

# ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

# THE MESSENGER

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

## August 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

## It Matters

I'm writing this message on June 30, as I'm about to leave for the Metropolis of Atlanta's St. Stephen's Summer Camp. It is always somewhat bittersweet to leave. I enjoy serving our community, as I enjoy summer camp, and I don't like being away from my church family very often. This is home. This congregation is like family. The Divine Liturgy is the weekly family meal. While my thoughts today are of the events that will happen in the next few weeks, and by the time you read this message I'll be back home, hopefully safe and sound. As I write this message, I am thinking back on events of the last month in our world. Needless to say, it hasn't been a great month.

1. There was controversy over whether a gorilla should be shot so a boy could be saved.
2. A young music star was assassinated after a concert in Orlando
3. 49 people who went out for a night of fun at a club were brutally killed.
4. Two dedicated parents watched their son get killed by an alligator.
5. One of the world's busiest airports in Istanbul was shot up by three terrorists.

*And while I was at summer camp, there was even more violence*

6. *A terrorist attack in France*

7. *A mass police shooting in Dallas*
8. *An attempted coup in Turkey*
9. *Another mass police shooting in Baton Rouge*

It saddens me to read in the paper on a daily basis, stories of human tragedy, rather than stories of human triumph. Sad stories are seemingly the only thing available to read. The sadness of these stories is made even sadder when special interest groups see them as an opportunity to advance political causes. We get so caught up in "these lives matters" or "this group needs more rights" or "it's somebody's fault" that we forget that ALL lives matter, we forget that it is not one specific group that is under attack but it is our world that is under attack. The devil manifests himself in many ways, seeking to hurt, kill and destroy. God seeks to heal, create and preserve. With all of the bad news we read about, how much time do we spend reading the "Good News," the Bible. The Bible gives a dose of good news every time we open it - it is filled with hope, with purpose for our lives. The best news of all is contained in the Bible.

People put labels on certain generations—the boomers, the millennials, etc. We have, in my opinion, become a society of "whatever" and "shades of grey." There are no absolutes, there are no boundaries. It used to be that the right to extend a fist ended before hitting someone else's nose. It seems that that

boundary has been redefined as it is my right to swing my fist and if you are in the way, oh well. The Constitution provides for a separation of church and state. In modern times, the state is presiding over the slow eradication of the Church by the state. Freedom of speech is given based on what you are talking about. If one's speech espouses traditional moral values, these voices are silenced as "out of touch" at best and tyrannical at worst. Moral degradation is okay for public consumption, but make mention of the Lord and you are committing a crime. The "smut" that fronts the covers of Cosmopolitan and National Enquirer Magazines we see in the supermarkets are just part of the shopping experience we are all forced to accept. I wonder what kind of protest would erupt if there were Bibles for sale in the checkout line. Our supersized meals have led to supersized waist lines, and our violent video games, trashy clothes and trashy music have led to supersized waste-filled minds.

So, let's talk about what really matters, and what really doesn't:

1. **Your family matters.** It doesn't matter if your favorite sports team wins, in the big picture of life. I love the Rays and the Lightning but these passions for sports don't make the list of what is most important in my life. Don't watch football or movies or reality TV or anything else at the expense of neglecting your family.

2. **Your marriage matters.** If you aren't "happily" married, you owe it to yourself, your spouse and to our Lord to fix what needs fixing so you can have the marriage that God intended for you to have, as the Lord intended for you to have it. Marriage matters.

3. **Purity matters.** What one chooses to do before marriage matters. Sexual purity outside of marriage leads to sexual purity in marriage. Lack of restraint prior to marriage will lead to lack of restraint in it.

4. **Honesty matters.** The reason is that cheating and lying is habitual, and if cheating is your habit, where does it stop? It matters when athletes cheat, when spouses cheat, when doctors cheat, when students cheat. When one is a habitual liar, he loses perspective on what truth is and all truth becomes irrelevant. Being honest matters.

5. **Our children matter.** It doesn't take a television, an i-Phone or a computer to raise a child. Violent video games and hate-filled music don't help either. Parents raise children, and parents raise children by taking an interest in them. Throwing the ball around the yard, getting an ice cream cone, playing games, and telling your children you love them every day and that you are proud of them, these things matter! Spend time with your children. They matter!

6. **Your job matters.** It does take a village to operate a village. It takes teachers, doctors, architects, firefighters, truck drivers, mail carriers, gardeners, taxi drivers and much more to operate the village. So, whatever role you play in the "village" that role matters, so fill that role with dedication and with conviction.

7. **Your faith matters.** At the end of life, all that will follow us to our grave and to our judgment with the Lord is our faith. We've lost all sense of "take up the cross and follow" because we live in a society where "it's all about me." Eternal life is all about God. Our existence on this planet is a miracle from God. It's all about HIM. So your faith matters!

8. **YOU matter.** Every single one of you matters. When

one of you dies, I don't cry because you are rich, or educated, or funny, or different. I cry for you because YOU matter and what you bring to the world matters. We shouldn't wait for a shooting to rally that "certain lives matter." The greatest commandments of Christ were to love God and to love one another, in other words "All lives matter."

The events that have scarred our news these past few months have left me more convicted about what I believe and more conscious of what I am doing to share what I believe. God matters, faith matters, living a morally disciplined life matters.

This issue of the Messenger includes two articles that follow, one is "The Priest Who did Not Want to Serve The Divine Liturgy" on the next page. In reading this article, you will realize that every Divine Liturgy matters, worship matters, and how we worship matters. I've had days when I didn't want to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, which my mind was on other things, when I would rather have slept in than gotten up early. But I came anyway, because the Divine Liturgy matters, because it brings me into union with God. It brings all the faithful in attendance into union with God. That's why we celebrate the Liturgy so often. That is why it is important that you attend the Divine Liturgy as often as you can. Receiving Communion matters! Worshipping on a regular basis matters!

The second article is about growing church communities, "Creating a Church that reaches out and welcomes the non-religious." It is written by a priest who started a church with only a handful of families, that today has 150 families and TWO priests, whose entire budget is funded on stewardship and there is no Greek Festival. They spend their time spreading the faith to the unchurched, and educating those who are part of their community. There are many points to ponder and I hope that you will take time and ponder them. This article made me think, wouldn't it be awesome if we got to the point where stewardship covers the budget? With your continued help, we are working our way there. That matters!

To my parishioners, my friends—your lives matter! Your spiritual lives matter to me! Your souls matter to me! That's why I continue to celebrate as many services as I can. This is why I encourage people to go to confession, why I speak sometimes with passion and emotion, because the faith matters! This is why I'm going to summer camp tomorrow. This is why I continue the prayer team. This is why I am writing an article the night before I leave because I don't want to miss even one opportunity to talk about Christ with you, because He matters! I am far from the perfect person, and certainly have areas of my life and priesthood that need improvement. I'm giving the best I have because you matter and this faith matters. Jesus took twelve uneducated men and changed the world. Look at how educated the world is now, and look how we have regressed, rather than progressed, as a society. Because we took things like faith, family, integrity, honesty, hard work and we've marginalized them. If we want improvement in the world, it starts in our own little corner—our church, our family, our individual souls. So, please give some thought to taking up the cross and following. We don't take up convenience and follow. We don't take up church and follow. We take up the cross, suffering on it like Christ, so that we can share in His glory! And that matters, in this life, and for eternal life!

With love in the Lord,  
+Fr. Stavros

# The Priest Who did Not Want to Serve The Divine Liturgy

**T**here was once a priest who did not want to serve the liturgy because it was a cold winter day.

The temperature was 10 degrees below zero and the priest knew that the only person who was likely to come to the service was the chanter. The priest had no idea about the Church's teaching on the presence of the Triumphant Church and how the Divine Liturgy benefits the living and the departed. With difficulty he forced himself to go to church. On the way to church he kept wishing that the chanter would not come so that he would not have to serve and go home. However, the chanter did come.

The priest did the Prothesis (or Proskomedia, the service of preparing the holy gifts) in a hurry and began the Divine Liturgy. Shortly after, some bishops, priests, monks and nuns and some lay people arrived. Most of them sat in the choir section and began to chant so beautifully that the priest forgot about how cold and lonely he was earlier. His whole body was warm and his whole being was all a flame.... When he did the small entrance he noticed that the church was full of people - most of them familiar - he did not pay much attention and just continued with the Divine Liturgy.

When the time came for the Sanctification of the Holy Gifts he saw three bishops, brightly clothed and radiant entering the Holy Altar. They knelt with him and prayed. The priest then stood up very carefully with fear, took the censer and in a loud voice said, 'Especially our All Holy, Immaculate, Most Blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary...'. The soul of the priest was amazed and filled with divine joy. Peace and heavenly stillness, hesychia, dominated his inner self. When the time came for the elevation and dividing of the Host (Lamb) the whole church filled with the sweetest melodies. The whole multitude of people who were present along with the monks, priests and bishops chanted not only once but many times, 'One is Holy, One is Lord: Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen'. Next they chanted the Holy Communion hymn, 'Taste and see that the Lord is good, Alleluia.'

The priest was wandering what to do. Should he partake of the Holy Communion first or step aside for the three bishops who were present. Just as he was thinking this, one of the bishops nodded to him indicating that he should receive Holy Communion and then to Unify and Place the remaining of the portions of the Lamb into the Chalice along with the portions in memory of the Holy Theotokos and the Saints.

Having completed this the priest then opened the Beautiful Gate ... and saw no one in the Church... he turned and looked back into the holy altar, he looked to the right, looked to the left, the bishops had disappeared, he stood there speechless, amazed. He slowly opened his mouth and chanted the next petition, 'With the fear of God and faith and love, draw near ...,' and the chanter slowly drew near to take Holy Communion.

The priest was still amazed, still wondering! The whole Triumphant Church was present. All those present in the church were persons familiar to him, they were persons that had departed from this life and he would from time to time commemorate their names during each liturgy: 'that's why they were present, that's why they all seemed so familiar', he thought. As for the bishops in the altar they were the Three Hierarchs: Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Basil the Great and Saint Gregory the Theologian.

So many years of study at university, so much research and so many sleepless nights he spent studying and these efforts were not able to give him not even one drop of the sweetness and divine knowledge that this one Divine Liturgy gave him.

**Editor's Note:** And this is why we celebrate the liturgy so often, so that we can stand in the presence of the angels and the saints. This is why, even when the church is empty of people, it is still filled. This is why you should come to church, regardless of if many people will attend, or few, because this is the kind of holiness one can encounter at any and every liturgy.

## Names to be Commemorated for Paraklesis

Please write the names of all those whom you wish to be commemorated in the Paraklesis Services this August  
Monday, August 1; Wednesday, August 3; Friday, August 5; and Friday, August 12.

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

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

# Liturgical Schedule for August

<b>Monday, August 1</b>	<b>Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary</b>	6:00 p.m.
<b>Wednesday, August 3</b>	<b>Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary</b>	6:00 p.m.
<b>Friday, August 5</b>	<b>Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary</b>	6:00 p.m.
<b>Saturday, August 6</b>	<b>Holy Transfiguration of Our Savior</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	

**Sunday, August 7      7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Matthew**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Anyone Attending Mau Serve

**Ushers:** Tammy Christou, Demetrios Halkias, Amin Hanhan

**Welcome Committee:** Greeters: Megan Rindone, Katherine Sakakis; Ambassador: Donna Trakas

Caller: Peggy Bradshaw; Get Acquainted: Mike Xenick, Maria Xenick

**Coffee Hour:** The AHEPA Family

**Friday, August 12      Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary      6:00 p.m.**

**Sunday, August 14      8<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Matthew**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** TBD

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

**Welcome Committee:** Greeters: Genie Carter, Elaine Halkias; Ambassador: Helen Cauthorn; Caller: Lisa Alsina

**Coffee Hour:** Sunday School

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

**Sunday, August 21      9<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Matthew**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** TBD

**Ushers:** Ron Myer, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis

**Welcome Committee:** Greeters: Kalliope Chagaris, Skip Higdon; Ambassador: Carole Fotopoulos;

Caller: Helen Cauthorn

**Coffee Hour:** Young at Heart

**Sunday, August 28      10<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Matthew**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** TBD

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

**Welcome Committee:** Greeters: Dwight Forde, Ewana Forde; Ambassador: Donna Hambos;

Caller: Martha Kapetan

**Coffee Hour:** Maids of Athena & Sons of Pericles

**Monday, August 29      Beheading of St. John the Baptist**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Thursday, September 1      Beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year (Indiction)**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

# Liturgical Notes for August

## Paraklesis Services of Supplication to the Virgin Mary



The service of Paraklesis or “Intercessory Prayer” to the Most Holy Theotokos, the Mother of God, is chanted during the fasting period of the first fourteen days of August, preceding the Feast of the Koimisis or “Falling Asleep” of the Virgin Mary, which is August 15. In this service we ask the Theotokos to pray for us and to intercede for us with her Son and our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not the Theotokos who saves us. God saves us. Thus we do not pray to the Theotokos, but we pray through the Theotokos, that through her intercession, we may find favor with God. The Paraklesis service is chanted not only for fourteen days in August, but can be chanted in at any time of the year, for those who are in need of prayer in time of sickness, despair, struggle, or any occasion, since any of life’s experiences provide us an opportunity for prayer. The Paraklesis Service consists of soft, melodic chants of supplication to the Virgin Mary, and lasts about an hour. It is also one of few services in the church where we commemorate individuals out loud during the service. You will find a place to write the names of you and your families, loved ones and friends (who are living) to be commemorated at the Paraklesis Services in August. Please mail these to the church office, or bring them to the services. Paraklesis services will be held four times this August - Monday, August 1; Wednesday,

August 3; Friday, August 5; and Friday, August 12. All services will be from 6:00-7:00 p.m. The Feast of the Dormition will be celebrated with Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, August 15. We should all attempt to keep the fast, at least from meat, during the first fourteen days of August, and we should each plan to receive Holy Communion on August 7, 14 or 15.

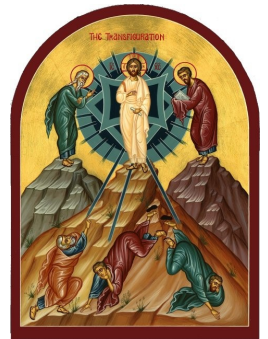
Concerning the Dormition of the Theotokos, this is what the Church has received from ancient times from the tradition of the Fathers. When the time drew nigh that our Savior was well-pleased to take His Mother to Himself, He declared unto her through an Angel that three days hence, He would translate her from this temporal life to eternity and bliss. On hearing this, she went up with haste to the Mount of Olives, where she prayed continuously. Giving thanks to God, she returned to her house and prepared whatever was necessary for her burial. While these things were taking place, clouds caught up the Apostles from the ends of the earth, where each one happened to be preaching, and brought them at once to the house of the Mother of God, who informed them of the cause of their sudden gathering. As a mother, she consoled them in their affliction as was meet, and then raised her hands to Heaven and prayed for the peace of the world. She blessed the Apostles, and, reclining upon her bed with seemliness, gave up her all-holy spirit into the hands of her Son and God.

With reverence and many lights, and chanting burial hymns, the Apostles took up that God-receiving body and brought it to the sepulchre, while the Angels from Heaven chanted with them, and sent forth her who is higher than the Cherubim. But one Jew, moved by malice, audaciously stretched forth his hand upon the bed and immediately received from divine judgment the wages of his audacity. Those daring hands were severed by an invisible blow. But when he repented and asked forgiveness, his hands were restored. When they had reached the place called Gethsemane, they buried there with honor the all-immaculate body of the Theotokos, which was the source of Life. But on the third day after the burial, when they were eating together, and raised up the artos (bread) in Jesus’ Name, as was their custom, the Theotokos appeared in the air, saying “Rejoice” to them. From this they learned concerning the bodily translation of the Theotokos into the Heavens.

From synaxarion of the Archdiocese

## Saturday, August 6 - Transfiguration of our Savior

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



## Monday, August 29 - Beheading of St. John the Baptist

St. John the Baptist, according to the Gospel accounts, was beheaded in prison. We commemorate this event each year on August 29, which is also a strict fast day. As St. John the Baptist is the patron saint of our parish, we honor this feast day, and we pray for his intercessions over each of us and our parish.

# Beware of the “Filter Bubble” and Step into the Real Reality with Christ

By Charlie Hambos

**T**wenty five years ago, something crazy happened. Some of us remember it well and truly believe that the world will never be the same and others don't remember and don't necessarily think to much about it. Twenty five years ago, the first website went online (info.cern.ch). It was Tim Berner-Lee's World Wide Web. For 500 years before, the main form of information was found on the printed page thanks to Johannes Gutenberg and his printing press. Information, these days, is moving very fast and we are not taking the time to figure out what is the truth or not the truth.

As Christians, we know that the only truth is Christ who Himself says in John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.” Let's face it, even the truth of Christ is getting super distorted in the media. As Christians, we have a responsibility to reflect the Light of Christ to everyone around us and we must not let the Light be diminished by happenings in the world, especially in this world of fast paced news and quick snippets of information.

A recent article in The Guardian, entitled, “How technology disrupted the truth,” highlights how things like Brexit (the exit of the Great Britain from the E.U.) and the current trends in the U.S. Presidential race are results of mass amounts of misinformation found on the web and most notably social media. It may not be misinformation but so much information is being spread so fast from different sources with different biases that we don't stop to analyze but rather believe something because it seems true to us. The article states, “When a fact begins to resemble whatever you feel is true, it becomes very difficult for anyone to tell the difference between facts that are true and ‘facts’ that are not.”

Even the mainstream news agencies, are looking for sound bites of information, catchy headlines and Tweetable reads to try to deliver news. The problem is, the media is under pressure to get the most “likes” on Facebook or “tweets” on Twitter in a very fast paced information battle. They are looking for something catchy enough to get our attention as we swipe our screens at record speed.

Not to mention, different social media sites, like Facebook and even search engines like Google, store all of our searches or things that we “follow” or “like” to create an online experience tailored to our search history and previous online purchases. The Guardian article stated, “Algorithms such as the one that powers Facebook's news feed are designed to give us more of what they think we want – which means that the version of the world we encounter every day in our own personal stream has been invisibly curated to reinforce our pre-existing beliefs.”

This creates a bubble, dubbed the “filter bubble” in 2011 by Eli Pariser, the co-founder of Upworthy. Upworthy according to their website says, “We believe that stories about important issues can and should be great stories — stories for everyone, stories that connect us and sometimes even change the world.” Stories about important issues don't necessarily get the most “likes” or “retweets” giving news agencies the better rating so now we have to rely on other sources like Upworthy to bring everything back into focus. The “filter bubble,” is created based on our online habits, “means that we are less likely to be

exposed to information that challenges us or broadens our worldview, and less likely to encounter facts that disprove false information that others have shared.”

In the Gospel of Matthew, when Christ gave His instructions to the 12 disciples, He knew he was sending them on a dangerous mission. He knew that the message they would bring would cause uprisings and court trials. The road would not be an easy one. Christ gave them some wisdom though, “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” (Matthew 10:16) This is a learning lesson for us today in a world where we are bombarded by information. When we use social media, we must be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. When it comes to the news and the videos that pop up on our feeds, do some more digging to see what actually happened. Don't take anything at face value.

Many people are saying that the world is getting worse. The world could be getting worse but we are definitely seeing more of the happenings of the world with tools like the internet and social networks. More recently, anyone with a smart phone or internet ready device has the ability to have a live video feed with Facebook Live or the Periscope app. With these tools, we are seeing even more right at our fingertips.

Even with all of these tools, we still don't see everything that happens. This point needs to be reiterated. We do not see everything that happens in the world. People often say that Christians are being persecuted more now than they have in the past. Also, not necessarily the truth. We just haven't heard about it as much as we do today. There is always a focus on the Middle East but we don't always hear about the destruction of Christianity happening in Africa with Boko Haram.

We also rarely hear about the good things that happen. We only imagine that Christian and Muslims throughout the world hate each other and are always trying to kill each other. This is based on the “filter bubble” we mentioned above and this is what the media wants us to believe. On a daily basis Christians and Muslims are working together. The Ecumenical Patriarchate is in Turkey and it isn't easy but they rely on goods and services from the local Muslim community. Syrian Christian Orthodox Bishops act as negotiators between Shia Muslims and Sunni Muslims when one of the groups kidnaps members from the other. Muslims and Christians are working together in the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean. The problem is we have to search for these bits of good news, when a majority of the time we only see the negative news.

With all of the recent attacks just in the last couple of months social media has become a platform for showing support for the victims. For example, the attack in Paris, prompted a filter of the French flag on the profile pictures of people on social media. The same with Belgium and also the rainbow flag for the tragedy in Orlando. Why only for those? Nobody changed their profile pictures to an Iraqi flag filter when nearly 300 people were killed and almost 200 were injured at an attack on a shopping mall in Baghdad in early July. Why? As Orthodox Christians, we need to have a more global perspective. Christian persecution has been happening since the formation of the church. In fact, on a daily basis, in the Orthodox Church we commemo-



rate someone who was martyred for the faith.

So, what do we do? We must pray. We must be wise. We must keep a global perspective and we must remember the peace of Christ. Christ says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." (John 14:27) Christ knew the world was a mess even in the period of time He came. We can not look to the world to find peace. We definitely can't look at the news to find peace or our social media outlets. The peace is to be found in Christ. Christ again says, "I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) Yes, we need to lament every single tragedy that affects every single person, which is created in the image of God. That is every single human being, regardless of race, regardless of gender, regardless of sexual orientation. The fact of the matter is that most people are ignorant of the fact that they are created in the image of God. Those who kill, murder and destroy the image of God in each of us, do not believe we are created in the image of God.

The Church has a role to play. Social media and social networking is nothing new. We are created to make connections to other people. We are created to have relationships. These "tools" are connecting us a super fast rate and probably more connections are being made than we can handle. Some can be positive and some can be negative. Patriarch Kirill of the Orthodox Church in Russia said something interesting in an address he made in 2012, "However, communication with the faithful in social networks, no matter how interesting and useful it may be, cannot replace the personal communication. Our task [the Church] is to testify of Christ all the ways we can, to help people find God, come into the temple, to find spiritual

support and realize the value of the personal fellowship with the brothers and sisters of the Lord."

The Church through its sacraments and worship are to help the faithful establish relationships not only with God but with people. Our worship cannot be experienced via the Internet. No one can receive the sacraments online. We have the service of Forgiveness Vespers, which encourages the face-to-face communication of forgiveness. It shouldn't be something done online or on social networks. Now, as we know, even in the Church, there can be some friction between people and maybe these are not the relationships we need. The term relationship is used to describe the connection between one person and another, not romantically. At its core, the church is built to form relationships. The Church forces us to stop and engage in reality.

Let's conclude with the idea that we live in a world of many realities. In a report from a conference on Orthodox Church communication in St. Petersburg, Russia, Dimitry Fedorov speaks about these realities and the responsibility the church has to help people navigate them. There is the Artificial Reality (AR) which is created by the mass media. There is also the Virtual Reality (VR) created by books, the Internet, social networking, our smart phones, movies and everyday surroundings. So here we are, our selves, stuck in a bubble created by the AR and the VR. There is another reality out there. It is the Real Reality (RR). The Real Reality (RR) is where Christ is. The job of the Church is to help people get to the RR, through regular worship, Bible Studies, education in the faith for all ages and open dialogue about our faith and how to live our life in the Real Reality. The Church can also help us navigate the AR and VR with wisdom so that we can be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves. May His Peace be with you always.

## 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.**



# Community News

## Parish Registry

**Baptism**-William Lesley (Vasili) Williams IV, son of William Williams III and Alexa Abbate, was baptized on Sunday, May 22. Katerina Agriostathis was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Nicholas Foutz, son of Joshua Foutz and Kallie Papadimitriou, was baptized on Sunday, May 22. Eleni Papadimitriou was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Alexandra Kaliopi Passias, daughter of Aristidis and Despina Passias, was baptized on Sunday, May 29. Katina Tryphonos was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Julianne (Julia) Katsamakis, daughter of Perry and Betty Katherine Katsamakis, was baptized on Sunday, June 5. Theodore and Marisa Panopoulos were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Sevianna Kai Smith, daughter of Bradley and Nicolette Smith, was baptized on Saturday, June 18. Godparents were Maria Tsangaris and George Tsambis. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Zoe Demetra Carratt, daughter of Peter Carratt and Erin De Marines, was baptized on Saturday, June 18. Godparents were Christina Capitano, Evan Carratt and Sam Gahagan. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Zacharias Panagioti Sarantos, son of Chris and Sara Sarantos, was baptized on Sunday, June 26. Godparents were Adam and Vicki Bennett. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Oliver Sebastian Calamunci, son of Chris and Crystal Calamunci, was baptized on Sunday, June 26. Godparents were Sarah Sengsouvanha and Alex Calamunci. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Lorelei (Nicole) Elly, daughter of Jonathan and Jenevieve Elly, was baptized on Tuesday, June 26. Godparent was Vickie Peckham. Na Sas Zisi!

**Condolences** to Nancy Manikas, on the passing of her brother, Ilias Boudoudis. May his memory be eternal!

**Condolences** to JoAnn Hartung on the passing of her mother Ourania. May her memory be eternal!

## Get Acquainted Sunday, August 7



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.



## Prayer for School Students

All school students are invited to to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, Father Stavros will offer a prayer for all of our school students, 3 years old through High School, as the school year is about to begin.

## Sunday School Teachers Seminar - Saturday, August 13

Our Sunday School teachers are invited to attend a seminar on Saturday, August 13, beginning at 9:00 a.m. Fr. Stavros will lead sessions and answer questions, as we prepare for the beginning of the new Sunday School Year!

## Sunday, August 14

### Prayer for College Students

All college students are invited to celebrate the Divine Liturgy with us. At the end, Fr. Stavros will offer a prayer for all college students as they begin a new school year.

### First day of Sunday School Classes

With the new school calendar having school begin August 10 we will be resuming Sunday School classes on Sunday, August 14. Registration will take place on from July 31 - August 14 after services. Sunday School meets each Sunday after Holy Communion. Sunday School student receive Communion, and then go to their classes. Classes are dismissed around noon.

### Calendar Meeting

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

### GOYA

Our first GOYA meeting of the new school year will be held on Sunday, August 14 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner will be provided. One parent of each GOYAn is asked to attend the meeting. Also, there will be a parents' meeting, while the GOYAns meet with Fr. Stavros to go over procedures for the year, review the yearly calendar, fill out emergency forms and arrange for parents to sign up to do a meal for one of the meetings. St. Stephen's Summer Camp Reunion and Lock-in is scheduled for Saturday, August 27.





## Community Outreach - Saturday, August 20

St. John the Baptist's Community Outreach will be serving breakfast to the Homeless at the First Presbyterian Church in Downtown Tampa from 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. 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!



# Council of Ministries Open House

## Sunday, August 21

**Each Ministry will have a booth and representative to share information.**

Last year the Parish Council formally approved the rollout of a Ministry Based Organization or MBO to include the Council of Ministries. This complements the current 'operational' efforts of our ministries.

We are very excited about this concept as a way to revitalize and energize our community! Our Council of Ministries brings together all levels of church leadership and provides a framework to work together to improve communication, provide testimonials, identify resources, best practices, goals, talents, etc. to serve the mission of our Church and broader vision of our parish.

We have many exciting ministries at St. John the Baptist with something for everyone and no limits on how many ministry groups you may choose for participation. They are all different, with varying objectives, age of members and activities.

Come learn more about the individual Ministries at St. John the Baptist Sunday, August 21 at our Ministry Open House!

**Greek Dance Groups** - I Hara Mas dancers are the children's dance group; The St. John's Dancers are the teenage dance group; and Panigyri Dancers is the adult group.

**The AHEPA Family** - Promotes Hellenic culture and education by having fellowship gatherings and offering scholarships.

**Greek Festival** - Each November, our church sponsors the annual Greek festival, which shares our culture and faith with the Tampa community.

**Sunday School** - Weekly Sunday school classes teach our children about the Orthodox Faith. We are always looking for volunteers to teach our classes and we encourage those with children to bring them every Sunday

**GOYA** - This is our teenage group for young people in 7-12th grades. They participate in a monthly spiritual encounter, social events, retreats and sponsor a Lenten retreat each spring.

**HOPE/JOY** - Youth ages 3 years old through 6th grade come together for spiritual retreats, social events and service projects.

**Small Group Ministry** - There are at present four small groups that gather each week to discuss the Bible, Orthodoxy and the Christian life. They are led by lay people and meet in various locations throughout Tampa.

**Bible Study** - A traditional Bible study is offered once a week at the church in the evening.

**Community Outreach** - St. John is affiliated with an inter-faith coalition to serve food to the homeless in Tampa Bay once a month on Saturdays, with additional opportunities during the year.

**Philoptochos** - The Annunciation Chapter is a women's organization of the parish dedicated to providing aid for the poor and needy and enriching our parish life.

**Choir** - Our choir sings on Sundays and at other services throughout the year. They practice on Wednesday evenings and anyone interested is welcome to join.

**Welcoming Committee** - This a group of people who welcome new people to our parish, get people connected and help to grow our parish on a weekly basis. Those who serve get on a list and serve on a rotating basis

**MOMS** - This is a ministry for mothers to gather together to form a network of mutual spiritual support. Is it for mothers with wisdom to share and mothers who are searching for answers and meaning in the vocation of motherhood.

**Young at Heart** - With faith, a desire to give back and in appreciation of our many blessings, we will use the experience of our years as a badge of commitment to encourage, to inspire and to set an example to others to ENJOY LIFE while HELPING our church and community.

## Altar Boys

Any young man entering 4th grade this fall or older is eligible to serve in the Altar at St. John the Baptist. If your son is not on a team and wishes to serve, please contact Father Stavros. This coming year, there will be four teams. The new schedule will take effect on August 14. There will be a meeting for all altar boys on Sunday, August 21 following the Divine Liturgy. All altar boys are requested to attend to go over procedures for how to serve in the altar. ONE PARENT of each boy is also requested to attend. This meeting will last approximately 1 hour.



**2016  
TAMPA**

**GREEK**

**FESTIVAL**



## ~Save the Date~

**Annual St. John the Baptist - Greek Festival Coming Soon!**  
**November 11, 12 & 13 2016**

### Things we Know

It takes the effort of our entire Church Community to host a successful festival and highlight our Greek Culture/Heritage but more importantly OUR Orthodox Christian Faith!

Our festival is a lot of fun but only happens as a result of many volunteers dedicating of their time and talent!

Planning meetings will be announced soon with Volunteer Signups coming in September

Many opportunities will be available for participation; from planning, advertising, baking, decorating, dancing, raffle sales, donations needed for silent auction to the hundreds of opportunities over the festival weekend!

This is our opportunity to showcase our faith, culture and beautiful place of worship at St. John

Your ideas are welcome

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## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Adult Greek School Want to Learn Modern Greek?



Teacher born, raised and educated in Greece with over 19 years of experience teaching the Greek language. Adult classes for beginners taught at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church (2418 W. Swann Ave, Tampa, FL 33609). Classes are held at 6:00 p.m.—8:30 p.m. on Thursday evenings, starting on October 6, 2016.

This will be the first of three sessions.

Speak Greek	Basic Grammar & More.
Read Greek	Some Greek History
Write Greek	BOOK INCLUDED IN

Price per session is \$100 for church members and \$125 for non-members

Contact Ms. Magdalini Myer: at (813) 909-2327, [aspis69@aol.com](mailto:aspis69@aol.com)



## Ecumenical Prayer Service with Christ the King at St. John the Baptist on Tuesday, September 13

This past February, we had an ecumenical prayer service for peace in the Middle East with the faithful from Christ the King Roman Catholic Church. Hundreds of people attended and a combined choir of Christ the King and St. John the Baptist offered the responses. Father Len and Father Stavros offered homilies. This coming September 13, we will host a service at St. John the Baptist, with Father Len and members of his congregation joining us. The service will be held at 6:30 p.m. So, please plan to attend as we pray for our environment and for peace in the world.

## 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Weekend Saturday, October 8 & Sunday, October 9

The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Decorating Committee has started to plan! Everyone is welcome to join this committee!! Please contact Jeanie Nenos if you are interested at 813-451-9116 or [jeanie.nenos@moffitt.org](mailto:jeanie.nenos@moffitt.org).

### Parish Directory

Help us celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St John the Baptist with your participation in our new church directory. It has been 10 years since our last directory! Our vibrant community is filled with many new faces and families that have grown. What a great way to put a name to every face/family, with a directory filled with updated pictures and current contact information. Dates will be announced soon and available in late August & September to sign up for individual/family photos. Any questions can be addressed to Jenny Paloumpis (813-382-5144), Debbie Kavouklis or Jeanie Nenos (subcommittee of our 60th Anniversary Committee) volunteering their time & talent to this very important project!



# Youth Protection “Round Up” Sunday, September 11

Dear Parishioners,

There will be a Youth Protection “Round Up” and training session on September 11. In this session, we will review our policies as they are outlined in our manual. New volunteers will have the opportunity complete the Youth Protection Training requirements. This “Round Up” constitutes Phase I of our updates. Phase II occurs in spring 2017 and will reflect the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese’s final requirements.

## **At this session, new volunteers will have the opportunity to:**

- Review the Youth Protection Manual of policies and procedures.
- Complete the online youth protection training.
- Complete a volunteer application.
- Under go a criminal/driving background check.
- Sign the covenant committing to the policies of St. John the Baptist.

## **Questions:**

### **Who is required to attend?**

- If you are a new Sunday School teacher, or are interested in becoming a volunteer assistant for any of our children’s activities you must complete the YPP paperwork prior to your involvement.
- All current volunteers involved in children’s activities must attend the presentation covering the manual. Policies have been updated and we want to ensure that everyone understands the expectations outline in the manual.
- All current ministry heads.
- Anyone interested

### **What are the date and hours?**

- Sunday, September 11, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 pm.
- The manual will be covered first.

### **Why are we presenting information on the manual?**

The YPP manual is a critical component to our program. It contains all of our policies and beliefs regarding how we should behave around children and how we should protect the children under our care. It also outlines our responsibilities as youth volunteers to report and act on prospective problems.

This year, we implemented several significant changes that parallel expectations outlined by the Archdiocese. We want to ensure our parishioners are fully trained and aware of this changes.

### **What if I cannot attend?**

Please contact the YPP coordinator, Catherine Mitseas, or your ministry head. Additionally, all the paperwork is on the church website at the <http://greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com/youth-protection-policy/>. Please complete the paperwork and then contact your ministry head or me to receive the link to a background check.

### **I’ve been background checked through St. John the Baptist already. Do I need to renew my check at this time?**

No, all background checks conducted late 2014, early 2015 are still current.

### **Do I have to pay for my background check?**

Not at this time. Starting in 2017, all volunteers will need to pay for their own background check. It will be a reasonable amount and be good for two years.

### **I was background checked by my company. Do I need to submit to another one?**

Yes, we are establishing uniform criteria and it is essential all volunteers are screened in the same manner.

# Sunday School News

The Sunday School Staff is looking forward to serving the children of St. John the Baptist for the 2016-2017 school year. Our first day of Sunday School is Sunday, August 14. Please make sure to register your children on Sundays, July 31, August 7 or August 14.. We need this information for our records and for communication.

## **WE ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE OUR OUTSTANDING STAFF FOR THE 2016-2017 SCHOOL YEAR! THEY ARE:**

**Director of Sunday School:** Vickie Peckham

**Music/Special Programs:** Maria Xenick

**Music Assistant:** Pam Irwin

**Pre-K (3 and 4 year olds):** Alexis Scarfoglio – Teacher and Denise Panos - Assistant

**Kindergarten:** Debbie Nicklow - Teacher and Donna Trakas - Assistant

**Grade 1:** Melissa Krinos - Teacher and Andrea Jernigan - Assistant

**Grade 2:** Oliviana Catrone

**Grade 3:** Stamie Garcia and Amy Kafantaris - Co-Teachers

**Grade 4:** Debbie Ferekides

**Grade 5:** Vickie Peckham

**Grade 6, 7 and 8:** Heidi Borgeas and Marina Choundas - Co-Teachers

**High School:** Peggy Bradshaw and Isidoros Passalaris - Co-Teachers

The teachers will meet with Father Stavros and Charlie Hambos for a Sunday School Teachers' Retreat on Saturday, August 13. This is a wonderful way to start the new Sunday School year. The teachers feel blessed to have Father Stavros guiding us as teachers. He is such an inspirational teacher and has provided each of us with a collection of lesson plans. We are also looking forward to Charlie's continued involvement with the Sunday School. He will provide a children's sermon on Youth Sundays and also visit each of our classrooms twice, throughout the year. We are so thankful that he is able to have such a personal connection to our students.

## **Sunday School Mission Statement**

The Sunday School Program at St. John Greek Orthodox Church is dedicated to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.

## **Sunday School Vision:**

The Sunday School Program shall seek to fulfill its mission by:

1. Embracing the Spiritual Life and Joy of our Orthodox faith through regular prayer, worship, and frequent participation in the sacraments.
2. Support the Church through stewardship of time, talent, and sacrificial giving.
3. Providing our students with a welcoming, caring, and loving educational environment.
4. Having the Sunday School Staff and Students exemplify Orthodox Christian character and morals.
5. Providing strategies for our children to rely on their faith and values, when confronted with challenging circumstances and temptations, as they travel through their teens and into adulthood.
6. Teaching our students why this vision is important—why it is important to embrace the Spiritual Life by defining and teaching what is the Spiritual and Sacramental Life of the Orthodox Church; what is stewardship and why it is important; and teaching Orthodox Christian character and morals.

More information will be provided about the first day of Sunday School in the bulletin and through our weekly e-mails to parents. Please feel free to contact Vickie Peckham at 813-406-5626 with any questions, suggestions, or comments regarding St. John the Baptist Sunday School Program.

## ~Stewardship Update~

He who is not a lover of Man (Philanthropos) is not a lover of Christ (philochristos). Manuel Holobolos, 13<sup>th</sup> c.

Dr. Vrame Director of the Department of Religious Education for the Greek Orthodox Archdioceses of America shared this ancient but relevant quote, during the 43<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Clergy-Laity Congress. Written by Byzantine orator and monk – Manuel Holobolos. We are called to love God, love one another and to serve.

During this Congress all Delegates were challenged to be the Voice of Christ in a changing world. It is not easy to carry this message but through regular church attendance to church, daily prayer, participation in the sacraments, ministry involvement and giving through Stewardship we are all making contributions toward this mission and can find peace amongst other Christians.

As we begin a new Liturgical year in September, we encourage you to get involved in a ministry and match your God given personal gifts with the ministry needs. Look for our Ministry Fair (coming soon) to learn more about individual opportunities.

Without the commitment of our parishioners dedicating of their time, talent and treasure our church would not be sustainable. *The Stewardship Committee expresses sincere appreciation and thanks.*

### **Little of This & That ...**

If you have not completed a Pledge Form in 2016 please take time to do so today. It is never too late – We are called as Christians to give back and our beautiful church in Tampa would not sustain without our cheerful givers and faithful servants of Christ. When you give to God, you discover what God gives to you!

<b>Stewardship Summary</b>	<b>2016</b>
<b><i>Pledged for Year*</i></b>	<b><i>\$427,796.<sup>36</sup></i></b>
<b><i># Parishioners/Families Pledged</i></b>	<b><i>324</i></b>

We will publish a list of ‘Stewards’ at St. John the Baptist in the October Messenger as we prepare for Fall General Assembly and Parish Council Nominations and Elections.

Online Pledge Forms and General Donations (via PayPal) are now up and running on our website. Many of our Stewards have taken advantage of submitting their pledge form on line and setting up systematic payments for Stewardship. And don’t forget online banking as an easy and convenient option for automatic payments if you chose not to use PayPal.

We love hearing from our parishioners, If you would like to share something regarding your calling to Stewardship, please contact Sandra Pappas (Stewardship Co-Chair) at spappas11@gmail.com or call 813-785-3747

\*We require a completed Pledge Form to be considered a Steward of St. John The Baptist

### **Leave the Church in Your Will**

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



# **Brief Update Clergy-Laity**

The first week in July, Sandra Pappas & Stavroula Crafa attended the 43<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Clergy-Laity Congress, in Nashville TN, as delegates of St. John the Baptist in Tampa. Dee Nicolaou, Metropolis Philoptochos President, and Cindy Xenick, local board member, attended the Philoptochos Congress, with over 375 participants, focused on the key business of this important ministry and also attended some of the general sessions/events. They will share comments from their meeting in the October Messenger.

Glory to God ~ what an honor! We found ourselves uplifted and inspired and humbled to be with over 1,000 Orthodox Christian unafraid to profess their faith. Dedicated time to learn, share and pray together. Indeed the Holy Spirit was with us throughout the day week with over 500 clergy and Orthodox Hierarchs in attendance.

The theme for the Congress ‘You are the Voice of Christ in a Changing World,’ affirms our vital mission in this world. We have been sent by Christ to proclaim the Gospel, to share truth in love to be His voice. Our Lord said to his disciples, and He continues to say to us today. *As the Father has sent me, so I send you. (John 20:21) You are the light of the world.; (Matthew 5:14)* We encourage you to review the entire Key Note Address from His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Geron of America and the many other presenters and official documents discussed and passed by this Congress. (*ClergyLaity.org*) is a resource for many of the PowerPoint and video presentations during the Congress. You can find the link on the front page slider of our website. These can also be accessed from the Archdiocese website (*Goarch.org*) home to many valuable resources for our church.

Delegates had an opportunity to attend the Divine Liturgy every morning and Compline service every night. The days were filled with general sessions, open forums (with a great session on creative ministries) and workshops including a panel discussion and insights from Archbishop Demetrios, Metropolitans and Bishops that attended the recent Holy and Great Council in Crete. A momentous gathering 60 years in the making for Orthodox Church leaders from almost all jurisdictions. Throughout the week all hierarchs, clergy and laity from throughout the Church in America were asked to share struggles, successes and discuss the current challenges facing our communities, and explore new opportunities for being a light of faith and grace in our changing world.

Each of us attended a workshop with His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of Detroit and His Eminence Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh. They challenged the participants to be ‘the Voice of Christ’ with interactive dialogue and questions. Metropolitan Savas pointed out that we are called to be saints and Christ speaks loudest through the saints and recommended we evaluate our Parish Ministries to carry this message and mission of the church. Metropolitan Nicholas spoke from the heart with humor and God’s Grace challenging us all as Christians to carry the Voice of Christ.

After hearing from many other Clergy and Parish Leaders we felt a greater appreciation and love for our church, spiritual leader Fr. Stavros and the vibrant community of St. John the Baptist and the available education opportunities provided to us. We walked away with a few key takeaways (many others too numerous to list) but encourage questions of this truly spiritual and inspiring experience.

1. We must have an understanding of Christ, our Faith and the ability to define ‘what makes us Orthodox’
2. Recognition that we can improve the depth of our ministries, communication and outreach to those not connected to the church and our service to Christ. One Christian is no Christian we are a community here to support one another in good and bad times with Christ and the Church as our refuge.
3. We can better utilize the emerging technologies, support and resources from the Archdiocese

Lastly, we all are provided the opportunity to carry the Voice of Christ so that in Him we will find true and abundant life.



## **Prayer Team**

Over 600 people are now on the prayer team, the group of people who receive daily messages written by Fr. Stavros. If you would like to be added to the prayer team, email Fr. Stavros or Charlie and we’ll be happy to add you to the list.

Through the hand of Fr. Anthony Salzman  
[www.imageandlikeness.com](http://www.imageandlikeness.com)



# Ladies

# Philoptochos

## 2015-2016 Year at a Glance

### Philoptochos - Annunciation Chapter - Tampa, Florida

**President:** Lisa Alsina  
**V. President:** Jeanie Nenos  
**COR SEC:** Martha Kapetan  
**REC SEC:** Elaine Halkias  
**Treasurer:** Melissa Krinos  
**Advisor:** JoAnn Hartung  
**Board Members:** Vanessa Aviles, Arty Giallourakis,  
 Ellen Karaku, Kathy MacLaury, Cindy Xenick

### Current Membership –72

Our annual \$30 membership fee and fundraisers enable us to fulfill our commitments on a local, Metropolis and National level.

Here is a list of some of the Philanthropic charities and organizations we have been blessed to support this year.

#### Local Level

First Presbyterian Church– feeding the hungry  
 Alpha House  
 Champions For Children  
 Chester Taylor Elementary Shoe Drive  
 Metropolitan Ministries  
 Philanthropy Discretionary Fund  
 Project Mexico  
 Retreat Curriculum Scholarship  
 St. John Food Pantry  
 Zoe for Life

#### Metropolis Level

Diakonia Center  
 Clergy Education  
 Youth & Summer Camp  
 Philanthropy Fund

#### National Level

Academy of Saint Basil  
 Autism Assistance Fund  
 General Medical Fund  
 Hellenic College Holy Cross School of Theology  
 International Orthodox Christian Charities  
 National Philoptochos Emergency Fund  
 Orthodox Christian Fellowship  
 Retired Clergy & Widowed Presbyteres Fund  
 Social Services  
 UNICEF  
 Cancer Fund



# AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – AUGUST 2016



The AHEPA CITRUS DISTRICT 2 - 83RD ANNUAL CONVENTION was held on June 9, 10, 11, 12, 2016 at the Historic Floridan Palace Hotel in Tampa, Florida hosted by Lycurgus Chapter 12 and the AHEPA Family of Tampa.

**Attendance** Our Guests and members in attendance at the Convention far exceed our estimates and goals and we are gratified by attendance of the AHEPA family members including the Sons of Pericles and Maids of Athena, from throughout the Nation and the State and other Hellenes and Hellenic Organizations from Florida and the Tampa Bay area.

**Pre-Convention Events Golf Tournament** On Thursday morning the Pre-Convention started with a Golf Tournament at the Babe Didrikson Zaharias Golf Course. George Zacharias was a member of our church. Our AHEPA Golf Tournament was organized by District Athletic Director Gus Pantelides noting how appropriate it was to play golf at this historic course. Our golfers returned from a great round of golf and wonderful lunch at the Babe Didrikson Zaharias Clubhouse and sang the praises of the event.

**Tampa Museum of Art** - Members and guests attended the Tampa Museum of Art for an informative and educational lecture and presentation of the Hellenic Art of the Museum, some of which were original works of art dating to before Christ. The presentation by Dr. Seth Pevnick was simply fantastic.

**Historic Columbia Restaurant and Flamenco Show** On Thursday evening we went to the Historic Columbia Restaurant in Ybor City. We started with an estimate of 20 attendees, increased the reservations to 30 and ultimately 72 AHEPAns and Daughters attend the event. The Flamenco Dance Show was very colorful and exciting and all that attended remarked on how they enjoyed the show.

## Friday Events

**Luncheon “Honoring Our Past Leaders”** On Friday at noon we had a Luncheon honoring our Past District and National Officers who we were pleased to have present. We were also pleased to have 80 AHEPAns and Daughters present to honor our past leaders.

**Dinner Dance “AHEPA Goes Greek”** Friday night we continued the AHEPA custom of Friday being Greek Night, celebrating our cuisine, customs, dress and culture. AHEPA Went Greek! All 180 of them, AHEPAns and Daughters, Sons and Maids and many guests. Wearing their native costumes and dancing native Folk Dances it was truly a sight to behold. After dinner, we were treated to a wonderful original presentation prepared specifically for us by the Levendia dance troupe.

## Saturday Events

**Luncheon 90th Anniversary of Lycurgus Chapter 12** On Saturday at noon we had a Luncheon celebrating the 90th Anniversary of the granting of the Charter of Lycurgus Chapter 12 in Tampa in 1926. Ninety members of the AHEPA family of Tampa and elsewhere in the District and numerous members who are descendants of the original families of AHEPA and the Daughters of Penelope joined in honoring the original pioneer Greeks who settled Tampa. An audio visual presentation prepared by Gus Paras traced the history of the Greek Community and AHEPA From the landing of Theodoros Griego in 1527 and the first immigrant settler from Skopelos, Greece, Anthony Sellas, in 1887. The presentation showed how AHEPA which was chartered in 1926 grew and prospered.

**Dinner Dance “Grand Banquet”** The Convention concluded with the “Grand Banquet” on Saturday evening, it was attended by 135 members of the AHEPA family and guests and was a fitting conclusion to a convention whose theme was, “AHEPA the Voice of Hellenism; Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”. We were honored to have many dignitaries including Congressman Gus Bilirakis of the U.S. House of Representatives; Adamantia Klotsa, Consul General of the Greek Government, Connie Pilallis, Daughters of Penelope Grand President; Andrew Zachariadis, Order of AHEPA Supreme Vice President and Gregory Pappas of the Pappas Post, Guest Speaker

**Sunday Events** Church services were held at St. John’s Greek Orthodox Church in Tampa on Sunday. It was attended by over 30 members. The new District Lodges of both Daughters of Penelope and AHEPA, who were present, were introduced by Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis. After the church services were complete a coffee in the church hall was hosted by the Maids of Athena and the Sons of Pericles Chapters of Tampa.

# Thank You!



## Thank you to the Parish Council for our Successful Picnic!

What a wonderful parish picnic we enjoyed on Sunday, May 15. The weather was perfect. So was the food. And most especially the fellowship! Thank you to Carole Fotopoulos for organizing this event and to all of the Parish Council who pitched in to set up, cook and serve a tasty lunch!

## Sun State 31<sup>st</sup> Junior Olympics

Many thanks to those who helped us put on the Junior Olympics this past June 17-19. Nearly 200 people participated in this event. And congratulations to our GOYAns for your great example of sportsmanship.



### 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  
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# “Creating a Church that reaches out and welcomes the non-religious.”

By Fr. Theodore Dorrance

**T**hank you for the opportunity to be back at Holy Cross, a wonderful part of my life and Christian formation. I feel honored and privileged to be a part of the life of the School, a part of the Inauguration of our new President, Fr. Chris Metropoulos, who I have known for many years, and a part of this esteemed group of speakers. As a simple parish priest, I stand before you humbled by this opportunity. I do not have a perfect parish, and I certainly am not a priest who has all the answers. Any thoughts I present are meant to be constructive and aimed at encouraging us all to more fully live out the missionary and evangelical theology of our Church. I hope that my thoughts may contribute to this important discussion of recognizing the United States as a mission field and facing the reality that we are in a post-Christian age and immersed in an increasingly secular society.

Recently, the Pew Institute came out with another in a series of comprehensive studies looking at the religious landscape of our country. To me, the most interesting information coming from this study was that people are becoming increasingly non-religious. The fastest growing segment of our population, religiously speaking, are those who no longer consider themselves to be affiliated with a religion. To put it bluntly, people are leaving the churches of their parents and grandparents. They are no longer associating themselves with any specific faith tradition.

I'm not sure we need to be dependent upon national studies to realize that our nation is drifting away from God. I'm from Portland, Oregon, and we in the Northwest, and specifically in Portland have been living this reality for some time. Oregon has long been ranked as one of the most unchurched states in the country, and Portland, one of the most secular cities in America. Neo-paganism is alive and well in Portland. Our state is a leader in driving values and laws that stand in the face of God's commandments and the teaching of the Orthodox Christian Church. All of this secularism is certainly not unique to the Northwest. This cultural shift away from God is, increasingly, a national phenomenon. For sure, there are some who are hostile to Christianity and to Christians, just look at the shooting in Roseburg, Oregon, where Christians were specifically targeted. But, there are still many who are non-religious and yet not hostile toward Christianity. Many non-religious are still seeking truth. They are searching for an “authentic experience” of God. Many of those who have left “organized religion” are not atheists; they may be confused about what they believe, or they might even consider themselves still Christian but done with churches. In Portland, we often hear the statement: “I’m spiritual, but not religious.”

## The Inoculation Effect

It's true that people are leaving churches at an unprecedented rate, but we, the Orthodox Christian Church here in America need to see this as an opportunity! People are created in the image of God; therefore, they are by nature, worshipping creatures. Their hearts, because they are created very good, are naturally inclined toward the truth. They may be currently unattached, with no church affiliation, but we need to remember: most of them were never Orthodox! They have probably never experienced the fullness of truth or an authentic experience of heavenly worship. These people are a part of the great harvest of which our Lord speaks. They have gone to church; been a part of “organized religion” and have found it wanting. They have been spiritually inoculated, meaning they have had just enough of partial truth, just enough of a bad witness of Christianity or “organized religion” to reject it, which makes them ripe for the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church!

In order for people to accept true, apostolic Christianity they have to reject the half-baked pseudo Christianity that they've been exposed to. Similarly, if we are going to have churches that effectively reach out to this growing segment of our country's population, we cannot offer them watered down Orthodoxy. We have to make sure that our Church and our parishes are the BEST reflection and expression of the Apostolic Truth, Faith and Life that has been passed down by every generation of Orthodox since the Apostles.

## Personal background:

Something from my personal background is of relevant importance in this conversation. I was born into a Roman Catholic family, dabbled for a short time in the Evangelical Protestant Faith Tradition during my early college years before I discovered the Orthodox Church. I can still remember vividly my astonishment of being absolutely ignorant of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Christian Church for the first nineteen years of my life! The realization that it took me so long to discover the “best kept secret,” and that so many people just like me are looking for the Truth but can't find it, has stayed with me and shaped my entire priestly ministry.

My first two parish assignments were large parishes: 1200 families between three priests and 400 families on my own. With both parishes, I was so focused on the needs of my many parishioners that I felt like I was neglecting the thousands all around me who were just like me before I found the Orthodox Church. The burning question throughout my ministry was and still is how are we going to share with the non-Orthodox around us this ancient and saving Faith of the Apostles?!

It was this burning desire within me that motivated me to volunteer to start a new parish from scratch. It started as a strategy of the Metropolis rather than as a break-off from an existing parish or a response to an already existing group of people. The new parish started with six families. Unlike most start-up parish situations, I was assigned as the full-time priest right away. By the grace of God and the financial commitment and generosity of the founding families, the parish was never subsidized by any outside sources. From the very beginning until the present day, the entire Operating Budget of the parish has been sustained by the members' commitment to stewardship. The Parish has now grown to close to 150 families and supports 1.5 priests, a Parish Administrator and a Budget of almost half a million dollars entirely on Stewardship. The overwhelming percentage of growth has come from people either converting to the Orthodox Church with no previous connection to Orthodoxy or from people who had fallen away from Orthodoxy and came back.

Throughout my almost 25 years of ministry, I have never forgotten the sense within me that I had discovered the fullness of truth: the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. One of the statements from my reading early on in my young adult search for truth that literally blew me away was that the Orthodox Church had an unbroken continuity of biblical interpretation, doctrinal belief, liturgical worship and succession of ordination from the present day all the way back to Christ and the Apostles. To me at the time, this was an incredible statement: either it was the most presumptuous statement or it was true. For the next year, I studied church history to either prove it wrong or verify it, and I am standing here right now as an Orthodox priest, because I found it to be true. This Church, our Church, became known as the Orthodox Church for a reason. “Orthodox” means right belief, because everything Christ

is, everything He did and all that He taught is contained in its entirety in the Orthodox Church, and the Holy Spirit keeps this truth whole and intact from generation to generation.

### **An Evangelical Mindset**

Do we believe this, not as intellectual truth, but in the way we live, in how we act and go about expressing ourselves as a Church with humility, but also with a burning love for those drowning around us in the ocean of confusion, falsehood and partial truths, while we sit within the “ark of salvation”?

Christ has revealed Himself to us as the Bridegroom. The whole story of salvation history is Christ the Bridegroom in pursuit of His beloved. His love for every human being He has created is so unquenchable and unfathomable that He completely emptied Himself and condescended to such a degree that He became a man. His entire life is an expression of self-sacrificial love, culminating in His willing ascent upon the Cross. Through His horrible death upon the Cross Jesus Christ weds Himself to humanity and consummates this ultimate marriage between Himself and us. And when I say us, I don’t simply mean the Orthodox Christians; I mean every single human being from Adam to the last person conceived before the end. The Apostle Peter affirms this when he says, “The Lord does not wish that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” (2Pet.3:9) This is the love of God for every single human being and the whole world. Our Lord’s heart burns for each human being from Adam to the last person conceived before the end. Our Lord said, “The harvest is truly great, but the laborers are few.” (Lk.10:2) He commanded His disciples to pray for the harvest and for laborers to go out and reap that harvest. God wants our hearts to burn like His with the same love for those around us and throughout the world. This was true in the first century and it is still true today.

One of the most important characteristics of the first century Church that needs to be renewed in the twenty-first century is this burning love on the part of Orthodox Christians for those outside the Church. The Apostles and their successors, precisely because they had this burning love of Christ within them for non-believers, had a profound and lasting impact on the Roman Empire and beyond in just a couple of generations. The Apostle Paul, for example, stated that he was even willing to forfeit his own salvation for the sake of his fellow Jews. (Rom.9:3ff)

We too are called to grow closer to Christ and partake of His divine nature that we may also participate in His love for the whole world. This God-like love has certain characteristics that are enumerated clearly in 1Corinthians, chapter 13. Among these characteristics, St. Paul says “love does not seek its own.” Love is always about the good of the other. A Church filled with people who are growing closer to Christ is a Church that is burning with the love of God for the people all around them and for the whole world. The temptation for church communities is to seek homogeneity, to find a comfort zone where the membership feels safe and things stay familiar. This results in “seeking our own” rather than turning our parishes inside out and “going out” with our faith and our witness in a loving but uncompromising way.

While the Church is not of this world, it is also not a ghetto that only focuses on itself and stays in its own comfort zone. The Church engages the world and confronts society as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. For this to occur, the Orthodox Church and its members need to be visibly working to comfort the afflicted, clothe the naked, feed the hungry and minister to the sick. We cannot reach the souls of the people all around us if we are neglecting to meet also their physical, emotional and psychological needs.

A Church burning with the love of Christ practices the same spirit of self-denial that we as individual Orthodox Christians are called to practice, always for the sake of our relationship with Christ and for the salvation of those around us. The greater Church, each parish and each individual Orthodox Christian must be constantly asking two questions: What am I doing to grow closer to Christ? AND, what am I doing to bring the Good News of salvation to those who don’t know it yet? This is clearly summed up by the two greatest commandments: Love God with all your heart, mind and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself.

The Orthodox Church is the fullness of truth moving through time in a dynamic but uncompromising way. She is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. This means that there is no other religion, no other Christian faith tradition that is her equal. She is Catholic, because she contains the entirety, the fullness of truth about God and everything needed for salvation. When we believe this in an active, intentional way, with humility not triumphalism, then this conviction necessarily translates into a missionary and evangelistic mindset. This was the mindset of the Apostles and of every Saint through the ages, and it needs to be our mindset if we are going to be a Church that effectively reaches out and welcomes the non-religious.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our American society is not standing still. It is constantly changing, in fact, moving at an exponential speed away from God. This requires a response of love from us as Orthodox Christians. We have built up the Church and firmly established her here on this soil, now we need to become even more serious about “going out” with the Gospel, with this beautiful, life-giving message of salvation to our family members, our neighbors, our co-workers and everyone who crosses our path.

Remember! The non-religious of America have already been exposed to and rejected a watered down version of Christianity. Matthew Gallatin wrote a book entitled “Thirsting for God in a land of shallow wells.” This title aptly describes the current religious landscape of our country: A land of shallow wells! If we are going to have anything to offer contemporary America it must be the best and fullest expression of Orthodoxy! And we can’t wait around until we are holy; we need to begin right now!

### **Parish Life**

So what does this mean for our Orthodox Church in the twenty-first century? So much could be talked about, but because of time constraints, I have chosen to focus on just three aspects of parish life that are essential to effectively reach out to the non-religious.

First, a Church that welcomes the non-religious must be a Church that continually strives to be better at teaching, preaching and inspiring our people to know and live deeply their Faith. This is of vital importance. We cannot offer to others what we do not have ourselves. The clergy have the responsibility to be life-long learners and life-long practitioners of the Faith. We have to keep growing in Christ, both in terms of studying our theology and putting it into practice. Everything we expect from our parishioners we need to expect from ourselves, and to an even greater degree. The Apostle Paul asks the pointed question: “You who teach another, do you not teach yourself?” Our preaching and our teaching should be clothed in humility and be the fruit of our own study and struggle to live what we preach. As clergy, whenever we preach or teach, we should try to do the very best we can and utilize the Scriptures and the holy Fathers as much as we are able. Our goal should be to help the faithful effectively live their faith in continuity with the Saints who have come before us through the ages.

In addition to the sermons on Sundays and Feasts, we should take every opportunity to explain to our people what we are doing and



why we are doing it. The clergy should not be the only teachers and educators in our parishes. We need to utilize the gifts of the laity. They need to be trained, empowered and entrusted in this essential ministry, teaching and equipping our Church membership with as full an expression of the faith as possible. We should offer catechetical classes and Bible Studies open to everyone: Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. Retreats with guest speakers should be offered several times each year in every parish.

Youth ministry is important, and we should offer the very best youth programs we can, but even more important than a shining youth ministry, we need to build up and educate our parents. The truth of the matter is that parents are our primary youth workers on a twenty-four hour, seven day a week basis. If our parents do not know their faith, live their faith and witness the Orthodox faith in their homes behind closed doors, then how can we expect our children to overcome a weak witness in the face of all the enticing offerings of the world and remain life-long Orthodox by choice. The more we build up our parents in the Faith, the more their home environment will parallel the Church. If our parents know and live their faith, then we can have confidence that their children, our youth, will have the best chance of making the faith their own before they leave home and transition into young adulthood.

Thriving bookstores in all our parishes is a must if we are going to be well positioned to meet the needs of today's non-religious. The Bible, the writings of the Fathers, the lives of the Saints and the writings of contemporary elders and theologians are all food for our souls. In the same way the body needs material nourishment, the soul also needs spiritual nourishment. In the face of the never-ending assault on our minds and hearts of noise, information and outright falsehood, we need a steady diet of truth. We need practical teaching to inspire and encourage us, as well as trustworthy lives to imitate. We cannot grow if we are not learning and putting into practice what we learn. Similarly, we will not have a convincing witness if we are not educated in our faith. The bookstore will also be an attraction to those among the non-religious who are seeking. Our parish bookstore gets drop-in visitors all the time that have stumbled across Orthodoxy on the internet and want someone to talk to and something more to read.

Secondly, if we are going to do better as a Church in effectively reaching out and welcoming the non-religious, we need to strive even harder to deepen our repentance. Remember, if we are going to have the one thing needful to offer contemporary America it must be the witness of lives being changed, healed and sanctified by Jesus Christ. This requires continual and deep repentance. The very first words that were ever preached by our Lord were "Repent, for the Kingdom is at hand!" (Mt.4:17) The whole goal of the Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. If we want those outside the Church who are all around us to come and experience Jesus Christ and His Kingdom through the Orthodox Church, then we need to be the living evidence of the presence of His Kingdom! While we have the fullness of Truth, if this fullness of Truth is not changing us, making us more Christ-like, or making us even a little bit holier and different than the world around us, then we will not have what the non-religious of the twenty-first century need.

In the first century, Andrew could tell Peter, and Philip could tell Nathaniel: "Come and see!" and they could come and actually see Jesus for themselves. Today, we say, "Come and see," and people are not able to see Jesus in the flesh before them. Instead, what they will see will be our lives, our example, and our witness. In a very real sense, we might be the only living Gospel for these people to see. This is a weighty responsibility, but we cannot escape it. Remember the words of our Lord, "He who hears you, hears Me, and he who rejects You, rejects Me." (Lk.10:16)

Therefore, we must be serious about repentance. St. John Chrysostom teaches that repentance "opens up heaven and leads us into Paradise." May this not only be true for us, but may our witness open up heaven for those who visit our churches and also lead them into Paradise. Jesus taught, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Mt.5:8) Christ calls us to purify our hearts through repentance that His light might shine through us to those around us. This is what Christ meant when He said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Mt.5:16) In other words, we need to trust that visitors and inquirers will see the light of Christ in us if we are striving for greater purity of heart.

Thirdly, a Church that can offer living water to those who are thirsting for God in a land of shallow wells is a praying Church. The heart and soul of the Orthodox Church is her liturgical and sacramental life. We most fully manifest ourselves as the Body of Christ by partaking of the one Bread and the one Cup. On this side of life, the place, par excellence, where heaven and earth intersect is in the Divine Liturgy. "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, NOW and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen." Every human being is created to worship, since they are created in the image of God. The beauty of our church architecture and iconography, the power of liturgical music well done, the witness of an orderliness, prayerful ethos, the depth of piety on the part of both the clergy and the laity, and the beauty and depth of truth revealed in the hymns, prayers, the readings and the petitions—all of these aspects of our Orthodox worship are meant to deeply touch the heart of every human being. Remember the words of the Slavic emissaries who visited Agia Sophia: "Whether we were in heaven or earth we do not know, but surely we know that God dwells in this place." Through this experience of the Church at prayer an entire nation was converted to Christianity.

We need to make sure that our parishes are not Sunday only churches. We priests need to make sure we are offering as full a liturgical life as possible. All too often, clergy don't schedule the services, because they say the people don't come. Rather than abandoning some of these beautiful and rich services that make up the prayer life of the Church, this is a tremendous opportunity to educate our faithful, to encourage them, and to cultivate within them a desire for prayer and worship. A church committed to prayer benefits even those who are unable to attend all the services.

A full liturgical life in our churches inspires our members to pray and to a life of prayerfulness. St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain says this of prayer: "There is no other virtue that is either higher or more necessary than sacred prayer. Prayer joins man with God and God with man and makes the two one spirit."

## The Greater Church

### Our Hierarchs

There is no way to speak about the Church and not think about the role of our bishops. The hierarchs play a central role in every aspect of Church life. As St. Ignatius of Antioch teaches: "Where the bishop is, there is the Church!" The bishop is the fullest expression of Christ's priesthood in the Church. Nothing we do in the Church is valid apart from the canonical connection and oneness we receive by being of the same mind and in communion as clergy and laity with our bishops. Therefore, any shift in mindset toward a greater recognition of America as a mission field and toward a more central focus on missions and evangelism must not only include the bishops but be lead by our hierarchs. We pray at every Divine Liturgy that our bishops will rightly divide the word of truth, because we know and recognize what a central and vital role they play in assuring that we live and practice the fullness of

Faith we have received from those who have gone before us. To be in the line of the Apostles, as our bishops truly are, means by definition that they have been sent out to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples. May we fully support them as they lead us and guide us as missionaries and evangelists in turning our parishes inside out to reach out and welcome those who are seeking the Kingdom of heaven.

### **Our Seminaries**

The dual institutions of Holy Cross and Hellenic College or any of our Orthodox Seminaries also play a vital role in helping our Church confront our increasingly secular society. At these beautiful schools, we are preparing and helping shape the next generation of clergy and lay leaders of our Church. What an incredible opportunity for our seminaries to cultivate a missionary-mindedness and the burning love of Christ for those hungering and thirsting for Truth in the hearts of these students. We are already past due to have as a part of the core curriculum of our Theological Schools classes on missiology and evangelism from an Orthodox point of view. We do practicums in pastoral care. We are good at training and producing maintainers and sustainers of what we already have. Now, it will be a necessity for our Orthodox seminaries to equip every future leader in how to plant new churches, revitalize shrinking parishes, reach out to the non-Orthodox and the non-religious and make new disciples. America is a mission field, and we need to begin producing domestic missionaries, as well as an increased mission-mindedness in all our priests and church leaders.

### **Our Metropolises**

At the Metropolis level, allow me to use the work of the Commission for Orthodox Missions and Evangelism or C.O.M.E. within the Metropolis of San Francisco as an example of how our metropolises can help our parishes more effectively reach out to the non-Orthodox. C.O.M.E. has a Board comprised of the Metropolitan, the Chancellor and seven other appointed clergy and laity from around the Metropolis. We have also recently hired a full-time Assistant Director, so we now have a full-time presence in the life of our Metropolis. C.O.M.E. was founded back in 1991 and is responsible for helping establish over 25 new parishes up and down the west coast. With the development of our new Strategic Plan, C.O.M.E. has expanded its scope and more finely tuned some of its ongoing objectives.

The three primary objectives of C.O.M.E. are to:

1. Establish and support a Missions and Evangelism Ministry in every Parish;
2. Respond to Parishes either needing or requesting Mentoring in various aspects of Parish Life, so they can better meet their mission and vision;
3. Continue to plant new parishes where needed, particularly in growing Metropolitan areas

### **Planting New Parishes**

Please allow me a few words about planting new parishes. Many believe that we can grow the Orthodox Church in a significant way by growing our already existing parishes larger. This has not and will not prove to be true. Most of the large parishes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese are not appreciably growing. Some are even shrinking. Studies show that when parishes reach around 80% of their physical capacity, growth in membership begins to slow down. In addition, larger parishes make it very difficult to fully act upon and express our sacramental theology. The sacrament of confession is the most obvious example. In our larger par-

ishes, the parishioner to priest ratio is too great to practically allow for regular confession on the part of the majority of members.

If our Orthodox Church is going to effectively reach out to the non-Orthodox and grow, one way it is going to grow is by strategically and intentionally planting new parishes. The ideal parish moving forward should not be larger than 200 active families who are fully committed to Christian Stewardship and the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church. The ideal priest to family ratio is one to one hundred families. Therefore, even an active parish of 200 families can support two priests and better meet the pastoral and sacramental needs of the members.

In addition, smaller, thriving and growing parishes are more attractive to non-Orthodox seekers. They are looking for an authentic experience of community where they can be known and more intimately know others in the parish. They are also looking for greater access to the priest on a more intimate level of relationship as a mentor and spiritual guide. All these reasons point to more and smaller parishes as a strategic answer to this important topic of our conference.

There is also a myth that if we plant new parishes in a city, it will hurt the already existing parishes. In our experience in the SF Metropolis, not once has this proven true. Quite the opposite! In every city, such as Phoenix, Sacramento, Seattle and Portland, where we have planted new parishes, the existing parishes have grown stronger.

In conclusion, please take away with you today two essential points. First, one of the most important ways our Orthodox Church can reach out and welcome the non-religious is to offer them the witness of lives that are being changed and sanctified by participation in the life of the Church. The other point is that we need to rediscover the Church's Apostolic identity as a mission-minded and evangelical Church. This identity is rooted in Christ's own unquenchable love for every human being and for the whole world. We need to have His love burning inside us, compelling us to reach out to the people outside our walls. Without any compromise of our Orthodox faith and life, we need to turn our churches inside out and go forth into our increasingly secular society and proclaim the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

*Fr. Theodore Dorrance is the Proistamenos of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Portland, Oregon.*

~ August 2016 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1**</b> Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	<b>2**</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>3**</b> Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	<b>4**</b>	<b>5**</b> Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	<b>6**</b> <b>Transfiguration</b> Orthros 8:15 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
<b>7**</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Get Acquainted Sunday Prayer for school Students Sunday School Registration	<b>8**</b>	<b>9**</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>10**</b>	<b>11**</b>	<b>12**</b> Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	<b>13**</b> Sunday School Teachers' Seminar 9-12:00 p.m.
<b>14**</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Calendar Meeting Sunday School Starts Prayer for College Students Sunday School Registration GOYA Kick off Meeting	<b>15</b> <b>Dormition</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>16</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>17**</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19**</b>	<b>20</b> Community Outreach
<b>21</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Altar Boy Meeting Ministry Fair	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>24**</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26**</b>	<b>27</b> Camp Reunion lock-in
<b>28</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>29</b> <b>Beheading of St. John the Baptist</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>30</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>31**</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

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## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

### Timetable of Services

**Sundays:** Orthros 8:45 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 Katsamakos 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 Katsamakos 813-468-1596

**Dance Group**  
H XAPA MAE, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668  
Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347  
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963  
St. John's, 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

**Hope/Joy**  
Amy Kafantaris 727-743-1297  
Debbie Nicklow 813-690-0671

**Junior Olympics**  
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**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

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

**Sunday School**  
Vickie Peckham 813-406-5626

**Usher**  
Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

**Visitation Committee**  
Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

**Welcome Committee**  
Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

**Young at Heart**  
Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947  
Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

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