

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 2016

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 members to grow in their faith.

Father Stavros' Message

How to Cover the Most Miles on Your Lenten Journey

Great Lent begins on Monday, March 14. Pascha is May 1. By the time you receive this Messenger, we will only be a few days away from the beginning of this year's Lenten journey. Every year, as we approach Great Lent, I try to make myself a game plan for how I am going to spend this Lent.

I had the opportunity recently to attend a Catholic Men's Retreat at one of our local Catholic Parishes. Obviously I am not Catholic but I was interested in the topics being covered as well as the speakers. And I think "retreats" are a good thing—it is a good thing to retreat from the world for a few hours and be fed with spiritual food, in the company of others who are seeking the same thing. I am usually the presenter at the retreats I attend, and I must say it was nice to be just "someone" in the crowd, one who was doing the "eating" rather than the "feeding." There were 1,000 men there—and just the sheer numbers were inspiring and motivating. As Easter for the Catholics (and everyone but us) is March 27, one of the presentations was about preparing for Lent, and since our Lent begins so much later, it affords me the opportunity to share some of these ideas with you.

The Catholics set up their Lenten journey according to three things—Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. To these I will add

worship and confession. I hope that you will give some careful consideration to what follows, so that the Lenten journey isn't just a period of time that passes on the calendar, but a meaningful time of spiritual growth for you.

(Many of the ideas on Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving below were articulated by Fr. Larry Richards, a Roman Catholic Priest who was the retreat presenter, adapted by me for our purposes, but I wanted to give due credit to a very inspiring speaker. I have mentioned Fr. Larry both in conversation and in the Messenger. It was wonderful to make his acquaintance and I was very inspired by what he had to say. He gave a talk not only on preparing for Lent, but another talk on the Seven Deadly Sins. We do not use this phrase in the Orthodox Church. For us, all sins can lead to death and destruction. But I will give a summary on 7 sins to correct in your life in a future issue of the Messenger.)

The most important "take away" from the session on preparing for Lent was **The focus of Lent should not be on you, but on the Lord.** It's about growing in Him!

Prayer

I've written and preached on the subject of prayer many times. Permit me to say a few words to get you to think differently

about prayer. When I was a Boy Scout, we learned that you could take a magnifying glass over a piece of wood, have the sunlight reflect off the glass onto the wood and you could start a fire that way. So, imagine that the sun is the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is filled with power and light so immense we can't look upon it or comprehend it. The wood is the human soul, either ours or the soul of someone else. When you pray, the Light of Christ reflects into YOUR soul and sets it on fire for the Lord. When you pray for someone, you become a living magnifying glass, you set someone else on fire for the Lord. When you pray with someone else, you help to set both of you more on fire for the Lord.

Most people start off the day with bad news—they read the newspaper, they scan the internet, they check their emails. Why not start off with Good News—reading the Bible, the Good News; and praying?

If I were to offer you one million dollars to get up each morning and pray, would you do it? If I told you I would give you one million dollars if you went to church each Sunday for a year, would you do that? We all would. Would you get up each morning and pray, for the Lord? Would you come to church each Sunday, and do that for the Lord?

If you are not in the habit of praying each day, of letting God's light shine into your soul through prayer, then Lent is a great time to start to make this a habit. And if you are already doing something, Lent is a time to add something more.

Worship

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

One of the reasons we worship is to remember what the Lord did for us. Outside of church, we are bombarded with all kinds of messages, most of them not in line with the Gospel. Many of them focus on material gain, or glamor, or entertainment. They don't help to lead us to the ultimate goal, which is salvation. Worship helps us do this. During a period of the year where we are focused on spiritual growth, along with a heightened sense of prayer, should come a desire to worship with greater frequency, specifically receiving Communion. There will be an opportunity not only on each Sunday, but on each Wednesday of Lent to receive Holy Communion.

Fasting

Fasting is what gives Lent a bad reputation. We dread the "giving up" of something we like and can't wait to "get it back" once Lent is over. This is the wrong way to look at Lent and at fasting. Lent should not be about giving things up, but about adding things to your life.

Remember the analogy of the magnifying glass, that magnifies

the Son of God on our soul and the souls of others when we pray? When you fast, you are cleaning the magnifying glass, so that you can better be aflame with Christ, so that you can better set others on fire for Him.

The purpose of fasting is to help us gain control of something we like—certain kinds of food. If we can discipline ourselves to go without certain kinds of food, we can hopefully discipline ourselves so that we can go without certain kinds of behavior that are spiritually destructive. Along with fasting from food, we need to fast from the things that get us in trouble—perhaps the television, or alcohol, or inappropriate materials on the computer and in movies. If you want your magnifying glass clean to better reflect the Son of God on your soul and in your life, you have to think of the things that are making your soul dirty and clean your "glass" of these things.

One other idea that I got at the retreat that I had never really thought of is the idea of "fasting for someone else." No, that doesn't mean that meat lovers like me get a vegetarian to do the fast for us. There is no fasting (or worship, confession, Bible reading) by proxy. But as you fast, asking God to purify your heart, you should bring to mind others who need their "glass" cleaned and ask God through your fasting, to purify their heart as well. Again, Lent should not be all about us - It's all about the Lord and our neighbors as well. In fasting, there is an opportunity to love both.

Confession

One of the most beneficial ways to clean the magnifying glass of your soul is to engage someone else's help in cleaning it. This would be your spiritual father. What is a spiritual father? The person that you go to for spiritual guidance and to have your confession heard.

Is a spiritual father necessary? My answer to this is: Is it necessary for you to have a doctor? You might be able to get by for a period of time without a doctor, especially when you are healthy. But you certainly need a doctor when you are sick. And as you get older, it's a good idea to go to the doctor at least once a year for a check-up, to make sure you are really as healthy as you feel. Most of us would not go through life without asking for help from a doctor in the maintaining of physical health. Yet, most of us go through life without asking for help from a priest in the maintaining of spiritual health.

Does my spiritual father need to be my parish priest? The answer is NO. Your spiritual father should be someone who knows you, who you feel comfortable with. Two different people might come to confession to me with the same sin but I might advise them in two different ways, depending on their circumstances, depending on how I know them. Ideally, your spiritual father is someone you can keep in touch with on a regular basis, and seek out for confession at least once a year.

I recently was asked to speak to a group of youth workers in the Tampa Bay area and out of curiosity, I asked them to write down the reasons why they do or do not go to confession. There were 22 responses, which were submitted anonymously.

Here were some of the answers as to why people go:

1. I go because I feel a weight lifted and I appreciate the guid-

- ance and counseling. I don't go enough though.
2. I go because I feel unprepared for Communion if I don't.
3. I go because I want to prepare myself properly for Holy Communion.
4. I go to repent for my sins and grow closer to the Lord.
5. I go to confession to set an example for my kids and to lift my burdens.
6. I go for a restart.
7. I go to confession to clean my heart.
8. I go to confession to save my soul.
9. Going to confession helps me maintain my relationship with my spiritual father.

Here were some of the answers as to why not:

1. I'm afraid the priest will talk.
2. I don't go because I'm nervous to confess what it is and I just haven't made an appointment to go yet (not that I don't want to).
3. Don't go as often as I should ("lazy").
4. I do not go because I am not comfortable.
5. I don't go because I feel I can confess directly to Jesus Christ through prayer.
6. I have not gone in a long time to confession.
7. I don't go to confession because my parish priest is not my spiritual father and because of penance/results.
8. I have not gone in a few years, mainly because I don't plan for it and also I prefer not to go to my regular priest.
9. Don't understand when or how to go to confession. Is there a specific time for confession?
10. I don't go because I am embarrassed—I confess when I pray.
11. I don't because I forget.
12. I don't go, not sure why.
13. I don't go because I am not accustomed to going. It wasn't a part of growing up in the church.

As you can see, even in a group of dedicated adult youth workers, the majority of respondents do not regularly participate in the sacrament of confession.

Let me first address some comments on why the people go. All of those answers are good answers—going to confession does clean your heart, it gives you a restart, and it is an important part of preparing for Holy Communion. Going to confession affords you the opportunity for individualized counseling and spiritual guidance. One works with a spiritual father to identify and work through challenges in the spiritual life, making a game plan (repentance) for how to grow in the faith while avoiding the pitfalls. While going to confession in and of itself won't save your soul, it is certainly an important tool in the journey to salvation.

As for the reasons people do not go, let me address some of those concerns as well.

I do not talk to other people about what I hear in confession. To be honest, I can't even remember what I hear in confession. My mind is so filled with "stuff" that unless I write something down, I can't remember hardly anything. If there is a trust issue with me, or with any priest, find a priest who you DO trust so that you can participate in this sacrament.

I don't go because I'm nervous and not comfortable. I don't like going to the doctor to get blood tests and lab work. But I go anyway, because more than the uncomfortable feeling of having these tests, I'm always glad to know where I'm at in the picture of my physical health. Confession works in the same way—I can't say I'm comfortable pouring out my sorrows and talking about my failings with my spiritual father, but I am always glad afterwards, that I did.

I don't go because I can confess directly to Jesus Christ through prayer. It is true that we should confess our sins daily in prayer. However, there are a couple of things that you can't receive in prayer. One is absolution, which is the actual "sacrament." This is where you are absolved of the sins you have confessed, they are completely wiped off of your record, and you receive permission not to think of them again. Many times, people confess to the same sin in prayer, because they are riddled with guilt about a past failing. In confession, you get "permission" to leave your guilt and "go in peace." The other benefit to going to confession is that you actually get to speak to someone about your spiritual life. I could "take my own vital signs" and not go to the doctor, but who is going to interpret for me whether my signs are good or not?

I don't go to confession because my priest is not my spiritual father and because of penance/results. As to the first part of this—you don't have to go to your parish priest. You can go to any priest who is a "father confessor" (has the blessing from the Metropolitan to hear confession). Regarding "penance", there are certain sins where one cannot just say what they did and "go in peace." For instance, if someone came and confessed to murdering someone, I wouldn't say "ok, go in peace." There is a criminal penalty for that. I would say "go turn yourself in, that is your penance." There are other sins where just "saying" the sin doesn't bring relief to the person who has confessed. So, penance can also work as a project, to help a person work through guilt or pain when confessing it isn't enough. Some spiritual fathers impose excommunication (not receiving Communion) for a period of time. I do not do that. I think it is important that we be in Communion at all times. In fact, I rarely use excommunication from communion in confession. If you have questions about confession, please ask me, I'm happy to answer them. As for trying out a new priest for confession, it is a good idea to sit down with that priest before you go to confession, and ask him questions about penance, or any other concerns that you have.

I don't go because I am not accustomed to going. It wasn't a part of growing up in the church. Well, I never went to confession until I was 19, it wasn't part of my growing up in the church either. I didn't fast properly, I didn't read the Bible, and I didn't pray regularly, and lots of other things that are part of the Orthodox Christian life. I went to church, and thought that kind of covered everything and I focused on being a good person. But there are two problems with this—going to church doesn't "cover" everything. One has to make a personal relationship with Christ through personal time in prayer and scripture reading. And I was "good" according to who? According to me. Just like I can say "I'm healthy," according to me. An examination may reveal that I am in fact healthy, or it may reveal that I'm not healthy (I can't check my cholesterol or do an

EKG, certainly can't do my own colonoscopy). But I won't know until I submit to an examination.

Almsgiving

We can't compartmentalize our faith. It doesn't fit into little compartments. Like "I act like a Christian on Sundays, but on other days I do un-Christian things." If we are Christians, then we have to strive to be Christians every day. And either Jesus is Lord of our life, all of it, or He isn't. He can't be Lord of our Sunday mornings, but not the Lord of our jobs. He can't be Lord of our children but not of our marriage. So, Jesus is the Lord of everything, including the Lord of our money. Almsgiving is giving without someone knowing. One of the things we have done poorly in the Orthodox Church, and I have been complicit in it, I won't deny that, is accepting gifts in exchange for name recognition. That's not really almsgiving. Almsgiving is giving without anyone knowing. I understand this better now than I did even a year ago.

It's easy to spend \$100 or even \$200 on an expensive night out, and there is nothing wrong with that. But at the same time, we've got to support the church, and we've got to take care of the poor. The tithe is 10%. Ten percent of what we receive is what we are supposed to give back. When you are giving, don't focus on the dollar amount you are giving, but the percentage of what you get that you are giving. And ask yourself, "for every \$1,000 that I am receiving, I am giving back \$_____ to the Lord."

Concluding Thoughts

Who was the first person to get into heaven? It was a repentant thief who "stole" Paradise in the last moments of His life. He asked the Lord to remember him in His kingdom. He asked Jesus for mercy. And Jesus had mercy on him. He told him

that he would be with Him in Paradise that very day. In the world today, and I am guilty of this too, we want mercy for ourselves and justice for everyone else. Lent is supposed to help us heighten our love of God and of each other. Forgiveness and love are what bring people to repentance. Prayer, fasting, worship, confession and almsgiving are where we work on forgiveness and love, so that the period of Great Lent is a time of sincere and marked repentance.

Father Larry made a very powerful statement, that I will conclude this month's article with—If the only reason you love God is so you won't go to hell, then you are all about yourself.

The reason we are supposed to love God is because He is the Light that shines in the darkness. He is the Light that the darkness of this world can never overcome. And He is the Light of both this world and the world to come. Great Lent is a great time to ask yourself this question: Are you part of the darkness of the world, or are you part of the Light? In what ways are you bringing darkness into the world? And what ways are you reflecting the Light?

Remember the magnifying glass? The instrument that is used to reflect the light of the sun in order to set wood on fire. Remember the magnifying glass of your heart—it is used to reflect God's light into your own soul, and into the souls of all those you meet. Lent is the time we clean the magnifying glass—through prayer, worship, fasting, confession and almsgiving. These are the tools. The goal is for our glass to become more clean during Lent, so that we can magnify Christ's Light in our own lives and in the lives of others in the coming year.

Have a blessed Lent! Kali Saraskosti!

With love in the Lord,

Great 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 22, and then again after Pascha. Please make your appointment as soon as possible, because Fr. Stavros likes to give people whatever time they need. As it gets closer to Holy Week and more and more people are coming, He is 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.

New Prayer Team Unit

Over 500 people are now on the Prayer Team, the daily message Fr. Stavros sends out every morning. During this season of Lent and Triodion, he is writing on the scriptures of Lent and Holy Week. The new unit is called "And We Beheld His Glory." (John 1:14) If you want to join the prayer team for daily encouragement in your faith, please email Fr. Stavros (frstav@gmail.com) and Charlie (charlie.hambos@gmail.com) and they'll be happy to add you.

Liturgical Schedule for March 2016

Saturday, March 5 **1st Saturday of the Souls** Divine Liturgy in the Mausoleum Chapel at Garden of Memories
Orthros: 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Memorial Service at the end of the Divine Liturgy.
Fr. Stavros will bless the graves of our parishioners at Garden of Memories and Myrtle Hill Cemeteries.

Sunday, March 6 **Judgement Sunday (Meat Fare)**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke

Ushers: Florin Patrasciou, Mike Kavouklis, Tammy Christou

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Elaine Halkias, Donna Hambos; Ambassador: TBD; Caller: Martha Kapetan;

Get Acquainted: Mike Xenick, Maria Xenick

Coffee Hour: Maids of Athena

Saturday, March 12 **2nd Saturday of the Souls**
Orthros: 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Memorial Service at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

Sunday, March 13 **Forgiveness Sunday (Cheese Fare)**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John

Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, Perry Katsamakias, Peter Theophanous

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Helen Cauthorn, Jeannie Nenos; Ambassador: Lisa Alsina; Caller: Julie Palios

Coffee Hour: The AHEPA Family



Sunday, March 13 **Forgiveness Vespers** 6:00 p.m.

Monday, March 14 **Clean Monday**
Canon of Andrew 10:00 a.m. **Holy Unction** 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 16 **9th Hour** 5:30 p.m. **Pre-Sanctified Liturgy** 6:00 p.m. **Lenten Dinner to Follow** - Young at Heart

Friday, March 18 **Salutations to the Virgin Mary 1st Stanza** 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 19 **3rd Saturday of the Souls**
Orthros: 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Memorial Service at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

Sunday, March 20 **Sunday of Orthodoxy - Please note: We are starting early!**
Orthros 8:15 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Procession of Icons at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew

Ushers: Gregory Tisdale, John Christ, George Trimikliniotis

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Carole Fotopoulos, Marenca Patrasciou; Ambassador: Sandra Pappas; Caller: Katherine Sakkis

Coffee Hour: Community Outreach

Monday, March 21 **Great Compline** 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 23 **9th Hour** 5:30 p.m. **Pre-Sanctified Liturgy** 6:00 p.m. **Lenten Dinner to Follow** - Choir

Friday, March 25 **Feast of the Annunciation**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Salutations to the Virgin Mary 2nd Stanza 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 27 **Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark

Ushers: Brett Mourer, Demetrios Halkias, Amin Hanhan

Welcome Committee: Greeters: Donna Trakas, Jenny Paloumpis; Ambassador: Maria Karounos; Caller: Vickie Peckham

Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Monday, March 28 **Great Compline** 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 30 **9th Hour** 5:30 p.m. **Pre-Sanctified Liturgy** 6:00 p.m. **Lenten Dinner to Follow** - Sunday School

Guidelines for Great and Holy Lent - The Lenten Services

Saturday of the Souls - Saturday, March 5, March 12, March 19

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

On Saturday, March 5, we will hold the Divine Liturgy at the Garden of Memories Cemetery at 4207 E. Lake Avenue in East Tampa. We will have Orthros at 9:00 a.m., Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m., with a memorial service at the end of the Liturgy. After Liturgy is concluded, Father Stavros will visit the graves of the relatives of all attendees of the Liturgy. This is the fourth year that we will be doing this liturgy out at Garden of Memories. Please come and join us praying for the souls of our loved ones, as we also pray for strengthening and inspiration for ourselves.

Forgiveness Vespers - Sunday, March 13

Great and Holy Lent begins on Monday, March 14, a day called Clean Monday, or “Kathara Deftera” in Greek. Vespers is the service that ends one day and begins another, so we will celebrate the Vespers of Forgiveness and beginning of Great Lent on Sunday evening, March 13, at 6:00 p.m. This service lasts about an hour and marks the beginning of Great Lent, which is announced during one of the hymns mid-way through the service. During this hymn, the priest changes vestments from white to purple, the lights in the church are dimmed and the mood of the service becomes somber. In fact, it is the opposite of the Resurrection Service on Easter, where everything begins dark and goes to light. The service concludes with a prayer of forgiveness being read over the congregation and the exchange of mutual forgiveness among the members of the congregation. This service is an especially appropriate way to begin the Lenten season, and for those who attended last season, is one of the most moving services of the church year.

Canon of St. Andrew - Monday, March 14

The Penitential Canon of St. Andrew will be read from 10:00-11:00 a.m. on Monday, March 14 as we begin Great Lent. The Canon, in its entirety, takes hours to read. We will read and chant an abridged version of this Canon on Clean Monday. Service books for this service will be available in the narthex.

Holy Unction on Clean Monday - Monday, March, 14

The Sacrament of Holy Unction is always offered during Holy Week on Holy Wednesday. But the sacrament can be done at any time of the year. The emphasis of this sacrament involves, spiritual healing, spiritual cleansing and repentance. What better way to begin Great Lent than the sacrament of Holy Unction. Please bring your Holy Week book to follow along.

Sunday of Orthodoxy Icon Procession - Sunday, March 20

If anyone has new icons that have not been blessed, please bring them to church on Sunday, March 20, the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and place them in the windows of the church. They will be blessed with Holy Water during the service.

Great Compline - Mondays of Lent

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

9th Hour and Pre-Sanctified Liturgy - Wednesdays of Lent

The Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts (also called Pre-Sanctified Liturgy) will be held on the Wednesdays during Great Lent. This service consists of Vespers with Holy 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, 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.

Wednesday, March 16 - Young at Heart

Wednesday, March 23 - Choir

Wednesday, March 30 - Sunday School

Wednesday, April 6 - The AHEPA Family

Wednesday, April 13- Philoptochos

Wednesday, April 20- 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 (Heretismoi)

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.

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, and Holy Saturday morning. 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 will be in the pews on Sundays.

What We Celebrate on the Sundays of Triodion and Lent

Sunday, March 6 - Judgement Sunday (Meat Fare)

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

Sunday, March 13 - Forgiveness Sunday (Cheese Fare)

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

Sunday, March 20 - 1st Sunday of Lent - Sunday of Orthodoxy

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.

Sunday, March 27 - 2nd Sunday of Lent - St. Gregory Palamas

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.

We have hope in Jesus Christ; the Meaning of Saturday of Souls

By Charlie Hambos

A sick man turned to his doctor, as he was preparing to leave the examination room and said, "Doctor, I am afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side."

Very quietly, the doctor said, "I don't know."

"You don't know? You, a Christian man, do not know what is on the other side?"

As the doctor was holding the handle of the door; on the other side came a sound of scratching and whining.

When he opened the door, a dog sprang into the room and leaped onto him with an eager show of gladness.

Turning to the patient, the doctor said, "Did you notice my dog? He's never been in this room before. He didn't know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here, and when the door opened, he sprang in without fear. I know little of what is on the other side of death, but I do know one thing. I know my Master is there, and that is enough."

This story demonstrates that many of us, who are alive today, whether healthy or ill, are afraid to die and not sure what is waiting for us in the afterlife. Many of us are still grieving the death of a parent, grandparent, a sibling, another close relative and even some close friends.

On Saturday, March 5, our church celebrates the first Saturday of Souls where we will remember all those who have died from the very beginning of time. This first Saturday of Souls also has special significance because it comes before the Sunday of the Last Judgment. Therefore, before we focus on our own life and the implications made on the Sunday of the Last Judgment, we take the time to remember and pray for the souls of those who have departed before us and also wait for the Second Coming of Christ.

But unlike the man in the hospital who was afraid to die, this day is not a day to reinforce our fears of death but instead to reinforce our life in Christ and look deep and hard at how we can grow closer to Him. In addition, since we believe in Christ, we must have faith and hope in the resurrection of our souls and bodies when we eventually leave this life and of those who have fallen asleep before us.

In the Epistle Reading that we will hear on Saturday, March 5, St. Paul writes to the Christian converts in Thessaloniki who were worried about their friends and relatives who had died and would not be there to see the Second Coming of the Christ. They wondered what would happen to those who already died versus those who would be alive when Christ would return.

In the beginning of this passage, Paul in a very elegant fashion literally says "we do not wish you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning the sleeping" or in another translation it says "we want you to be quite certain" that you do not grieve for them, like the other people who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that in the same way God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

So, here Paul responds to their questions by reiterating their belief as Christians in the resurrection of the body and soul in order to strengthen their faith and hope.

Paul wants the Thessalonians to know that he understands their grieving and sadness over the dead, but it must not lead to hopelessness, depression, and the loss of their faith in God.

For the family and friends who have died that we remember on the Saturday of the Souls, we must remember to not let our sadness and grief make us lose our faith in God.

Then Paul tells us how this will happen. "At the signal given by the voice of the Archangel and the trumpet of God, the Lord himself will come down from heaven; those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise and only after that shall we who remain alive, be taken into the clouds, together with them, to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord."

With this Paul concludes the passage by saying that we as Christians need to encourage one another by strengthening each other's hope and faith. The very good news is, as the body of believers, our Church and its Orthodox Christian tradition provides the opportunity to strengthen the faith and hope of those who are grieving the loss of loved ones as well as to inspire holiness for those who are uncertain about the life to come. The church also reminds us on this day that as the body of Christ, those of us who are still struggling on earth are in communion; we are connected, to those who have already fallen asleep in the Lord. This is what Saturday of Souls is all about.

In order to explore the deeper meaning of Saturday of the Souls, I would like to answer a few questions: Why do we do this on Saturday? What is the significance of the service during Lent?

Why do we do this on Saturday?

We remember those who have fallen asleep before us on Saturday for three reasons. The first, because Saturday is a day of death. The second because it is a day of rest. The third because it is a festal day. Saturday is a day of death because when Christ died on the cross, the whole world died with him. Saturday is a day of rest because this is the day that Christ rested from his works in the flesh before he was resurrected. Saturday is also a festal day because on this day Christ descended into Hades, loosening the bonds of death and rescuing the souls of the righteous by bringing them to paradise. St. Paul writes, "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?"

These themes of death, rest and feast can be seen in two important Saturdays of the liturgical year. The first is the Saturday of Lazarus, where we remember Lazarus' resurrection. Christ brought him back to life in the world as a foretaste of the common resurrection of our souls and bodies through the work of Christ's death and resurrection. The second Saturday is obviously the Great and Holy Sabbath of Pascha when death itself was transformed into the new life of the New Creation.

What is the significance of this service during Lent?

We celebrate the Saturday of Souls in the weeks leading up to Great Lent to help us remember time and to use it wisely. In 1 Peter 2:11, we read that as Christians we are only “aliens” or “exiles” in this world. This place is not our final destination. We are here only for a short time. Just as we prepare for Pascha during Great Lent, we must be reminded to prepare ourselves for our own ending and remember to stay close to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ so that we will be eager to jump into his arms, when the door opens for us at the end of our life.

So, this is what the church is doing as we celebrate Saturday of the Souls. We are continuing what Paul told the faithful in Thessaloniki. To comfort those who have lost loved ones and prepare our own selves for the time of our sleeping. So that, on the day, when we know the time is near, we will not be afraid, but will be like the dog who knew that the Master was on the other side of the door and could not wait to come in.

As we remember those who have fallen asleep before us and once again contemplate our own life and death let us not forget the words of St. Paul to the Thessalonians concerning what will happen to those who have gone before and those of us who will still be alive, “And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.”

“And so we shall always be with the Lord.”

Remember! Let us not be ignorant like those who have no hope in Jesus Christ because we shall always be with the Lord.

“O Master Christ, set the souls of Your departed servants in the tabernacles of Your righteous, and have mercy upon us and save us, as You are the only Immortal One. Amen.

Special Altar Boy Schedule for Lenten Services

CAPTAINS

Savas Ferekides
Gregory Koutroumanis
Harry Koutroumanis
Mihail Kaburis
Karter Lenardos
Val Courialis
George Hambos

St. Matthew

John Palios
Nicholas Katzaras
James Katzaras
Makis Crassas
Andrew Patrasciou
Genaro Scarfogliero
John Nicholas Krinos
Jonathan Brannan

St. Mark

John Karamitsanis
Lukas Karamitsanis
Brigham Sibley
Dominic Garcia
Benny Hidermichel
James Kavouklis
Grayson Borgeas-Beach

St. Luke

Nicholas Alsina
Frankie Giallourakis
Demetri Karounos
Jonah Blankenbaker
Yanni Trimikliniotis
Andrew Thatcher
Alexander Findlay
Demetri Passalaris

St. John

Dean Mitseas
Christos Nenos
Antonio Bavaro
Nicholas Yotis
Peter Chandler
Zach Chandler
Niko Bavaro
Chris Cojita
Anthony Catrone

Wednesday, March 16- Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m. - **Savas Ferekides, Mihail Kaburis and St. Matthew**

Friday, March 18- Salutations 6:30 p.m. - **Val Courialis, Karter Lenardos and St. Mark**

Wednesday, March 23 - Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m. - **Harry Koutroumanis, Gregory Koutroumanis and St. Luke**

Friday, March 25 - Salutations 6:30 p.m. - **George Hambos, Mihail Kaburis and St. John**

Wednesday, March 30 - Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m. - **Savas Ferekides, Val Courialis and St. Mark**

Friday, April 1 - Salutations 6:30 p.m. - **Harry Koutroumanis, Gregory Koutroumanis and St. Matthew**

Wednesday, April 6 - Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m. - **Karter Lenardos, George Hambos and St. John**

Friday, April 8 - Salutations 6:30 p.m. - **Mihail Kaburis, Savvas Ferekides and St. Luke**

Wednesday, April 13 - Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m. - **Harry Koutroumanis, Gregory Koutroumanis and St. Matthew**

Friday, April 15 - Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m. - **Savvas Ferekides, Karter Lenardos and St. Mark**

Wednesday, April 20 - Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:30 p.m. - **George Hambos, Val Courialis and St. Luke**

Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism - Leo Matthew (George) Saliba, son of Matthew and Julie Saliba, was baptized on Sunday, January 24. Wissam Saliba and Rana Saoud were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism - Robert Stephan Reace, son of Rich and Gini Reace, was baptized on Sunday, January 31. Steve Small, Leighton Small and Lofton Small were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Double Baptism - Uriah (Vasilios) and Lukas (Ioannikios) Ricks, twin sons of Georgia Ricks, were baptized on Sunday, February 14. Melina Goldenberg was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

Adult Baptism - Michelle Graves was baptized on Sunday, February 14. Na Sas Zisi!

Funeral - Estelle Kavakos passed away on February 4. Her funeral was held on February 9. Her 40-day memorial service will be on Sunday, March 13. May her memory be eternal!

Condolences to Ron Myer on the recent passing of his mother Winifred. May her memory be eternal!

Get Acquainted Sunday, March 6



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.



Community Outreach

Saturday, March 19 from 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. St. John the Baptist's Community Outreach will be serving breakfast to the Homeless at the First Presbyterian Church in Downtown Tampa. The church is located at 412 Zack Street. The entrance is on Polk Street. Grab a cup of coffee and come help us! We love to see new and old faces!



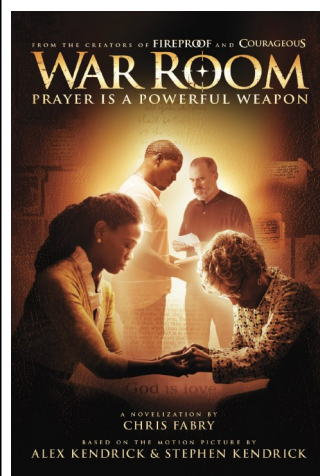
GOYA

The next GOYA Meeting for March will be Sunday, March 6, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.



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 27, after Divine Liturgy. We will have upwards of 20 participants this year. This event is really inspiring, to hear our young people talk about their faith. Anyone is welcome to come and watch this event after church on Sunday, March 27. We will be providing a light snack and late luncheon during the tallying of the votes around 2:30 p.m. We would love to have as many people as possible there.



Please join us Friday, March 4 at 6:30 p.m. at the Screening of the Movie "War Room"!

We will have dinner and a movie followed by a discussion from 6:30-9:30 p.m. Please RSVP to officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com if you will be joining us!

Storyline:

Filled with heart, humor, and wit, WAR ROOM follows Tony and Elizabeth Jordan, a couple who seemingly have it all—great jobs, a beautiful daughter, their dream home. But appearances can be deceiving. In reality, their marriage has become a war zone and their daughter is collateral damage. With guidance from Miss Clara, an older, wiser woman, Elizabeth discovers she can start fighting for her family instead of against them. As the power of prayer and Elizabeth's newly energized faith transform her life, will Tony join the fight and become the man he knows he needs to be? Together, their real enemy doesn't have a prayer.

We Want to Thank You!

Ye Holy Krewe of Tampa raises record \$6,600 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 \$6,600. A special thank you for John Kokkas, captain of Ye Holy Krewe of Tampa for the 9th straight year, and his mates – Mary Maas, Ed Gerecke, George Chagaris, Alexandra Gerecke (and three of her sorority sisters—Jade, Jasmine and Corrina), Despina Sibley, Paulina Katsouli, Brett Mourer, Lisa Alsina, and Mike Xenick - for an outstanding job! Additionally, we sold gyros to the Gasparilla patrons, and special thanks to Byron Nenos, George Hambos, Theo Camene, Dean Koutroumanis, Paul Assimiades, and Demo Langas for cooking the grub!

We raised over \$1,700 on OCMC Missions Sunday!



On Sunday, February 7, the Philoptochos Annunciation Chapter sponsored our annual luncheon to benefit the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC). Kenny Kidd from OCMC was our guest homilist. Thank You!

We collected over 40 pounds of food and \$514 from everyone's generous donations!

Thank you to all our parishioners for donating to the youth led initiative to stop hunger, "Souper Bowl of Caring", last Sunday. The Broncos may have won the Super Bowl but the Hope Children's Home was the big winner from your generosity! A special thank you goes out to our four Sunday school children, Maggie Brewer, Bill Conner, Dimitri Camene and Audrey Gallos, for helping with the collection and cheering on Hope Children's Home! ~Debbie Nicklow and Amy Kafantaris



SAVE THE DATE - April 3, 2016

Greek Independence Day Luncheon

We will be hosting our annual Greek Independence Day Luncheon and program on Sunday, April 6, 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.



Sunday School News

February was a very busy month for the Sunday School. Our topics were Salvation: the story of Zacchaeus, Reading the Bible, Church Etiquette, and the Prodigal Son. Charlie Hambos was also very busy with our students. He always does a children's sermon on Youth Sundays and he worked with our Pre-K, Kindergarten, and 4 graders this month.

Our February YOUTH SUNDAY took place on Feb. 7. We need to thank our children who are singing louder and more beautifully than ever. We also would like to thank our Epistle Reader, Larissa Krinos. She did an exceptional job. The Prosphora was delicious as usual and we would like to thank our 4th Graders for making it. Our children are truly great stewards of St. John's.

One new project this year is our HALL OF FAITH. The list is on our Sunday School bulletin board. Students names will be added to our Hall of Faith when they memorize The Lord's Prayer (Pre-K-3rd) and/or The Creed (4th Grade and up). As of Feb. 1, **CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING STUDENTS:**

I HAVE MEMORIZED THE LORD'S PRAYER!

Nicholas Akrotirianakis	Nathan Moran
Constantine Ameres	Emily Nicklow
Gryphon Borgeas-Beach	Maria Palios
Sofia Camene	Vasilios Panos
Zachary Carter	Aiden Ricks
Kris Christopher	Lucas Ricks
Aidan Clifton	Uriah Ricks
Calliope Kafantaris	Penn Serbanos
Teddy Kafantaris	Ariana Thatcher
Julie Konstas	George Xenick

I HAVE MEMORIZED THE CREED!

Alexander Demetriou
Benny Hidremichael
Gennaro Scarfogliero
Brigham Sibley
Toula Trakas
Artemis Xenick
Elizabeth Xenick

On February 14, the Sunday School sponsored the Coffee Hour to support our Sunday School Lenten Retreats. We would like to thank our Sunday School parents and teachers for donating so many treats on this Valentine's Day. The 5th graders served the food and passed out Valentine's with the scripture verse John 3:16 to all of our parishioners.

We would also like to thank all of our Church families for supporting the SOUPER BOWL of Caring event that took place on Feb. 7. Over \$500 and many pounds of food were donated for the Hope Children's Home. We can always count on our generous families to support the less fortunate.

One of the best ways to prepare for Pascha is to participate in the Sacrament of Confession. Each Sunday School class will have the opportunity to participate in this important Sacrament. On Jan. 31, our 5th and 6th Graders attended and on February 21 our 3rd graders went to Confession. Our 4th graders will participate in this Sacrament on March 6 and on March 20 the 1st and 2nd graders will attend. The 7th - 12th graders' confessions will be heard 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.

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.

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.





AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – March 2016

AHEPA FAMILY SCHOLARS 2015



The AHEPA FAMILY hosted the annual SCHOLARSHIP AND CHRISTMAS SOCIAL DINNER at the Floridan Hotel, once again awarding scholarships to the young members of our community including high school seniors, college and graduate school students. Scholarship recipients included **Nedi Ferekides, Vasilios Nenos, Christopher Scarfogliero and Eleni Pessemier**. The following are quotes from their applications.

Nedi Ferekides



Quote- Nedi said "I want to inspire people. I want someone to look at me and say, 'Because of you I didn't give up.'" In my upcoming, college journey, I plan to continue following my intellectual curiosity in biology and psychology by studying Neuroscience. After receiving my bachelors, I plan to go into Medical school, as I believe that practicing medicine is an especially rewarding career that not only will interest me, but will allow me to make a major impact in many individuals' lives. I will continue striving to be an example for others, as an active member in my community through my educational and career aspirations, as well as to help others to accept their own differences."

Vasilios Nenos



Quote- Vassilios said "My Papou Byron, who was a Chiropractor for over 60 years and loved what he did every day really brought me to the realization of wanting to be a chiropractor and follow in his footsteps. Also seeing how many people he helped every day, who had trouble walking in the office then seeing them be able to walk out with substantially less pain looked to be especially rewarding. The last reason why I chose this career was because it is a much less invasive method than surgery, and causes less pain in the first place. I know that he is looking down on me and smiling now."

Christopher Scarfogliero

Quote – Christopher said "What I have learned most from my experience is that there are no absolutes, guarantees or short cuts. Anything I want in life I have to earn, nothing is given. If I want something I have to go get it and not assume it will just come. Hard work and perseverance will help me attain the things I want in life. Upon graduating I would like to work in hotel management, with aspirations of becoming the CEO of a major corporation. The degree I have chosen is Business Management. I feel that this degree will help me the most in my quest for leadership. I am an AFROTC cadet, and as such once I finish college I will become a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force. In the Air Force I would like to be in charge of the Officers Clubs and the housing for the families on base, giving me the experience I need, while allowing me to serve my country. This experience coupled with my education in business, will help me to get a management job and enable me to work my way up to the top."

Eleni Pessemier

Quote - Eleni said "I believe I can bring so much good into the world, and I want my unique contribution to society to be a great one. Many people would think that means being a doctor or a lawyer or a politician, but I want to be a teacher. I want to be a teacher because I believe I can help children to develop that worldview and those skills that will allow them to continue improving our world. That's what it's all about—passing on knowledge and skills to the next generation and building off of them every day to continue changing our world for the better."



**THE 83RD CITRUS DISTRICT 2 CONVENTION AND
90TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF AHEPA LYCURGUS CHAPTER 12
WILL BE HELD ON JUNE 9,10,11,12, 2016 AT THE FLORIDAN HOTEL IN
TAMPA PLAN TO BE THERE**



Stewardship 2016

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Hebrews 13:16

~ Glory to God ~ this passage, part of our Stewardship Materials in 2016, was a call many of us heard and answered as we start our best Stewardship year in our church history! We remain humbled and thank our loyal parishioners.

Over 48% of our Stewards have increased their pledge in 2016! We have been blessed with 33 New Members – a testament to the growth and joy we feel as a community when we worship together and celebrate our Orthodox Christian Faith.

~ A Little Comparison ~	2016	2015
Pledged for Year*	\$390,603.⁰⁰	\$322,036.⁰⁰
# Parishioners Pledged	255	209

*Based YTD as of 2/8/16 & 2/10/15

We have a little ways to go before we achieve 100% participation from our Parishioners, but remain hopeful and have faith our 95 parishioners that pledged in 2015 will complete their **2016 Pledge Form which is now available Online!**

Now for some Stewardship Technology News...

We made great strides the past few months with technology enhancements and are pleased to offer Online Pledge Forms and Online Donations (via PayPal).

Stewardship Pledge Forms can now be completed Online and are available under the Stewardship & Donate Online tabs on our church website. We require a completed Pledge Form to be considered a Steward of St. John. Consider completing Online next year or this year if you haven't turned in your 2016 Pledge Form!

Stewardship Donations and General Donations can now be made via PayPal under the Donate Online Tab of our church website as a one time or reoccurring donation.* A PayPal account is not required and all major credit cards are accepted. Online donations are fast, easy and secure. General Donations may include Memorials, Easter Appeal, Christmas Appeal, Building & Ground, Festival or a Specific Ministry.

* We also encourage the use Auto Bill Pay for convenience via your bank for ongoing Stewardship Donations which is fast and easy to setup. With traditional check and cash, your entire gift goes to the church. When using PayPal or credit cards keep in mind PayPal charges 2.2% +\$0.30 USD per transaction.

~On behalf of the Stewardship Committee we Thank You for your support and look forward to the year ahead~

PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY MEMBERS

IN THE SATURDAY OF THE SOULS

MEMORIAL SERVICES - March 5, March 12, March 19

In Memory of

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

****You only need to write the first name of each person. Please mail to the church office by March 1.**

What Stewardship means to me...

Please Note: Longtime Loyal Stewards of St. John the Baptist, Brett and Ana Mourer, have provided a comprehensive Parishioner perspective of 'What Stewardship Means to Me.' We have included Part 3 of this ongoing series below and sincerely thank Brett and Ana for their dedication to our church and their time to prepare this thoughtful message. The full article is also posted under Stewardship on the Church Website.

Page 33 of Beyond Wealth - Orthodoxy, Capitalism and the Gospel of Wealth states: "Material exchanges were meant to provide a means for mankind to transcend necessity (through almsgiving, poverty and ministry), they now become the means by which necessity continues to dominate mankind."

We also don't give to receive; we need to live the "give" way not the "get" way of life. We know we cannot outgive God, but does not God want us to thank Him for the gifts He has given to us? The elements used for the Eucharist—does it not say these are your gifts from your own gifts? The wheat and the grapes are from God, and we give back to Him bread and wine which He then mysteriously transforms into His body and blood. So, no matter what we give back to God, He gives us something better in return. Our giving does not benefit God because He owns the whole universe; giving is designed to help us outgrow our selfishness and learn not to be dominated by necessity, but by LOVE.

This is why we need to cease worrying if we are going to make it financially if we give to the Church. 10% sounds like so much to us. But God promises us that He will supply for our needs, but we must put Him first and His Church (as imperfect as it is) and what He promised, He will do. In Malachi 3:8-10, God accuses us of robbing Him. He states "'Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove me now in this," says the Lord of hosts. 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.'" Do you accept and have faith in the Lord's proclamation? Are you willing to prove the Lord's promise on this?

You might say, "Oh well, this is a quote from the Old Testament, this does not apply to us now." All right, then consider that everything we have He has given to us. So what is 10% (a tithe) or more to God? The Lord says that unless our righteousness exceeds the Pharisees, then we "will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:30). The Pharisees (of the Old Testament) gave 10% religiously. So, what does that mean for us? Does it not mean that we should be giving at least 10% of our income to the Lord if not more since "our righteousness needs to exceed the Pharisees?"

In Christian thinking, it used to be considered virtuous to "sell all your goods and follow the Lord." This is why many, if not most, saints gave away everything even all of their possessions. Christians used to have a "box for the poor" in their houses and would regularly put money there. Even the poor Christians, following the example of the woman with two mites, had a "box for the poor" in their home and they put whatever they could in their own boxes. But this idea is not too popular today. Unfortunately, being poor is looked down upon in today's society. Striving for riches and being rich and possessing things is looked upon very positively. We brag about our children when they are very successful in this world and have obtained riches and/or a high education that secures them a good job. We actually see that as being "virtuous" and being poor is looked down upon and judged harshly. Being rich has become something to strive for, but the Lord says the opposite. He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The Lord is not against us having necessities in this world. He is against us not putting forth effort in overcoming greed that influences us to hoard things for ourselves, and not to give to His Church and His people. Proverbs 19:17 states, "He who gives alms to the poor, lends unto God."

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 Fr. Stavros at Frstav@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.



Philoptochos 2016 Membership Drive!

We are on the MOVE for a Great New Year!

We Invite all women ages 18 to ???

To join the St. John the Baptist Philoptochos Annunciation Chapter!

Membership Drive: January thru April, Suggested Stewardship is \$30.00. However, we accept whatever you have in your heart to give. Your donation makes you a member of the National, The Metropolis and our Local Chapters of Philoptochos...

THANK YOU SO MUCH AND HAVE A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR 2016

Name _____ Date _____
Street Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Home Phone _____ Cell _____ Work _____
E-mail address _____

Please return from to: Jeanie Nenos, 14506 Nettle Creek Rd, Tampa, FL 33624
Or the Philoptochos mailbox in the church office.

Donations Needed for Great Lent and Holy Week

Great Lent begins March 14. 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 the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church” with “Lenten Flower Donation” on the memo line.

March 18	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 1 st Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
March 25	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 2 nd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
April 1	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 3 rd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
April 3	Veneration of the Holy Cross	Flowers for Tray for Procession	\$350
April 8	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 4 th Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
April 15	Akathist Hymn	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
April 25	Palm Sunday	Flowers for Icon of Palm Sunday	\$75
		Palms Strips & Branches	\$250 total
Holy Week		Pillar Candles for Windows (20)	\$15 each
April 25	Holy Monday	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex	\$75
	Bridegroom Service	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom on Solea (2)	\$75 each
April 27	Holy Wednesday	Flowers for Icon of Last Supper	\$75
	Holy Unction	Q-tips, Olive Oil, Flour, Prosphora (2)	See Fr. Stavros
April 28	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 29	Good Friday	8 Bags Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers	\$50
		Flowers for Epitaphios	Several Needed
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Apokathelosis	\$15 each
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Lamentations	\$15 each
		Icon of Extreme Humility	\$75
May 1	Pascha	Flowers for Icon of Resurrection	\$75
		Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb	\$75
		Silk Flower for Royal Doors	\$100
		Easter Lilies	\$25 per Lily



General Donations can now be made via PayPal under the Donate Online Tab of our church website as a one time or reoccurring donation. A PayPal account is not required and all major credit cards are accepted. Online donations are fast, easy and secure. We ask that you put a note in paypal what flowers you would like to donate to so we have it on record. Thank you for your Donation!



Please join us for the Eleventh Annual Lenten Retreat

At St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Tampa

***Let Us Lift Up Our Hearts: Reclaiming Physical, Emotional
and Spiritual Health in our Hearts***

Saturday, April 2nd 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 Speakers: Dr. Christina Stamoolis, Family Medicine Doctor

Vanessa Aviles, Group fitness Instructor and Online Coach

Father Stavros Akrotirianakis, Priest of St. John

Schedule:

9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy

10:00 a.m. Refreshments

10:30 a.m. Introductory Remarks: Fr. Stavros

11:00 a.m. Session One: Why it is important to maintain a healthy heart from a medical perspective: Dr. Christina Stamoolis, Family Medicine Doctor

12:00 p.m. Session Two: Physical Fitness: Exercising your way to a healthy body

1:00 p.m. Lunch

1:45 p.m. Session Three: The Relationship between Spiritual and Physical Health

2:45 p.m. Closing Prayer

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

Adults only please

Please return this registration form by mail or take it to the Church Office or email this information to Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com by **March 28**. We look forward to seeing you there!

Name: _____ Name of Spouse: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Small Group Bible Study

We have **Five Small Groups** that meet once a week. If you haven't joined a group yet, you may do so at any time!

Monday Night Bible Study (for everyone)

Location: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in the Administration Building meeting room

Group Leader: Charlie Hambos

Charlie.hambos@gmail.com, 813-843-8471

Meeting time: Monday evenings from 6:30– 8:00 p.m.

March Meeting Dates: March 7, 21, 28

East Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults)

Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient to those who live on the East side of town Riverview, Brandon, Valrico, Seffner, Lakeland

Location: Home of George and Donna Hambos

2604 Herndon Street, Valrico, FL 33596

Group Leader: Donna Hambos

dhambos@msn.com, 813-843-8412

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

March Meeting Dates: March 7, 21, 28

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

Location: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in the Administration Building in the meeting room

Group Leader: Father Stavros

frstav@gmail.com, 813-394-1038.

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

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

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

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: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in the Library

Group Leader: Bessie Palios

bmp1126@yahoo.com, 813-523-0347.

Meeting time: Tuesday evenings from 7:00-8:30 p.m.

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

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

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

Group Leader: Debbie Kavouklis

dkavouklis1@verizon.net, (813) 690-0155.

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

March Meeting Dates: March 1, 8, 22 (will meet at the church), 29

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

Wesley & Melissa Thompson - Clearwater, FL

Demetrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH

Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL

Bessie Bliziotes—Palm Cost, 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 the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church 2418 Swann Avenue, Tampa, FL 33609

The Lenten Covenant

A “covenant” is a promise. God has made covenants with us. In the Old Testament, He makes the first Covenant with Abraham, to be the God of Abraham’s descendants. The sign of this Covenant is circumcision. In the New Testament, God replaces the Old Covenant with a New Covenant, which is baptism and Holy Communion. If you are baptized and have received Holy Communion, then you have a Covenant relationship with God—you are part of the Covenant between God and His people. The Lenten Covenant is a promise between us and God—it is a promise to do certain things during Lent so that one can grow spiritually during Lent, with a promise to change one thing after Lent has ended so that spiritual growth continues during the year. ***The Lenten Covenant will help us in keeping the lifelong Covenant relationship we have with God by giving us a short-term covenant by which to evaluate our standing in the lifelong Covenant.***

How does the Lenten Covenant Work?

Below there is a form that lists a menu of plans to help in a Lenten Goal of growing closer to God this year. The menu includes fasting, prayer, worship, reading the Bible, reading a theology book, going to confession, changing one bad habit, and the one that is most important, a goal for once Pascha is over. The menu offers several levels of commitment for each area. Each area is important—it is important that you fast, pray, worship, read scriptures, go to confession, and change a bad habit if you are going to get something out of this Lent. But if you’ve never fasted before, the covenant offers different levels of difficulty. So if you’ve never fasted, perhaps you should check the easiest level. If you’ve mastered the first level, perhaps this year you challenge yourself with the second level. If you’ve never read the Bible, don’t commit to reading the whole Bible during Lent—that is a huge commitment. Commit rather to something smaller like reading a chapter a day, or perhaps reading the Gospels, something that is challenging but attainable. If you’ve never worshipped in church on a day that isn’t Sunday, don’t commit to every service during Lent, but commit to one service per week, or even commit to one of each of the Lenten services, which would be three extra services over the six weeks of Lent. Regarding confession, how many hours of your life have you spent alone with an Orthodox priest to talk about your salvation? If you are over age 20 and the answer is zero, perhaps you need to think about changing that this Lent. If you are over age 60 and the answer is zero, you’ve got even more incentive. Think about how many hours a year you spend watching television, or listening to music, going to movies, doing yardwork, gossiping on the phone—it adds up to hundreds of hours each year, thousands of hours over a lifetime. And then think about how many hours you’ve spent in your whole life talking about your salvation, about repentance, with an Orthodox priest. Sadly, for many people, the answer is zero. This could be the year you change that.

So, if you decide to do the Lenten Covenant, do the following:

1. Fill out the survey which follows.
2. Make two copies of it for each person in your household that is going to participate.
3. Put one copy in a place at home where you can see it, on the refrigerator, by your bedside, in your Bible.
4. Take the other copy of the covenant and place it in an envelope.
5. Seal the envelope and write your name and address on the envelope.
6. Bring the envelope to church on Sunday, March 13, and place it in a box that will be in front of the icon of the Virgin Mary on the solea of the church.
7. The box will be kept locked, the only person with the key will be Fr. Stavros
8. FATHER STAVROS WILL NOT OPEN THE ENVELOPES OR READ THEIR CONTENTS—these will remain private. Father Stavros will merely jot down the names on the envelopes to pray for these people throughout Lent, to pray that they will make good on their covenants. This is my commitment to you.
9. The box will remain in the church until the Resurrection Service on Easter as a reminder to you each time you come to church that you have a covenant or promise to God.
10. After Easter, your envelope will be mailed to you in your self-addressed envelope, as proof that the envelope was never opened, and as a way for you to see how you did.

Lenten Covenant for Children

(Older children should fill out the regular form) Things I promise to do this Lent (Check all that you wish to do)

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pray every day | <input type="checkbox"/> Say prayers at meals | <input type="checkbox"/> Go to confession during Lent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be nicer to my parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Do my chores without being told | <input type="checkbox"/> Share more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say prayers every morning | <input type="checkbox"/> Come to church each Sunday | <input type="checkbox"/> Read a short passage from the Bible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be nicer to my brother/sister | <input type="checkbox"/> Be more helpful at home | <input type="checkbox"/> each day |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say prayers every evening | <input type="checkbox"/> Receive Communion each Sunday | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Try harder in school | <input type="checkbox"/> Not say any bad words | |

PRAYER: *Lord help me to be successful in keeping the promises I have made. Help me to grow in my faith and love You more this Lent. Help me to be a nicer person and a better Christian. Amen.*

Sign Your Name

Make a copy for yourself, place your covenant in a sealed envelope, write your name and address on front of envelope. Bring covenant to church and place it in locked box on the solea in front of the icon.

The Lenten Covenant

Check as many as apply under each topic. You should (but need not) answer every topic. This is a matter of your own conscience and areas where you want to grow spiritually.

1. Concerning my prayer life, each day I will commit to:

- ☐ 5 minute period of un-interrupted prayer
- ☐ 5 minute period every morning of un-interrupted prayer
- ☐ 5 minute period every evening of un-interrupted prayer
- ☐ 5 minute period each morning AND evening of uninterrupted prayer
- ☐ Other: Write in here

2. Concerning Worship

- ☐ I'll commit to attending Divine Liturgy each Sunday.
- ☐ I'll commit to attending ONE additional service each week during each week of Lent.
- ☐ I'll commit to attending AT LEAST 1 Compline, 1 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and 1 Salutations Service.
- ☐ I'll commit to attending AT LEAST ONE Saturday of the Souls.
- ☐ I'll commit to attending the Forgiveness Vespers.
- ☐ I'll commit to preparing and receiving Holy Communion at least once a week during Lent.

Concerning Holy Week, I'll commit to:

- ☐ Every Service
- ☐ Every Evening Service
- ☐ One service each Day
- ☐ Specifically Holy Thursday—the Passion of Christ
- ☐ Other (write in here)

3. Concerning Fasting, I'll commit to:

- ☐ Level One: Fast from meat on Wednesday and Fridays and during Holy Week.
- ☐ Level Two: Fast from meat and fish on Wednesdays and Friday and during Holy Week.
- ☐ Level Three: Fast from meat the entirety of Lent and Holy Week.
- ☐ Level Four: Fast from meat and fish the entirety of Lent and Holy Week.
- ☐ Level Five Level Four and eliminate dairy products during Holy Week.
- ☐ Level Six Level Four and eliminate dairy products on Wednesdays and Fridays and during Holy Week
- ☐ Level Seven Level Four plus eliminate dairy products during all of Lent and Holy Week.
- ☐ Level Eight Level Seven plus eliminate oil and wine during Holy Week.
- ☐ Level Nine The Strict Fast-no meat, fish, dairy products, wine or oil during the entirety of Lent.
- ☐ I can't fast from food for health reasons. I will give up the following: (Write answer here).

4. Concerning reading the Bible, I'll commit to:

- ☐ Reading one chapter a day from some book
- ☐ Reading the four Gospels
- ☐ Reading the Psalms
- ☐ Other (Write in)

5. Concerning confession

- ☐ I'll commit to going once during this Lenten period either to Fr. Stavros or another Priest.
- ☐ I've been recently to confession and don't feel the need to go at this time.
- ☐ I don't believe in going to confession.
- ☐ I'll get more information on this sacrament and then make a decision.

6. Concerning Holy Communion, I will try to be prepared to receive

- ☐ Every Sunday
- ☐ Every Sunday and at Wednesday Pre-Sanctified
- ☐ At least every other Sunday

7. Concerning bad habits, here are one or two or a few bad habits I'll watch and change this Lent

- ☐ Gossip
- ☐ Self-aggrandizement
- ☐ impatience
- ☐ Greed
- ☐ Lust
- ☐ Disobedience
- ☐ Wasting time
- ☐ Self-pitying
- ☐ Not giving good effort at work/school/marriage/children
- ☐ Others: Write in here

8. One spiritual goal I want to commit to once Pascha has passed is:

Prayer: Lord help me to be successful in this task I am about to undertake. May it be for the growth of my soul and the improvement of my spiritual life. Help me to keep all the commitments I have made. Amen.

_____ Sign your name

Make a copy for yourself, place your covenant in a sealed envelope, write your name and address on front of envelope. Bring covenant to church and place it in locked box on the solea in front of the icon

**Note-alcohol should be consumed at a very minimum during Lent, and abstained from totally if possible. Also, activities should be curtailed, socializing a little more sedate, no dancing and loud music. During Holy Week, all unnecessary activities aside from work and children should be curtailed, so that we can focus on the Holy Days of the Passion of Christ.

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.**

~ March 2016 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 WBS 9:30 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m. Fr. Stavros clergy retreat 3/1-3/3	2** MBS 7:30 a.m.	3 Young at Heart 11:30 a.m. Greek School 6:00 p.m.	4** War Room Movie Night 6:30 p.m.	5 Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. (at cemetery)
6 Meat Fare Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Get Acquainted Sunday Youth Sunday GOYA 5:00 p.m.	7** EBS 6:30 p.	8** WBS 9:30 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	9** MBS 7:30 a.m.	10** Greek School 6:00 p.m.	11**	12** Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
13** Cheese Fare Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Sunday School Pre-Lent Retreat Forgiveness Vespers 6:00 p.m.	14** Canon of St. Andrew 10:00 a.m. Holy Unction 6:00 p.m.	15** Basketball 8:00 p.m.	16** MBS 7:30 a.m. 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner	17** Greek School 6:00 p.m.	18** Salutations 6:30 p.m.	19** Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Community Outreach
20** Sunday of Orthodoxy Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Tarpon Springs Independence Parade	21** Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. EBS 6:30 p.m.	22** WBS 9:30 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	23** MBS 7:30 a.m. 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner	24** Greek School 6:00 p.m.	25** Annunciation Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations 6:30 p.m.	26** Journey of Marriage Seminar with Fr. Gregory Georgiou
27** St. Gregory Palamas Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Oratorical Festival	28** Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. EBS 6:30 p.m.	29** WBS 9:30 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	30** MBS 7:30 a.m. 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner	31** Greek School 6:00 p.m.	**Fast Day	

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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

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www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

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TAMPA, FL

PERMIT NO. 461

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Timetable of Services

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

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

Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-394-1038 (Cell)
firstav@gmail.com

Pastoral Assistant Charlie Hambos

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-843-8471 (Cell)
Charlie.hambos@gmail.com

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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
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Magda Myer 813-909-2327

AHEPA

Gus Paras, President 813-254-6980

Altar Angels

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

Basketball

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

Bible Study

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Bookstore

Bill Manikas 813-960-3679

Chanter

Nick Andreadakis 813-516-6081

Choir

Artie Palios, Director 813-831-1294
Ruth Losovitz, Organist 727-688-2782

Community Outreach

Betty Katherine Katsamakias 813-468-1596

Dance Group

H XAPA MAE, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668
Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963
Kefi, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
Anna Maria Bavaro 732-239-9085
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

Elaine 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

REAL

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Oratorical Festival

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

Philoptochos

Lisa Alsina 813-728-1094

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

Usher

Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

Visitation Committee

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Welcome 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.