

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*

April 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

FORM VERSUS SUBSTANCE - The Journey of Holy Week

No other Christian denomination can compare its liturgical "form" to that of the Orthodox Church. That is because a) We have the most complete set of worship services (comments below); b) The worship services are old—most of them date to the early centuries of Christianity, so they are historical and timeless, rather than modern; and c) they are done the same way the world over, so there is consistency.

Most people's worship experience is restricted to the weekly celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Yet, there are MANY other worship services in the liturgical anthology of the church—such as Orthros, Vespers, Compline, Akathist, and Paraklesis, in addition to the Divine Liturgy. Our worship is restricted in part because it is not possible for many of us who work to attend services outside of Sundays. And most simply live too far away from the church to come down to St. John several times a week. It is also impossible for a parish with only one full time priest, or one chanter, as most Orthodox churches in this country have, to offer a "full" array of services. It would be unrealistic to offer daily Orthros (morning service) and Vespers (evening service) and expect people to come to these services. So by and large they are not offered.

During Lent and especially during Holy Week, a more complete calendar of services is kept. During Lent, Sunday Liturgy is supplemented with the service of the Compline on Monday evenings, Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday evenings and Salutations/Akathist services on Friday evenings. (Throughout the year, I try to keep the tradition of honoring the feasts of the Lord and the Major Saints with Divine Liturgies on weekdays). And during Holy Week, the liturgical calendar reaches a cli-

max as the church offers services EVERY morning and evening for a week. This is the church at its best, because we are first and foremost a praying church, and we are at our best when the church is in an almost constant state of prayer and worship.

Holy Week - You Are There

I've often looked at Holy Week as a lengthy play. It has several scenes, a plot that runs all the way through, times of conflict and times of reflection, times of sorrow and times of triumph. The road is long but the reward is great. I've had many non-Orthodox friends who have never been to church in between Palm Sunday and Easter. And there are many Orthodox who don't make much of the journey in between either. But the reward of the journey, the glory of the Resurrection, is found in making the Holy Week journey in as complete a way as possible. As one of our prayers says, "Through the cross, joy has come to all the world." And there isn't much joy to be had at the Resurrection, if one hasn't endured the pain of the crucifixion.

In the Holy Week journey, you are there—each event of the week is commemorated in scripture, in hymn and in action. On Holy Wednesday, for example, we pray for healing, we chant about healing, and then we approach to be anointed for physical and spiritual healing. On Holy Thursday, we read about the Passion of Christ, we chant hymns about it, and we experience the procession of the Crucified Christ. This puts us back 2,000 years ago to Jerusalem. We feel the darkness and fear in the troubled city, we stand watch over the crucifixion, we make the midnight journey with the women to the empty tomb and we

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return to the church to proclaim the good news that Christ is risen from the dead.

What does this do for us? It reminds us what it is we believe. This is a one-week tutorial if you will on why the Crucifixion and Resurrection are important for our lives. It reaffirms our faith—it is a “shot in the arm” so to speak of enthusiasm for being a Christian, because the week ends on a positive note, and because the journey is shared with pilgrims like us. It provides a time of new beginnings—as we will sing on Pascha, “Let all things be forgiven in the Resurrection.”

The Scenes of Holy Week

Scene One: The Triumphal Entry

Days: Saturday of Lazarus-Palm Sunday Morning

These two days provide a respite from the austerity and sadness of Great Lent. The Saturday of Lazarus commemorates the miracle of Jesus raising His friend Lazarus from the dead. And it is a foreshadowing of the general resurrection of the dead that is possible for all through Christ’s Resurrection. Palm Sunday commemorates the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. Jesus enters the city on a donkey and is met by thousands of people who wave palm branches and sing praises to him.

Observations: The colors for these two days are lighter, generally white on Saturday of Lazarus because this is a Resurrectional liturgy and green on Palm Sunday. The Divine Liturgy both days is that of St. John Chrysostom. Both days are joyful in tone and nature.

Scene Two: The Early Days of Holy Week-the Final Teachings/Plotting the Betrayal

Days: Palm Sunday evening through Holy Wednesday morning

As day changes to night on Palm Sunday, the joy of the morning fades to reflective sadness on what lies ahead. The journey of the next three days is a mixture of Christ telling His followers of the end times and to remain vigilant and the narrative of the Chief Priests and the plot against Christ.

The Bridegroom services are actually Orthros (Matins) or morning services, celebrated the evening before by anticipation, i.e. the Orthros of Holy Monday is celebrated Palm Sunday evening by anticipation. The name of this service comes from the central figure in the well-known parable of the ten maidens (Mt. 25:1-13). The Kingdom of God is compared to the bridal feast and the Christ of the Passion is the Divine Bridegroom of the Church. The title Bridegroom also suggests the Parousia or Second Coming. The central hymn of these services is “Behold the Bridegroom comes in the middle of the night. . .” and is a reminder to all of us that we must be vigilant in our faith. On Palm Sunday evening, we have the procession of the icon of the Nymphios. The Nymphios service is also celebrated on Holy Monday in the evening and Holy Tuesday in the evening, and the choir will also sing the Hymn of Kassiane during the service Holy Tuesday evening.

Observations: The Icon of the Nymphios/Bridegroom, is carried in procession on Sunday evening and remains in the middle of the church sanctuary until after the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday morning. The Bridegroom service is held on Palm Sunday, Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday evenings with the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy being held on Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday and Holy Wednesday mornings. The colors worn at these services are traditionally purple and black. The lights are kept dim for these services. At St. John, we also have our Sun-

day school girls take on the role of the “maidens” (taken from the aforementioned scripture) who keep vigil around the icon of Christ the Bridegroom.

Scene Three: The Upper Room

Days: Holy Wednesday Evening-Holy Thursday morning

The theme now changes to one of healing, as we commemorate the washing of the feet and the institution of the Holy Eucharist. On Holy Wednesday evening, we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Unction and on Holy Thursday morning, the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. The Mystery of Holy Unction is established upon the words and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a sacrament of healing and transformation from a bruised and hurt world to the deliverance from sin and corruption.

Observations: The Icon of the Last Supper is displayed at both services. Traditionally crimson or red is worn on Holy Thursday, symbolizing the blood of Christ instituted in the New Covenant of Holy Communion and shed for the life and salvation of the world on the Cross. The Divine Liturgy of Holy Thursday morning has a joyful tone to it.

Scene Four: The Passion and Death of Christ

Days: Holy Thursday evening, Good Friday morning and Good Friday afternoon

The journey of Holy Week now goes into high gear. We move from the upper room, to the Garden of Gethsemane, to the Betrayal, the Torture, the Trial, the road to Golgotha, the Crucifixion, Death and Burial of the Lord. Between these three services, 17 Gospel passages are read, almost half of the Holy Week total. The first Gospel on Holy Thursday evening is the long discourse and High Priestly Prayer of Christ and is a beautiful passage on love and friendship. The Procession of the Crucified Christ occurs after the fifth Gospel. The faithful have an opportunity to kneel and pray before the Cross. The service of the Hours on Good Friday morning is traditionally not well attended, which almost seems appropriate. Very few followers hung on to witness the Crucifixion of the Lord. Most fled to their homes. The service of the Hours has little fanfare or pageantry, but is a quiet vigil watching over the Lord on the Cross. The Vespers of the Descent of the Cross is a good service to attend particularly if you cannot attend the other two. It summarizes the events of the previous two services adding the burial of Christ in the tomb. The body of Christ is removed from the cross and wrapped in a white linen sheet. It is entombed on the altar table for the remainder of the service and is not put back up on the cross until the Ascension forty days after Pascha.

Observations: The vestments worn at these services are purple and black. Good Friday is the only day of the year when no Divine Liturgy can be held. Also no funeral services can be done on Good Friday—the only funeral is that of the Lord. The Icon displayed is the Icon of the Crucifixion.

Scene Five: The Lamentations

Day: Good Friday Evening

This is a service of transition between the sadness of Holy Thursday and the joy of the Resurrection. The color worn at this service is traditionally gold or red. The lights are turned up again for the first time since Palm Sunday. This service is highlighted by the singing of the Lamentations and the procession around the outside of the church with the tomb of the Lord. In terms of the Holy Week narra-

tive, however, very little is covered. The Gospel is only 4 verses long and is a repeat of the 12th Gospel of Holy Thursday night. The Prophecy of Ezekiel and the Epistle reading from the letter to the Corinthians are important scriptural references. The icon displayed for this service is the icon of the Extreme Humility. It shows Christ going into the tomb with the cross in the background. Many people flock to the Good Friday service for the “pageantry”—the Lamentations, the Procession, etc. In my opinion, while this is one of my favorite services in Holy Week to celebrate, it is not one of the most important. Certainly Holy Thursday evening, the Gospel narratives of the Passion and the Procession of the Crucified Christ rank of higher importance. So, while I encourage you to attend as many services of the week as possible, I would actually consider this service not as important as many others.

Scene Six: The Empty Tomb

Days: Holy Saturday Morning-Holy Saturday Evening-Pascha
There are two Paschal Liturgies, that is two liturgies that commemorate the Resurrection of Christ. In the ancient church, there was an all-night vigil commemorating the Resurrection with the Vespers and Liturgy of St. Basil being held in the evening hours of Holy Saturday, the Resurrection Service at midnight, and the Orthros and Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom being held on Sunday morning. In recent centuries, this has been changed. The Resurrection service is still held at midnight. The Orthros and Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom follow immediately, from 12:30-2:00 a.m. And the Vespers and Liturgy of St. Basil have been transposed to Holy Saturday morning. Thus, we proclaim the Resurrection with “Arise o God,” “Anasta o Theos,” from the morning of Holy Saturday. The Holy Saturday morning Liturgy commemorates the first announcement of the Resurrection to those who were in Hades. Jesus Christ descended into Hades and bestowed eternal life to those who had been held captive there. The Resurrection Service and the Liturgy which follows commemorate the Resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Observations: The color for Pascha traditionally is White. On Holy Saturday morning, bay leaves are scattered throughout the church as a sign of Christ’s victory over Hades and death. Prophecies foretelling the Resurrection are read, including the Prophecy of Jonah and the whale (the three days Jonah spends in the belly of the whale foreshadow the three days of Christ in the tomb) and the Prophecy of Daniel (The three youths saved from the fiery furnace). The Liturgy of St. Basil follows. This is a longer liturgy than that of St. John Chrysostom. The Resurrection service begins with the chanting of the Canon of Good Friday at 11:00 p.m. This is a summary, if you will, of the events of Holy Week. There is an actual closing to the period of the Great Lent, where petitions are said for the well-being of the community as we close the Lenten season and anticipate the Resurrection. Great and Holy Lent concludes with “Through the Prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us and save us.” This is traditionally how we end all the services in our church, except for those services between Pascha and Ascension. “Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers. . .” will not be said again in the church until Ascension. The lights in the church are completely extinguished, except for the Vigil Candle on the Altar Table.

The priest lights his candle from a solitary light in the altar, the vigil candle that is in front of the tabernacle. He comes through the Royal Doors and chants “Come receive the Light, from the everlasting Light and glorify Christ, who is risen from

the dead.” The light is then “passed” to all in the church. A procession is made outside to the empty tomb, where the Gospel of the Resurrection is read and we sing “Christos Anesti-Christ is Risen” proclaiming the Resurrection of Christ. We then return to the church and turn all the lights on, and celebrate the Divine Liturgy for the “feast of feasts” the Resurrection of our Lord.

Having celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the early hours of the morning, there is no Liturgy at 10:00 a.m. on Pascha, ironically the only Sunday of the year where that is the case. On Sunday morning, we celebrate the Agape Vespers from 11:00 a.m.-noon. This is a brief service where we chant “Christos Anesti” many times and read the Gospel in many languages. This is a reminder to us that we are to share the good news of the Resurrection of Christ to all peoples in all languages.

THE HOLY WEEK PLAN

Here is an idea to help you get the most out of your Holy Week experience this year. (Obviously it is the ideal to attend as many services as possible each year, because Holy Week is where we re-learn, re-live and recommit to the message of salvation that plays out in the services. For those who are retired or not working, this is a great opportunity to attend all of the Divine Services) Here is a practical guide to celebrating Holy Week this year:

Choose at least one service from each scene, 1-4 and 6. I consider scene five almost “optional.”

Scene One - Pick either Saturday of Lazarus or Palm Sunday, to experience the “joy” and “hope” of these feastdays, as well as the temporary break from the austerity of Great Lent

Scene Two - Pick at least one of the early services of Holy Week, either an evening Bridegroom service or a morning Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and you’ll get a better understanding of the theme of watchfulness. Come to at least one of these services also to meditate and reflect on the icon of the Bridegroom.

Scene Three - Pick either Holy Unction on Holy Wednesday or the Liturgy on Holy Thursday morning to experience healing and the Institution of the Holy Eucharist. Ideally, pick both so you can receive Holy Unction and Holy Communion

Scene Four - After the final scene of the Resurrection, SCENE FOUR is the most important. It is very important for us to stand with Christ as He hangs on the cross. Holy Thursday evening, Good Friday morning and Good Friday afternoon afford us this opportunity, so choose at least one of these to attend.

Scene Five (optional) - While one of the most popular services of Holy Week, Good Friday evening is not even one of the most important or moving. Come to this one only if you’ve done a good number of the other ones.

Scene Six - The victory scene - It is obviously most important, after the journey of Great Lent, to experience the joy of the resurrection. Pick either Holy Saturday morning, Holy Saturday evening or the Agape Vespers on Sunday morning.

AND NOW A COUPLE OF WORDS ABOUT SUBSTANCE
As I said at the outset, no other Christian Church in the world has the FORM of the Orthodox when it comes to celebrating Holy Week—the processions, the pageantry, the vast amount of scripture readings, and the moving hymns. Unfortunately,

for many, we almost worship for the form, forgetting the substance. This is apparent even in how we speak about the services. We say that on Holy Wednesday, we go to church to “get the oil.” Yet, it’s more than that—we go to be anointed for “healing of soul and body.” It’s so much more than getting the oil. We tend to focus on the “souvenirs” of Holy Week—That’s why many people come just to the services where they get to take something home, like oil on Holy Wednesday, or a flower on Good Friday or a Palm on Palm Sunday, but they don’t come to Holy Monday evening, or the Great Hours of Good Friday. Many people come to church on Pascha who never come to church during the year, and they light their candle, sing Christos Anesti and think they’ve done a great thing.

The most important thing about Holy Week is the substance. The opportunity to receive Holy Communion 8 times in 9 days is an opportunity to keep ourselves in a perpetual state of readiness. Holy Wednesday is an opportunity to pray for our own physical and spiritual healing. Holy Thursday is an opportunity to kneel before the Cross of Christ, and leave anger and dis-

appointment at the foot of His cross. The long Holy Week Book provides us an opportunity to relearn what it is we believe about Jesus Christ, salvation, heaven, the Resurrection and many other topics. Just about all of our theology in the Orthodox Church is found in the Holy Week Book.

So, make a Holy Week plan for yourself, invest some time in the form, open your heart to the substance, and I guarantee you will have a meaningful Holy Week journey. I’m looking forward to celebrating my thirteenth Holy Week and Pascha in Tampa and I wish all of you a blessed journey through Holy Week. May our journeys bring each of us spiritual comfort, refreshment and renewal, and may we rejoice in the Resurrection of Christ on Pascha and throughout the year.

Kalh Anastasi!! Kali Anastasi! Let us have a good journey to the Resurrection of Christ!

With love in Christ,
+Fr. Stavros

For those who don’t come to church often

As there are in all churches, whether they are Orthodox or not, there is a segment of the congregation that doesn’t come often.

- Some people come sporadically.
- Some come for the occasional wedding, baptism, funeral or memorial service.
- Some come in time of crisis.
- Some come for Christmas and Easter (in Tampa, we call them “Chreasters”).

There are different reasons why people don’t come to church.

- Some are angry at other parishioners.
- Some are angry at something that happened in the community in the past.
- Some are angry at God because their lives haven’t gone well and they blame Him.
- Some work on Sundays.
- Some don’t understand why it is important.
- Some have fallen out of the habit.
- Some choose to do other things.
- And some are just lazy.

Church is important. Why?

- It’s not because God needs our praise—He is God, He doesn’t need anything.
- It’s not so we can brag about how many people come to church—church is about faith, not about counting bodies in the pews.
- It’s not a matter of giving God His due, once in a while, or especially at Easter.
- It’s not a matter of tradition or pride or culture.

Church is important because

- It helps us slow down the hectic pace of our life so we can reflect on what is really important—our salvation.
- It gives us the opportunity to pray for ourselves and our loved ones.

- It gives us the opportunity to receive the prayers of others
- It gives us the opportunity to enjoy fellowship with people like us.
- It gives us the opportunity to pray in a way that is structured so well, that the Divine Liturgy is a complete prayer that touches on every aspect of our life and our World.
- It gives us an opportunity to touch God and for God to touch us, in the sacrament of Holy Communion.
- It unites us with the saints, the holy ones of God; and also with those in our family who have passed away, since we pray for the departed in our services.

It gives us a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven. Why?

- Because heaven won’t be anything like life on earth.
- Heaven will not be a secular experience but a holy, awesome and moving one.
- The central activity in heaven is Communion with God and fellowship with those in God’s kingdom.
- If we don’t learn how to worship, we won’t be ready to enter God’s Kingdom, just like those who do not practice their sport don’t play well on the field, just like those who don’t do well in school do not graduate.

How can you get back in the habit of coming to church?
JUST START COMING!!!

When is a good time to come back?
ANY TIME, BUT ESPECIALLY DURING LENT

But what if I’m mad at someone?
It’s a great time to forgive them. After all, if we want God to forgive us, we must forgive one another.

What if I’m totally lost in my faith and don’t know how to start over again?
Make an appointment to meet with Fr. Stavros

SEE YOU IN CHURCH!!! PLEASE COME BACK!

Liturgical Schedule for April

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 Patrascoiu, Megan Rindone

Coffee Hour: Community Outreach

Monday, April 3

Great Compline 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 5

9th Hour 5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Lenten Dinner sponsored by Small Group Bible Studies to follow in the Kourmolis Center.

Saturday, April 8

Saturday of Lazarus **Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Matthew

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Proskomide 9:30 am Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, April 9

Palm Sunday

Orthros 8:15 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m.

Altar Boys: Savvas Ferekides, Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, Karter Lenardos, Frankie Giallourakis, John Palios, Nicholas Akrotirianakis, Demetri Passalaris, Andrew Thatcher, Peter Chander, Zach Chandler, Nicholas Carter

Ushers: John Alexander, Brett Mourer, George Trimikliniotis

Welcome Ministry: Greeters: Genie Carter, Helen Cauthorn; Ambassador: Kalliope Chagaris, Carole Fotopoulos; Caller: Peggy Bradshaw

Coffee Hour: Philoptochos' Palm Sunday Luncheon



Palm Sunday, April 9

Bridegroom Service 6:30 p.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark

Holy Monday, April 10

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:00 a.m.

Bridegroom Service 6:30 p.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke

Holy Tuesday, April 11

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:00 a.m.

Bridegroom Service 6:30 p.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John

Holy Wednesday, April 12

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:00 a.m.

Bridegroom 5:45 p.m.

Unction 3:00 p.m.

Unction 6:30 p.m.

Altar Boys: Savvas Ferekides, PJ Zelatis, Jonathan Brannan, Frankie Giallourakis, Brigham Sibley, Grayson Borgeas-Beach, Gryphon Borgeas-Beach, John Nicholas Krinos, Chris Cojita, Anthony Catrone

Holy Thursday, April 13

Vespertal Liturgy 9:15 a.m.

12 Gospels 6:30 p.m.

All Night Vigil at the Cross

Altar Boys: Savvas Ferekides, Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, Karter Lenardos, Nicholas Katzaras, Nicholas Alsina, James Katzaras, Antonio Bavaro, Yanni Trimikliniotis, John Palios, Andrew Patrasciou, Dominic Garcia, James Kavouklis, Benny Hidermichel

Great Friday, April 14

Royal Hours 9:00 a.m. (Anyone attending may serve)

Apokathelosis 3:00 p.m.

Altar Boys: Savvas Ferekides, James Kavouklis, Yanni Trimikliniotis, Genaro Scarfogliero, Andrew Patrasciou, Makis Crassas, John Palios, Nicholas Akrotirianakis, George Xenick

Lamentations 7:00 p.m.

Altar Boys must be in the altar by 6:30 p.m.: Savvas Ferekides, Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, Karter Lenardos, Nicholas Katzaras, Nicholas Alsina, Antonio Bavaro, Dean Mitseas, Christos Nenos, James Katzaras, Gregory Thomas, Benny Hidermichel, Nicholas Yotis

Holy Saturday, April 15

Vespertal Liturgy 8:30 a.m.

Altar Boys: Savvas Ferekides, Christos Nenos, Brigham Sibley, Yanni Trimikliniotis, Genaro Scarfogliero, Alex Findlay, Niko Bavaro, George Xenick, Nicholas Akrotirianakis, Demetri Karounos, Jonah Blankenbaker

Great Canon 11:00 p.m.

Resurrection Service 12:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 12:30 a.m.

Altar Boys must be in altar by 10:30 p.m.: Savvas Ferekides, Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, Karter Lenardos,

Sunday, April 16

Great & Holy Pascha - CHRIST IS RISEN!

Agape Vespers

11:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Easter Egg Hunt to follow service at noon.



Friday, April 21

Life-Giving Fountain

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

Sunday, April 23

Sunday of St. Thomas - Feast of St. George

Orthros 8:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark

Ushers: Tammy Christou, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis

Welcome Ministry: Greeters: Elaine Halkias, Donna Hambos; Ambassador: Skip Higdon;

Caller: Betty Katsamakakis

Coffee Hour: Young at Heart



Sunday, April 30

Sunday of the Myrrh Bearing Women

Orthros 8:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke

Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas

Welcome Ministry: Greeters: Maria Karounos, Debbie Kavouklis; Ambassador: Edie Kavouklis;

Caller: Christene Worley

Coffee Hour: The Dance Groups



Prayer Team

The Prayer Team is a daily devotional that Fr. Stavros has been writing for more than 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.

Ecumenical Service at Christ the King

On Thursday, February 23, several hundred people attended our third Ecumenical Prayer Service with the congregation of Christ the King Roman Catholic Church. Both Fr. Stavros and Fr. Len Plazewski (priest at Christ the King) offered homilies. A combined choir from both churches offered hymns and responses. A beautiful reception was held afterwards. We will be hosting a service at St. John the Baptist in September, following our tradition of holding two services each year, one in spring at Christ the King and one in the fall at St. John the Baptist.



Liturgical Notes for April

Sunday, April 2 - 5th Sunday of Lent - St. Mary of Egypt

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

Monday, April 3 - Great Compline

This service lasts about an hour and consists of Psalms and hymns of repentance. Service Books will be available in the Narthex.

Wednesday, April 4 - 9th Hour & Pre-Sanctified Liturgy

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. Small Group Bible Studies will be hosting dinner.

Saturday, April 8 - Saturday of Lazarus, Service of the Proskomide

Father Stavros has received the blessings of Metropolitan Alexios to celebrate the service of the Proskomide on the solea once a year, on the Saturday of Lazarus. The Proskomide is the service where the bread and wine are prepared to be offered at the Divine Liturgy. On Saturday, April 8, Father Stavros will celebrate this service at 9:30 a.m., on the solea at St. John the Baptist and will explain the service to those who are in attendance. He will also pray for everyone in attendance and offer a piece of bread on each person's behalf in the preparation of the Holy Communion. Please plan to come to this service to see this important aspect of the Liturgy.

Friday, April 21 - Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain - Friday after Pascha

Commemorates the consecration of a Chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which was built over a spring in Constantinople, that emits water with healing powers. Hundreds of miracles and healings have occurred at this spring. This feast day of "Zodochos Peghe", the Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain, is always celebrated on the Friday of Bright (Renewal) week, the week after Pascha, April 21, this year.

Sunday, April 23 - Sunday of St. Thomas - Feast of St. George-

The Church brings to our mind the unbelief of Thomas followed by his belief after seeing the scars of Christ. St. George the "Trophy Bearer" is one of the most famous saints of our church. He lived in the third century. He was a soldier, famously memorialized in icons as slaying a dragon. Symbolically, he "slayed" the "dragons" that opposed Christianity and was martyred for his faith. His relics were placed in the altar of our church when it was consecrated in 1986. St. George's feast day is celebrated on April 23 (or the Monday after Pascha if Pascha falls on or after April 23). Thus, this year, we will celebrate his feastday on its correct liturgical date, which will be Sunday, April 23.

Sunday, April 30 - Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women

They came to anoint Jesus' body, but found an EMPTY tomb. We also commemorate Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

Protocols from His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios

At a recent gathering of the clergy of our Metropolis, His Eminence distributed several "liturgical protocols" to the priests of our Metropolis. It is the purview of the Metropolitan to oversee liturgical uniformity in his Metropolis. There are several areas that were addressed by His Eminence:

The Divine Liturgy - There is a new translation of the Divine Liturgy which has been approved by the Patriarchate. There have been changes to both the translation and the rubrics of the Divine Liturgy. We will be updating the Divine Liturgy books in the pews to account for these changes over the next few months.

Holy Unction - The Metropolitan made it clear that Holy Unction is not to be taken home by anyone. It is a sacrament of the church and is to be distributed by the priest to the faithful, in the same way that Holy Communion is distributed.

Musical instruments in church - The only instrument allowed to be played in the church is the organ. This is the only instrument that will be allowed at weddings. Going forward any other instruments, such as string quartets or harps or CDs with music will not be allowed. We have not allowed these at St. John the Baptist but the Metropolitan is now formalizing this protocol.

Only clergy can speak at a funeral in the church - This has long been our policy at St. John the Baptist. If family members would like to speak in connection with a funeral, they are permitted to speak at the Trisagion at the funeral home, after the grave-side service at the cemetery or at the makaria luncheon. Only clergy are permitted to speak in the church at a funeral service.

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SCHEDULE FOR 2017

April 8 **Saturday of Lazarus**

Commemoration of the raising of Lazarus from the dead

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

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

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

April 9 **Palm Sunday-The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

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

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

Procession of the Icon of the Nymphios

Theme: Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church; watchfulness

April 10 **Holy Monday**

9th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.

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

Theme: The Parable of the Talents

April 11 **Holy Tuesday**

9th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.

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

The Choir will sing the Hymn of Kassiane

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

April 12 **Holy Wednesday**

9th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.

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

Matins of Holy Thursday

Reading of the Gospel of Last Supper 5:45 p.m.

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

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

April 13 **Holy Thursday**

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

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

Reading of the 12 Gospels, Procession of the Crucified Christ

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

All-Night Vigil will follow the service

April 14 **Good Friday**

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

Standing vigil at the Cross of Christ

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

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

Lamentations 7:00-10:30 p.m.

Singing of the Funeral Lamentations and

Procession with the Epitaphios

April 15 **Holy Saturday**

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

Reading of Prophecies foretelling the Resurrection of Christ

Great Canon 11:00 p.m.

April 16 **PASCHA**

The Service of the Resurrection of Christ-Midnight

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

Following Liturgy, all are invited to a reception in the

Kourmolis Center

AGAPE Vespers 11:00 a.m.-Noon

The Gospel is read in numerous languages to indicate the universal character of the Christian message

Easter Egg Hunt for Children at Noon

ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΟΣ-2017

Σάββατο, 8 Απριλίου

Σάββατο του Λαζάρου

Ορθρος 8:30-9:30 π.μ.

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

Θεία Λειτουργία 10:00-11:15 π.μ.

Κυριακή, 9 Απριλίου

Κυριακή των Βαίων

Ορθρος 8:30 π.μ.

Θεία Λειτουργία 9:45 π.μ.

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου

6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Δευτέρα, 10 Απριλίου

Μεγάλη Δευτέρα

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Τρίτη, 11 Απριλίου

Μεγάλη Τρίτη

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:30 μ.μ.

Τετάρτη, 12 Απριλίου

Μεγάλη Τετάρτη

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

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

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 5:45-6:30 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία Ευχελαιον 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Πέμπτη, 13 Απριλίου

Μεγάλη Πέμπτη

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

Ακολουθία Σταυρώσεως 6:30-10:00 μ.μ.

Παρασκευή, 14 Απριλίου

Μεγάλη Παρασκευή

Οι Βασιλικές Ωρες 9:00-11:00 π.μ.

Αποκαθλώσις 3:00-4:15 μ.μ.

Επιταφίος Θρήνος 7:00-10:30 μ.μ.

Σάββατο, 15 Απριλίου

Μεγάλο Σάββατο

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

Ο Κανών 11:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία της Αναστάσεως Μεσανυχτα

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

Κυριακή, 16 Απριλίου

Αγιον Πάσχα

Μεγας Εσπερινος της Αγάπης 11:00 π.μ.

Worshipping the Creation and Forgetting about the Creator

By Charlie Hambos

More wisdom from Wisdom, the Wisdom of Solomon that is. After learning about the attributes of Wisdom and how wonderful and beautiful it is, the author of this book goes into several chapters of where people have forgotten the Wisdom of God or simply refused to accept it. They refuse to accept because they have taken up idolatry in many forms. The first form is that of deifying nature, also known as, worshipping the creation without giving a thought to the Creator.

The indictment begins in the Wisdom of Solomon 13:1, which says, *“Yes, naturally stupid are all who are unaware of God, and who, from good things seen, have not been able to discover Him-who-is, or by studying the works, have not recognized the Artificer (New Jerusalem Bible).”* The Wisdom of Solomon was written in less than 100 years before the arrival of Christ. Yet, today we can see this very thing. The idea that people are “naturally stupid” or “ignorant” in another translation, because they are unaware of God and they are indeed rendered useless in that condition because they neither can be on the side of God or on the side of the Evil One. We can’t even blame them for not knowing God or not being aware of him. It’s not even their fault. It could be years and generations of falling away from the church and its teachings. They have not been enlightened to know that they are created in the Image of God or they simply forgot or were never told. If more people knew that they were created in the Image of God, then the world would be a better place.

So, those who are unaware of God, look at the good things of the world and can not discover, find or even begin to know the Creator. In the Wisdom of Solomon it says they are unable “to discover Him-who-is,” or “to know Him who exists.” This is a reference to Exodus 3, when Moses asked God who he should tell the Israelites, when they asked Moses who sent him to free them from the hands of the Egyptians. *“Moses then said to God, ‘Look, if I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is his name?’ what am I to tell them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I am he who is.’ And he said, ‘This is what you are to say to the Israelites, ‘I am has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:13-14 NJB)* This is the revelation of the name of God. His name is “I am,” “The One who is,” “The one who exists.” There is great theological meaning behind this name but for our purposes here, two things need to be observed.

The first we can find by looking at any icon of Jesus Christ. In his halo, there are three divisions, one on either side of his head and one directly above his head. Sometimes, there will be a cluster of dots or one dot in each division, but most times there are the Greek letters, O ΩΝ, one letter in each of the divisions. In English these two words mean, “The One who is,” because this is his name. The second observation we can see in the life of Christ and who he said that he was and is to this day in several “I am...” statements giving us a blank check to fill in the statements. In John 6:35, He says, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger,

and he who believes in me shall never thirst.” In John 8:12, He says, “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” In John 8:58, He says, “Before Abraham was, I am.” In John 10:9, He says, “I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” In John 10:11, He says, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” In John 11:25, He says, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.” In John 14:6, He says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Finally, in John 15:1, He says, “I am the true vine.” All of these, “I am...” statements help us see how Christ is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. We also see how Christ, fulfills the name of God, in a sense because Christ completes the task of our salvation, so we can ultimately fulfill our goal on earth.

Our goal on earth, as Christians, is to become one with God or at least to get as close as we possibly can. We do this by uniting ourselves with God through prayer and the sacraments of the church. We also are not only responsible for uniting ourselves with God but also uniting one another and the entire creation back to God. This is our purpose. Going back to the Wisdom of Solomon, we can continue to see how important it is to realize: who the Creator is, see our responsibility and discover the Creator in all of the Creation. It is our responsibility because it says in the remainder of Wisdom 13:1, those who do not know God, “by studying the works, have not recognized the Artificer.” They rather worship the creation because they do not know the Creator. As believing Christians, we are not ignorant of God. We also must help people see the Creator in the creation so they are no longer lost and can then become useful in making the Kingdom of Heaven on earth a reality. As we study the creation, looking into nature on a daily basis, it should bring our spirit even closer to God.

If they do not believe in God, we see then what happens, in Wisdom 13:2, *“Fire, however, or wind, or the swift air, the sphere of the stars, impetus water, heaven’s lamps, are what they have held to be gods who govern the world.”* As we said, these things, the marvels of creation, become then the gods of those who do not know the true God or choose not to know Him. According to Wisdom 13:3-5, we must, *“let them know how much the Master of these excels them, since it was the very source of beauty that created them. And if they have been impressed by their power and energy, let them deduce from these how much mightier is he that has formed them, since through the grandeur and beauty of the creatures we may, by analogy, contemplate their Author.”*

Finally, in the information age, where so much information is at our fingertips, we can learn about almost anything in an instant, we have trouble taking a moment to learn about God and see Him through the creation. According to the Wisdom 13:9, we (they) have no excuse, *“if they are capable of acquiring enough knowledge to be able to investigate the world, how have they been so slow to find its master? (NJB)”*

A BIG Thank You!

Thank You to our Young at Heart!

Young at Heart gave a generous donation of \$5,000 to reduce our mortgage. Young at Heart donated the proceeds of their dinner dance to our church. Thank you for setting an example for our ministries in giving back proceeds from one of your events to the church.



Thank You to Garden of Memories/Myrtle Hill Cemeteries who allowed our church to use the mausoleum chapel at Garden of Memories Memorial Park FREE of charge for a Divine Liturgy on Saturday of the Souls (February 25) for the fifth year in a row. Approximately 60 parishioners attended the Liturgy and afterwards accompanied Father Stavros to bless the graves. If you were not able to attend the service this year, plan to attend next year. It was a very meaningful experience to celebrate the Liturgy out at the cemetery.

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival - On Sunday, February 19, we held our Parish Level Competition of the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. Twelve of our young people participated this year in the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. A special thank you Peggy Bradshaw for organizing this event each year and to the judges and everyone who assisted her. Congratulations to all of our children for participating - Arianna Karounos, Demetri Karounos, Antonio Bavaro, Angelina Krinos, Elizabeth Xenick and Artemis Xenick were in the junior division. Stephanie Owens, Sophia Krinos, Larissa Krinos, Anna Thomas, George Hambos and Savvas Ferekides were in the senior division. Elizabeth Xenick and Artemis Xenick, Anna Thomas and George Hambos, advanced to the district level of competition which will be held at St. Nicholas in Tarpon Springs on Saturday, March 4. And Anna Thomas won the district level for the Oratorical Festival. The Metropolis finals will be in Fort Lauderdale at the end of April. Thank you to the adults who helped out—Dory Passalaris was the timekeeper. The Junior Level judges were Brett Mourer (head judge), Dr. Bill Manikas, and Taylor Stamas. The senior level judges were Dante Skourellos, Dr. John Christ and Stavroula Crafa.

Successful Lenten Retreat - On Saturday, March 11, 20 people gathered for a retreat on “Realizing My Purpose: God Made Each of Us for a Special Reason.” We started the day off with the Divine Liturgy, followed by presentations and discussions on the Why, How and What of life and how to realize each. Thanks for everyone who participated. We hold (at least) two retreats each year. There will be a retreat for moms in May and again for the whole parish in the fall.

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

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

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

Donations Needed for Holy Week

Holy Week		Pillar Candles for Windows (20)	\$15 each
April 9	Palm Sunday	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
		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

Donation Needed

The vessel that we use to add hot water to the chalice at the Divine Liturgy is called a Zeon. These vessels in the past have been gold plated, with their interior also being gold plated. Over time, the gold plating wears off and these vessels need to be replaced. Our chalice sets have sterling silver cups, so they do not wear out quickly. But the zeons, up to this point have not been made with sterling silver inside. A new product has been created, a zeon with a sterling silver interior. It sells for \$900 but is an item that will last for a very long time. If you are interested in donating this item, please see Father Stavros.



PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY MEMBERS IN FRONT OF THE EPITAPHIOS (TOMB OF CHRIST) ON GOOD FRIDAY EVENING

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

****You only need to list the first name of the person you wish to be commemorated. You may list names of people who are Orthodox or non-Orthodox. Please mail to the office or bring to church by April 10.**

Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism - Alexandar John Zaharis, son of Dino and Rachel Zaharis, was baptized on Saturday, March 4. Fr. Stavros and Deacon Zacharias Zaharis (Grandfather) officiated. Chris and Nicole Mantzanas were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism - Michael Mantzanas, son of Chris and Nicole Mantzanas, was baptized on Sunday, March 5. Fr. Stavros and Deacon Zacharias Zaharis officiated. John and Virginia Brokalakis were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Wedding - Jeffrey Edwards and Christina Cardy were married on Saturday, February 25. Jean Cardy Tsagaris and John Tsagaris were the Koumbaroi. Congratulations!

Funeral - Eleni Karamitsanis passed away on Wednesday, March 1. Funeral services were held at St. John the Baptist on Tuesday, March 7. May her memory be eternal!

Get Acquainted Sunday, April 2



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



Luminaries for Good Friday and Pascha

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 Pascha. On each bag names can be written of loved ones, either for their health and well-being if they are living (Pascha), 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.

Saturday, April 29 - Tubing on the Rainbow River

This will be a fun and refreshing experience as we meander down the pristine Rainbow River. Tubing trip will be followed by lunch hosted by the Giallourakis family at their lake house. Please contact Maria Koutroumanis at mrk1997@verizon.net if you are able to join us. An email will follow including times, meeting place and other trip details.

Young Adults Dinner

Our young adult ministry group has a monthly dinner/discussion night at the church. For April, it will be Sunday, April 2, from 5:00 - 7:30 p.m. Our "May" meeting will be Sunday, May 30, also from 5:00-7:30 p.m. Please bring \$10 to cover the cost of dinner.

Ushers Meeting

A Meeting for all ushers will be held on Sunday, April 2, following Divine Liturgy, in the Zaharias Room. All ushers are requested to attend. Tom Georgas is the Head Usher for our parish and we will be re-organizing the groups as well as going over the procedures for Holy Week. Are you interested in serving as an usher? We are looking for some more people to serve in this capacity. If so, please come to the meeting on April 2. If you are on the list as an usher and do not wish to serve in this capacity, please notify Tom Georgas at Georgas@verizon.net.

Excused Absences from School for Good Friday

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

Easter Egg Hunt

The Annual Easter Egg Hunt will take place on Easter Sunday, April 16, following the Agape Vespers. Please plan to attend the Agape Vespers as a family beginning at 11:00 a.m. which will be followed by the Easter Egg Hunt.



St. John's PASCHA PICNIC

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

10th Annual Parish Picnic

When: Sunday, April 23, 2016
Following the Divine Liturgy

Where: Ballast Point Park*
5300 Interbay Boulevard
Tampa, Florida 33611

Admission is FREE!

We will have sports, relays, and activities on the field for all ages.

Face painting and balloons for the kids.

Plus hamburgers, cheeseburgers, and hot dogs for all!

*Please carpool since parking is limited.



~Sunday School News~

February and March were very busy months for our Sunday School. Our topics were The Presentation of Jesus, Fasting, The Publican and the Pharisee, The Prodigal Son, The Last Judgement, Forgiveness, Sunday of Orthodoxy, and Being a Good Friend - The Paralytic, and the Holy Cross. Charlie Hambos was also very busy with our students. He always does a children's sermon on Youth Sundays and he worked with our 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and High School Students this month.



Sunday, February 12, the Sunday School sponsored the Coffee Hour with proceeds going towards our Sunday School Lenten Retreats. We would like to thank our Sunday School parents and teachers for donating food to serve our congregation.

Our St. John Chrysostom ORATORICAL FESTIVAL took place on Sunday, February 19 and our participants presented amazing and inspiring speeches. A special thank you to Peggy Bradshaw for organizing this event each year and to the judges and everyone who assisted her. Congratulations to all of our children for participating - Arianna Karounos, Demetri Karounos, Antonio Bavaro, Angelina Krinos, Elizabeth Xenick and Artemis Xenick were in the Junior Division. Stephanie Owens, Sophia Krinos, Larissa Krinos, Anna Thomas, George Hambos and Savvas Ferekides were in the Senior Division. Elizabeth Xenick and Artemis Xenick, Anna Thomas and George Hambos, advanced to the District Level of competition, which was held at St. Nicholas Church in Tarpon Springs on Saturday, March 4. Anna Thomas WON the senior division and will be representing our parish at the Metropolis Level Competition next month.

On Sunday, February 26 our SUNDAY SCHOOL PRE-LENTEN RETREAT took place. It was a wonderful opportunity for our students of all ages/grades to prepare for our forty day journey through Great Lent. We held our retreat during regular Sunday school time, and our lessons focused on the Saturday of Souls and the Kolyva taught by Cindy Xenick, Forgiveness and Confession presented by Charlie Hambos, and the Lenten Calendar, Covenant, and the Prayer of St. Ephraim taught by Maria Xenick. At the conclusion of this event all of the students went into the church with their parents for a short talk by Fr. Stavros and a prayer to start off Lent. We would like to thank everyone who made this Pre-Lenten Retreat such a success.

We would like to thank all the families that brought a lenten dish to the PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY DINNER Sponsored by the Sunday School on Wednesday, March 8. It was a pleasure to offer this delicious meal to our parishioners after such a spiritually motivating service.

One of the best ways to prepare for Pascha is to participate in the Sacrament of Confession. Each Sunday School student in 1st through 6th Grade had the opportunity to participate in this important Sacrament with their classmates. During the GOYAN retreat on March 31-April 2 our 7th-12th graders will have the opportunity to experience Confession. We would like to thank Father Stavros for hearing the confessions of over 100 of our students.

Our Altar Boys, Myrrh-Bearers, and Maiden for the Bridegroom Services are preparing and excited for their upcoming roles during Holy Week. Everyone is also looking forward to our Sunday School Good Friday Retreat on April 14. +++ May everyone have a blessed remainder of Lent, Holy Week, and a spiritually uplifting Pascha experience.

April Calendar

Sunday, April 2

Topic: Holy Week - Charlie: 5th grade

Sunday, April 9 - Palm Sunday Procession

Topic: Holy Week/Pascha

Friday, April 14

Sunday School/Hope & Joy
GOOD FRIDAY RETREAT

Sunday, April 16 - Pascha

No Sunday School Classes

Sunday, April 23

Topic: St. Thomas - Charlie: Middle School

Sunday, April 30 - Youth Sunday

Prosphora (Pre-K)
Oratorical Presentation GOYA 5:00 p.m.



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!

~ Stewardship Update ~

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

On behalf of the Stewardship Committee we wish everyone a blessed Lenten Journey.

Our great and gracious God has blessed us abundantly and we can find joy in Stewardship as our gesture of appreciation. We are inheritors of a great tradition, as Orthodox Christians, founded by the Apostles and passed on for generations. Our traditions focus on the greatest gift God could give: the gift of His Son, who voluntarily died on the Cross and rose from the dead for our salvation. During this Lenten Journey may we be grateful for all our blessings.

A few of those blessings include our beautiful church that provides us a heavenly place of worship. We enjoy fellowship and support one another on our journey as Orthodox Christians growing in our faith together. We have welcomed many new families to our community as evidenced by our full church on Sundays!

All of this is possible with your support of Stewardship when you affirm that every aspect of our lives comes as a gift from Him. The work of Christ truly depends on all of us and your pledge is a sign of a growing commitment to Christ.

We thank our loyal Stewards and encourage every parishioner to complete a 2017 Stewardship Pledge Form. Thank you for your faithful support of St. John the Baptist.

Pledge Forms are easy to complete online and also available in the Church Narthex or Bookstore. Consider making your Stewardship Donations and General Donations online via PayPal as a one time or recurring commitment.

Please let us hear from you today if you haven't submitted your pledge form. Or visit our website to complete your Stewardship Pledge Form and make your gift today. For any questions, please speak directly with Fr. Stavros, Sandra Pappas or Pete Trakas-Stewardship Co-Chairs. We are here for YOU!

~ A little comparison ~	2017*	2016
Pledged Year to Date	\$346,376	\$403,313
Received Year to Date	\$127,222	\$128,703
# of Individual/Families Pledged	226	281

*YTD as of 3/8/2017

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 Bliziotes - Palm Cost, FL
Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL
Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL
William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL
Lillan 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.

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

~Welcome Ministry News~

As part of our Stewardship Committee, the Welcoming Ministry has been busy at work, updating our welcome packets, greeting visitors and guests as they come to our church. Our mission is to practice hospitality to all who enter our doors. We are not just about welcoming people, but about developing relationships – with each other and with Christ. The most important person for a visitor to talk to in order to feel at home in a new church is you. It is not the priest, or the greeter, but a regular attender. One of the most impressive gestures we can extend to first time visitors is for people with no official position to take the initiative and welcome them.

How can you do this?

- Treat first time visitors as guests of God, not strangers.
- Offer a smile or a handshake with a simple “Good Morning!”
- Rather than saying, “Are you new here?” ask “Have we met before?” and offer your name.
- Take the initiative; don’t wait for visitors to initiate conversation.
- Learn people’s names and remember them.
- Invite visitors to join you at something, anything!
- Never let new people sit alone and introduce them to others.
- Invite people to fill out our church’s connection card.
- Tell people you’re glad they are here.
- As visitors are leaving, make sure to smile and thank them for coming.
- Pray for them throughout your week.

You don’t have to travel to a foreign country, to another state, or even get in your car to do the work of a missionary. The Great Commission of Christ can be fulfilled simply by picking up the phone, speaking to a new person you don’t recognize, sitting with someone who is alone. Can you call a parish member you haven’t seen in a while? A personal invitation to attend church is a great way to reintroduce them to the wonderful things we have going on at St. John the Baptist.

If you are interested in joining this exciting and fun new ministry of the Welcoming Ministry, please contact Maria Xenick at mpxenick@gmail.com.

We will see many new faces during the busy weeks ahead. Please make all feel welcome as they join us for worship services!

News from St. John Legacy Society

With a Will, There’s a Way

Create Your Vision for the Future with This Important Document

Momentous events like a milestone birthday, the arrival of a grandchild or retirement are times to celebrate and reflect on where your family has been and what the future might hold. It’s also a chance to think about the values you hope to pass on to future generations.

One way you can ensure that your values endure is through will planning. Will planning is the highly personal process of deciding how your assets will be distributed after your lifetime.

Start at the Beginning

Create a will. Through this important document, you can direct the division of your property the way you choose. If St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church has been important in your life, you can also include a gift to support the church’s future.

Already have a will? Don’t set it and forget it! Review it every couple of years to ensure that it has kept pace with your life. A new marriage, divorce, birth or death of a family member are events that should trigger a review to make sure that your will still protects the people you love.

Go a Step Further

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 above and Federal Tax ID # 59-1170684. Additionally, please contact Fr. Stavros at 813-876-8830 ext. 103, (email frstav@gmail.com) or Debbie Gavalas at 813-505-8901 so that we may include you as a founding member of the St. John Legacy Society.



AHEPA FAMILY NEWS - April 2017

The Fifth Annual AHEPA Family Traditional Easter Festivities 2017



Easter Sunday, April 16, 2017 1:00 p.m. - Sundown
FREE FOR EVERYONE Al Lopez Park 4810 N. Himes Avenue Tampa, FL



This event is organized every year by AHEPA and the Daughters of Penelope. Everyone is welcome including AHEPANS, Daughters, Maids of Athena, Sons of Pericles, members of the Greek Orthodox community and their friends and guest, in short, **EVERYONE!** This is our fifth year BUT it is a continuation of a tradition which stretches back to the early 1900 in the Tampa community. Come and enjoy Roast Lamb, Greek Roasted Potatoes, Greek Salad, Mixed Vegetables and Delicious Desserts. The Event is Free to Everyone! SEE YOU THERE.

First Annual AHEPA Districts 1 & 2 Spring Retreat Diakonia Retreat Center – Salem, SC May 19 – 21, 2017

Join your fellow AHEPANS and male friends (ONLY), for 3 days of fellowship, relaxation, fishing, canoeing, hiking, backgammon, reading, cards, golf and more. Falcon's Lair Golf Club is only a short 15 minute drive from the Center. The only thing you are required to bring is your Greek state-of-mind to enjoy a weekend of Hellenic hospitality, fellowship & brotherhood.

2 nights accommodation (14 private cabins available), 5 meals served and access to all the facilities.
Total cost for this package is: \$160.00 all inclusive.

Questions? Call Michael Pantel at (727) 461.6220 or e-mail: mmpjd1@gmail.com

Do not miss out on brotherhood camaraderie! Deadline for registration is May 5, 2017.

Greek Independence Day Parade - Tarpon Springs, FL

They came, stood tall, and launched an overwhelming sense of pride, the elite Greek Army, Honor Guards, the Evzones made their return to Tarpon Springs this year. Cheers were heard and flags waved in a sea of Greeks that had swarmed nearly all of Tarpon Springs.



AHEPANS, Daughters, Maids of Athena, Sons of Pericles from Tampa joined AHEPA Family Members from throughout Florida to participate in the Greek Independence Day Parade in Tarpon Springs on March 19, 2017.



THE AHEPA FAMILY OF TAMPA WISHES EVERYONE KALO PASCHA !

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.

April Meeting Dates: April 3 and 24

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.

April Meeting Dates: April 18 and 25

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

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

Group Leader: Debbie Kavouklis

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

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

April Meeting Dates: April 4, 18 and 25

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.

April Meeting Dates: April 18 and 25

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: Michael Palios

mpalios@gmail.com; 813-523-0346

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

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

April Meeting Dates: April 5, 19, 26

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/stjohngoctampa



Holy Week Guidelines

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

Traditionally, the Matins or Orthros is done in the early morning hours, ending with the sunrise, when the Great Doxology is sung or read. The Orthros or Matins Services of Holy Week are VERY long. The Orthros lasts almost three and a half hours. During the Middle Ages, the services were transposed ahead several hours, from the early morning hours to the evening of the preceding night. Thus, the Orthros of Good Friday was moved to Holy Thursday evening, the 12 Gospels and the Procession of the Crucified Christ. The Lamentations, which is the Orthros of Holy Saturday was moved from Saturday morning to Friday night. The Vespers services, was moved from Holy Thursday evening to Holy Thursday morning. Our services commemorate events about 12 hours before they happened in real time, with the Last Supper Holy Thursday morning, the Crucifixion Holy Thursday evening, etc. The Descent from the Cross on Friday afternoon remains at its proper time, as a Vespers service, but the interval between the Vespers of Friday afternoon and the Orthros of Holy Saturday. The Resurrection Service takes place at the proper time. The schedule of transposing services begins Palm Sunday when we celebrate Orthros and Liturgy in the morning and celebrate the Orthros of Holy Monday on Palm Sunday evening. There is a vespers on Palm Sunday, which has been suppressed in modern usage.

Holy Unction

The Mystery of Holy Unction is established upon the words and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ and is a sacrament of the church. This is a sacrament of healing and transformation from a bruised and hurt world to the deliverance from sin and corruption. All sacraments of the church are administered by the priests of the church. In fact, the primary role and identity of the priests of the church is to be the celebrant of the sacraments. Because of this, **Holy Unction may not be taken home.** If you wish to have this sacrament offered, I am happy to offer it at the church, on a day and time of your choosing. For those unable to come to church, Father will be happy to bring it to shut-ins who are unable to come to church.

Bridegroom Service for the Last Supper

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

Holy Thursday Evening - The Service of the Passion

The service of the 12 Gospels and procession of the crucified Lord is the longest service of the Church year. On Holy Thursday, light and darkness, joy and sorrow are mixed. At the "upper room" and in Gethsemane the light of the kingdom and the darkness of hell come together. The way of life and the way of death converge.

However, one cannot truly celebrate the Resurrection if he/she has not stood at the foot of the cross of Christ. As one prayer of the Sunday Orthros states, "Through the Cross, joy has come to all the world." Without the Crucifixion, there could be no Resurrection. Thus, after the Resurrection Service on Holy Saturday Night, one could argue that Holy Thursday evening is the next most-important service of Holy Week. **If you are unable to attend the entire service, then please come from 7:30-8:30 p.m., witness**

the Procession of the Crucified Lord, venerate His precious Body on the Cross and leave early. But please do not abandon the Lord as He hangs on the Cross. Holy Thursday evening is the most powerful service of the entire Holy Week and the entire church year.

An All-Night Vigil at the Cross of Christ

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

Good Friday

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

Apokathelosis

The Service of Apokathelosis (the Un-Nailing) re-enacts the narrative of Christ descending from the Cross. The figure of Christ is removed from the cross and wrapped in a new linen cloth, carried into the sanctuary and placed on the altar table. In the same service, a procession with the Epitaphios (embroidery of the dead Christ) is made around the interior of the church, and the Epitaphios is placed in the Kouvouklion (tomb of Christ).

The Lamentations and the Epitaphios Procession

The Lamentations are short, poetic verses lamenting the Passion, Death and Burial of Christ. Interspersed with the Lamentations are Psalm verses from Psalm 119, the same verses we sing at a funeral service, which is appropriate, as the Lamentations are the funeral service for the Lord. The service starts with the Canon, and after the Canon is complete, the priest opens the Royal Doors, the lights are turned up, and the Lamentations begin. Everyone is invited to sing together. Books will be provided for your use. The outdoor procession of the tomb of our Lord will take place, weather permitting, at the Service of the Lamentations. We invite all the faithful to participate in this procession by proceeding in an order, quiet and dignified manner befitting the solemnity of this occasion. Please, refrain from conversing with others or acting in a way which will bring attention to you instead of the dead Lord. Please sing along with the choir. This is a time to pray, not to text message! Everyone will pass under the Epitaphios, symbolizing the passing from death to life, re-enter the church quietly and await the resumption of the service. Finally, everyone will be given a flower from the Epitaphios as a blessing at the end of the service.

Holy Saturday

Anastasis Service

The service of the Anastasis will begin at 11:00 p.m. on Holy Saturday evening, with the chanting of the Canon. Shortly before midnight, the light of the Resurrected Christ will be given to all the faithful. We will then go outside, weather permitting, to read the Resurrection Gospel and sing the Christos Anesti for the first time. Please proceed outside in an orderly manner so that we can

complete this service in a timely manner. We will then proceed back into the church for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. **Please plan to stay for the entirety of the Divine Liturgy on Pascha, the most joyous Liturgy of the year, and to receive Holy Communion. After all, we don't break our fast with meatballs and cheese, but with Holy Communion.** There will be a reception following the Divine Liturgy for all in attendance, in the Kourmolis Center. After making the journey through Holy Week together, what better way to continue our celebration than to sit down as a family and break bread together on the greatest feast day of the church year.

Blessing of Baskets of Food

It is the Orthodox Tradition on Pascha that we not only bless eggs but other types of food that will go on the table for the Paschal Banquet. Therefore, if anyone wishes to bring a basket of food to be blessed on Pascha night, they may come and place it beneath or around the table on the Solea where the basket of Easter eggs will be.

Reading of the Resurrection Gospel at the Agape Vespers

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

Holy Communion to be given only during Divine Liturgy

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

A Note on Kneeling and Sitting

It is the tradition of the church that we kneel or stand for the majority of the services. However, by dispensation, we now have pews in the church and the faithful are allowed to sit at certain points in the services. Because of the long lines for Communion and because the length of the services, and because many of our congregation are elderly and not in good health, **PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO SIT** as you need to during Holy Week,

especially during Holy Communion. Also, for those with bad knees, just sit with your head bowed during times we are kneeling, do not attempt to kneel. Our church never seeks our physical hurt in worship, nor do we want people passing out or becoming sick, which will only make us nervous and anxious.

Holy Week Books are available for sale in the church bookstore. The Holy Week Book contains the words and hymns of all the Holy Week services and will serve not only as an aid to worship but as a complete theology book, for the services of Holy Week contain all the theology of the Orthodox Church.

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

No Kneeling until Pentecost - It is actually the Tradition in the Orthodox Church that we not kneel on Sundays in honor of the Resurrection of Christ. Because we do not worship on a daily basis in our church communities, priests have encouraged people to kneel on Sundays, the thought being that if we do not kneel on Sundays, that we'll never kneel in church. It is a Tradition, that for 50 days after Pascha, we do not kneel in honor of the Resurrection. The next time we will kneel after April 15 is on the Feast of Pentecost at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says "Again and again on bended knees let us pray to the Lord."

Fast Free the week after Pascha

Having kept a fast for almost 8 weeks, including the week before Lent, Lent and Holy Week, the church gives us a "week off" from fasting the week after Pascha. During Bright Week, or Renewal Week, as that week is called each day is like a Sunday. Hence, there is no fasting during this celebratory week. Who, then, may receive Communion? Whoever wishes to, providing that they abstain from food the morning they are receiving. So, the Sunday after Pascha, everyone in the congregation may receive. There is no fasting on Wednesday or Friday of renewal week, or any other day of that week either.

Doing it all

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

Church Etiquette by Fr. Stavros

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

Some General Thoughts

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

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

Cell phones should be turned off during the service. This is a time to disengage from the world and enter into God's world. The only cell phones that should be on are for doctors who are on call who come to church and these should be on vibrate mode. Also, please don't give phones to your kids to play on, or text people while in church. I have heard from several people who have been distracted by others who are texting or children who are playing video games. If you want to take a picture or a video of something in church, that's fine, but other than this, please don't use the phones in church.

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

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

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

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

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

Strapless dresses—in monasteries, women must have their

heads covered in church. In our church, we only ask for the shoulders. A three inch wide strap is appropriate. Less than that is not.

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

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

Arriving at church

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

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

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

While in Church

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

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

When do I make the sign of the cross?

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

These include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kneeling

Put the kneelers up and down quietly.

Kissing the hand of the priest

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

For Holy Communion:

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

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

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

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

Small Children – We love that there are so many children at St. John the Baptist. Please use discretion and common sense when it comes to taking them out when they become fussy. As the Holy Week services are long and run late, for those who bring small children to the services, please sit near either the side door or in the back and if your child becomes fussy, please take them outside for a few minutes.

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

~ April 2017 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 ** GOYA Lenten Retreat
2 ** Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Ushers Meeting YAL 5:00 p.m.	3 ** Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	4 ** WBS 10:00 a.m.	5 ** MBS 7:30 a.m. 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner -Small Groups	6 ** Baking Day YAH 11:30 Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.– 8:30 p.m.	7 **	8 ** Saturday of Lazarus Orthros 8:30 a.m. Proskomide 9:30 am Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Breakfast/Making Palm Crosses
9 ** Palm Sunday Orthros 8:15 a.m. Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Palm Sunday Luncheon Bridegroom Service 6:30 p.m.	10 ** Holy Monday Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:00 a.m. Bridegroom 6:30 p.m.	11 ** Holy Tuesday Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:00 a.m. Bridegroom 6:30 p.m.	12 ** Holy Wednesday Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:00 a.m. Unction 3:00 p.m. Bridegroom 5:45 p.m. Unction 6:30 p.m.	13 ** Holy Thursday Vespers Liturgy 9:15 a.m. 12 Gospels 6:30 p.m. Vigil at the Cross	14 ** Good Friday Royal Hours 9:00 a.m. Sunday School Retreat Apokathelosis 3:00 p.m. Lamentations 7:00 p.m. Office Closed	15 ** Holy Saturday Vespers Liturgy 8:45 a Great Canon 11:00 pm Resurrection Service 11:45 p.m. Liturgy 12:30 am Pascha Reception
16 Pascha Agape Vespers 11:00 a.m. Easter Egg Hunt @ noon	17 No Fasting this week Office Closed	18 WBS 10:00 a.m. EBS 6:30 p.m. SBS 7:00 p.m.	19 MBS 7:30 a.m.	20 Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.– 8:30 p.m.	21 Life-Giving Fountain Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA Retreat in New Port Richey	22
23 Thomas Sunday Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Parish Picnic	24 Bible Study 6:30 pm Parish Council	25 WBS 10:00 a.m. EBS 6:30 p.m. SBS 7:00 p.m.	26 ** MBS 7:30 a.m.	27 Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.– 8:30 p.m.	28 ** Fr. out of town	29 Fr. out of town
30 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Oratorical Speeches YAL 5:00 p.m. Youth Sunday AHEPA/DOP Mtg	NO Community Outreach for April					

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

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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.

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AHEPA

Gus Paras, President 813-254-6980

Altar Angels

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Sia Blankenship 813-968-8855

Basketball

Perry Katsamakos 516-403-3118

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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

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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

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Anetta Alexander 813-758-2689

Gasparilla Parking

John Kokkas 727-992-4615

GOYA

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Kara Katzaras 863-669-6739

Hope/Joy

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

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Lisa Alsina 813-728-1094

Small Group Bible Study

East, Donna Hambos 813-843-8412

Men, Fr. Stavros 813-394-1038

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Women, Debbie Kavouklis 813-258-5571

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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.