope National Convention - July 1-5, 2015

- The Tampa AHEPA Chapter won third place nationally for most new members.
- Gus Paras was invited to be the speaker at the Governor's Conference.

National DOP 2015 Athletic Award - Zoe Cavalaris Honoree -Christina Gerecke

Christina Gerecke was the 2015 outstanding female athlete/scholar and was honored at the 2015 Athletic Awards Luncheon at the Supreme Convention in San Francisco, California on Friday, July 3, 2015. Her parents Terri & Ed Gerecke and her sister Alexandra Gerecke attended the awards ceremony. Christina's softball and golf achievements, academic record, leadership qualities both on the athletic field and in school, and her volunteer work in the community make her an outstanding female athlete.



Her accomplishments included:

Academics

President's Honor Roll with Distinction

Athletic Awards

Varsity Softball Academic All-American, Eastern Orthodox Junior Olympics Outstanding Athlete Senior, Girls Travel Softball MVP Award, Travel Softball Leadership Award Varsity, Third Individual Place in Golf District Competition, Tribune All-Hillsborough County Honorable Mention for Golf, High School Golf Jaguar Award, Tribune All-Hillsborough County, 2nd Team for Golf and Softball

Nicholas Kavouklis, received the PSP Louis G. Manesiotis Scholar-Athlete Award.

Kavouklis was Captain of his high school football and baseball teams, a member of the All-County Baseball team, and a Dean's list student every semester. Nicholas was honored at the 2015 Athletic Awards Luncheon at the Supreme Convention in San Francisco, California on Friday, July 3, 2015. His parents Chris and Debbie Kavouklis and his brother James attended the awards ceremony. "The recipients of the AHEPA National Scholar-Athlete Awards are truly outstanding examples of Scholar-Athletes," Gregory J. Stamos, chairman, said. "While we honor and recognize them for their athletic achievements, which are most certainly notable, these young men and women also embody the ancient Hellenic ideal of 'sound mind and solid body' in that they excelled not only on the fields and arenas of sport, but in the classrooms and in their communities, both civic and faith-based."

ANNUAL KICK-OFF DINNER

The AHEPA and DOP had their annual Kick-Off Dinner on June 27, 2015 at the Floridan Hotel. The new officers of AHEPA were installed by District Governor Kostas Sofikitis and the new officers of the Daughters of Penelope were installed by PDG Matia Vamvounakis. Gus Paras, President of the chapter awarded members for outstanding achievement. New Sons of Pericles member, Michael Kavouklis was initiated into Menelaos Chapter 154. His proud parents, Nick and Edie Kavouklis and grandparents, Mike and Irene Kavouklis were present. District scholarships were awarded to Arianna Krinos, Katina Smith and Alexandra Gerecke by the District Governor.

JOIN AHEPA OR THE DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE TODAY !

10 Powerful Scriptures to Help You Fight for the Heart of Your Son or Daughter

By Lisa Terkeurst

I wish I could confidently say I've got this mom thing figured out. I've been working on this amazingly thrilling job of raising kids for over 21 years. And while I love my children to pieces, I can't say I've mastered motherhood.

I've done a lot wrong as a mom. Haven't we all? But one thing I know I've done right is praying for them.

However, there's something I've been working on changing up just a bit: how I pray. I want to pray boldly for my kids with more confidence and authority.

And I thought you might feel that way too.

That's why my team at Proverbs 31 Ministries and I have put together 10 Powerful Scriptures to Help You Fight for the Heart of Your Son or Daughter. Our ministry is passionate about equipping moms to raise God-honoring adults instead of just rule-following children. And we can do that by praying our kids through fear, change, and the hard times they face.

Prayers To Help Fight for the Heart of Your Son

1. Give my son a deep desire to seek You with his whole heart and not stray from your commandments. (Psalm 119:10).
2. Lord, lead him to pursue paths of righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness throughout each part of his life (I Timothy 6:11)
3. I pray against pride developing in my son's heart. Lord, help him to gain wisdom through becoming humble instead. (Proverbs 11:2)
4. May he turn his eyes away from worthless things, so he can live a life fully dedicated to following You. (Psalm 119:37)
5. In this world of so many temptations, help my son to flee from sexual immorality and maintain his purity for his future spouse. (I Corinthians 6:18A)
6. May he desire to listen to You, Lord and pray often, "What message does my Lord have for His servant?" (Joshua 5:14B)
7. Give my son a passion for loving You, Lord, with all his heart, soul, strength and mind. May he also love others in a way that brings glory to You. (Luke 10:27)
8. Let him find confidence in You, God, even when hard times come and he doesn't know what to do, by keeping his eyes fixed on You. (II Chronicles 20:12)
9. Lord, I pray that my son would do the right thing and stand strong in the face of sin. (James 4:17) May he be a light to those around him and man who fights to overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)
10. And may he always remember his weaknesses aren't a bad thing as long as he surrenders them to You and seeks Your strength. Then his weaknesses can be opportunities to see Your mighty power move in his life. (II Corinthians 12:10)

Prayers To Help Fight for the Heart of Your Daughter

1. Give my daughter a deep desire to listen to You, Lord, and pray often "What message does my Lord have for His servant?" (Joshua 5:14B)
2. Let her learn early in life that to obey You, God, is the best way to the life her heart truly desires. (I Samuel 15:22)
3. May she find comfort in Your ability, God, to reach her, hold her, and rescue her. (II Samuel 22: 17-18)
4. May she please You, Lord, by desiring, asking for, and utilizing a discerning heart full of wisdom. (I Kings 3: 9-12)
5. Let her find confidence in You, God, even when hard times come and she doesn't know what to do, by keeping her eyes fixed on You. (II Chronicles 20:12)
6. Give her a great desire to accept Your Word, God, and store up Your commands within her so her ears will turn to Your wisdom. (Proverbs 2:1-2)
7. May she keep herself under control and not give full vent to people and situations that anger her. (Proverbs 29:11)
8. Give her the ability to rise above the traps of people pleasing so she can be kept safe by trusting You, Lord. (Proverbs 29:25)
9. Let her walk in the security of Your assigned worth to her. Give her a strong work ethic and health to accomplish all her tasks. Give her a heart that desires to extend her hand to those in need. Protect her for the right husband, a man of respect and godly honor. And let her be a woman of joy and laughter whose Christ-centered character is what makes her most beautiful. (Proverbs Chapter 31)
10. And every time You, Jesus, whisper, "Follow Me" she does so with great grace. (Matthew 4:19)

What Stewardship Means to Me.....

Written by Catherine Mitseas

Peter 4:10

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

To understand stewardship, it is important to evaluate the impact of our investment. How it influences our church and our community.

Giving means to donate time, money, talents to organizational groups, and people without consideration of repayment or recognition.

The truly generous people I know live through the tenant the more we give the more we receive. Proverbs 11:25 (KJ) states ***"The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."*** These individuals, both of moderate means and greater wealth, believe with every fiber of their being, that generosity leads to spiritual wealth; their personal success is a byproduct of their lifelong commitment to living the Word of God.

Once I had a chance to interview what, in today's terms, might be called a "power couple." The husband and wife were in their late 70's and their last name decorates buildings and institutions throughout Tampa. They had ridden the waves of 20th Century industry, saved carefully, lived fruitfully, and were in a position to help create a better world by supporting meaningful organizations.

One statement struck me during our conversation. These individuals discussed creating a culture of philanthropy in Tampa Bay. A community committed to helping others in big, generous ways. These two people believed by giving they could create and grow a culture of philanthropy. Their actions could inspire a reaction!

This is what Jesus means in Proverb 11:25 and others. We cultivate our own triumphs by reaching out and supporting others. It is a philosophy that works in every life regardless of one's circumstance. And carries into our Church Today.

We have a community, which I cherish, and hope to see grow and thrive for generations. **Our stewardship can make this happen.**

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.

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

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

Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL
Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI
Perry & Fay Stamatiades - Asheville, NC
Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI

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 the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church 2418 Swann Avenue, Tampa, FL 33609

~Spirit of Stewardship ~

Our 'Spirt of Stewardship' article in the June/July Messenger highlighted the Young at Heart (YAH) but when listing the officers we failed to list Mary Nenos – Vice President of the YAH Ministry.

With this correction we wanted to take the opportunity to Highlight Mary Nenos for her Stewardship to St. John the Baptist over the years. Mary has been a member of the church since 1956 and attends church regularly with her son Peter Nenos. Her beloved husband John, also a faithful servant to our Church, passed away in 1983. Mary gives in many ways of her Time, Talents, and Treasure.

Many of us know Mary and see her engagement in our church and various ministries. Giving makes her happy and her commitment to our faith is practiced daily. She believes all gifts come from God and does not hesitate to give back as a result.

It takes many helping hands to bring together our Beautiful Liturgy on a typical Sunday. Mary Nenos has been a helping hand for many years from Preparing Prospora for us and the Monastery in Ocala, Sewing Altar Cloths and Robes for Fr. Stavros & the Altar Boys, Preparing Koliva for whoever asks. With past participation ranging from Parish Council to Sunday School Mary has generously contributed on many levels. Current involvement with the YAH, Philoptochos, Festival and visiting the sick keep her very busy! It is no surprise, Mary was the first recipient of the Archangel Michael Award at St. John the Baptist.

If you haven't met Mary, take time on a given Sunday stop by to say hello. She is a treasure trove of Church History, always engaging Parishioners to get involved with energy and enthusiasm that will surely rub off on all that meet her.

Stewardship....little of this and that

It is hard to believe this year is more than halfway over and we will soon be planning the Church Calendar and Stewardship for 2016!

We ThankYou for your prayers, feedback and continued support of Stewardship, this past year in Time, Talents, and Treasure! With continued prayers and God's Grace we remain hopeful that our Sacrificial Giving will continue to grow as the year progresses to close our Treasure Gap.

As a reminder, we ask that you review your commitments to ensure you're on track now that we are past June 30th. We sent out a letter last month detailing individual pledges, but the Church Office can address any additional questions.

If you haven't completed your Pledge form, please consider doing so today. Contact the church office and we'll be happy to send via mail or email. Forms are also available in the Church Narthex and Kourmolis Hall. Setting up an auto deduct from your bank account is an easy way to manage weekly/monthly pledges.

In September we will provide a list of 'Pledged Stewards' The Messenger. This list only includes Families/Parishioners that completed a 2015 Pledge Form. If you have any questions or wish to see a complete list of 'Pledged Stewards' please contact our church office.

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

	2015
<i>Stewardship Goal</i>	<i>\$470,000</i>
Pledged	\$387,936
Received*	\$230,383
Average Pledge	\$1,361
Median Pledge**	\$700
# of Parishioners (Families) Pledged with a completed form	284
# of Parishioners (Families) that have given a Stewardship Check without a form+	37

*Dollars received - Based on YTD as of 7/9/15

** Pledge amount in the Middle – ½ of Stewards pledge higher & ½ lower +Per our Bylaws, to be considered a Voting Member of St. John the Baptist we must have a completed Pledge Form.

DID YOU KNOW...?

In an effort to learn more about our church, faith, and the culture of the Orthodox Church, we started a Did You Know...? section in our Sunday Bulletin. Here are past Did You Know...? lessons just incase you missed one.

... before our current church had running water in our Baptismal font, Christine Scourtes' husband, Frank, brought buckets of warm water from their home in Parkland Estates, where Christine still resides today.

...After the church was built in 1956, our community did not have a Sunday School Building on campus. The church rented the Hyde Park Art Studio and the teachers would walk the classes directly on Swann Avenue. Luckily, they had the help of Sgt. Angelo Stavropoulos, a steward of our church, who was stationed at MacDill Air Force Base and provided safe passage for the students.

...The icon of the Virgin Mary with Christ directly above the altar table is called, "Platatytera ton Ouranon," which means "wider than the heavens." The Virgin Mary held God in her womb and He is something that the universe cannot even contain. She is opening her arms to welcome you to her child, Christ, who is our Lord and Savior.

...The 61st Canon of the Council of Trullo from 692 A.D. prohibits one from dancing with bears, specifically bears with ribbons on their head. At the time, it was thought that observing these dancing bears and receiving some of the hair to wear would ward off the evil spirits or something similar to the evil eye. Obviously, the church did not want people to seek the answers of a dancing bear but rather to seek Christ and His Church. This same canon also prohibits those seeking expellers of clouds, enchanters, amulet-givers, and soothsayers.

...On Sunday, May 10, 2015, the church of St. Constantine in Menemen, Turkey held its first service in 93 years! An olive tree was planted on the grounds and doves were released as a symbol of peace. His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I attended as well as several local officials, including the Mayor of Menemen. The church had been abandoned in 1922 after the population exchange between Greece and Turkey following World War 1.

...During the Divine Liturgy, the priest exits the Holy Altar and says, "Peace be with you all," three times: before the Holy Gospel is read, before the Creed and after the Lord's Prayer. It was the same number of times that Christ said "Peace be with you all" to the Disciples when he appeared to them after His Resurrection in the Upper Room. Twice when Thomas was absent and a third time 8 days later when Thomas was present. See John 20:19-29. A portion of this passage is read at the Agape Vespers Service on the Sunday of Pascha.

...The two large icons to the upper left and right of the front doors in the Narthex are found nowhere in the New Testament. The top left (facing the doors) is the Birth of the Theotokos and the top right is the Dormition or Falling Asleep of the Theotokos. Her birth narrative is found in the Protoevangelium of James, a second century document. Her death was reported by St. John Damascene [died 749] at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. that Mary had died in the presence of the Apostles but when the tomb was opened they found it empty, "wherefrom the Apostles concluded that the body was taken up to heaven." From this testimony the Church has taught that Mary was assumed bodily and now tastes the Resurrection for which all Christians hope.

...The dome of the Bishop's Throne is made out of an upside down styrofoam swimming pool and painted gold. The woodwork in the church was done in a ten year span in the 1960s and this is only one of the creative ideas put into place. God Bless the pioneers of our community.

...Peter and Paul both ended their ministries as apostles in Rome and suffered martyrdom there. Since Paul was a Roman citizen, he was given the more "merciful" death of beheading. Peter, however, was crucified, but he requested to be hung upside down, feeling unworthy to die in the same manner as Christ. We celebrate Sts. Peter and Paul on Monday, June 29.

...In the large icon of the Annunciation which spans on both sides of the Holy Altar, Archangel Gabriel has three feet! It appears that the iconographer wanted to put the Archangel lower, so if you look close you will see the pencil sketch of the foot of the Archangel under the actual foot. In order to see it, walk into the space under the Archangel leading into the Holy Altar.

...Underneath the Solea of the church, is all Terrazo flooring. In the terrazzo, somewhere in the middle is a double headed eagle, the symbol of Byzantium. At some point, the church decided to raise the solea, thus covering up the artwork on the floor. The Solea is the center of our Sacramental Life in the Church. It is were we receive communion, get married, get baptized (in most churches) and where the body rests during the funeral.

The Great Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos

By Fr. Jim Paris

This ancient Feast commemorates the "Falling Asleep" of the Most Holy Theotokos. Through her Son, Jesus Christ, the Son of God become the Son of Man for the salvation of the world, we all have a Mother who is fervently and perpetually praying for us. When the Son of God took flesh and blood through the Holy Spirit and by the Will of the Father, Holy Wisdom built Her House, and the Virgin Mary, as God's Chosen and Consecrated Vessel offered her pure womb on behalf of humanity. Thus, salvation came to the world through her sanctified womb.

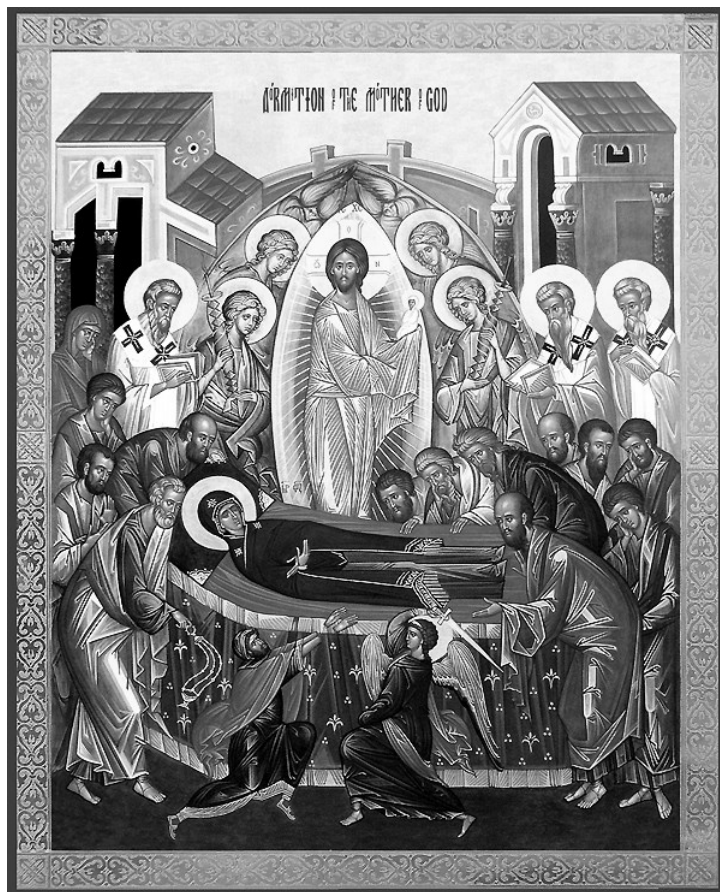
As God assumed all human nature in the Person of Jesus Christ her Son, she became thereby, through her Son, the Mother of all Humanity. God not only created us in His image for fellowship with Him; He also assumed our human nature to become one with us, teach us, heal us, share with us, suffer with us, and die for us, in order to deliver us from all and save us for eternity. He willingly endured everything imaginable to redeem us from everything. He died once and for all for us, so that we may live now and forever through Him. He shared our human nature so that He could share His Divine Nature with us. God became Man so that Man can become God.

This Divine deliverance from sin, this redemption from death, this eternal salvation, was made possible by the humility, purity, and obedience of a simple, humble Virgin named Mary who without hesitation listened to and accepted the Will of God the Father Who sent His Son through the Holy Spirit to dwell in her womb. Truly, as the prophecy was fulfilled: "Wisdom has built Her House." Her Womb become a Holy Tabernacle wherein dwelled the salvation of the world. The Prince of Peace entered her through "closed doors" and left through the "closed doors."

As prefigured by the burning bush before Moses, the fire of the divinity did not consume the flesh of the humanity. Isaiah's vision of the Virgin with Child and the assurance of the salvation of creation had been fulfilled. In thanksgiving, and praise of her, we fittingly honor her as the greatest of the Saints and the embodiment of Prophecy. Furthermore, as Divinely ordained, only a mother can have such a special and intimate relationship with her Son, and she always has His Ear, as she constantly intercedes to Him on our behalf, as the Mother of Humanity and Ambassador of the universe.

How can we not honor her passing? For although she has passed from this life to the next, she has not abandoned us. In the Birth of Her Son, she preserved her Virginity, and in her death, she did not abandon us. Our Hymn proclaims this theology in profound poetry and our Tradition of Iconography captures and enshrines this teaching in image.

Observing a beautiful Traditional Orthodox Christian Icon of her Dormition, we see all the apostles and the celestial hierarchy around her coffin. This symbolizes the entire Church, gathered from the four corners of the earth, present spiritually in honor of her. The celestial and terrestrial, visible and invisible,



spiritual and material, all come together in cosmic communion to praise her. Moreover, behind her coffin in the center, uniting the universe, is Her Son, Jesus Christ, Standing in His brilliant white funeral garment transfigured into resplendent Resurrectional white, fittingly as the One Who is the Light of Light and the One Who wears Light as a garment.

Whereas in most other Icons we see the Mother of God embracing her Son as a Child; this time we see her Perfectly Adult Son, holding and embracing her (His Mother as to His Humanity) as a child in swaddling clothes; this is a powerful and profound representation, for even though she has died to this world, she is now born in heaven. Whereas once she was born for a limited time to this confined world; now she is born for eternity in Heaven.

Through Her Son, death has become a passage for her to the Heavenly Promised Land for which we are all destined in Him. This Icon proclaims this eternal truth, and we know we have a Mother in Heaven caring for us, loving us, and praying for us. Thus, no matter how this fallen world may make us feel, as Orthodox Christians, we know we are not abandoned. This is a powerful and sorely needed message in this suffering and marginalize world.

So brothers and sisters in Christ, as the Apostles from far away gathered for the Theotokos, let us all gather together and honor the Holy Mother of God, the Mother of All Humanity, who perpetually, and forever, prays for all of us.

Rev. Fr. James T. Paris is the Proistamenos of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Clearwater, FL.

LITTLE HOUSES AND JOYFUL LAWYERS!

By Brother Toby

There are a lot of young people wandering in and out of my life these days. How they work their way through the world they have inherited is something I mostly leave to them. Usually there is at least a 60 year gap between us — that is hard to jump over. When I was their age we were just finishing World War II and optimistic about the Post-War adventure. However, many did not make it through that war. A few days ago it was Anne Frank's birthday (1929-1945). She became the symbol of what people of my age pledged never to forget. But for today's youth, at least in this country, all that stuff is ancient history.

So what troubles me? Right now it is local headlines, such as:

WHY ARE PALO ALTO'S KIDS KILLING THEMSELVES?

22 YEAR-OLD FINANCIAL ANALYST FALLS TO DEATH IN SAN FRANCISCO

ANOTHER SONOMA COUNTY TEEN'S SUICIDE LINKED TO BULLYING

A significant number of high school students in one of the nation's most prosperous and privileged communities are choosing to die at a train crossing. A junior at a premium school in that area says when she sees teachers huddled together or hears the loud-speaker go off, she always thinks, *"Did someone else kill themselves?"* Mental health people say her school has a "Suicide Cluster" of youth — just like in Fairfax County, Virginia, the University of Pennsylvania, MIT, Pine Ridge Indian Reservation — and on and on and on. I've heard some of those schools referred to as "Educational Pressure Cookers" — probably with good reason.

Is it just possible when we older folk were establishing the criteria for "The Good Life" way back in the 50's, we took some wrong turns which are partly responsible for our grandchildren finding themselves on dead end alleys today? We started making money, and buying things — lots of things. A satisfying life meant getting to the top. Whatever it takes — do it! Otherwise you ended up a loser forever living miserably among other losers. What's the result of these priorities? One student in a high school labeled as a "Double Suicide Cluster" puts it starkly in an article by Diana Knapp,

I feel like I am never doing enough, not using my time wisely, not working hard enough, it goes deep, this disappointment in ourselves.

Over the years a frightening group of clichés for success have developed. In business *"Eat-or-Be-Eaten."* In academics *"Publish-or-Perish."* In youth competitions *"Kill-or-Be-Killed."* I actually heard a parent tell his middle-school child, *"You want a career in music? Then you better beat everyone here today!"* No mention of the transcendent quality of music, the joy it brings to players and audience. Fortunately he was the exception. But by the time kids reach High School they get the message that this is a highly competitive society and a person's only chance at success is to come out on top. The problem is that does not make you a happy person or even a good person.

But maybe things are changing. My first day of Law School the professor (as did professors in many other Law Schools) said, *"Look to the people on either side of you. Get to know them because chances are 2 of the 3 of you won't be here next year!"* That was 1953. Now in 2015 there is in the mail a notice for a textbook with the title *"BECOMING A JOYFUL LAWYER; CONTEMPLATIVE TRAINING IN NON-DISTRACTION, EMPATHY AND EMOTIONAL WISDOM."* I think there is a big sea-change happening here! If it can happen in Law Schools it can happen anywhere.

Maybe we are going back to definitions of success more common in my parents time, between the Depression years and the beginning of the war. Everybody they knew was poor but they had dreams, one of which was to own your own home. My father and his fellow lumber mill workers had access to rejected boards. And they used them to build houses — little 2 and 3 room houses! I grew up in a lumber town of Lilliputian homes. It was also a town full of people who were not disappointed in themselves. They felt very good about what they had been able to achieve. I never heard of teenagers throwing themselves in front of trains or jumping from the cathedral towers of big business.

Recently a college Director of Counseling said many students *"don't have the resilience of previous generations ... They can't tolerate discomfort or having to struggle."* I question that. I wonder what would happen if we adults changed what we communicate about what we value in our lives and in our children's lives.

Well, it is worth a try. Maybe the movement could be led by a troop of Joyful Lawyers! — I can dream.

~ August 2015 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 **
2 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Get Acquainted Sunday	3 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	4 ** Basketball 8:00 p.m.	5 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	6 ** Transfiguration Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	7 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	8 **
9 ** Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Council of Ministries Calendar Meeting	10 ** MOMS 11:00 a.m.	11 ** Basketball 8:00 p.m.	12 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	13 **	14 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	15 Dormition of the Theotokos Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
16 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. AHEPA/DOP Mtg.	17	18 Basketball 8:00 p.m.	19 **	20	21 **	22 Sunday School Teachers' Seminar
23 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	24 MOMS 11:00 a.m.	25 Basketball 8:00 p.m.	26 **	27	28 ** Evening Liturgy for Beheading of St. John the Baptist Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.	29 ** Community Outreach
30 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Altar Boy Meeting GOYA Kick-Off Meeting	31 MOMS 11:00 a.m. Council of Ministries Quarterly Meeting 7:00 p.m.					**Fast Day

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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)
firstav@gmail.com

Pastoral Assistant Charlie Hambos

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-843-8471 (Cell)
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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 Mitseas 813-571-0658
Byron Nenos 813-789-0729
Despina Sibley 813-758-0520
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AHEPA

Gus Paras, President 813-254-6980

Altar Angels

Engie Halkias 813-932-5859
Sia Blankenship 813-968-8855

Basketball

Perry Katsamakis 516-403-3118
Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352

Bible Study

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Bookstore

Bill Manikas 813-960-3679

Choir

Artie Palios, Director 813-831-1294

Community Outreach

Betty Katherine Katsamakis 813-468-1596

Dance Group

H XAPA MAE, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668
Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
Glendi, Jenna Mingledorff 813-610-7365
Panigyri, Vanessa Aviles 813-221-2194

Daughters of Penelope

Edie Kavouklis, President 813-758-0305

Finance Committee

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

Food Pantry

Mick Scharbach 813-458-1620

Gasparilla Parking

John Kokkas 727-992-4615

GOYA

Elane Halkias 813-629-1843

Hope/Joy

Amy Kafantaris 727-743-1297
Debbie Nicklow 813-690-0671

Junior Olympics

Bryon Nenos 813-789-0729

MOMS

Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862
Lindsey Skourellos 813-503-7845

Oratorical Festival

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

Philoptochos

JoAnn Hartung 727-432-0228

REAL

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Small Group Bible Study

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

Stewardship

Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747
Pete Trakas 813-505-2193

Sunday School

Vickie Peckham 813-406-5626
Tammy Christou 813-957-0835

Usher

Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

Visitation Committee

Nancy Manikas 813-716-8185

Welcome Committee

Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

Young at Heart

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947
Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

The Messenger of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is published on a monthly basis. Publication is the first of each month. Deadline for notices and announcements for The Messenger is the 10th of each month. You may send announcements to the church office through email.

“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.