

# 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*

## April 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

## You Have to "Reflect" Before You Can "Reflect"

Shortly before His Passion and death on the Cross, Jesus offered a long discourse to His Disciples. It is the first of twelve Gospels we will read on Holy Thursday evening and is found in the Gospel of John, Chapters 13-17. At the end of the long discourse, Jesus offered a prayer to God the Father, on behalf not only of His disciples, but on behalf of everyone who will ever become a disciple, which means that this is a prayer for you and for me living in the world today. Allow me to quote a few verses from this prayer:

*"I do not pray for these (the original 12 disciples) only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. The glory which Thou has given me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as we are one, I in them, and Thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that Thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as Thou hast loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, may be with Me where I am, to behold My glory which Thou hast given Me in Thy love for Me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:20-24)*

Read this last sentence again carefully—Christ's desire for all of us is to be "with Me where I am," meaning to be with Him in heaven, at the right hand of God the Father. His second desire is for us to "behold My glory," meaning to gaze upon Christ with our own eyes and to not only see His glory but to share in it. And His third desire is for us to share the glory of God with God, in the same way that God was before the Creation of the world, meaning for us to exist in a state of perfect love with God and with one another, free from the sin of the fallen world, and to share this state of existence on a permanent basis. This is Christ's end hope for all of us. This should be the end goal for all of us.

### Show Me Your Glory

How many of us are familiar with the Old Testament story of Moses? Moses was a man who I can totally relate to. God called him to lead His people out of Egypt. Moses at times was filled with doubt, sometimes he lacked self-confidence, other times he was stubborn, sometimes he had a short fuse, with both the people of Israel and with the Lord. But he kept at it. He sometimes went to the Lord and threatened to quit, but he never did. One day, Moses was exasperated and he came to the Lord in total desperation. The Lord saw Moses, in a state of panic and sadness and asked Moses what He could do to

help him. Moses answered with one request: "Show me Thy glory." (Exodus 33:18)

*Moses said, "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory." And He (God) said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you My name 'The Lord'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," He said, "you cannot see My face; for man shall not see me and live." And the Lord said "Behold, there is a place by Me where you shall stand upon the rock; and while My glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by; then I will take away My hand, and you shall see my back; but My face shall not be seen." (Exodus 33:18-23)*

And reading further we see that Moses was profoundly impacted by the experience:

*When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. And when Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone and they were afraid to come near him. (Exodus 34:29-30)*

Have you ever thought about the word "glory"? Have you ever wondered what "the glory of the Lord" might look like? Most of us probably don't think about this often, if at all. We live in a world that is super-crazy-busy. The pace of life does not allow for us to slow down and reflect on things like this. We should, but many times we don't. Also, because we are surrounded by accomplishments of man, we forget about the accomplishments of God. For instance, as I sit in my office typing this message, I sit in a chair made by man, at a desk made by man, in a building built by man, using a computer made by man, typing on a keyboard with an arrangement of letters invented by man. Where is God's glory at this moment? If I didn't give it much thought, I might wonder if there is a God in the midst of all my man-made stuff. But, if I sit and reflect, I realize that God made the tree, from which the wood came to make my desk. God made the metal that was mined from the earth to make the chair. And God made the mind of the man who created the computer and invented typing. If I stop long enough to reflect, I am surrounded by God's glory, even in my man-made office.

### **We Are Truly Beautiful When We Reflect the Son!**

Have you ever admired the moon at night? We've all done that I hope. Have you ever seen a picture of the moon? If you study a picture of the moon taken by the astronauts who landed there in the late 1960s and early 1970s, you will see that the moon is a lifeless ball of gray dust, pock-marked with craters. It does not have the color and beauty of the earth. So, why is the moon so beautiful in the night time sky? Because it reflects the sun. God made the moon to reflect the light of the sun, so that the earth can have some minimal light at night. The moon by itself is lifeless and ugly. It becomes beautiful when it reflects the sun.

In the same way, we are like the moon. When we reflect God's glory in our lives, we are like the most beautiful moon. When we fail to reflect God's glory, we become desolate and ugly, just like the moon in the absence of the sun. We exist to reflect the SON. But before we can "reflect" the Son of God, we have to "reflect" ON Who is the Son of God, and what did He do for us, and why is it important and necessary that we reflect Him.

The annual journey of Lent and especially Holy Week provides the perfect opportunity to do so.

### **The Pace of Worship is Appropriately Slow**

We live in a fast-food society. Everything is fast. We seek faster internet speeds, data travels faster than ever before. Speed is good in a lot of things, but not where spirituality is concerned. Because it takes time to reflect ON God in order to reflect God in our lives. Just because it is good to have a quicker computer doesn't mean it is better to have a quicker prayer life.

The yearly cycle of services for Lent, and especially Holy Week, changes the pace of life for us. The Holy Week services are a slow march to the beat of God's drum. They take us to the time of His Passion, as we relive and remember that through the services, hymns and scripture readings. One of the reasons to make the Holy Week journey is to REMEMBER what He did for us. To meditate on His glory. We forget to do this. So, the Holy Week journey is put on the calendar for us, as an opportunity to spend a long week remembering what God did for us. It is a long period of reflection, so that when Pascha comes, we are better able to reflect the glory of God in our daily lives.

The services also allow us an opportunity to reflect on our own journeys to God. Are we reflecting God's glory as we should in our lives? We have beautiful opportunities in Great Lent, like the Great Compline service and the sacrament of Holy Unction, as well as the sacrament of confession, to come before God and say that we're sorry for the times we haven't reflected His glory as well as we should have, and to receive healing through the Grace of the Holy Spirit that comes through these prayers and sacraments. We have the beautiful opportunity to receive Christ through Holy Communion more often than at any other time of the liturgical year. I know that when I go to the beach in summer, when I put on sunscreen, it not only protects my skin, but my skin also becomes shiny because of the oil in the sunscreen. When we receive Communion, it protects our souls, and it also causes us to shine, because of the presence of Christ in us through Holy Communion.

### **The Theology of Fred Flintstone**

Many of us remember the cartoon "The Flintstones." "Fred" worked in a rock quarry, sitting on a dinosaur chipping away at rocks all day. At "quitting time," a bird would squawk, Fred would jump off the dinosaur and head home for the evening.

What does Fred Flintstone have to do with our life in 2016? Well, most of us do not live our lives in the present. We think primarily about past regret, or past glory, and we think about future achievement. So, we miss out on a lot of the present. The second thing we do is that we don't understand the concept

of “quitting time.” We either “quit” working too early, or we don’t quit working and we take work home. Both problems are solved by working to be present. If I’m going to work until 5:00 p.m. today (and actually today I’ll be here much later), I’m going to work hard until quitting time, and then I’m going to quit and go home and enjoy being home. I’m not going to quit at 3:00 p.m., or be so inefficient that I’m going to have to take work home. I will work hard, be present, and run all the way through quitting time and then at whatever time quitting time is today, I’m going to quit and go home.

How can I stay present? How can I be efficient? How can I touch all the bases? By myself I cannot. With Christ, I can. When I strive to reflect Christ in the present moment, I don’t get as easily distracted. When I try to remain in His presence all day, then I feel more joyful about what I am doing, and therefore feel more motivated to do what I am doing. How does one reach this state of remaining in His presence? By getting in His presence as often as possible, especially through daily prayer and at least weekly worship.

By participating in Holy Week, by putting aside other things in order to stand in His presence for this special week, it is going to prepare us better to reflect Him, and it will afford us an opportunity to reflect on how to better reflect Him. It will give us a good “boost” to take in all of His glory so that we can reflect it better when Holy Week is over. This issue of the Messenger is filled with helpful hints to get more out of the Holy Week experience, as well as to better prepare for Holy Week over the next few weeks.

The end goal of life is to share in God’s glory, to live in the state that mankind lived in before the Fall, in a complete oneness with the Lord and with one another. The first step to that goal is what you and I are doing today—are we reflecting His glory? Holy Week comes up on the calendar each year as an

opportunity to reflect on the Lord, so we can better reflect Him in our lives, culminating in beholding His glory face to face, at the end of life.

In I Corinthians 13:12, we read, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully.” Every year of our lives that passes, we each move closer to the “face to face” meeting with God. Each Holy Week should be an opportunity to “shine” the mirror so that we are ready to reflect God now, and share His glory forever. The Holy Week journey provides us yet another opportunity to learn “in part,” so that putting all the parts and the years together, we are able to “understand fully.”

So, make a plan from now to be part of as much of the Holy Week journey as possible—take time to “reflect” on Christ, so that you can better “reflect” Christ in your life. Again, the Holy Week journey is like a long, slow march to the beat of God’s drum. So slow down life in order to get in this beat for one week. Be deliberate, purposeful, and present. So that when the week is over, you can keep some remnants of its deliberateness, purposefulness and its beauty with you long after the journey is complete.

Come and reflect on God’s glory! Allow it to change your life! And reflect His glory to the world each and every day! Make “reflecting the SON” a daily goal!

I look forward to sharing in this journey with you again! Have a blessed remainder of the Great Lent, a meaningful Holy Week, and a Kali Anastasi!

With love in the Lord,  
+Fr. Stavros

---

## Ecumenical Service at Christ the King

Several hundred people attended the first ecumenical prayer service at Christ the King on Tuesday, February 22. Our choir sang along with the Christ the King choir. Both Father Len Plazewski (priest of Christ the King) and Father Stavros offered remarks. A collection was taken for International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), which raised \$3,543.00. A beautiful reception was held afterwards. We will be hosting a service at St. John the Baptist on Tuesday, September 13. The plan is to have two of these services each year, one in the spring at Christ the King and one in the fall at St. John the Baptist.



# Liturgical Schedule for April 2016

**Friday, April 1**      **Salutations to the Virgin Mary 3<sup>rd</sup> Stanza**      6:30 p.m.

**Sunday, April 3**      **Veneration of the Holy Cross**

Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.      Procession of the Holy Cross will be held at the end of the Liturgy

**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Luke

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

**Welcome Committee:** Greeters: Skip Higdon, Carole Fotopoulos; Ambassador: Megan Rindone; Caller: Christine Worley;  
Get Acquainted: Sandra Pappas

**Coffee Hour:** Greek Independence Day Program

**Monday, April 4**      **Great Compline** 5:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, April 6**      **9th Hour** 5:30 p.m.      **Pre-Sanctified Liturgy** 6:00 p.m.      **Lenten Dinner to Follow** - The AHEPA Family

**Friday, April 8**      **Salutations to the Virgin Mary 4<sup>th</sup> Stanza**      6:30 p.m.

**Sunday, April 10**      **Sunday of St. John Climacus**

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

**Altar Boys:** Captains Only

**Ushers:** Tammy Christou, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis

**Welcome Committee:** Greeters: Kalliope Chagaris, Elaine Halkias; Ambassador: Donna Hambos; Caller: Martha Kapetan

**Coffee Hour:** Small Group Bible Study

**Monday, April 11**      **Great Compline** 5:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, April 13**      **9th Hour** 5:30 p.m.      **Pre-Sanctified Liturgy** 6:00 p.m.      **Lenten Dinner to Follow** - Philoptochos

**Friday, April 15**      **The Akathist Hymn** 6:30 p.m.      **Divine Liturgy** 8:15 p.m.

**Sunday, April 17**      **St. Mary of Egypt**

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

**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. John

**Ushers:** Florin Patrasciou, Mike Trimis, Tammy Christou

**Welcome Committee:** Greeters: Katherine Sakkis, Genie Carter; Ambassador: Carole Fotopoulos; Caller: Peggy Bradshaw

**Coffee Hour:** Young at Heart

**Monday, April 18**      **Great Compline** 5:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, April 20**      **9th Hour** 5:30 p.m.      **Pre-Sanctified Liturgy** 6:00 p.m.      **Lenten Dinner to Follow** - Bible Studies

**Saturday, April 23**      **Saturday of Lazarus**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Sunday, April 24**      **Palm Sunday**

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

**Altar Boys:** Savvas Ferekides, Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, Karter Lenardos, Val Courialis, Frankie Giallourakis, John Palios, James Kavouklis, Brigham Sibley, Christos Nenos, Nicholas Katzaras, James Katzaras, Nicholas Alsina, Antoni Bavaro, Makis Crassas, Andrew Patrasciou

**Ushers:** Nick Kavouklis, Marcus Calpakis, Peter Theophanous

**Welcome Committee:** Greeters: Helen Cauthorn, Donna Trakas; Ambassador: Maria Xenick; Caller: Marenca Patrasciou

**Coffee Hour:** Philoptochos Palm Sunday Luncheon

**Sunday, April 24**      **Bridegroom Service** 6:30 p.m.

**Holy Monday, April 25**      **Pre-Sanctified Liturgy** 9:00 a.m.      **Bridegroom Service** 6:30 p.m.

**Holy Tuesday, April 26**      **Pre-Sanctified Liturgy** 9:00 a.m.      **Bridegroom Service** 6:30 p.m.

<b>Holy Wednesday, April 27</b>	<b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b>	9:00 a.m.	<b>Holy Unction</b>	3:00 p.m.
	<b>Bridegroom Service</b>	5:45 p.m.	<b>Holy Unction</b>	6:30 p.m.
<b>Holy Thursday, April 28</b>	<b>Vespertal Divine Liturgy</b>	9:15 a.m.	<b>12 Gospels</b>	6:30 p.m.
<b>Great Friday, April 29</b>	<b>Royal Hours</b>	9:00 a.m.	<b>Vespers /Apokathelosis</b>	3:00 p.m.
	<b>Lamentations</b>	7:00 p.m.		
<b>Holy Saturday, April 30</b>	<b>Vespertal Divine Liturgy</b>			
	<b>Orthros</b>	8:45 a.m.	<b>Divine Liturgy</b>	10:00 a.m.
	<b>Great Canon</b>	11:00 p.m.	<b>Resurrection Service</b>	11:45 p.m.
	<b>Divine Liturgy</b>	12:30 a.m.		

**Sunday, May 1 Pascha**  
**Agape Vespers** 11:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Anyone attending may serve  
**Ushers:** Gregory Tisdale, George Mitseas  
**Coffee Hour:** Easter Egg Hunt



**Monday, May 2 St. George**  
**Orthros** 9:00 a.m. **Divine Liturgy** 10:00 a.m.

## Notes for the Remainder of Great Lent

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

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

A Lenten Dinner generously hosted by one of our ministries, will be served after each Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, continuing a tradition we’ve had for several years. **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** (Heretismo) will be held on Fridays at 6:30 p.m. This service also lasts about an hour and is a series of prayers and devotions that invoke the intercessions of the Virgin Mary for our salvation. Service Books for this service will be available in the Narthex.

### 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 Father likes to give people whatever time they need. As it gets closer to Holy Week, more and more people will go, so he will be forced to go quicker, and it is very important not to be rushed in this Sacrament. **Please make all confession appointments by emailing the office or calling the office and speak to Monica or Charlie. They will be arranging all of Fr. Stavros’ appointments.**

### 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 St. Basil’s liturgy, significantly shortening them. The Anaphora of St. Basil (from the Creed until right before the Lord’s Prayer) has the priestly prayers significantly longer. They contain all the theology of the Orthodox Church. A copy of the “Anaphora” of St. Basil’s Liturgy has been placed in the pews for you to use on Sundays.



# What We Celebrate on the Sundays of Lent, Akathist Hymn, & Saturday of Lazarus

## Sunday, April 3 - Third Sunday of Lent - Veneration of the Holy Cross

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

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

## Sunday, April 10 - Fourth Sunday of Lent - S. John of the Ladder

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

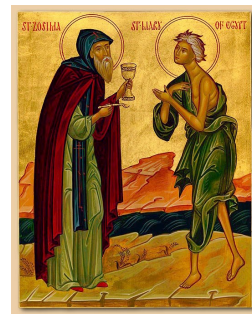


## Friday, April 15 - Vigil of the Akathist

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

## Sunday, April 17 - Fifth Sunday of Lent - St. Mary of Egypt

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

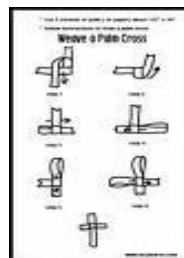


## Saturday of Lazarus, April 23 - Service of the Proskomide

Father Stavros has received the blessings of Metropolitan Alexios to celebrate the service of the Proskomide on the solea once a year, on the Saturday of Lazarus. The Proskomide is the service where the bread and wine are prepared to be offered at the Divine Liturgy. On Saturday, April 23, Father Stavros will celebrate this service at 9:30 a.m., on the solea at St. John and will explain the service to those who are in attendance. He will also pray for everyone in attendance and offer a piece of bread on each person's behalf in the preparation of the Holy Communion. Please plan to come to this service to see this important aspect of the Liturgy which is not usually witnessed by the congregation. If you've never seen this service, it is really something you should do at least once in your lifetime

## Making Palm Crosses

Following Divine Liturgy on Saturday, April 23, we will be preparing the palm crosses for Palm Sunday which is the following day. Please plan to stay for a while to decorate our church and make the palms as we do every year. No experience necessary. Come and we'll be happy to teach you.



How to  
Make  
Palm  
Crosses



## HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SCHEDULE FOR 2016

April 23 **Saturday of Lazarus**

*Commemoration of the raising of Lazarus from the dead*

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

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

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

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

April 24 **Palm Sunday-The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

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

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

Procession of the Icon of the Nymphios

*Theme: Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church; watchfulness*

April 25 **Holy Monday**

**9<sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.**

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

*Theme: The Parable of the Talents*

April 26 **Holy Tuesday**

**9<sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.**

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

The Choir will sing the Hymn of Kassiane

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

April 27 **Holy Wednesday**

**9<sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.**

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

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

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

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

April 28 **Holy Thursday**

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

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

Reading of the 12 Gospels, Procession of the Crucified Christ

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

**All-Night Vigil will follow the service**

April 29 **Good Friday**

**Reading of the Royal Hours 9:00-11:00 a.m.**

*Standing vigil at the Cross of Christ*

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

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

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

April 30 **Holy Saturday**

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

*Reading of Prophecies foretelling the Resurrection of Christ*

**Great Canon 11:00 p.m.**

May 1 **PASCHA**

**The Service of the Resurrection of Christ-Midnight**

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

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

**AGAPE Vespers 11:00 a.m.-noon**

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

Easter Egg Hunt for Children NOON

May 2 **St. George**

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

## ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΟΣ-2016

Σάββατο, 4 Απριλίου

**Σάββατο του Λαζάρου**

Ορθρος 8:30-9:30 π.μ.

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

Θεία Λειτουργία 10:00-11:15 π.μ.

Κυριακή, 5 Απριλίου

**Κυριακή των Βαίων**

Ορθρος 8:30 π.μ.

Θεία Λειτουργία 9:45 π.μ.

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου

6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Δευτέρα, 6 Απριλίου

**Μεγάλη Δευτέρα**

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Τρίτη, 7 Απριλίου

**Μεγάλη Τρίτη**

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:30 μ.μ.

Τετάρτη, 8 Απριλίου

**Μεγάλη Τετάρτη**

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

Ακολουθία Ευχελαιονγία τα παιδιά 3:00-4:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 5:45-6:30 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία Ευχελαιον 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Πέμπτη, 9 Απριλίου

**Μεγάλη Πέμπτη**

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

Ακολουθία Σταυρώσεως 6:30-10:00 μ.μ.

Παρασκευή, 10 Απριλίου

**Μεγάλη Παρασκευή**

Οι Βασιλικές Ωρες 9:00-11:00 π.μ.

Αποκαθηλώσις 3:00-4:15 μ.μ.

Επιταφιος Θρήνος 7:00-10:30 μ.μ.

Σάββατο, 11 Απριλίου

**Μεγάλο Σάββατο**

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

Ο Κανών 11:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία της Αναστάσεως Μεσανυχτα

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

Κυριακή, 1 Μαΐου

**Αγιον Πάσχα**

Μεγας Εσπερινος της Αγάπης

11:00 π.μ.

2 Μαΐου

**Του Αγίου**

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

# The Prayer of St. Ephrem: The Inner Struggle is Real

By Charlie Hambos

*O Lord and Master of my life,  
Take from me the spirit of sloth,  
Despair, lust of power and idle talk;  
Grant rather the spirit of chastity, humility,  
Patience and love to thy servant.  
Yea, O Lord and King,  
Grant me to see my own transgressions  
And not to judge my brother,  
For blessed are Thou unto the ages of ages.  
Amen.*

When we think of Syria, these days, we think of ISIS, war, torture and destruction. A war has been going on there for a long time. Not the war we see today but a spiritual war and during Great and Holy Lent, we are all to engage in the war against the passions, against Satan and against the world. It is no surprise that the prayer “par excellence” of Great Lent comes from St. Ephrem the Syrian (306-373 A.D.) St. Ephrem was born in the town of Nisibis (modern day Nusaybin) on the border of Turkey and Syria, which, according to the media is a difficult border because of the conflict and subsequent refugee crisis.

The Prayer of St. Ephrem, is significant during Great Lent for several reasons. The first, is that it is particular to the services of Great Lent. Here at St. John the Baptist we will hear this prayer mainly at the Great Compline services on Monday evenings during Great Lent and the 9th Hour Before Pre Sanctified Liturgy. We also heard this prayer at the Forgiveness Vespers service and the Canon of St. Andrew at the very beginning of the fasting period. If we were to celebrate the daily cycle of services during Lent, this prayer would be at each one of those. Another reason why this prayer is significant during Great Lent, is because it elicits a movement of the body. This movement is called a Great Metania, a prostration in which the forehead touches the floor. If someone were to come to the seminary during Great Lent, during the reading of the Prayer of St. Ephraim, they may think they were in a mosque and not at the Holy Cross Chapel. In fact, the Muslims, took this position of prayer from the early Christians. Keep this in mind. Metania, obviously comes from the Greek word, Metanoia, which very simply translates as repentance. Of course repentance does not do justice for this word which actually means a complete turning back after a heart piercing realization that we have done God wrong. As Olivier Clement says in his commentary on the Prayer of St. Ephrem, “Metania (metanoia) refers specifically to penitence as a conversion of our entire perception of reality.” A complete refocus, a complete conversion from one reality to the “REAL-ality,” that is life in Jesus Christ. Let’s dive into the prayer with some help from Olivier Clement’s commentary on the prayer. By doing this, we will learn why this prayer is a perfect prayer, which our Holy Tradition tries to keep alive in our hearts and minds. In the prayer itself, we will see the struggle that each one of us faces for trust, humility and respect for others.

**O Lord and Master of my life...** “Lord, have mercy.” We know this. It is the response to each petition of any of the Di-

vine Services of the Orthodox Church. We are not simply asking God to have mercy on us. We are asking him to pour out His mercy, love, compassion, peace, and grace; like oil, over our heads and cover our entire body and soul. God is our Master. In our earthly life, however, we have many other masters, which only make the inner struggle more difficult and down right painful. In Matthew 6:24, Christ says, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Mammon is an evil influence or idol. In our daily life, we struggle between the Master of our Life and other little masters: money, television, smartphones, pride, anger, lust etc. Basically, it isn’t going to work, so the struggle is real, so-to-speak. According to Clement says,, “I exist by His will; His Breath enlivens the earth from which I was made; He calls me and elicits a response; through His incarnation He has become ‘master of my life.’” In addition, Clement the Lord is the Master of our lives because, “He is its source, because I am continually receiving it from Him, and because it is He who gives and forgives, and continues to give in abundance a future made new: ‘Go, and sin no more.’” If God, is already the source of everything in our life and is responsible for giving to us in abundance of our needs, then why, why don’t we let Him be the master of our life. The portion of the prayer beckons us to place all our trust in Him. We are to cast all our worries, our pains, our sorrows on the Lord. He is the Master and He can take care of it all. In Matthew 11:28, Christ says, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He wants to give us rest but we must make Him the Master of our life.

**Take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power and idle talk...** Here are the major obstacles that keep us from making the Lord, the Master of our Life. These obstacles sum up our human condition. A sloth is a very cute animal, which moves very slowly. This sloth, however, is not cute and is very destructive. This sloth is not being lazy or slow. This sloth is means “forgetfulness,” which according to the ascetics is “greatest of all sins.” This forgetfulness causes us to not be amazed, to be excited or to even see our life. It is the antithesis of “stopping to smell the roses.” We must strive to remain amazed and in awe of the creation and how God works through us and others everyday our life. Clement says, “It is a frame of mind in which the only relevant criteria become utility, profitability and the correlation of price and quality.” Watch out Western World! Orthodoxy is coming for you! We forget to give thanks to God for the little things, leading us ultimately to forget God and all of His creation.

“This ‘sloth’ is an anesthetic which affects our whole being, this insensitivity, the closing off of the depths of our heart, the sexual and intellectual frustration, all lead to ‘despondency.’” This is despair, this is aversion of life itself. We become numb to everything. We do not care. We no longer have excitement about our life because we don’t have Christ. We forget Him.

If we don’t have the Lord as the “Lord and Master of Our Life,” we feel the urge to become the Lord and Master of oth-



ers with the lust of power. “We need slaves and enemies. We invent them. We lord over others to feel as if we were gods, we have enemies in order to hold them responsible for our anxiety.” Clement goes on to explain that the first Christians were martyred because they refused to call Caesar Lord. Only God is Lord. “Christ stripped the power of its sacred character by reminding us to render to God what is God’s, and to Caesar what is Caesar’s.” Ultimately, the lust of power seems that it will give us some gratification in our life but it is a false gratification.

Lust of power is only exacerbated by idle talk, “an expression taken from the Gospels refers to every thought, to every bit of imagination that withdraws from silence, from wonder from the intensity of being, and from mystery. It refers to any approach to man that claims to explain and simplify him without taking into account all that is in him.” Silence is a problem these days because there is not enough of it. We are afraid of it and thus we have to fill the void with stupidity. If we just sat down and listened in complete silence, then we will hear the Word of God. We cannot explain everything that happens to us. We do not need to explain. As Orthodox Christians, we are mystics. We see beauty in the mystery of the unknown of the unexplainable. We must keep the mystery alive because however we try to explain it, to break it down, is going to ruin it at its very essence.

**Grant rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to Thy servant...** The prayer pinpoints the four major obstacles, representative our human condition causing us to look inside our hearts, to pierce our hearts and see that we are continually run into these obstacles. However, the prayer does not leave us hanging. It doesn’t say, go and fend for yourself. No, it gives us four complimentary virtues: chastity, humility, patience, and love. These virtues are to be used to battle against the four obstacles of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk. The virtue to the obstacles aren’t necessarily complimentary, one for the other, but they are powerful tools.

Chastity is not only about sexuality. Limiting chastity to sexuality, does not do the virtue justice of its deep theological meaning. Someone who is chaste is someone who is not wavering of their faith, who can withstand the storms and stand firm. It is an exchange of eros love with agape love. Agape love is the love of God, which we must show to everyone regardless of if they have done us wrong and make our stomach feel twisted. A chaste persons brings this love to all relationships, both personal and interpersonal. This is also the love, which is the fourth virtue prayer. Chastity is strong enough faith to bring love to all no matter what. We are asking God to bring these things to us.

Humility is the number one virtue and one of the only characteristics that Satan himself does not understand and will flee from. It is what holds our faith together. Clement says, “The thread of my existence, that is so precarious, so often on the verge of breaking, is held together only by the strange will of some Other.” We have to humble ourselves in order to allow God to be the master of our life. Clement quotes John Climacus saying, “Humility, is a gift of God and from God Himself, for it is said: learn neither from angels nor from men but from

me—as I dwell within you, as I illumine and work within you—that I am gentle and humble of heart, in thought and in spirit, and your souls will find rest from their struggles and comfort from your thought.” St. John says it all, there is no need to expound. One important note about humility which Clement mentions and we must not forget, “Humility is a virtue we may perceive in others but which we cannot see in ourselves. Anyone who says: ‘I am humble’ is woefully vain.” The only “I am” of anything that exists is the “One who is” and that is God.

Patience is the antithesis of despondency, of despair. We despair because we don’t get what we want right away. Since, we are not allowed to see humility in ourselves, we can surely see when we are not being patient. Clement says, “Patience puts its trust in time. Not merely ordinary time, where death has the last word and where time erodes, separates and destroys everything, but time mingled with eternity, as it is offered to us by the Resurrection. The time that moves toward death is one of anguish; the time that moves toward resurrection is one of hope.”

Love, we spoke about earlier. It is the thing, which must penetrate our souls, to love like God loves in all situations to all people and to all of creation. It is St. Paul which reminds us that love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” in his 1<sup>st</sup> Letter to the Corinthians (13:7). Clement says, “Freeing oneself from impatient and hopeless ‘passions’ through patience and hope enables one little by little to acquire apatheia, which is not stoic impassibility but an inner freedom and participation in the ‘foolish love’ which God bears toward His creatures.” What kind of crazy God would continue to love us despite all of the unnecessary evil we bring upon our brother, ourselves, which indirectly is brought upon Him? The Lord and Master of our Life, that’s who.

**Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou unto the ages of ages. Amen....** Here the prayer concludes with one of the worst sins we can commit, “justifying oneself while condemning others, deifying oneself while damning others, hating, despising and discounting others and doing it all with a clear conscience because we are right,” says Clement. We all do it. It is the worst. In the prayer we ask God to show us that we do this and how horrible we are. We must not judge others. God is the judge. Let him do something. Let him at least judge, if we can’t let him be the Master of our Life. “To see one’s own sin does not consist of tallying up one’s transgressions, it means feeling asphyxiated and lost, drowning, in vain thrashing about in this lost state and betraying love.” This is obviously a terrible feeling but if we still have this feeling that means we understand the weight of sin in our lives and only have one option and that is to reach out to the Lord and Master of Our Life. Ultimately, the goal is to see our own sin and not judge our brother but instead love him. If we disappoint ourselves enough, there will be nothing that anyone can do to disappoint us. Again, this process isn’t going to happen immediately, and may never happen but it something can strive to achieve. We must take every situation we find ourselves in and be present and try to show the love of Christ because we want others to show the love of Christ to us.

# Community News

## Parish Registry

**Baptism** - Olive Francies Dumphy, daughter of David and Halen (Kostis) Dumphy, was baptized on Sunday, February 28. Godparents were Mark Costis and Sean Costis. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism** - Kyra Theodora Christopher, daughter of Louis Christopher and Penny Plakas, was baptized on Saturday, March 19. Godparents were Harry and Kyriakoula Chambi. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism** - Alexandra Mia Laliotis, daughter of Stavros and Adriana (Sanchez) Lalitois, was baptized on Sunday, March 20. Godparents were Calvin and Vivian Samuel. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism** - Daphne Grace Kane, daughter Lance and Georgia (Lalitois) Kane was baptized on Sunday, March 20. Godparents were Stavros and Adriana Lalitois. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism** - Alexxa Jade Shockley, daughter of Michael and Pauline (Cavas) Shockley, was baptized on Sunday, March 20. Godparent was Constantina Malecki. Na Sas Zisi!

**Chrismation** - Camille (Christine) Curry, was Chrismated on Sunday, March 13. Kalliope Chagaris was the sponsor. Congratulations!

**Wedding** - Cameron Colvin and Christine Raffoul were married on Saturday, February 20. Abdaloah Raffoul was the Sponsor. Congratulations!

**Wedding** - George Guarino and Michelle Graves were married on Sunday, March 6. Diane Kalogridis was the Sponsor. Congratulations!

**Funeral** - Mary Diniaco, mother of Pete Diniaco, passed away on Thursday, March 3. Funeral services were held at St. John on Monday, March 7. May her memory be eternal!

**Funeral** - Jack Gombos passed away on Saturday, March 12. Funeral services were held at St. John on Wednesday, March 16. May his memory be eternal!

**Condolences** to Artie Palios and family, on the passing of her sister, Elaine, on February 18. May her memory be eternal!

## Get Acquainted Sunday, April 3



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

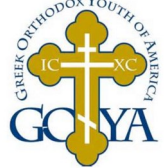
Saturday, April 16 from 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. St. John the Baptist's Community Outreach will be serving breakfast to the Homeless at the First Presbyterian Church in Downtown Tampa. The church is located at 412 Zack Street. The entrance is on Polk Street. Grab a cup of coffee and come help us! We love to see new and old faces!



## GOYA

The **GOYA meeting** will be on Sunday, April 3, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center.

Our **12<sup>th</sup> Annual GOYA Lenten Retreat** will be held April 8-9-10. We will welcome GOYAns and advisors from around the Tampa Bay area who will be with us for the Salutations service on Friday, April 8 and the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, April 10.



**Luminaries for Good Friday and Easter** - These are little bags with votive candles inside that line the way of the procession of Christ's tomb around the church on Good Friday and are lit around the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. On each bag names can be written of loved ones, either for their health and well-being if they are living (Easter), or in memory of someone who has passed away (Good Friday evening). The GOYAns will be selling the luminaries after church on Sundays, April 10, 17 and 24. This is a wonderful way to honor those who are living, those who passed away, to make our services even more beautiful and to help out our GOYAns.

## Greek Independence Day Luncheon Sunday, April 3, 2016

We will be hosting our annual Greek Independence Day Luncheon and program on Sunday, April 3, 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.



# Thank You

**Ryan Rindone** who changed all the light bulbs in the church recently. He replaced our old bulbs with higher efficiency, lower energy bulbs. Thank you to the guys who play basketball on Tuesday nights for the donation and Thank you Ryan!

**A Big Thank You to Garden of Memories/Myrtle Hill Cemeteries** who allowed our church to use the mausoleum chapel at Garden of Memories Memorial Park FREE of charge for a Divine Liturgy on Saturday of the Souls for the fourth year in a row. Approximately 60 parishioners attended the Liturgy and afterwards accompanied Father Stavros to bless the graves of their loved ones. We will continue to make this an annual tradition. If you missed it this year, please come join us next year.

## Ushers Meeting

A Meeting for all ushers will be held on Sunday, April 17, following Divine Liturgy, in the Zaharias Room. All ushers are requested to attend. Tom Georgas is the Head Usher for our parish and we will be re-organizing the groups as well as going over the procedures for Holy Week. Are you interested in serving as an usher? We are looking for some more people to serve in this capacity. If so, please come to the meeting on April 17. If you are on the list as an usher and do not wish to serve in this capacity, please notify Tom Georgas at [Georgas@verizon.net](mailto:Georgas@verizon.net).



St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church will be celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and we need you! We are collecting historical information on our Parish...please share information you wish to be considered for presentation in the 60<sup>th</sup> festivities. Submit your historical information - photos, text or personal statements to [sigoc60th@gmail.com](mailto:sigoc60th@gmail.com). We will be collecting until Tuesday, May 31. Should you have photos or text needing to be scanned please use the email above and you will be contacted to coordinate scanning your items.

**We are very excited to collaborate with all the parishioners on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Please stay tuned to the Messenger and Bulletin for further announcements as to the anniversary festivities.**



St. John the Baptist Philoptochos Annunciation Chapter will be having a meeting Sunday, April 17 immediately following the Divine Liturgy.

The Ladies of Philoptochos will be baking in the kitchen Wednesday, April 20 starting at 9:00 a.m. for Saturday of Lazarus and Palm Sunday Bake Sale! Please come by on April 20 to help bake!

The Ladies are also having A Palm Sunday Luncheon Sunday, April 24. Please save the date!



## Save the Date for our Annual Picnic

Our Annual Pascha Picnic will be held on Sunday, May 15, following the Divine Liturgy! Please mark your calendar for this afternoon of fun and fellowship. More information to come in May.



The **11<sup>th</sup> Annual Adult Lenten Retreat** is on Saturday April 3 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at St. John the Baptist. The Topic is Let Us Lift Up Our Hearts: Reclaiming Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual Health in our Hearts. Retreat Speakers are Dr. Christina Stamoolis, Family Medicine Doctor, Vanessa Aviles, Group fitness Instructor and Online Coach, and Father Stavros Akrotirianakis, Priest of St. John the Baptist. The cost is \$15. If you have not signed up yet, please do so now!



**The deadline for applications for The American Foundation for Greek Language & Culture Scholarship applications for Dr. Demetrios Halkias and Mr. & Mrs. Kourmolis is Monday, April 4!** These scholarships are for College Students currently enrolled in graduate studies or undergraduate studies. AFGLC will be presenting two scholarship for each. The Scholarships will be presented at our AFGLC Conference on April 16, 2016.

# Sunday School News

We would like to thank the parishioners of St. John the Baptist, our parents, Fr. Stavros, Charlie Hambos, our Staff, and especially our children for making our Sunday School Program a success. Our teachers are dedicated to preparing and presenting lessons that will encourage a stronger understanding of our Orthodox faith.

March was a very busy month for the Sunday School. Our topics were the Sunday of Orthodoxy (First Sunday of Lent) and Being a Good Friend. (Second Sunday of Lent—The Paralytic). Charlie Hambos was also very busy with our students. He always does a children's sermon on Youth Sundays and he worked with our 3rd graders this month.

Our March YOUTH SUNDAY took place on Sunday, March 6. We need to thank our children who are singing louder and more beautifully than ever under the direction of Maria Xenick. We also would like to thank our Epistle Reader, George Hambos. He did an exceptional job. The Prospora was made by our Kindergarten, 1st Grade, and 2nd Grade on Sunday, March 27, under the guidance of Melissa Krinos. Our children are truly great stewards of St. John the Baptist.

On Sunday, March 13, our SUNDAY SCHOOL PRE-LENTEN RETREAT took place. It was a wonderful opportunity for our students of all ages/grades to prepare for our forty day journey through Great Lent. We held our retreat during regular Sunday school time, and our lessons focused on the Saturday of Souls and the Kolyva taught by Melissa Krinos, important days of the Triodion and the Sundays of Great Lent presented by Charlie Hambos, and the Lenten Calendar, Covenant, and the Prayer of St. Ephraim taught by Vickie Peckham. Fr. Stavros met with all of our Sunday School parents during this retreat and at the conclusion of this event all of the students went into the church for a short service about forgiveness. We would like to thank everyone who made this Pre-Lenten Retreat such a success.

One of the best ways to prepare for Pascha is to participate in the Sacrament of Confession. Each Sunday School student in 1st through 6th Grade had the opportunity to participate in this important Sacrament with their classmates. During the GOYA retreat on April 8-10 our 7th-12th graders will have the opportunity to experience Confession. We would like to thank Father Stavros for hearing the confessions of over 70 of our students.

On Sunday, March 20, our children did a wonderful job in the Icon Procession during the Sunday of Orthodoxy service. Prior to this procession Charlie Hambos taught our students all about the Sunday of Orthodoxy.

On Sunday, March 27, the first step of the 2015 Oratorical Festival took place at our church. Many of our students participated and spent months working on their presentation under the direction of Peggy Bradshaw. Participants and winners will be acknowledged in the next Messenger.

We would like to thank all the families that brought a Lenten dish to the PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY DINNER Sponsored by the Sunday School on Wednesday, March 30. It was a pleasure to offer this delicious meal to our parishioners after such a spiritually motivating service.

Speaking of Lent and Holy Week, our Altar Boys, Myrrh Bearers, and Maiden for the Bridegroom Services are preparing and excited for their roles during this important time in our church. Everyone is also looking forward to our Sunday School Good Friday Retreat on Friday, April 29.

+++ May everyone have a blessed Lent, Holy Week, and a spiritually uplifting Pascha experience +++

---

## Excused Absences from School for Good Friday

If you would like to have your child/children attend Good Friday Services at St. John, please pick up a letter from the baptistery in the front of the church.

## Easter Egg Hunt

The Annual Easter Egg Hunt will take place on Easter Sunday, May 1, following the Agape Vespers, at noon. Please plan to attend the Agape Vespers as a family beginning at 11:00 a.m. which will be followed by the Easter Egg Hunt.





# Great and Holy Friday Youth Retreat



**Friday, April 29, 2016**  
**10:00 AM – 4:00 PM**

\*Service of Royal Hours - 9:00 – 10:45

Our retreat will begin in church at 10:00 a.m. for the last part of the Service of Royal Hours

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

**Please r.s.v.p. your child by Friday, April 20, 2016**

Call or email Debbie Nicklow at

[Debbienicklow@hotmail.com](mailto:Debbienicklow@hotmail.com) or 813-920-0892

\*Excused absence forms from school will be available\*

The retreat will end with The Apokathelosis Service-  
Descent from the Cross Service at 3:00 p.m.

All Parents are encouraged to attend!

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

\*Parent volunteers are needed for any part of the day!\*

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

---

## **A Note from Father Stavros to Our Sunday School Teachers and Students**

Over the course of several Sundays, I heard the confessions of most of our Sunday School students. I want to thank all of our Sunday School teachers for preparing our students for what was a moving experience for ME, as well as for them. The relationship with a spiritual father is something of great importance in the Orthodox Church. The relationship is akin to that of our relationship with a doctor. The doctor is the physician of the body. The priest is the physician of the soul. So, as we go to the doctor regularly for check-ups on our physical health, we should be going to the priest for a check-up on our spiritual health. We know that as we get older, our doctor's appointments get more complex. More tests are needed. More visits are needed. It's the same thing with our spiritual check-ups. As children, they are brief. What we did over the past several weeks was to get our children to understand that we go to God, through the person of our priest, to not only confess our sins but to try to form new habits in our Christian walk. With them getting used to this at a young age, when they get older, when they are teenagers and adults, the mechanisms will already be in place for them to come to their priest with the more serious issues that we all face. Thank you to supporting the Sunday school program. Thank you to our teachers for preparing our children for a wonderful experience. Thank you for our children for taking their first steps in what is a beautiful tradition in our faith. And thank God for continuing to bless our community in so many ways.

**And a note for the rest of the community, the procedure for the children works for adults too**—the students were asked to make two lists—the things I have done wrong, and the things I want to work on. The same principle works for adults—make a list of what you've done wrong, and what you want to work on—you read that in front of an icon of the Lord in the presence of a priest, have a short discussion about the lists, receive a prayer of forgiveness and absolution and go about your life, now free of guilt and shame, with a renewed sense of commitment with your faith. There is a third list that adults may also want to add, a list of questions—confession is an excellent opportunity to ask questions about fasting, receiving Communion, Orthodox theology or anything else that will aid you in your spiritual journey.



# AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – April 2016

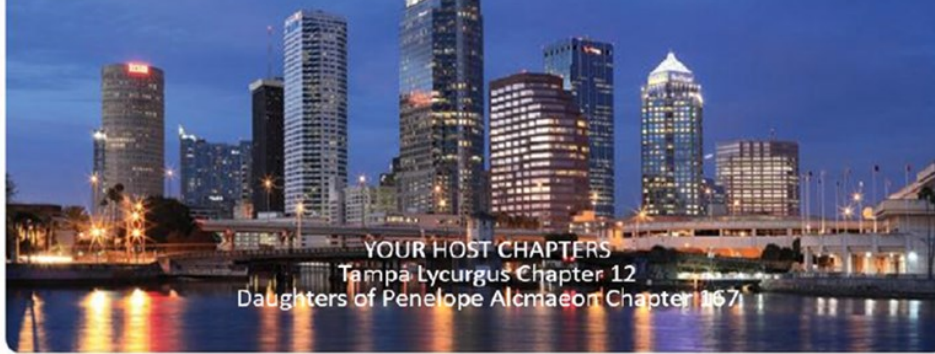
## 2016 AHEPA DISTRICT 2 CONVENTION

THE AHEPA FAMILY - VOICE OF HELLENISM – YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW



### JOIN US IN TAMPA BAY

FOR THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE EVERY WAY IN TAMPA BAY



2016 AHEPA District 2 Convention In Tampa, Florida  
June 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> 2016

We are looking forward to our upcoming AHEPA Family Citrus District 2 Convention with great anticipation as we hope you are. The convention is to be held at the Floridan Palace Hotel, 905 Florida Avenue, Tampa, Florida on June 9-12, 2016 and we have prepared many interesting fun and educational activities for your pleasure.

**Pre-Convention Activities on June 9** will begin with a visit to the Tampa Museum of Art to view the exhibit **“The Classical World”** from the museum’s extensive collection of Hellenic art and to hear from Seth Pevnick, the museum’s well known and articulate curator of Antiquities. The afternoon will include the **AHEPA Family Salad Super Bowl**, a fun and exciting competition to discover the AHEPAn or Daughter who is the best and most creative salad maker in the state. The evening will be completed with a visit to historic Ybor

City and dinner including the **Flamenco Dancing Show at the Columbia Restaurant**, a historic world renowned restaurant famed for its Mediterranean cuisine.

**On Friday, June 10**, We begin with a Luncheon Honoring Our Past Leaders those AHEPAns and Daughters that have served as leaders of our organizations. In the evening we will spend time in Greece with our **AHEPA Family Goes Greek Night** event featuring Greek dancers, costumes and the unique cultural activities of the many regions of Greece, Cyprus and the Islands. Complete with Greek food and dancing into the wee hours.

**On Saturday, June 11**, Lunch will feature the **Celebration of the 90th Anniversary of the Founding of Lycurgus Chapter 12** and a look back in history at AHEPA in the yesteryear. Finally the evening and the Convention will come to a close with the formal **Grand Banquet** replete with a plethora of VIP dignitaries including our very own Congressman Gus Bilirakis. Our Guest Speaker, Gregory Pappas, editor of the Pappas Post, will challenge and inspire us to lead the way into the future with his multimedia presentation on **“AHEPA the Voice of Hellenism – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”** and the evening will conclude with dessert and dancing.

## AHEPA FAMILY EASTER PICNIC

EASTER SUNDAY MAY 1, 2016 AT LOPEZ PARK 4810 N. HIMES AVENUE TAMPA, FLORIDA  
1:00 PM TILL SUNDOWN FREE TO EVERYONE

**This event is organized every year by AHEPA AND THE DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE. EVERYONE IS WELCOME INCLUDING, AHEPANS, DAUGHTERS, MAIDS OF ATHENA, SONS OF PERICLES, FOREVER YOUNG MEMBERS, MEMBERS OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY AND THEIR FRIENDS AND GUESTS, IN SHORT, EVERYONE.** This is our fourth year **BUT** it is a continuation of a tradition which stretches back to the early 1900’s in the Tampa community. The Event is Free to Everyone!



# Stewardship 2016

## The Stewardship Committee wishes everyone a blessed Lenten Journey.

Our mission as stewards is to spread our faith, make it grow, and make sure it perpetuates into the future and we embrace this journey together. Without our loyal Parishioners this would not be possible. We thank you for affirming that every aspect of our lives comes as a gift from Him. As Christian stewards we seek the heart of God in faithfully, joyfully and gratefully managing all the gifts God has given. God looks at the heart, not the hand—the giver, not the gift!

We remain humbled by the hearts coming forward this year and the growth within our church. We have over 37 new members in 2016 and over 48% of our Stewards have increased their pledge.

~ A Little Comparison ~	2016	2015
<b>Pledged for Year*</b>	<b>\$402,813.<sup>00</sup></b>	<b>\$336,698.<sup>00</sup></b>
<b># Parishioners Pledged</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>232</b>

\*Based YTD as of 3/14/2016

### *Technology on the Move..... for Stewardship!*

*If you haven't completed a Pledge form for 2016\* it just got easier!*

Online Pledge Forms and Online Donations (via PayPal) are now available at on the churches website under the Donate Online Tab at [greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com/donate-online](http://greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com/donate-online).



*Stewardship Donations and General Donations can also be made via PayPal as a one time or recurring 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 require a completed Pledge Form to be considered a Steward of St. John the Baptist in 2016.*

**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  
Demitrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH  
Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL  
Bessie Bliziotis - Palm Cost, FL  
Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL  
Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL  
William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL

#### Friend of St. John the Baptist

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

*I wish to be a "Friend of St. John the Baptist". 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

# 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 4 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.

When we leave this earth, we will not be judged on how much money we have in our bank account, what degree we obtained on this earth or what worldly success we obtained in this life. But for sure one of the things that we will be judged on is whether we were greedy on this earth, did we learn to give of ourselves, and yes, that includes money. Were we willing to support the work of God on this earth or were we only concerned about having more and more, and with accumulating riches, degrees and human recognition for ourselves? Were we willing to exhibit love in caring for others by sharing our blessings by providing financial assistance? This life will pass by quickly and be like a "dream," but eternity is forever! Is it not more important to worry about what kind of a house we will have in eternity as opposed to what house we live in here on earth? Matthew 6:19-21 states, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

We must not view stewardship as a burden or allow ourselves to feel like someone is trying to squeeze money out of us or that someone is trying to manipulate us into giving to the Church. These thoughts are not from the Lord, but from the enemy. Therefore, we must guard our heart and repel those thoughts when they try to attack us. Know for sure that the enemy does not want you to give and be blessed. Therefore, the enemy of our souls has created a slew of reasons to influence us why not to give, because he knows very well that there is a spiritual law that governs the entire universe which states that it is "more blessed to give than to receive."

At times, giving will stretch us and make us wonder whether we will be able to pay all of our bills, but God is faithful and helps us meet all of our obligations. He will bless all of us not just financially, but emotionally and spiritually with His grace, peace, protection, favor at work, healing, etc. This also means that we may not have the fanciest car, the nicest house,

the finest designer clothes, etc. We need to learn to give without expecting God to give back to us what we want, but have faith in Him that He will supply what we need.

Some people are able to handle being wealthy because they know the Source of their wealth and use it to give alms, but for some of us wealth makes us greedy for more, and we quickly forget the Source of our wealth. Also, riches can sometimes make us forget to depend on God, but rather we depend on our wealth. So, it may not be best for some of us to have very much in this life. Regardless, we must trust in the Lord that our true reward will be given to us in the next life. In our society, a person is identified by "what he has instead of what he is in the Lord." Do you really think that God values society's definition of success? Do you think that He wants us to describe ourselves by how many possessions we have or what degrees we have achieved?"

God does not need our money or our degrees. God is more interested in how we used our money and our degrees. Did we use money and degrees for self-recognition and to "get ahead" or did we use them for almsgiving and to help others who are in need? Did we assist those who cannot afford the services that our degrees allow us to provide? For example, pro bono work for a lawyer, more affordable medical assistance to those in need for a doctor, etc.

Everything belongs to Him. He created the entire world, and He is the energy and intelligence behind the entire universe. He gave it to us. He wants us to learn to give so that we can also become Godlike, and learn to truly be His children. He gave Himself to us. We should give back to Him because we love Him. Then, we are blessed because we are attaining His likeness.

May we all grow in God's love and give freely as He freely gave of Himself for us!

Love in Christ,  
Brett and Ana Mourer

---

## 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](mailto:Frstav@gmail.com). Thank you for your consideration.

# Donations Needed for Great Lent and Holy Week

We have many special celebrations during Great Lent. 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.

<b>April 3</b>	Veneration of the Holy Cross	Flowers for Tray for Procession	\$350
<b>April 8</b>	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 4 <sup>th</sup> Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
<b>April 15</b>	Akathist Hymn	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
<b>April 25</b>	<b>Palm Sunday</b>	Flowers for Icon of Palm Sunday	\$75
		Palms Strips & Branches	\$250 total
<b>Holy Week</b>		Pillar Candles for Windows (20)	\$15 each
<b>April 25</b>	<b>Holy Monday</b>	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex	\$75
	Bridegroom Service	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom on Solea (2)	\$75 each
<b>April 27</b>	<b>Holy Wednesday</b>	Flowers for Icon of Last Supper	\$75
<b>April 28</b>	<b>Holy Thursday</b>	Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion	\$75
		Wreaths for Bottom of Cross (2)	\$150 each
		Scattered flowers at base of cross	\$50
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)	\$15 each
<b>April 29</b>	<b>Good Friday</b>	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
<b>May 1</b>	<b>Pascha</b>	Flowers for Icon of Resurrection	\$75
		Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb	\$75
		Silk Flower for Royal Doors	\$100
		Easter Lilies	\$25 per Lily

## Pascha versus Easter

In every language except English and German, the feast of the Resurrection is identified with a word whose root is “Pasch.” For instance, in Spanish, the word is “Pasqual.” “Pascha” comes from the Hebrew for “Passover.” The first Passover occurred in the Old Testament book of Exodus. The last of the 10 plagues on the Egyptians was the death of the first born son. The Hebrews were told to slaughter an unblemished lamb outside the city wall on a Friday, to not break any of its bones, and to spread it’s blood over their doorways. Those who had the blood of the lamb on their homes would be spared. The angel of death then came to the Egyptians and killed the first-born son in each home. Passover was a holiday celebrating the deliverance of the Hebrews from the bondage of Pharoah and his taskmasters. The Crucifixion occurred at the Passover—the Lamb of God was killed outside the city wall on a Friday, none of His bones were broken, and by His blood we are set free from the bondage of sin and death. “Easter” comes from the word “Oestre” and was actually a Pagan holiday each spring. That’s why in the Orthodox Church, and in our personal lives, we should try to use the word “Pascha” to describe the feast of the Resurrection, rather than Easter.



# *Holy Week Guidelines*

## **Why are the services at night during Holy Week called Matins Services, even though they are taking place during the evening hours?**

Traditionally, the Matins or Orthros is done in the early morning hours, ending with the sunrise, when the Great Doxology (Glory to God who has shown us the light) is sung or read. The Orthros or Matins Services of Holy Week are VERY long. The Orthros of Good Friday lasts almost three and a half hours. Same thing with the Orthros of Holy Saturday. During the Middle Ages, the services were transposed ahead several hours, from the early morning hours to the evening of the preceding night. Thus, the Orthros of Good Friday was moved to Holy Thursday evening, and is the service we are familiar with, the 12 Gospels and the Procession of the Crucified Christ. The Lamentations, which is the Orthros of Holy Saturday, was moved from Saturday morning to Friday night. Thus, the Vespers services, like the Vespertine Liturgy of Holy Thursday morning (which commemorates the Last Supper), was moved from Holy Thursday evening to Holy Thursday morning, where it currently is celebrated. Thus, our services commemorate events about 12 hours before they happened in real time, with the Last Supper Holy Thursday morning, the Crucifixion Holy Thursday evening, etc. The Descent from the Cross on Friday afternoon remains at its proper time, as a Vespers service, but the interval between the Vespers of Friday afternoon and the Orthros of Holy Saturday, which normally would be 12-15 hours, is only about 3 hours. The Resurrection Service takes place at the proper time. The schedule of transposing services begins Palm Sunday with we celebrate Orthros and Liturgy in the morning, as we usually do, and celebrate the Orthros of Holy Monday on Palm Sunday evening. There is a vespers on Palm Sunday, which has been suppressed in modern usage.

## **Holy Unction**

The Mystery of Holy Unction is established upon the words and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ and is a sacrament of the church. This is a sacrament of healing and transformation from a bruised and hurt world to the deliverance from sin and corruption. All sacraments of the church are administered by the priests of the church. In fact, the primary role and identity of the priests of the church is to be the celebrant of the sacraments. Because of this, **Holy Unction may not be taken home.** Fr. Stavros will anoint people who are unable to attend services on Holy Wednesday evening on Holy Thursday and Good Friday after each service, and will make such announcements at each of these services. For those unable to come to church, Father will be happy to come to your home and anoint those who are home-bound. And as for use throughout the year, Holy Unction is kept in the church year-round. If there is ever a time when you would like to be anointed, or have a loved one anointed, all you have to do is ask. TWO Holy Unction services will be held this year, on Wednesday, April 27, one at 3:00 p.m. for those with young children, and one at 6:30 p.m. for everyone else.

## **Bridegroom Service for Last Supper**

There is actually a Bridegroom Service which is traditionally celebrated on Holy Wednesday evening. However, this service has been suppressed in most parishes because of the Sacrament of Holy Unction. This service, however, is important because it contains the Gospel lesson of the Last Supper. So, if you are not going to attend church on Holy Thursday morning, and would

like to have a complete narrative of Holy Week, please plan to attend this brief service at 5:45 p.m. on Holy Wednesday, which will be celebrated before the evening's Holy Unction Service.

## **Holy Thursday Evening - The Service of the Passion-**

The service of the 12 Gospels and procession of the crucified Lord is the longest service of the Church year. On Holy Thursday, light and darkness, joy and sorrow are mixed. At the "upper room" and in Gethsemane the light of the kingdom and the darkness of hell come together. The way of life and the way of death converge. In many parishes this service is not very well attended.

**However, one cannot truly celebrate the Resurrection if he/she has not stood at the foot of the cross of Christ.** As one prayer of the Sunday Orthros states, "Through the Cross, joy has come to all the world." Without the Crucifixion, there could be no Resurrection. Thus, after the Resurrection Service on Holy Saturday Night, one could argue that Holy Thursday evening is the next most-important service of Holy Week. *If you are unable to attend the entire service, then please come from 7:30-8:30 p.m., witness the Procession of the Crucified Lord, venerate His precious Body on the Cross and leave early. But please do not abandon the Lord as He hangs on the Cross.* **HOLY THURSDAY EVENING, AS YOU EXPERIENCED LAST YEAR FOR THOSE WHO ATTENDED IS THE MOST POWERFUL SERVICE OF THE ENTIRE HOLY WEEK, AND OF THE ENTIRE CHURCH YEAR.**

## **An All-Night Vigil at the Cross of Christ**

For the past three years, we have done an All-Night Vigil at the Cross of Christ. Those who participated found it VERY inspiring. The vigil will begin following the service of the 12 Gospels and will continue until the service of the Royal Hours, so it will last from approximately 10:30 p.m. on Holy Thursday evening until 9:00 a.m. on Good Friday morning. We will have a sign-up sheet for people to sign up for an hour or two to stand at the Cross and read from the book of Psalms as well as other prayer books. Charlie Hambos will again be coordinating this for us. If you are interested in participating at the All-Night Vigil on Holy Thursday, please contact Charlie Hambos. A sign-up sheet will also be made available towards the end of Lent for this purpose as well.

## **Good Friday**

**Decoration of the Epitaphios** will be done in church following the Royal Hours on Good Friday. All are invited to come and help decorate the tomb of Christ. Please, however, work quietly—this job is meant to be solemn not social.

**Apokathelosis**—The Service of Apokathelosis (the Un-Nailing) reenacts the narrative of Christ descending from the Cross. The figure of Christ is removed from the cross and wrapped in a new linen cloth, carried into the sanctuary and placed on the altar table. In the same service, a procession with the Epitaphios (embroidery of the dead Christ) is made around the interior of the church, and the Epitaphios is placed in the Kouvouklion (tomb of Christ). We will celebrate the Apokathelosis at 3:00 p.m.

## **The Lamentations and the Epitaphios Procession**

The Lamentations are short, poetic verses lamenting the Passion, Death and Burial of Christ. Interspersed with the Lamentations are Psalm verses from Psalm 119, the same verses we sing at a funeral service, which is appropriate, as the Lamentations are the



funeral service for the Lord. The service starts with the Canon, and after the Canon is complete, the priest opens the Royal Doors, the lights are turned up, and the Lamentations begin. Everyone is invited to sing together. Books will be provided for your use. The outdoor procession of the tomb of our Lord will take place, weather permitting, at the Service of the Lamentations. We invite all the faithful to participate in this procession by proceeding in an order, quiet and dignified manner befitting the solemnity of this occasion. Please, refrain from conversing with others or acting in a way which will bring attention to you instead of the dead Lord. Please sing along with the choir—don't check your cell phone for messages. This is a time to pray, not to text message! Everyone will pass under the Epitaphios, symbolizing the passing from death to life, re-enter the church quietly and await the resumption of the service. Finally, everyone will be given a flower from the Epitaphios as a blessing at the end of the service.

### **Anastasis Service**

The service of the Anastasis will begin at 11:00 p.m. on Holy Saturday evening, with the chanting of the Canon. Shortly before midnight, the light of the Resurrected Christ will be given to all the faithful. We will then go outside, weather permitting, to read the Easter Gospel and sing the Christos Anesti for the first time. Please proceed outside in an orderly manner so that we can complete this service in a timely manner. We will then proceed back into the church for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. **Please plan to stay for the entirety of the Divine Liturgy on Easter. Plan from now to stay for the entire Liturgy, the most joyous Liturgy of the year, and to receive Holy Communion. After all, we don't break our fast with meatballs and cheese, but with Holy Communion.** There will be a reception following the Divine Liturgy for all in attendance, in the Kourmolis Center. After making the journey through Holy Week together, what better way to continue our celebration than to sit down as a family and break bread together on the greatest feast day of the church year.

### **Blessing of Baskets of Food**

It is the Orthodox Tradition on Easter that we do not only bless eggs but other types of food that will go on the table for the Easter Banquet. Though this practice has become sort of dormant in the Greek Orthodox Church, it is very much alive in other Orthodox jurisdictions. Therefore, if anyone wishes to bring a basket of food to be blessed on Easter night, they may come and place it beneath or around the table on the Solea where the basket of Easter eggs will be.

### **Reading of the Resurrection Gospel at the Agape Vespers**

Those interested in participating in the beautiful Easter Vespers of Agape on Easter Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. by reading the Gospel of the Resurrection in a foreign language are encouraged to see Fr. Stavros or call the church office, prior to Holy Week. **WEEK. DON'T JUST SHOW UP EXPECTING TO READ. WE NEED TO CAREFULLY PLAN THE SERVICES SO THEY ARE DONE PROPERLY.** Please come to the Agape service by 10:45 a.m. to find out where you will stand for the reading of the Gospel. The reading is from the Gospel of St. John 20:19-25. You may read it in any language you wish, the more the better.

### **Holy Communion to be given only during Divine Liturgy**

There are eight opportunities to receive Holy Communion during Holy Week - Saturday of Lazarus, Palm Sunday, Holy Monday morning, Holy Tuesday morning, Holy Wednesday morning, Holy

Thursday morning, Holy Saturday morning, and of course, at the Paschal Divine Liturgy on Easter. Please plan to receive Holy Communion through prayer and fasting at as many of these services as possible. Incidentally, a person may receive Holy Communion each time it is offered. For instance, you can receive Holy Communion on both Holy Saturday morning and at the Anastasis. For those who have kept the entire Lenten fast, you can receive Holy Communion conceivably, all eight times during Holy Week. Since there are so many opportunities to receive Holy Communion during the Divine Liturgies of Holy Week, **Holy Communion will only be given in the context of the Divine Liturgy, not before or after.** (no drive through Communion) Also, even if we receive Holy Communion on Holy Thursday or Holy Saturday, we should not break the fast until the conclusion of the Easter Liturgy. When receiving Holy Communion, it is important and necessary to have celebrated the entire Liturgy. Please no phone calls about what time is Communion, so you can duck in and out quickly. Come for the entire service. Be there for the invitation to enter the Kingdom, be there for the reading of the Gospel, the reciting of the Creed. And after Communion, don't just take your Communion and run, as many people will do on Holy Saturday morning, stay the remaining minutes of the services and pray the prayers of Thanksgiving in the back of the Liturgy book.

### **A note on Kneeling and Sitting**

It is the tradition of the church that we kneel or stand for the majority of the services. In fact, in many old churches, there were not even pews, the people did not sit at all. However, by dispensation, we now have pews in the church and the faithful are allowed to sit at certain points in the services. Because of the long lines for Communion and because the length of the services, and because many of our congregation are elderly and not in good health, **PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO SIT** as you need to during Holy Week, especially during Holy Communion. Also, for those with bad knees, just sit with your head bowed during times we are kneeling, do not attempt to kneel. Our church never seeks our physical hurt in worship, nor do we want people passing out or becoming sick, which will only make us nervous and anxious.

**The same thing goes for fasting! If you are on medication, are sick, are pregnant or nursing, you do not need to fast before Holy Communion. Please follow the directions of your doctor. Again, fasting is designed for our spiritual benefit, not as a threat to our health.**

### **Holy Week Books are available for sale in the church bookstore.**

The Holy Week Book contains the words and hymns of all the Holy Week services and will serve not only as an aid to worship but as a complete theology book, for the services of Holy Week contain all the theology of the Orthodox Church. These books are well made and will last forever, so get yours today and get more out of your Holy Week experience.

### **Doing it all**

The experience of attending all of the Holy Week services is rare indeed. But if you are able to do it this is a beautiful experience everyone should try at least once in their life. How often do you have the opportunity to receive Holy Communion 8 times in 9 days, to be within 12 hours of having received or receiving again for a week! How often do you have the opportunity to attend two services a day for a week! For a very uplifting and unique experience, please consider coming to all the services—as a priest, I go to all the services—I know the effort, the fatigue, the pain, but also the joy that only comes when you “do them all.”

# Church Etiquette by Fr. Stavros

*As we are in the Lenten and Paschal seasons, many people will be attending church services. It's always helpful to be reminded of a few basic points of etiquette for our church services. I have expanded on the article I have printed in years past, so please reread this one anew this year.*

## Some General Thoughts

At a recent baptism, where the sponsor was chewing gum with his hands in his pockets, made me think that we need some continued commentary on church etiquette. The Orthodox Church is a sacred space. Our society is losing its understanding of sacredness in general, but the Orthodox Church is a sacred place. When you enter the church, you are entering a piece of heaven on earth. There are large icons of the Lord, the Virgin Mary and the Saints, that dominate the church edifice. The smell of incense reminds us of our prayers going to heaven. The Body and Blood of Christ are present at all times in the tabernacle on the Altar Table. So, whether there is a service going on or not, the church is sacred at all times.

When we enter the church for a service, before a service has begun, we should be quiet and reverent. If speaking, it should be in hushed tones. It is frustrating that before a baptism, the volume level in church would be the same as in a restaurant or bar, and that we often have to ask people for their attention to begin the service, or ask them to quiet down. Leaving the church is the same thing—when waiting for Antithoron, please do so quietly, and whisper if you are going to speak.

**Cell phones** should be turned off during the service. This is a time to disengage from the world and enter into God's world. The only cell phones that should be on are for doctors who are on call who come to church and these should be on vibrate mode.

**Gum** belongs at a ballgame, not at church. Our mouth should be praying and singing in church, not chomping on gum.

**Lipstick** stains have been left on the icons in the narthex or on the special icons that are on the solea. Please be careful that you do not leave lipstick marks on the icons. You should not wear lipstick on Holy Thursday or Good Friday. These are days of extreme humility and sadness. Do not leave lipstick marks on the body of Christ as it hangs on the Cross. Please refrain from wearing lipstick if you plan to receive Holy Communion.

**Hands in pockets** are too casual. Our hands should be in our laps or at our sides or folded in front of us, a position of reverence and attention.

**Don't Cross your legs in church** because it is too casual. When standing in church, either have your hands on the pews in front of you, cross them in front of you, or hold a liturgy book in front of you. When sitting, place hands in your lap, not around the person next to you. Have your feet flat on the floor, not crossed legs.

**Cocktail dresses** are too short for church. Low-cut tops are inappropriate for church and really for anywhere. Dress in a manner that befits an encounter with the living God.

**Strapless dresses**—in monasteries, women must have their heads covered in church. In our church, we only ask for the

shoulders. A three inch wide strap is appropriate. Less than that is not.

We should put on our Sunday best for church. If the best at your disposal is blue jeans, then come in blue jeans. But don't opt for blue jeans if you have other attire. If the best you have is a T-shirt, then do not stay away. But if you own a polo shirt or a button down shirt, or a coat and tie, then come at your best.

We would never want anyone to stay away from church because of lack of an expensive wardrobe. Merely, put on the "best" that you have in your wardrobe for church, and come to church respectfully, and ready for worship, not like you are ready for a night on the town. As a society, we have become altogether immodest. I do not wish to return to the overly dressed gentlemen and ladies of the middle-ages, but it seems that we have taken it to the other extreme. And outside of church, we should consider what kind of statement our clothing makes about us and the Christian values of modesty that we claim to hold.

## Arriving at church

**Come on time** - The time to arrive at church is before the service starts. If you arrive after the Divine Liturgy begins, try to enter the church quietly and observe what is happening. **If it is the Small Entrance, the Gospel, the Great Entrance, the Creed or the Consecration (kneeling), then do not enter the church.** Wait until these are finished and then quickly find a seat. Do not enter the nave while Father is giving the sermon. Try to not interrupt the Liturgy by your entrance. The best way to avoid this situation is to arrive on time.

**Venerating icons** - It is customary to venerate icons in the Narthex when you enter into the church. When venerating (kissing) an icon, you are venerating an image of holiness. A Holy Person, or the LORD Himself is depicted in each icon. Pay attention where you kiss. It is not appropriate to kiss one of the saints on the lips. Rather, kiss the hands or feet of the saint, or if the person depicted in the icon is holding a cross, Gospel or scroll, you can venerate that, along with the hand or feet of the person depicted in the icon.

**Lighting candles** - Lighting candles is an important part of Orthodox worship. We light them along with offering personal prayers. Thus, it is not appropriate to be lighting candles during the Small Entrance, Gospel, Great Entrance, Creed or Consecration.

## While in Church

**Talk only to the Lord during the services** - worship is not an appropriate time to greet your friends and neighbors. Please leave that for the coffee hour.

**Leaving the church early** - our Sunday school students go to class after Holy Communion, so that they may receive proper instructions. For those who are not in Sunday school, or when there is no Sunday school, it is expected that everyone will remain in church until the end of the service. To receive Communion and immediately leave is to treat the church like a res-

taurant where we come and go as we please.

### **When do I make the sign of the cross?**

You can make the sign of the cross any time you wish, but please do it in a reverent way. It is not necessary to cross oneself three times in a row. Once, and reverently, is sufficient. Making the cross sloppily many times makes it look like we are strumming a guitar. There are some times when we should cross ourselves.

#### **These include:**

- Anytime you hear the name of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- When you hear the name of the Theotokos/Virgin Mary
- Before and after venerating an icon, the cross or the Gospel book
- When you enter and exit the church building
- When you cross in front of the altar, from one side of the church to the other.
- As the Holy Gifts pass you during the Great Entrance
- Before and after the Holy Gospel, when saying "Glory to You O Lord, Glory to You."
- At the phrase "In one, holy, catholic and apostolic church" in the Creed.
- At the words of Institution - "Take, Eat, this is My Body"; and "Drink of this all of you, this is My Blood."
- Before and after receiving Communion - Make the sign of the cross before it is your turn and after you've stepped away so one does not hit the chalice.
- When the priest comes out with Holy Communion and says "With the fear of God, with faith and with love draw near."
- On any petition or prayer that speaks to your heart.
- When the priest censes you, or blesses you, you can make the sign of the cross, or simply bow your head.

#### **Listen to the words of the service** they tell you what to do!

At the Small Entrance: "Come let us worship and bow down" make a slight bow

Let us lift up our hearts: Look upwards to Christ in the dome and lift up your hands

Let us bow our heads to the Lord: Pretty self-explanatory, bow your head to the Lord.

**Sing with the choir** and offer the responses of the liturgy, this is a work of the people, ALL the people. Recite the Creed and Lord's Prayer as well.

### **Kneeling**

Put the kneelers up and down quietly.

### **Kissing the hand of the priest**

When greeting a priest, you should kiss his hand as a sign of respect that this is the hand that holds the Holy Communion. This goes for in church, and also outside of the church, for instance when greeting a priest in his office or in the hall. Also, when you kiss the priest's hand (or the bishop's) you receive a blessing in return, they offer you a blessing in return.

### **For Holy Communion:**

- Pray the Communion Prayers silently as Father prays aloud
- As you are waiting in line, pray the Jesus Prayer, "Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner," or the prayer of the repentant thief "Lord, remember me in Your

Kingdom" repeatedly.

- Don't have your hands in your pockets
- Girls, wipe off lipstick before receiving
- When the person before you is receiving, make the sign of the cross.
- When it is your turn to receive, say your Orthodox name to the priest, even if he knows your name.
- Either take the cloth and hold it under your chin or allow the altar boy to do that for you. Come close to the chalice so that Father doesn't have to reach.
- Open your mouth wide
- Close your mouth on the spoon.
- Wipe your lips.
- As you walk away, make the sign of the cross
- Take a piece of the blessed bread.
- Pray the post-Communion prayers in the Liturgy book if you are staying in church.

Holy Communion is the Body and Blood of Christ. There has never been a documented case of disease being transmitted through Holy Communion. Every priest in the Orthodox Church, after distributing Communion to all the faithful (and undoubtedly someone is sick in our church each Sunday when over 250 people are receiving) consumes what remains of the Holy Communion. No priest gets sick from doing this. Father chooses to put a lot of Communion on the spoon, so that you can "taste and see how good the Lord is" (Psalm 34:8). **So please don't pull away quickly, because it makes him nervous because we do not want the Body and Blood of Christ to end up on the floor.** Please approach with not only fear of God, with faith and with love, but also with care. This IS THE Body and THE Blood of Christ, "shed for the life and salvation of the world" (Liturgy of St. Basil) and imparted to us for "the remission of sins and life everlasting."

**Bread at the end of church** is called Antithoron which means "instead of the Gifts." Antithoron is not Holy Communion but needs to be treated with respect and reverence. When you approach to receive Antithoron, cup your hands one inside the other, kiss the hand of the priest as he places the bread in your hand, and then eat the bread carefully so that crumbs don't fall all over the place. This is holy and blessed bread! When waiting for Antithoron at the end of the service, please do so quietly, and whisper if you are going to speak.

**Small Children** - We love that there are so many children at St. John the Baptist. Please use discretion and common sense when it comes to taking them out when they become fussy. A little noise is alright and certainly expected but loud crying drowns out the choir and distracts everyone. As the Holy Week services are long and run late, for those who bring small children to the services, please sit near either the side door or in the back and if your child becomes fussy, please take them outside for a few minutes.

**Thank you for your cooperation in honoring the sanctity of our Holy Church.** Your cooperation will assure that our services will continue to be celebrated with the proper honor and dignity with which they should be afforded and will make our celebration of Holy Week and Pascha truly memorable. These etiquette practices should be observed all year round!

# 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.

**April Meeting Dates:** April 4, 11, and 18

## **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.

**April Meeting Dates:** April 4 and 11

## **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.

**April Meeting Dates:** April 6, 13, and 20

## **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.

**April Meeting Dates:** April 5 and 12

## **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)

**April Meeting Dates:** April 5, 12, and 19

**ALL BIBLE STUDIES WILL ATTEND PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20.**

## 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](http://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.**



~ April 2016 ~					
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
**Fast Day					<b>1**</b> <b>Salutations</b> 6:30 p.m. Young Adult Discussion
					<b>2**</b> Orthros 8:15 a.m. Liturgy 9:00 a.m. Adult Lenten Retreat 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
<b>3**</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Get Acquainted Sunday Greek Independence Day Program GOYA 5:00 p.m.	<b>4**</b> <b>Great Compline</b> 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Philoptochos Board 7:00 p.m. EBS 6:30 p.m.	<b>5**</b> WBS 9:30 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>6**</b> MBS 7:30 a.m. <b>9<sup>th</sup> Hour</b> 5:30 p.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified</b> 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner	<b>7**</b> Greek School 6:00 p.m. Young at Heart 11:30 a.m.	<b>8**</b> GOYA Lenten Retreat <b>Salutations</b> 6:30 p.m.
<b>10**</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. AHEPA Meeting GOYA Luminaries	<b>11**</b> <b>Great Compline</b> 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. EBS 6:30 p.m.	<b>12**</b> WBS 9:30 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>13**</b> MBS 7:30 a.m. <b>9<sup>th</sup> Hour</b> 5:30 p.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified</b> 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner	<b>14**</b> Greek School 6:00 p.m.	<b>15**</b> <b>Vigil of Akathist</b> <b>Akathist Hymn</b> 6:30 p.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 8:15 p.m.
<b>17**</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Philoptochos Mtg. Usher Meeting GOYA Luminaries	<b>18**</b> <b>Great Compline</b> 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>19**</b> WBS 9:30 a.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>20**</b> MBS 7:30 a.m. Baking day- Philoptochos <b>9<sup>th</sup> Hour</b> 5:30 p.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified</b> 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner-Small Group Bible Studies will attend	<b>21**</b> Greek School 6:00 p.m.	<b>22**</b>
					<b>23**</b> <b>Saturday of Lazarus</b> <b>Orthros</b> 8:30 a.m. <b>Proskomide</b> 9:30 a.m. <b>Vespers</b> 10:00 a.m.
<b>24**</b> <b>Palm Sunday</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. <b>Liturgy 9:45 a.m.</b> Philoptochos Palm Sunday Luncheon GOYA Luminaries <b>Bridegroom Service</b> 6:30 p.m.	<b>25**</b> <b>Holy Monday</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified</b> 9:00 a.m. <b>Bridegroom Service</b> 6:30 p.m.	<b>26**</b> <b>Holy Tuesday</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified</b> 9:00 a.m. <b>Bridegroom Service</b> 6:30 p.m. <i>No Basketball</i>	<b>27**</b> <b>Holy Wednesday</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified</b> 9:00 a.m. <b>Unction</b> 3:00 p.m. <b>Bridegroom Service</b> 5:45 p.m. <b>Unction</b> 6:30 p.m.	<b>28**</b> <b>Holy Thursday</b> <b>Vespers</b> 9:15 a.m. <b>Service of the</b> <b>12 Gospels</b> 6:30 p.m. <b>All Night Vigil at the</b> <b>Cross</b>	<b>29**</b> <b>Good Friday</b> Sunday School Retreat <b>Royal Hours</b> 9:00 a.m. <b>Vespers</b> 3:00 p.m. <b>Lamentations</b> 7:00 p.m. GOYA Coffee Hour
					<b>30**</b> <b>Holy Saturday</b> <b>Liturgy</b> 8:45 a.m. <b>Great Canon</b> 11:00 p.m. <b>Resurrection Service</b> 11:45 9.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 12:30 a.m. <b>Paschal Reception</b>



## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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

officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com

www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

NONPROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE

**PAID**

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

#### **Parish Council**

Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867  
Mike Xenick, Vice President 813-340-8737  
Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747  
Ed Gerecke, Treasurer 813-229-4306  
George Chagaris 727-420-1920  
Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947  
Skip Higdon 813-831-9021  
Catherine Mitseas 813-571-0658  
Byron Nenos 813-789-0729  
Despina Sibley 813-758-0520  
Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534

#### **Office Staff**

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

#### **Adult Greek School**

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 Katsamakis 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 Katsamakis 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

#### **OCF**

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

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.