

THE MESSENGER

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

March 2017

VISION:

Love God, Love your neighbor and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ as an Orthodox Christian community.

MISSION:

The mission of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is to welcome and serve people with love, truth, joy and peace, and to create an environment that encourages all to seek salvation through Orthodox Christianity.

CORE VALUES:

Love, Worship, Community, Learning, Service

Father Stavros' Message

What is a Catechumen?

During the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy in Great Lent, we will hear the word "Catechumen." In fact, there will be prayer and petitions for the "catechumens." Many of us are unfamiliar with this word. Most of us know the meaning of the word "catechism," which is the study of the faith. A catechumen is one who is studying the faith, with the intention to join the church. "Catechumen" was a designation given to people who were not yet baptized but who were preparing to be baptized. In the early centuries of the church, up until the 8th century, baptisms were done only for adults. Infant baptism was introduced in the 8-9th centuries.

Back in the early church, those who were interested in joining the church had to be catechumens for TWO YEARS. That means there was a two year course of study in order for one to be baptized. I'd bet those early Christians, especially the newly baptized ones, were pretty committed. After all, who is going to commit to something for two years and then drop out? The catechumens were not allowed to receive Holy Communion, and they weren't even allowed to be part of the Divine Liturgy past a certain point. In the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, there are petitions which direct the catechumens to depart. They say, in a very straight-forward way "Catechumens depart, catechumens depart. Let none of the catechumens remain. All we faithful, once again in peace let us pray to the Lord." In the Divine Liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil, before the congregation recites the Creed, the priest says "Guard the doors. In wisdom let us attend." This is an indication that the catechumens were to leave. They would not be part of reciting the Creed, the consecration or receiving Holy Communion. In

fact, the first time the catechumen would experience the entirety of the Liturgy would be after they were baptized. So not only were the catechumens preparing for two years, they were accepting Orthodoxy "sight unseen." Talk about commitment and faith!

One last point about the catechumens and why they were highlighted during Lent is that baptisms in the early church occurred en masse on only a few days of the Liturgical year. And two of those days were Saturday of Lazarus and Holy Saturday. So, instead of having 20-30 private baptisms each year as we do now, the majority or entirety of that number would come in at one time. Thus, the petitions to pray for the catechumens during Lent and before Holy Week was very appropriate—they were about to be baptized as a group. Likely in a church community, there might have been 20-30 or more catechumens in attendance to hear the prayers of the church community.

With the practice of infant baptism now prevalent in the church, and with baptisms now done privately, and not in a mass group, who, then, are the catechumens today? Why are we still offering these petitions today? In my opinion, the catechumens fall in three groups:

Those in our community that will be Chrismated before Pascha—Just about every year, we have at least one person who joins our church through the sacrament of Chrismation. Last year, in fact, we had both a Chrismation and an adult baptism during Lent. So, we have people who can be classified as "catechumens" during this time of year. By the way, don't

worry if you are a catechumen. While you can't receive Holy Communion until you are Chrismated Orthodox, you certainly can stay until the end of the service.

Those in other church communities who will become Orthodox during Lent—We haven't had a catechumen every year at St. John, there are a few years where we didn't have even one. These petitions for the catechumens may not apply to anyone in Tampa in certain years, but most certainly they apply to someone in one of our area churches, in our Metropolis, in our Archdiocese, and throughout the world. We may be one church community in Tampa but we are one church, and our parish in Tampa is part of the greater church, the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church" that we confess in the Creed. So, in praying for the catechumens, we are praying for Orthodox catechumens all over the world.

We are "catechumens"—If a catechumen is someone who seeks to know more about Christ, then in some sense we are all catechumens. A look at the petitions and prayer for the catechumens shows prayers that apply to all of us:

Catechumens, pray to the Lord

Let us, the faithful pray for the catechumens. (in other words, let us pray for one another)

That the Lord will have mercy on them (us)

That He will teach them (us) the word of truth.

That He will reveal to them (us) the Gospel of Righteousness.

That He will unite them (us) to His holy, catholic and apostolic church.

Save them (us), have mercy on them (us), help them (us), and protect them (us), O God, by Your grace.

O God, our god, creator and maker of all, You wish all to be saved and to come to the knowledge the truth. Look upon Your servants, the catechumens (and us) and free them (us) from the old error and the devices of the adversary, and call them (us) to eternal life, illuminating their (our) souls and bodies, and numbering them (us) among Your rational flock over whom Your holy name is invoked.

So that with us they also may glorify you most honorable and majestic name, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

When we examine these petitions, putting "us" in place of the "catechumens," we realize that these prayers are something we need, whether we are new to the Faith or have been Orthodox our entire lives. And these petitions, while somewhat misunderstood, now actually make a lot of sense. As we approach the Lenten season, we should do it as students and as pilgrims, rather than as masters. For each of us has a ways to go in our Christian journey. I, for one, am thankful that the Lenten journey occurs each year. In fact, each year, it seems to come at just the right time. And rather than just mark time on the calendar, surviving Lent or waiting for the time to pass, I hope to use this time (and I hope you will use it as well) to learn more about my faith, to again have the mind of a catechumen, or perhaps for some of us, to have that mindset for the first time.

One of the drawbacks to the way that the Orthodox Church practices the Christian faith is that we don't have a requirement for anyone to learn about the faith and we don't have a requirement for anyone to stand up and say "I wish to belong." Since most of us were baptized as children, one can grow up in the church and never have read a book, or taken a catechism class,

or have any knowledge about the faith whatsoever. For the "catechumen" who comes into the church as an adult, since they must read and take a class in order to join the church, many catechumens who convert to Orthodoxy have more knowledge than those of us who have been part of the church our entire life. I have repeatedly pointed out that knowledge is power, and that without knowledge the faith doesn't have much power in our lives. With knowledge and with additional knowledge, the faith takes on a greater focus in our lives because we understand the purpose of the faith and the power that the faith has to change and shape our lives.

So, I encourage each of you to be a "catechumen" this Lent, to put aside time to learn more about the faith. There are ample opportunities as you will read in the Messenger to worship, to learn (consider coming to our Lenten retreat), to go to confession and other things to make your Lenten experience beneficial and rewarding.

Another Perspective on Confession from the Book of Hebrews

For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace in time of need. For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since He Himself is beset with weakness. Hebrews 4:15-16; 5:1-2

In this passage of scripture, Christ is the "high priest." One of the reasons Christ became a human being was to live the human experience, like us. Christ got frustrated, angry, sick, tired, lonely, joyful. He had the whole life experience. He also was tempted, and felt the agony of temptation. This is why, in coming to Christ, we can feel confident that He will be gentle with our lowliness and waywardness, since He understands our weakness.

Confession, simply put, is an opportunity, to do the following:

1. Cleanse our souls from past guilt—the prayer of absolution offered by the priest gives us permission to "have no further anxiety about the sins" we've confessed.
2. To receive some guidance in our spiritual life.
3. To address any questions we have regarding our faith and spiritual life.
4. To recommit ourselves to Christ.

For those who wish to receive the sacrament of confession, please:

1. Make an appointment with the office
2. Review the "Ten Commandments for Confession" handout
3. Make a list of the sins you wish to confess. Don't bring the "Ten Commandments" handout with you, simply make a list of the sins you wish to confess.

When you come to confession, the following will happen:

1. Two chairs will be set up in the church, one facing the icon of Christ and one to the right of that. You will sit in the chair facing the icon of Christ, the priest will sit to the right.
2. Father will offer a prayer

3. You will offer your confession to the Lord, with the priest serving as a witness and guide. Offer everything you came to offer and Father will not interrupt.
4. When you are finished, the priest will offer advice and counsel.
5. When this is finished, you will kneel, Father will place his stole over your head and offer a prayer.

Other frequently asked questions regarding confession:

1. Do you (Father Stavros) ever lose respect for people who go to confession? Answer: *Actually, I respect them more!*
2. Do you remember the sins we confess? Answer: *As one priest once told me, the same grace of the Holy Spirit that comes down on you to cleanse your sins, comes also on me to wipe away my memory of them.*
3. Do you talk about our sins with other people? Answer: *NO. Whatever is said in confession is confidential.*
4. What if I'm not comfortable going to you, can I go to another priest? *YES. There are many priests in this area. Please go to one of them. The most important thing is to GO!*
5. How often should I go to confession? *At least once a year, and at times when you feel spiritually sick. Kind of how we go to the doctor. Once a year for a checkup and when we feel sick.*
6. How long does confession last? *Long enough for you to feel not guilty and spiritually renewed. Anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour, depends on you. Bear in mind, however, as we get deeper into Lent, I will hear confessions at 20-30 minute intervals, so that I can get them all in.*

If the most important thing in life is our salvation, do you think it is a good idea to talk over your salvation once a year with a priest?

Would you go through life without a physician for your body? Of course not. Why, then, would you not want to go through life with a physician for your soul!

Why is it important to worship?

There are three reasons to worship. (And I'm not mentioning receiving Holy Communion, that is the number one reason to attend the Divine Liturgy, but there are many services during Lent where there is no Holy Communion).

1. We worship to express our love for Christ, to worship Him.
2. We worship to share in Christ's love with others. This is why worship is a communal act.
3. We worship to pray for others who are not in attendance. When we pray for peace in the whole world, as an example, as we pray in the petitions, we are praying for peace in our community, in our homes, for people that we do know and for people across our nation and our world who we do not know. Worship is actually work. It is holy work. On one recent feast-day, no one came to worship—it was just me and Charlie. We still offered the Divine Liturgy, since only the priest and one other person are needed in order to offer the service. Sometimes only two or three people come to a service. But those people are important. When you come to the Liturgy, it is im-

portant, not just for you but for others. For the few that may come, pray for the many who are not present. They pray for those who work and who are sick, for those who are in the military far away from home, from those in every kind of distress. Worship is work that we do for ourselves and for our community but also for our world. So, don't think your presence is not important at worship. It is. And don't think there is no point to celebrating services that are not well attended. There most definitely is. Finally, a story was told to me by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware. He told me that once he was celebrating a Paraklesis in his church in Oxford, England with two other parishioners who were in desperate need of prayers. The three of them held candles while praying. Two people walked by the church and looked in and saw the church filled with people holding candles, so many people that they didn't go in for fear of not finding a seat. Later on, they came back to the church and asked the Metropolitan what kind of service he was having on a Tuesday night that was attended by so many people. The Metropolitan mentioned that only three people were in the church. When the people asked why the church seemed so full, the Metropolitan said "It was filled with angels." He also told me that when I offer incense in the church, to cense every pew, even the empty ones, because the empty pews are where the angels sit. So, that morning last month that only Charlie and I were present for the Liturgy was actually glorious, for it was me and him and a church filled with angels and saints. There are lots of opportunities to worship this Lent—I hope you'll take full advantage of them.

I wish you a blessed and purposeful journey of the Great Lent! Kali Sarakosti!

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

Father Stavros' March Schedule

Father Stavros will be out of town from March 12 (after Liturgy) through Tuesday, March 14. There will be no Great Compline on Monday, March 13. Father Stavros will be leading the Metropolis Philoptochos retreat on March 17-18 at the Diakonia Center. Father Andrew Pavlakos will celebrate the Salutations Service on Friday, March 17. Father Stavros will celebrate Liturgy on March 19.

Liturgical Schedule for Great Lent & Holy Week

Wednesday, March 1 **9th Hour** 5:30 p.m.
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Lenten Dinner sponsored by Choir to follow in the Kourmolis Center.

Friday, March 3 **Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 1st Stanza** 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 4 **3rd Saturday of the Souls** - Memorial Service to be held at the end of the Divine Liturgy.
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, March 5 **Sunday of Orthodoxy - First Sunday of Lent**
Orthros 8:15 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.
Procession of Icons to be held at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew

Ushers: Brett Mourer, Demetrios Halkias, Amin Hanhan

Welcome Ministry: Greeters: Lisa Alsina, Donna Hambos; Ambassador: Helen Cauthorn;

Caller: Julie Palios; Get Acquainted: Michael Palios, Bessie Palios

Coffee Hour: Altar Angels

Monday, March 6 **Great Compline** 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 8 **9th Hour** 5:30 p.m.
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Lenten Dinner sponsored by Sunday School to follow in the Kourmolis Center.

Friday, March 10 **Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 2nd Stanza** 5:00 p.m. **Please Note The Earlier Time!**

Sunday, March 12 **Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas - Second Sunday of Lent**
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark

Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas

Welcome Ministry: Greeters: Elaine Halkias, Skip Higdon;

Ambassador: Maria Karounos; Caller: Peggy Bradshaw

Coffee Hour: The AHEPA Family



Wednesday, March 15 **9th Hour** 5:30 p.m.
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Lenten Dinner sponsored by The AHEPA Family to follow in the Kourmolis Center.

Friday, March 17 **Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 2nd Stanza** 6:30 p.m.
Fr. Andrew Pavlakos of Holy Trinity in Clearwater will be the guest celebrant.

Sunday, March 19 **Sunday of the Holy Cross - Third Sunday of Lent**
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Procession of the Holy Cross at the end of the Liturgy

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke

Ushers: Tammy Christou, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis

Welcome Ministry: Greeters: Edie Kavouklis; Ambassador: Debbie Kavouklis;

Caller: Betty Katsamakis

Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Monday, March 20 **Great Compline** 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 22 **9th Hour** 5:30 p.m.
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Lenten Dinner sponsored by Philoptochos to follow in the Kourmolis Center.

Friday, March 24 **Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 3rd Stanza** 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 25

Annunciation

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

Sunday, March 26

Sunday of St. John Climacus - Forth Sunday of Lent

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

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John

Ushers: Florin Patrasciou, Mike Trimis, Tammy Christou

Welcome Ministry: Greeters: Bessie Palios, Jenny Paloumpis; Ambassador: Sandra Pappas;

Caller: Christene Worley

Coffee Hour: Greek Independence Day Celebration

Monday, March 27

Great Compline 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 29

9th Hour 5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Lenten Dinner sponsored by Young at Heart to follow in the Kourmolis Center.

Friday, March 31

Akathist Hymn 6:30 pm

Sunday, April 2

Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt - Fifth Sunday of Lent

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

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew

Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, Marcus Calpakis, Peter Theophanous

Welcome Ministry: Greeters: Christy Pessemier, Tom Pessemier; Ambassador: Lisa Alsina;

Caller: Katherine Sakkis; Get Acquainted: Marenca Patrasciou, Megan Rindone

Coffee Hour: Community Outreach

Special Altar Boy Schedule for Lenten Services

CAPTAINS

Aris Rogers, Director
Savvas Ferekides
Gregory Koutroumanis
Harry Koutroumanis
Karter Lenardos

St. Matthew

George Hambos
Nicholas Katzaras
James Katzaras
John Palios
Andrew Patrasciou
James Kavouklis
Nicholas Akrotirianakis
Jonathan Brannan
PJ Zelatis

St. Mark

Nicholas Alsina
Frankie Giallourakis
Chris Cojita
Dominic Garcia
Benny Hidermichel
John Nicholas Krinos
Demetri Passalaris
George Xenick
Nicholas Carter
Gregory Thomas

St. Luke

Dean Mitseas
Christos Nenos
Genaro Scarfogliero
Jonah Blankenbaker
Yanni Trimikliniotos
Andrew Thatcher
Alexander Findlay
Grayson Borgeas-Beach
Gryphon Borgeas-Beach
Makis Crassas

St. John

Antonio Bavaro
Nicholas Yotis
Dimitri Karounos
Brigham Sibley
Peter Chandler
Zach Chandler
Niko Bavaro
Anthony Catrone

Wednesday, March 1 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.

Harry Koutroumanis and St. Luke

Friday, March 3 Salutations 6:30 p.m.

Karter Lenardos and St. John

Wednesday, March 8 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.

Gregory Koutroumanis and St. Matthew

Friday, March 10 Salutations 6:30 p.m.

Savvas Ferekides and St. Mark

Wednesday, March 15 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.

Karter Lenardos and St. John

Friday, March 17 Salutations 6:30 p.m.

Harry Koutroumanis and St. Luke

Wednesday, March 22 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.

Savvas Ferekides and St. Mark

Friday, March 24 Salutations 6:30 p.m.

Gregory Koutroumanis and St. Matthew

Wednesday, March 29 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.

Savvas Ferekides and St. Matthew

Friday, March 31 Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m.

Anyone in GOYA may serve

Wednesday, April 5 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:30 p.m.

Gregory Koutroumanis and St. Mark

Liturgical Notes for Great Lent

Mondays of Lent - Great Compline (No Service Monday, March 13)

The service of Great Compline will be read on the following Mondays of Lent - March 6, 20, 27, April 3. This service lasts about an hour and consists of Psalms and hymns of repentance. Service Books will be available in the Narthex.

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

The Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts (also called Pre-Sanctified liturgy) will be held on the Wednesdays during Great Lent. This service consists of Vespers with Holy Communion that was "Pre-Sanctified" the previous Sunday. It is an opportunity to receive Communion frequently during the season of fasting. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy is preceded by the reading of the 9th Hour, a short service with penitential prayers as well as the recitation of the Creed, a pre-requisite for the reception of Holy Communion. Service books for this service will be available in the Narthex.

Following the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy each week, one of our ministries will host a Lenten Dinner.

Wednesday, March 1 Choir
Wednesday, March 8 Sunday School
Wednesday, March 15 The AHEPA Family

Wednesday, March 22 Philoptochos
Wednesday, March 29 Young at Heart
Wednesday, April 5 Small Group Bible Studies

So, spend the hour you would spend cooking dinner worshipping in church and then stay for a complimentary dinner. This is being offered in the hopes that more people will attend this service, and that each member of each ministry will attend at least one of these moving services.

Fridays of Lent - The Salutations to the Virgin Mary (Heretismoi)

This service also lasts about an hour and is a series of prayers and devotions that invoke the intercessions of the Virgin Mary for our salvation. Service Books will be available in the Narthex. **Please note the earlier starting time on Friday, March 10 the service will be at 5:00 p.m. instead of 6:30 p.m.** His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios has asked all the priests and members of lay leadership to be at Holy Trinity in Clearwater by 6:30 p.m. on Friday, March 10 for a Dynmais Dialogue.. See advertisement for more information.

WHAT WE CELEBRATE ON THE SUNDAYS OF GREAT LENT

Sunday, March 5 - 1st Sunday of Lent - Sunday of Orthodoxy

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

Sunday of Orthodoxy Icon Procession

A grand procession with icons took place on March 11, 843 AD, marking the permanent triumph of icons. From this time, icons were defined as objects to be venerated and not worshipped. They are spiritual mirrors through which we see the heavenly saints. Their restoration in our churches is a true victory for Orthodoxy. Thus, on the first Sunday of Lent each year, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Triumph of Orthodoxy with a procession of icons, together with the reading of a Synodal Statement, authored in 843, marking their return to the Church. ***If anyone has new icons that have not been blessed, please bring them to church on Sunday, March 5, the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and place them in the windows of the church. They will be blessed with Holy Water during the service.***

Sunday, March 12 - 2nd Sunday of Lent - St. Gregory Palamas

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

Sunday, March 19 - Third Sunday of Lent - Veneration of the Holy Cross

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

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

Saturday, March 25 - Feast of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary

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

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

Sunday, March 26 - Fourth Sunday of Lent - St. John Climacus

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

Why does Liturgy seem longer on Sundays during Lent?

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

Great Opportunities This Lent

Interested in Reading during Lenten Services

In years past, we've offered the opportunity to parishioners to read during the Lenten services on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings. If you are interested, you can sign up by calling the office and Father will tell you the times and dates that are available or email Father at frstav@gmail.com or Charlie at Charlie.hambos@gmail.com.

Prayer team

The Prayer Team is a daily devotional that Fr. Stavros has been writing for two years. It is an email that comes out every morning at 12:30 a.m. from our church's Constant Contact system. If you are interested in receiving this daily message, please email Charlie at charlie.hambos@gmail.com and you'll be added to the list. On weekends, Father Stavros is writing about the scripture passages of Great Lent and on weekdays, he is writing on various topics related to Great Lent.

Adult Lenten Retreat

Our Twelfth Annual Adult Lenten Retreat will be held on Saturday, March 11, from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (Please see attached flyer). The theme of the Retreat is "Realizing My Purpose: God made each of us For a Special Reason." In addition to the subject material related to the theme, there will be ample opportunity for general questions about our faith. Please sign up by sending the attachment from the flyer to the church office by March 5 or emailing Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com. This event is open to all adults in our parish, as well as surrounding Orthodox parishes of the area. Non-Orthodox friends and friends from other churches are certainly welcome.

Sacrament of Confession

Many people have already made appointments for their confessions to be heard, many for the first time in their lives. It is confidential. It helps you re-connect with God and unburden yourself of guilt. It helps you to make a new start in your spiritual journey and is an integral part of any successful Lenten journey. If you have questions about confession, please ask. There is no better way to prepare for Pascha than to receive this sacrament. Confessions will be heard up to April 7, and then again after Pascha. Please make your appointment as soon as possible, because Fr. Stavros likes to give people whatever time they need. As it gets closer to Holy Week and more and more people are coming, he is forced to go quicker, and it is very important not to be rushed in this Sacrament.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

IN PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Leaving Space for the Wisdom of God to Work

By Charlie Hambos

People are seeking something in this world today. Outwardly they appear to shun “faith” and “beliefs,” but if we ask them if they are seeking something, after some mild argument, they may admit that they are indeed seeking something but they don’t know what it is. They may call it “inner peace,” “fulfillment,” “love,” “contentment,” or “happiness,” just to name a few. We as believers, ought to be seeking something as well. The point is we are all seeking and it is the action of seeking which is most important. The only difference between the believers and the non-believers, is that the believers are seeking God, through Christ, His Son and God’s activities in the world.

Since January, the Monday evening Bible Study here at St. John the Baptist, keeping to the tradition of studying an Old Testament Book in the spring, is churning through the Wisdom of Solomon. This book is part of the Wisdom Books which includes: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus. The Wisdom of Solomon is also part of the apocrypha, which means hidden things but deuterocanonical is the preferred designation of the Wisdom of Solomon. The Orthodox Christian Church and the Roman Catholic Church include these in their Biblical Canon. The Wisdom of Solomon is thought to be one of the last books written in Old Testament around 100 B.C. by a Jew in Alexandria, Egypt, with a lot of help from earlier writings of King Solomon. Wisdom itself is personified into a person which eventually makes way for the New Testament idea of the Word of God, who is Christ. The book can be broken into three parts. Chapters 1-5 explores the relationship between Wisdom and its influence in our salvation into eternity. Chapters 6-9 talk about where Wisdom comes from, what it is made of, how it operates and how to get it. Finally, chapters 10-19 focus on the how Wisdom has guided humanity from the time of Adam to the Exodus of Egypt and ultimately to the Kingdom of Heaven.

The book is very powerful and uses beautiful imagery and shows us how Wisdom is the source of many things. In fact, it says, *“She is a breath of the power of God, pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; so nothing impure can find its way into her (Wisdom 7:25-27).”* One difference we have to understand when reading the Old Testament is Hellenistic thought versus Hebrew thought. Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. The Wisdom of Solomon was actually written in Greek and brings Hellenistic thought with it. For example, the Platonic distinction between the body and the soul, the immortality of the soul, especially the idea that God intends humanity to be immortal. The only way to achieve this is through Wisdom and Wisdom is the way to God. Another idea which is central is that this life should be used to prepare for a different life where the righteous live with God and the unrighteous are punished. These are Hellenistic ideas which are central to Christianity so the Book of Wisdom is this interesting type of hybrid bridge linking the Old Testament to the New Testament.

The fact of the matter is that wisdom can be acquired if it is something we honestly seek in faith. In the book itself, the author likens Wisdom to a woman whom he is courting and whom he yearns to have.

Wisdom is brilliant, she never fades. By those who love her, she is readily seen, by those who seek her, she is readily found. She

anticipates those who desire her by making herself known first. Whoever gets up early to seek her will have no trouble but will find her sitting at the door. Meditating on her is understanding in its perfect form, and anyone keeping awake for her will soon be free from care. For she herself searches everywhere for those who are worthy of her, benevolently appearing to them on their ways, anticipating their every thought. For Wisdom begins with the sincere desire for instruction, care for instruction means loving her, loving her means keeping her laws, attention to her laws guarantees incorruptibility, and incorruptibility brings us near to God. Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-19

One of the most profound studies so far during our Bible study was in discussing the attributes of the Wisdom of God found in Wisdom 7. *“For within her is a spirit intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, incisive, unsullied, lucid, invulnerable, benevolent, shrewd, irresistible, beneficent, friendly to human beings, steadfast, dependable, unperturbed, almighty, all-surveying, penetrating all intelligent and pure.”* All of these attributes of Wisdom are attributes that we want to acquire. Wisdom, however, is the only one that can be all of these things at once. If want acquire them, we have to leave space for her to work within us and we have to seek her.

Let’s break down these attributes one by one. Intelligent means she is smart and moves beyond the irrational. We are given the opportunity to be rational and to choose God or not to choose Him, so She always wants to choose Him only if we only choose Her. Wisdom then wants to guide us to God. She is Holy because God is Holy. She is unique or only-begotten. There is nothing else like her in the entire spiritual and physical universe. She is manifold meaning she comes in many forms and ways and dispositions. She is subtle because She comes in ways which are not great and “in our face” obvious. Like Christ was born in Bethlehem, a rather unimportant place and in no way the place where the Messiah and New King of Israel should be born. She is mobile because she moves, pervades and penetrates everything and nothing can escape her. She is incisive meaning clear cut doesn’t create confusion. She is unsullied meaning pure and nothing can make Her spoil. She is lucid, manifesting Herself in real ways, not a dream. She is invulnerable meaning She can’t be damaged and can take anything thrown at Her. She is beneficent, meaning She loves only the good things of this world. She is friendly to human beings because She was created to help guide and protect use. She is steadfast. She stays on the right path and keeps us moving towards God regardless of our path. She is dependable meaning we can trust Her. She is unperturbed because She doesn’t worry about things. She is almighty meaning she is the most powerful because God is powerful. She is all surveying meaning she takes measurement, doing everything precisely. She penetrates all intelligent, again because those who have the choice between God and not God. She helps us become more intelligent if we trust Her. Finally she is pure meaning she is clean and doesn’t have any additives and isn’t made or mixed with anything else.

Let us make room for her in our heart and soul this Great Lent so that we can acquire some of these attributes. Seek her. Help those who are seeking, seek Her. Join us on Monday evenings as we continue to learn about Her and Her role in our lives.

Community News

Parish Registry

Double Baptism - Demetri Robert Roussos and Giulanna Lynn Roussos, children of Nicholas Roussos and Calista Wetherbee, were baptized on Sunday, January 22. Elpiniki Roussos, Nicholas Nezi and Evangelia Nezi were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Wedding - Frank Berdos and Isabel Prieto were married on Saturday, February 4. Paulina Berdos was the Koumbara. Congratulations!

Funeral - Steve Maltezos passed away on Sunday, January 22. Funeral Services were held at St. John on Friday, January 27, with Fr. Stavros, Fr. Thomas Paris (childhood friend of Steve) and Fr. Jim Paris officiating. May his memory be eternal!

Congratulations to Artie Palios, our choir director, who was recently inducted into the Hillsborough County Music Education Hall of Fame. The Hillsborough County Hall of fame award is presented annually to recognize outstanding retired Hillsborough County Music Directors and community leaders that have contributed to the advancement of music education in Hillsborough County. Congratulations Artie!

Get Acquainted Sunday, March 5



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.



Meetings

There will be two GOYA meetings in March. The first will be on Sunday, March 5, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. There will be a second meeting on Sunday, March 26, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. For the March 26 meeting, all GOYAns are invited to participate. For this particular meeting, Fr. Stavros is going to do a special seminar for all GOYAns who have siblings in GOYA, a "sibling" retreat. All other GOYAns who do not have a sibling in GOYA will meet with Charlie that night.

Lenten Retreat

Our 13th Annual GOYA Lenten Retreat will be held March 31-April 2. We will welcome GOYAns and advisors from around the Tampa Bay area who will be with us for the Salutations service on Friday, March 31 and the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, April 2.

Luminaries for Good Friday and Easter

These are little bags with votive candles inside that line the way of the procession of Christ's tomb around the church on Good Friday and are lit around the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. On each bag names can be written of loved ones, either for their health and well-being if they are living (Easter), or in memory of someone who has passed away (Good Friday evening). The GOYAns will be selling the luminaries after church on Sundays, March 26, April 2 and April 9. This is a wonderful way to honor those who are living, those who passed away, to make our services even more beautiful and to help out our GOYAns.

Community Outreach - Saturday, March 18

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!



Young Adults Dinner

Our young adult ministry group has a monthly dinner/discussion night at the church. For March, it will be Sunday, March 19, from 5:00 - 7:30 p.m. Please bring \$10 to cover the cost of dinner. Other events will be scheduled.

New Bibles in Pews

An anonymous parishioner donated Bibles for the pews in our church. If you ever want to just sit in church and read the Bible, please come and do so. Feel free to read the Bible during Holy Communion - the Communion line is usually long and this is a great time to dive into scripture. We all can stand to do a better job in our scripture reading.

We Want to Thank You!



Ye Holy Krewe brings in nearly \$7,000!

Our Gasparilla Parking Fundraiser was again headed up by Captain John Kokkas, his 10th year of leading Ye Holy Krewe! For the children's parade, in addition to John, we wish to thank Mary Maas, Alexandra Gerecke, Ed Gerecke, Brett Mourer, Anna Mourer, Mike Xenick and Charlie Hambos. Their efforts netted \$2,250. At the adult parade, the Krewe included John, Katherine MacLaury, Mary Maas, Brett Mourer, Peter Theophanous, Charlie Hambos, Mike Xenick, Ed Gerecke, Dwight Forde and George Chagaris. Additional thanks to Lisa Alsina who got Dr. Marcadis' office for use of 25 additional parking spots. The total amount of the adult parade was \$4,620, for a grand total of \$6,870.75. Thanks again to Ye Holy Krewe.

OCMC Missions Sunday

Every year on Superbowl Sunday, we hold our annual Orthodox Christian Mission Center Luncheon. This luncheon, sponsored by Philoptochos, raised \$1,050, to go along with \$1,000 that we budget for Orthodox Missionary efforts. So, this year, we sent over \$2,000 to OCMC. We also sent over 500 icons for Orthodox Christians in other countries.

Second Annual Movie Night a Success

On February 10, we showed the movie "Risen." It was preceded by dinner, which was generously donated anonymously by one of our church families. And after dinner, we had a great discussion about the movie. We had a great turn out of 30 people!

Hope/Joy News

Souper Bowl of Caring

Our annual Souper Bowl of Caring was a huge success on Sunday, February 5. Our kindergarten kids did a great job cheering on the teams and collecting the contributions. The Falcon's pot raised \$356 and the Patriot's pot raised \$235. The Falcons were favored for the win at St. John the Baptist, the Patriots won the game and the Hope Children's Home was the Big Winner with a total of \$600 and about 300 pounds of food donated to the home. Thank you to all our parishioners and the Daniel Plan ministry who gave hope to the children there, through your generous donations! THANK YOU!!



Movie Night

On Friday, January 20 Hope/Joy hosted their 2nd Movie and Pizza night. Thank you, Charlie, for all the help and a special thank you to all the families that came and enjoyed a fun night of fellowship, pizza, popcorn, candy and the movie Zootopia together.



Great and Holy Friday Youth Retreat

Friday, April 14, 2017 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Service of Royal Hours - 9:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

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

**Please join us for a day filled with
crafts, activities, reflection, and worship with your Sunday School friends.**

The retreat will end with The Apokathelosis Service -- Descent from the Cross Service at 3:00 p.m.
All Parents are encouraged to attend!

Lunch and snacks included **Please r.s.v.p. your child by Friday, April 7, 2016** *Parent volunteers are needed*
Call or email Debbie Nicklow at Debbienicklow@hotmail.com or 813-920-0892.

Students should dress appropriately for Church and for comfort during the retreat.

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

Family Calendar for Great Lent 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
February 26 Cheesefare Sunday of forgiveness Come to church and ask forgiveness Sunday School Retreat 5	27 Clean Monday Great Lent Begins Holy Unction Service Great Compline No TV today 6 Great Compline Help make your bed, clean up and dust your room 13 Great Compline Help set the table and clean up after dinner	28 Call and wish your Godparents a "Blessed Lent/Kali Sarakosti" 7 Do something nice for your mother 14 Do something nice for your father	March 1 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Say a special prayer for sick children 8 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Receive Holy Communion /Sunday School Family dinner 15 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Say a special prayer for your neighbors	2 Make a prosfora bread with your family to bring to church 9 Collect some clothing or shoes to donate to a charity special to you 16 Collect some coins to bring to church on Sunday	3 Salutations to the Virgin Mary Make a list of 5 things you are thankful for 10 Salutations to the Virgin Mary Read a favorite Bible story with your family 17 Salutations to the Virgin Mary Pray the Lenten prayer of St. Ephraim together with your family	4 Saturday of the Souls Make a prayer list of those who have died and bring to church 11 Help your parents in the yard/garden 18 Read about the life of a Saint with your family Community Outreach
19 Holy Cross Take home a flower from the cross 26 St John of the Ladder Take 5 minutes of silence to pray about how much God loves you Youth Sunday <i>Confession for Grades 5&6</i> 2 St Mary of Egypt Sing Agios O Theos in Church today	20 Great Compline Forgive someone who hurt you 27 Great Compline Play with someone who feels left out	21 Do something nice for your teacher 28 Draw a picture of your saint or feast day by looking at an icon	22 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Say a special prayer for your Sunday School teachers 29 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Say a special prayer for your priest	23 Buy and donate a food item for our St. John food pantry 30 Choose a toy you don't play with and donate it	24 Salutations to the Virgin Mary Come Bless the icon of Panagia 31 Akathist Hymn/Divine Liturgy Sing Victorious Lady in your prayers one last time GOYA Lenten Retreat <i>*Confession for kids attending retreat</i>	25 Annunciation Say a special prayer for those who fought for your independence April 1 Ask for God to protect your house Tell someone you hurt that you are sorry
9 Palm Sunday Service of Bridegroom Replace your old crosses and have parents burn any old crosses	10 Holy Monday Bridegroom Service Read the story about the prophet Joseph	11 Holy Tuesday Bridegroom Service Read the story of Kassiani the Hymnographer	12 Holy Wednesday Come and receive Holy Unction	13 Holy Thursday • Divine Liturgy • 12 Gospels Service Color eggs red for Pascha, think about Jesus on the cross	14 Holy Friday • Royal Hours • Unnailing from the Cross • Lamentations Attend Sunday School retreat	15 Holy Saturday • Liturgy of St. Basil • Resurrection Service Come to the early Liturgy to see scattering of bay leaves
April 16 PASCHA! Christ is Risen! You have completed Great Lent! Attend Agape vespers to light your candle					*All students are encouraged to participate in the sacrament of Confession. If they have missed their scheduled class day, please schedule an appointment or join another class day.	



Please join us for the Twelfth Annual Lenten Retreat

At St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Tampa

***Realizing My Purpose: God Made Each of Us
for a Special Reason***

Saturday, March 11 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Retreat Leader: Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 Swann Avenue ~Tampa, FL~33609

813-876-8830

Schedule:

9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy
10:00 a.m. Refreshments
10:30 a.m. Introductory Remarks: Fr. Stavros
11:00 a.m. Session One: Why Did God Create, and Why Did He Create Us?
12:00 p.m. Session Two: Finding Your Purpose and How to be less Frustrated
1:00 p.m. Lunch
1:45 p.m. Session Three: Answering other “Why” Questions—Why evil? Why Suffering? Why Christ?
2:45 p.m. Closing Prayer

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

Adults only please

Please return this registration form by mail or take it to the Church Office or email this information to Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com by March 6. We look forward to seeing you there!

Name: _____ **Name of Spouse:** _____

Home Phone: _____ **Cell Phone:** _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

"DYNAMIS" A DIALOGUE TO STRENGTHEN OUR PARISHES AND PARISHIONERS

How can We Better Address The Challenges Facing Our Parishes and Parishioners?

Experience new resources, receive spiritual food, and join the dialogue of how we can help you with your critical work.

We want to hear you there.

Everyone is Encouraged to Attend!

For more information please visit atlmeteropolis.org or call the Metropolis office at 404-634-9345.

Metropolitan Alexios invites you to join him and his Metropolis co-workers to engage in a productive dialogue at one of the locations:

March 7	Jacksonville, FL	March 11	Mobile, AL	March 21	Greensboro, NC
March 8	Orlando, FL	March 12	Birmingham, AL	March 22	Charlotte, NC (HT)
March 9	Boca Raton, FL	March 19	Atlanta, GA	March 23	Florence, SC
March 10*	Clearwater, FL	March 20	Greenville, SC	Start Time is 6:30 p.m. at all locations.	

*Please note the earlier starting time on Friday, March 10. St. John the Baptist Salutation to the Virgin Mary Service will be at 5:00 p.m.



Metropolis of Atlanta's St. Stephen's Summer Camp Registration OPENS on March 28th!

Week #1	June 25 - July 1
Week #2	July 02 - July 8
Week #3	July 09 - July 15
Week #4	July 16 - July 22
Week #5	July 23 - July 29

\$400.00 Cost per Camper

For teens entering 6th through 12th Grades in the Fall.

We are pleased to offer a sibling discount of \$25.00 for each additional child from the same family who attends summer camp! Coupon Code: SIBLING

Call Julie at the Metropolis for more details 404-634-9345!

Donations Needed for Great Lent and Holy Week

Great Lent begins February 27. We have many special celebrations during these weeks. We know that many of you would like to contribute to the decorating of our church and icons during this period. For your convenience, below is a list of items needed for the celebration of the Sacred Services of Lent and Holy Week. Please contact the church office to reserve your desired offering for the health of your loved ones or in memory of a deceased loved one.

Payment may be sent to the church office. Checks should be made payable to “St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church” with “Lenten Flower Donation” on the memo line.

Lent	Wireless Microphones in the Church	Duracell or Energizer AA Batteries	Many Needed
Lent	Metropolitan Visits	Ribbons for Bishop’s Candles	\$200
March 3	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 1 st Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
March 10	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 2 nd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
March 17	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 3 rd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
March 19	Veneration of the Holy Cross	Flowers for Tray for Procession	\$350
March 24	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 4 th Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
March 31	Akathist Hymn	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
April 9	Palm Sunday	Flowers for Icon of Palm Sunday	\$75
		Palms Strips & Branches	\$250 total
Holy Week		Pillar Candles for Windows (20)	\$15 each
April 10	Holy Monday	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex	\$75
	Bridegroom Service	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom on Solea (2)	\$75 each
April 12	Holy Wednesday	Flowers for Icon of Last Supper	\$75
	Holy Unction	Olive Oil, Flour, Prosphora (2)	See Fr. Stavros
April 13	Holy Thursday	Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion	\$75
		Wreath for Top of Cross	\$250
		Wreaths for Bottom of Cross (2)	\$150 each
		Scattered flowers at base of cross	\$50
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)	\$15 each
April 14	Good Friday	8 Bags of Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers	\$50
		Flowers for Epitaphios	Several Needed
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Apokathelosis	\$15 each
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Lamentations	\$15 each
		Icon of Extreme Humility	\$75
April 16	Pascha	Flowers for Icon of Resurrection	\$75
		Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb	\$75
		Silk Flower for Royal Doors	\$100
		Easter Lilies	\$25 per Lily



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

New Policy on Memorial Services

After much thought, we are introducing a new procedure for memorial services. It is part of the Orthodox Tradition to pray for loved ones who have departed this life by offering memorial services. Up until about 150 years ago, memorial services were not done on Sundays at all. It was by economia (dispensation) that the practice was allowed. It used to be that memorial services were conducted in conjunction with Saturday liturgies. Now we have four Saturdays (the Saturdays of the Souls) set aside for that purpose. And memorial services are allowed on Sundays.

It seems that we have a memorial service almost every Sunday now in Tampa. And memorial services add ten minutes to an already long worship service (Holy Communion often takes 30 minutes). It is customary for memorial services to be offered 40 days after a loved one passes away and on the one year anniversary. Some people like to remember their loved ones yearly. In order to accommodate this and to try and lessen the frequency of memorial services, we are going to institute a new policy for memorial services on Sundays.

- A 40 day memorial or a one year memorial will be offered on the Sunday corresponding to the forty days or the one year anniversary, meaning you can still schedule these memorial services as you wish.
- For memorials commemorating other intervals the memorial Sundays for 2017 will be as follows: March 11, April 2, May 7, June 11, July 2, August 13, September 3, October 1, October 29 and December 3.
- Sundays when memorials are not allowed during the remainder of 2017 are as follows: March 5 (Sunday of Orthodoxy), March 19 (Sunday of Holy Cross), April 9 (Palm Sunday), April 16 (Pascha), April 23 (Sunday of St. Thomas), June 4 (Pentecost), August 6 (Transfiguration), September 17 (Sunday after Holy Cross), December 24 (Christmas Eve).
- If you wish to have a memorial service, please inform the office no less than **TWO WEEKS before the date** of the memorial service or memorial Sunday. Please provide the name(s) of those you wish to remember and interval of their passing.
- If you wish to have the Philoptochos sponsor the kolyva, the cost is \$75. Please let the office know if you wish for Philoptochos to provide the kolyva or if you wish to offer it yourself,* or if you've asked someone else to offer it. Also, please let the office know how many pews we can reserve for your family.

It is our hope that this new policy will help us continue to remember our loved ones, but also cut down on having memorial services so frequently. By having them less frequently, they become special events.

*If you wish to offer koliva yourself and plan on sharing with the community, please prepare to cup the koliva yourself after the memorial service.

Ζήτω η Ελλάδα!



Sunday, March 26 Greek Independence Day Luncheon

We will be hosting our annual Greek Independence Day Luncheon and program on Sunday, March 26, following the Divine Liturgy, in the Kourmolis Center. There will be several performances by our dance groups, singing of some folk songs, Greek poems from our Adult Greek School and a tasty lunch. All proceeds will go to our church. Thank you to the Kalojiannis family for again sponsoring and donating this luncheon.



Please join us for our annual

Philoptochos' Membership Tea

Saturday, March 4, 2017

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

***At the home of Arty Giallourakis
11818 Marblehead Drive Tampa, FL 33626***

***Come, wear your fancy high tea hat and enjoy an
afternoon of fellowship with Philoptochos.***

***Kindly RSVP to
Arty Giallourakis 727-424-9626 or mgial@aol.com.***



~ Stewardship Update ~

One day, a person complained to his priest that the Church and Christianity is one continual “give, give, give.” To which the priest replied, “Thank you very much for the finest definition of Christianity I have ever heard. You’re right, Christianity is all about a constant “give, give, give.” God giving His only Son to the world to show His unconditional love. His Son Jesus giving His life on the cross to forgive our sins and destroy death. Then our Lord’s disciples giving all they had to make sure God’s Good News of love was preached to all people everywhere. They not only gave away their homes and businesses, but even gave up their lives as martyrs in gratitude to God!

It is by offering our blessings back to God that He will be able to continue His forgiving, healing, liberating, empowering, transfiguring, loving ministry through the Church. For God, Infinite though He be, has chosen to work through us, through our gifts, to continue His saving work in the world today. *Fr. Anthony M. Coniaris*

~Housekeeping~

We deeply thank the loyal Stewards of St. John the Baptist for your gifts of time, talent and treasure to our beloved parish. Your Stewardship provides the foundation for our parish and your loved ones to experience the joy of our faith. More than 350 individuals/families pledged in 2016, however we have only received pledges from 213 individuals/families in 2017. Our church is full every Sunday and together we experience the joy of worship and love of fellowship at St. John the Baptist. Together we can do better!

Did you know - Stewardship Payments & General Donations are now Easy & Convenient

Option 1 –Use Online Banking - How does it work and how do I set it up?

- Log into your Online Banking Account.
- Go to Bill Pay
- Set the Church as a Payee: Saint John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, 2418 W. Swann Avenue, Tampa, FL 33609.
- Set the amount you wish to give and the frequency (eg. Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, etc)
- Your bank will send the Church a check based on your instructions. IT’S THAT EASY!
- Your bank will notify you when your check has been mailed. You can change or stop the payments anytime.

Option 2: Use PayPal

- Go to the Home Page of our Church Website (or Stewardship Tab)
- Select Donate Online Tab to make a one time or reoccurring donation.

Advantages of Online Donations

1. They are fast, easy and secure.
2. They eliminate the hassle of writing the check.
3. PayPal accepts all major credit cards
4. You do not have to set up an account.
5. You automatically receive a receipt of your donation.
6. PayPal’s system is secure and will not reveal any credit card or checking account information to anyone (not even the Church).

Stewardship	2017
Pledged for the Year	\$327,651. ^{00*}
Collected For the Year	\$103,279. ⁵⁰
# of Parishioners (Families) Pledged with a completed form	213

*As of 2/13/2017

Please Note: If you setup payments automatically, please ensure you have a completed a 2017 Stewardship Pledge Form so we can match your detailed family information with your Pledge!

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

News from St. John Legacy Society

Continue Supporting Our Beloved St. John After Your Lifetime

Benjamin Franklin once wrote, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

Want to learn more about making tax-wise gifts? Passionate about supporting St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church even after your lifetime? It's not only possible; it's easy to do with a beneficiary designation. Just name St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church as a beneficiary to receive assets such as retirement plans and life insurance policies after you're gone. You simply fill out a form that is entirely separate from your will—which makes this approach an easy way to give.

Not only is it an easy way to give, but it's also flexible - you aren't locked into the choices you make today. You can review and adjust beneficiary designations anytime you want.

Please be sure to seek advice from your financial and legal advisors, and discuss your charitable plans with your family.

If you include St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in your plans, please use the church's legal name, St John Greek Orthodox Church, and Federal Tax ID # 59-1170684. Additionally, please contact Fr. Stavros at 813-876-8830 or email him at frstav@gmail.com or contact Debbie Gavalas at 813-505-8901 so that we may include you as a founding member of the St. John Legacy Society.

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA
William J Camarinos - Alexandria, VA
Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC
Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL
Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL
Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI
Perry & Fay Stamatiades - Asheville, NC
Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI
Wesley & Melissa Thompson - Clearwater, FL

Demitrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH
Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL
Bessie Bliziotis - Palm Cost, FL
Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL
Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL
William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL
Lillian Thomas - Highland, IN
Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL
Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD

Friends of St. John the Baptist - Some of you who receive *The Messenger* do not live in the Tampa Bay area or are members of other Greek Orthodox parishes. We would like to ask for your support of our parish by being a "Friend of St. John the Baptist." Your contribution as a "Friend" will help offset the cost of mailing *The Messenger*, among other things. Being a "friend" does not make one a steward of St. John or afford membership rights and responsibilities, but gives one who is a member elsewhere, an opportunity to make a gesture of financial support to our parish.

Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

Friend of St. John the Baptist:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I wish to become a Friend of St. John the Baptist. I am enclosing a contribution in the amount of:

_____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$200 _____ Other

Please mail this form and check to: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church 2418 W. Swann Ave Tampa, FL 33609

Small Group Bible Studies

Small group Bible Studies are well underway. These groups gather once a week to study the Bible, discuss how to apply scripture to daily life, pray together and become small spiritual support groups. These sessions are discussion based, not lecture based. This is an opportunity to work side by side with each other to learn more about the faith. As group members get to know one another on a deeper level and as groups become more committed, you'll see that the groups will not only become a resource to help learn and live the faith, but through these groups, we'll eventually help *"carry one another's burdens and so build up the body of Christ,"* as we are told to do in Galatians 6:2. And this is what the church is all about—helping one another through this life, on the journey to everlasting life.

Monday Night Bible Study (for everyone)

We are studying the Wisdom of Solomon.

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

Group Leader: Charlie Hambos

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

Meeting time: Monday evenings from 6:45– 8:15 p.m.

March Meeting Dates: March 6, 13, 20, 27

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

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

Group Leader: Debbie Kavouklis

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

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

March Meeting Dates: March 7, 21 at church, 28

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

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

Group Leader: Father Stavros for the first one but we are going to rotate this among group members. Please email Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com or contact him at 813-394-1038.

Meeting time: Wednesday mornings from 7:30-8:30 a.m. For this early morning group, bring your own coffee or breakfast food if you wish—we will not be providing these things. **March Meeting Dates:** March 8, 22, 29

South Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults)

Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient for those who live in South Tampa

Location: At the Church in the Library

Group Leader: Bessie Palios

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

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

March Meeting Dates: March 7, 21, 28

East Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults)

Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient to those who live on the East side of town

Riverview, Brandon, Valrico, Seffner, Lakeland

Location: Home of George and Donna Hambos

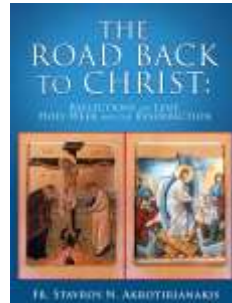
2604 Herndon Street, Valrico, FL 33596

Group Leader: Donna Hambos

dhambos@msn.com, 813-843-8412

Meeting Time: Tuesday evenings, Dinner at 6:30 Bible Study from 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

March Meeting Dates: March 7, 21, 28



Fr. Stavros' Second Book

"The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Great Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection" is available for sale in the bookstore.

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](https://www.facebook.com/StJohnGOCtampa).

Live Streaming

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

To access this page

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

All of the services are available to watch at anytime.

Pictures

Go to Flickr.com and search "St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church" or go to www.flickr.com/photos/stjohnngoctampa





AHEPA FAMILY NEWS

March 2017

AHEPA FAMILY SCHOLARS 2016



The AHEPA FAMILY hosted the annual **SCHOLARSHIP AND CHRISTMAS SOCIAL DINNER** at the Floridan Hotel, once again awarding scholarships to the young members of our community. Scholarship recipients included **George Hambos Jr.**, **Gregory James Koutroumanis**, **Larissa Alexandra Krinos** and **Katherine Chace Sibley**. The following are some quotes from the reference letters in their applications illustrating the exceptional qualities of these students.

George Hambos Jr - Quote from his references "I have known and taught George Hambos for 6 years. I have taught him all levels of Mathematics and Physics as well as observing him involved in many extra-curricular activities including sports, drama, music, National Honor Society and community service. George has been an excellent student and mentor to his peers. He has done well academically in all of his Honors classes. He exceeds all expectations in his work and strives to work to perfection in everything that he does. George takes the most rigorous of class loads while combing that with a host of extra-curricular activities. George is an accomplished musician. He plays and sings in the praise team and choirs at school and participates on the varsity soccer team. George is a great leader in this environment and has earned the respect of his teachers and peers alike. George has impeccable character and is a true leader. He leads by example and challenges others to follow his example. In my thirty years of teaching, he is one of the best students that I have had the pleasure of knowing and teaching. George has a great future ahead of him and I know that he will succeed in any endeavor he undertakes."



Katherine Chace Sibley - Quote from her references "To begin, I would first like to share with you that Ms. Sibley has been an exceptional student in this class of Robinson High School's International Baccalaureate program. Students with our program were not only chosen for their academic prowess, but for their ability to bond together and set the social norms and high standards expected in a top-choice program. I would fully expect her to be a driven college student and alumni for whatever university is lucky enough to accept her. Katherine has been a standout student for me the last few years, with a 4.99 GPA, and her well-balanced nature and caring persona are the primary reason for her success. She uses her intellect not only for her benefit, but for others. Her primary assignment in IB Psychology is the Internal Assessment of an experimental replication, and she was the leader in her group in producing a terrific data set. Her finished paper was an excellent final product. Ms. Sibley is as caring a student as I have known at Robinson. While she is well known for always doing the right thing, Ms. Sibley is also an exemplar of balance to others. In a program of competitive rigor such as ours, it is very hard to maintain this trait due to academic requirements. She swims five days a week competitively, often afterwards tutoring at an at-risk K5 reading program in the socioeconomically depressed area of Sulphur Springs. She spends her Saturday mornings at an affiliate of Metropolitan Ministries giving food and care to Tampa's homeless."

Gregory James Koutroumanis - Quote from his references "He is a steadfast servant leader for Metropolitan Ministries, Homes for Our Troops, The Special Olympics, and the Chairman for his Churches Youth Group Activities Booth at their Annual Festival. I had the privilege and honor of writing his letter of recommendation for my Alma Mater, Jesuit High School, when he was taking the entrance exam four years ago. He has excelled at this rigorous college preparatory school where he has an impressive 3.63 GPA, 30 Composite score on his ACT, and made the Honor Roll in 9th and 11th grade. He also participates in numerous extracurricular activities including the Latin Club, Jesuit Tigers News Network, the head Altar at Saint John's Greek Orthodox Church and Jesuit Big Brother's. He also finds time to enjoy numerous unique hobbies including fishing, scuba diving, sporting clay shooting, and photography. It is refreshing to be reminded by the presence, friendship and unwavering support of Gregory Koutroumanis that there are still young men out there that are motivated and determine to leave a legacy of love, compassion, generosity, and humility and to attempt to leave things in a better state than which they were found. Gregory is well on his way to leaving his footprint on this earth."



Larissa Alexandra Krinos - Quote from her references "Larissa has seen dynamic success in a rigorous program, but you can get that from a transcript. I would like to laud her skills as a positive communicator, which is the primary motivator to her success. Larissa is an animated, fun-loving student who makes the class better for having her in it. She is popular among her peers, and makes classroom discussion interesting and insightful. Her Internal Assessment group had a particularly tough experimental replication, and her light-hearted manner help keep some levity in the situation. This is a form of leadership in my mind, as she was able to keep the ship sailing despite the drudgery. Larissa learned this in her time in Band leadership and Science Honor Society. Ms. Krinos is also an empathetic, passionate individual. I have never witnessed her tear others down, and she actively discourages that behavior in others. Larissa Krinos is motivated and conscientious, a young woman of honor who consistently brings her best to the proverbial academic table. Any school will be fortunate to have this young woman. She will thrive in an academic environment that is committed to scholarship and individual integrity. Larissa has my strongest recommendation."

The Salutations Service to the Most Holy Theotokos (the Akathist Hymn)

By Fr. Jim Paris

Admitted, even by those who do not believe, to be one of humanity's most beautiful and profound works of art and a priceless heritage of the civilized world, the Akathist Hymn is one of Byzantine Orthodox Christians' greatest and lasting contributions for the inspiration and ennoblement of all, transcending epoch, boundary, and ethnicity. Deriving from the Greek word meaning not to sit, the hymn was composed and sung commemorating a great historical event of deliverance that changed the fate of Christianity and western civilization forever. The hymn was a thanksgiving offering to the Holy Mother of God for her divine protection and deliverance of her City--namely, Constantinople and New Rome, the capitol of the East Roman (Byzantine) Empire. The event goes back to 626 A.D. during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Heraklios (610-641 A.D.) Ponder that for a moment. That is almost 1,400 years ago. How blessed are we to have such a rich and ancient heritage? How many others can claim such an inheritance?

The history surrounding this incredible event is even better than fiction. Culturally Hellenic, Religiously Orthodox Christian, and Politically Roman, the East Roman Empire had stood firm and unshakable against heresies, barbaric invasions, and foreign powers from east, west, north, and south for centuries. The great walls of Constantinople had withstood, time and time again, incessant, relentless attacks. A Christian Empire that would last more than a thousand years, Constantinople, the City of Saint Constantine the Great, ascribed its protection and deliverance to the Most Holy Mother of God, who was the Queen of their City.

The Emperor Heraklios resolved to end these never-ending attacks upon this most Christian city of the Romans, their lands, their churches, their monasteries, and their people--once and for all. Moreover, to add sacrilege to plunder, rape, destruction, and desolation, The Most Precious Cross had been stolen from Jerusalem, and the Romans and the True Faith had been mocked. This time, the Emperor would take the fight, far to the east, to the very heart of the Romans' ancient enemies, the land of the Persians, and destroy their ability to ever make war again against the great City, the True Faith, and God's People.

Through treaties, the Emperor Heraklios secured his vulnerable flanks with neighboring barbarian kingdoms, prepared the City's defenses, committed the spiritual care of the Faithful to the Patriarch, and entrusted the Empire's welfare to their "Protectress"--the Most Holy Mother of God. Having done this, with fervent prayer and solemn procession with Icons and relics, he boldly took the great majority of the army into the vast expanse of Asia to retrieve the True Cross, liberate the People of God, and Defend the True Faith.

When the Persians had discovered that Heraklios' army had left Constantinople, the Persian king shrewdly seized the opportunity and bribed the barbarians all along the borders of the Empire and offered them military and logistical assistance in their attack against the City. Constantinople awoke to find itself besieged on all sides by the Avars, Gepids, Slavs, and Bulgars. In response, the Patriarch led the people in prayer and worship services and processed with the Holy Relics and Icons of the

Saints around the City walls. The Emperor and the People's armies were far away. The People had to trust in its sturdy walls and the Divine Protection of the Heavenly Queen of their City.

The Mother of God was fervently and perpetually entreated to appeal to her Son, as only a mother can, to deliver the City entrusted to her provident care. Miraculously, working through His nature, God summoned up the power of the sea and a great storm manifested itself to the awe of God's People. The storm splattered and splintered the besieging barbarian navies and scattered the barbarian hordes to the winds. The People prayed, the walls held, and Constantinople was delivered.

Meanwhile, the Emperor went on from victory to victory throughout Asia, destroying the armies of God's enemies. Defeated, the Persian King was killed, and the new Persian King on his death bed entrusted the care of his son to the noble Christian King Heraklios as guardian with these fateful words: "In the same way as you say that your God was presented to the old man Simeon, so I present your slave, my son, into your hands."

Under the glorious command of Heraklios, the Byzantines had secured the return of Roman territories previously seized, plundered, and defiled. Armenia, Roman Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt were all liberated and returned. (NOTE: These were once Christian lands.) Moreover, Heraklios retrieved and restored the True Cross.

When Heraklios brought back the True Cross, he was met by the Patriarch, the nobles, and the People, and they gave glory to God as they raised up this invincible standard and emblem of eternal victory. They went to the Church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God and gave all due worship, thanksgiving, and glory to Her and Her Son without sitting as the bells rang throughout all the Churches of this great and Most Christian City that would be the bastion and beacon of Christianity and western civilization for over 1,100 years, to the eternal renown and glory of those who remember and honor.

From this great historic event, comes the Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God and Protectress of Constantinople. Akathist means not to sit. In reverence and thanksgiving, the People of God stood throughout the service to thank the Theotokos for her intercessions and prayers and to give her Son all the Glory. Hence, the genesis and historical antecedents of the this great service of the Greek Orthodox Church.

How blessed we are to have such a rich and priceless heritage.

"Not to us, O Lord, not to us, to You belongeth all Glory."

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

~ March 2017 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 ** MBS 7:30 a.m. 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner - Choir OCF@USF 7:45 p.m.	2 ** YAH 11:30 a.m. Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	3 ** Salutations to the Virgin Mary 6:30 p.m.	4 ** 3rd Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
5 ** Orthodoxy Orthros 8:15 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m. Pan-orthodox Vespers St. Nicholas Greek Tarpon Springs 5:00 p.m.	6 ** Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	7 ** WBS 10:00 a.m. EBS 6:30 p.m. SBS 7:00 p.m.	8 ** MBS 7:30 a.m. 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner - Sunday School	9 ** Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Strategic Planning	10 ** Salutations to the Virgin Mary 5:00 p.m.	11 ** Adult Lenten Retreat
12 ** St. Gregory Palamas Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fr. out of town after Liturgy Pan-Orthodox Vespers St. Sava, Serbian St. Petersburg 5:00 p.m.	13 ** Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Fr. out of town	14 ** Fr. out of town	15 ** MBS 7:30 a.m. 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner in - The AHEPA Family	16 ** Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	17 ** Salutations to the Virgin Mary 6:30 p.m. Metropolis of Atlanta's Philoptochos Retreat Fr. out of town	18 ** Community Outreach Fr. out of town
19 ** Holy Cross Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. AHEPA DOP mtg. Tarpon Greek Parade YAL 5:00 p.m. Pan-Orthodox Vespers St. Philip OCA Tampa 5:00 p.m.	20 ** Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	21 ** WBS 10:00 a.m. EBS 6:30 p.m. SBS 7:00 p.m.	22 ** MBS 7:30 a.m. 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner- Philoptochos	23 ** Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	24 ** Salutations to the Virgin Mary 6:30 p.m.	25 ** Annunciation Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
26 ** St. John Climacus Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Greek Independence Day Luncheon Youth Sunday GOYA 5:00 p.m. Pan-Orthodox Vespers St. Nicolas Antiochian, Pinellas Park 5:00 p.m.	27 ** Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Parish Council	28 ** WBS 10:00 a.m. EBS 6:30 p.m. SBS 7:00 p.m.	29 ** MBS 7:30 a.m. 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified 6 p.m. Lenten Dinner –YAH OCF@USF 7:45 p.m.	30 ** Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	31 ** Vigil of Akathist Akathist Hymn 6:30 pm	

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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PERMIT NO. 461

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)

frstav@gmail.com

Pastoral Assistant Charlie Hambos

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-843-8471 (Cell)

Charlie.hambos@gmail.com

Parish Council

Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867

Mike Xenick, VP 813-340-8737

Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898

Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747

George Chagaris 727-420-1920

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947

Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352

Catherine Mitseas 813-571-0658

Ryan Rindone 704-564-2046

Aris Rogers, II 813-309-5525

Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534

Office Staff

Monica Gjerde, Office Manager 813-876-8830

officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com

Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper

debstjohntpa@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 Katsamakias 516-403-3118

Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352

Bible Study

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Bookstore

Bill Manikas 813-960-3679

Chanter

Nick Andreadakis 813-516-6081

Choir

Artie Palios, Director 813-831-1294

Ruth Losovitz, Organist 727-688-2782

Community Outreach

Betty Katherine Katsamakias 813-468-1596

Dance Group

H XAPA MAE, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347

Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963

Parea, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136

Anna Maria Bavaro 732-239-9085

Panigyri, Vanessa Aviles 813-221-2194

Daughters of Penelope

Chris Frazier, President 813-661-2290

Finance Committee

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

Food Pantry

Anetta Alexander 813-758-2689

Gasparilla Parking

John Kokkas 727-992-4615

GOYA

Maria Koutroumanis 813-245-3854

Kara Katzaras 863-669-6739

Hope/Joy

Amy Kafantaris 727-743-1297

Debbie Nicklow 813-690-0671

Junior Olympics

Bryon Nenos 813-789-0729

MOMS

Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862

Lindsey Skourellos 813-503-7845

OCF

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Oratorical Festival

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

Philoptochos

Lisa Alsina 813-728-1094

Small Group Bible Study

East, Donna Hambos 813-843-8412

Men, Fr. Stavros 813-394-1038

South, Bessie Palios 813-523-0347

Women, Debbie Kavouklis 813-258-5571

Strategic Planning

Marc Edquid 813-422-8940

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

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 Ministry

Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

Young at Heart

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947

Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

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

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