

# 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*

# January 2018

### 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

## Visit of Metropolitan Alexios, Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, and Ordination of a Deacon

**H**is Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta will be with us the weekend of January 6-7 as we celebrate the feastday of St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of our parish. On Saturday evening, January 6, His Eminence will preside over the Great Vespers Service, beginning at 6:30 p.m., assisted by the clergy of the Tampa Bay area.

On Sunday, January 6, His Eminence will officiate at the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. As an added blessing this year, His Eminence is going to ordain a young man to be a deacon. We haven't had an ordination in our church in over thirty years. Most parishioners have never seen an ordination. I wanted to share a few words with you about what we are going to experience. For not only is this a special day in the life of the man getting ordained but it is special and unique for the congregation who participates.

At the conclusion of the Orthros, the candidate will be led to the Bishop's Throne and presented to the Metropolitan who will "ordain" him to the office of subdeacon, which is the highest rank that a lay person can have. A "subdeacon" is considered a minor order of the clergy. (The ranks of the major clergy are deacon, priest and bishop). The candidate will be vested in a white robe, and will hold a pitcher of water and a bowl in his hands. The Metropolitan will pray over him. He will wash the hands of the Metropolitan, and then he will be escorted before the icon of Christ, where he will stand and pray. After the Great Entrance, he will stand before the icon of the Virgin Mary. The ordination will begin right after the blessing *"And the mercies of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, be with you all."* This is shortly before the Lord's Prayer.

The ordination of the deacon takes place at this point, since the primary role of a deacon is to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion. (The ordination of a priest takes place after the Great Entrance, since his primary role is to be the celebrant of the services and to consecrate the Gifts, so his ordination takes place before the Consecration. The ordination of a bishop takes place before the Epistle and Gospel readings, since the primary role of the bishop is to be a teacher.) At the time of the ordination, the candidate will again be presented before the Metropolitan. A letter, called the "Symartyria" will be read. This is a letter from the Spiritual Father of the candidate, stating his worthiness for ordination. The candidate will then address the Metropolitan as to why he wishes to be ordained. The Metropolitan will then offer words of exhortation and advice to the candidate.

After this, the candidate for ordination is escorted through the Royal Doors of the Holy Altar for the very first time. He is escorted around the altar table three times as the same three hymns from the wedding service (when the couple goes around the table) are chanted. This is because in the ordination service, the person being ordained is marrying the church. After this "dance" around the altar table, the candidate kneels before the Holy Altar, and the Metropolitan will ordain him as a deacon. In a few moments, he will leave the rank of laity and become a clergyman. After the ordination prayers, the new deacon will stand in front of the congregation. The Metropolitan will proclaim "Axios"—"Worthy" and all the people will shout "Axios." The new deacon will then be vested in the vestments of a deacon. Then he will take his place in the Liturgy, offering the petitions before the Lord's Prayer and doing the rest of

the deacon parts for the remainder of the Divine Liturgy.

The ordination service has its roots in the Book of Acts, Chapter 6, when the Apostles chose deacons to assist them and “laid their hands on them.” The sacrament of ordination can only be done by a bishop, since the Bishops have Apostolic Succession, they trace their episcopacy to the Apostles. And the moment of ordination comes when the bishop lays his hands on the candidate, and in this case, elevates him from layman to deacon. I hope that you will plan to worship with us on January 7. An ordination is not something we see frequently, and it will be a nice experience in the life of our parish to witness one on our feastday.

## Father Stavros' Message

In his song “Happy Christmas,” John Lennon, a self-proclaimed agnostic, wrote “*So this is Christmas, and what have you done, another year over and a new one just begun. . . A very merry Christmas, and a happy New Year, let's hope it's a good one, without any fear.*” It's interesting, when you break down the lyrics to popular songs, whether they are for the Christmas season or any other part of the year, that many of these songs that are so joyfully and enthusiastically sung have no real joy in them at all. When I actually study the words of this song, I interpret them, “Oh well, another year is over, I hope you had fun, and well, the new year is starting, I hope it's a good one.” Nowhere in this song is there mention of Christ, or of hope, or of gratitude, or new beginnings for another year, nothing but the passage of time being marked. If the ending of one year and the beginning of another is just time passing for us, without hope for progress in some way in life, indeed there's not much to be happy for as the New Year is upon us. But if we reflect on the year past, approach the new year with gratitude that we are blessed to even enter into a new year, with hope in ourselves and our ability to make something of 2018, we have taken the first steps toward making this coming year a “happy” one indeed.

As I reflect on the year 2017, it was really a challenging one for our world. Endless politics, mass shootings and natural disasters seemed to dominate the news. Our church had some challenges and also some triumphs. My personal life had some good days and some bad ones. As we turn the calendar to 2018, I wonder at where we will be a year from now, as a society, as a parish, and for me as a person.

As time rolls along though, and more so as I get older, I think about the deeper meanings of life in general and my life specifically. I sometimes wonder am I making progress as a Christian, as a priest, as a human being. Are we making progress as a society or are we regressing? It's kind of a cliché rhetorical question when someone asks “What is the meaning of life?” and there is the rhetorical response that one could write books on the subject, or travel to the ends of the world trying find the answer, and then there are those who think they can encapsulate the meaning of life into a mere word or two or three.

One of my favorite songs is entitled “The Riddle” by the group “Five for Fighting.” For those who aren't familiar with this song, I'm reprinting the lyrics here:

*There was a man back in '95  
Whose heart ran out of summers  
But before he died, I asked him  
Wait, what's the sense in life?  
Come over me, Come over me*

*He said, "Son why you got to sing that tune?  
Catch a Dylan song or some eclipse of the moon?  
Let an angel swing and make you swoon  
Then you will see, you will see"  
Then he said, "Here's a riddle for you  
Find the answer: There's a reason for the world  
You and I"*

*Picked up my kid from school today  
Did you learn anything? Cause in the world today  
You can't live in a castle far away  
Now talk to me, come talk to me*

*He said, "Dad I'm big, but we're smaller than small  
In the scheme of things, well we're nothing at all  
Still every mother's child sings a lonely song  
So play with me, come play with me"*

*And hey Dad, here's a riddle for you  
Find the answer: There's a reason for the world  
You and I*

*I said, "Son for all I've told you  
When you get right down to the  
Reason for the world who am I?"*

*There are secrets that we still have left to find  
There have been mysteries from the beginning of time  
There are answers we're not wise enough to see  
He said, You looking for a clue? I love you free*

*The batter swings and the summer flies  
As I look into my angel's eyes  
A song plays on while the moon is hiding over me  
Something comes over me*

*I guess we're big and I guess we're small  
If you think about it man you know we got it all  
'Cause we're all we got on this bouncing ball  
And I love you free, I love you freely*

*Here's a riddle for you  
Find the answer: There's a reason for the world  
You and I*

If you have a few moments, I encourage you to Google this song, it's got a catchy tune. The song makes a good point though—what is the reason for the world? The answer is rather easy: “YOU and I.” More specifically, YOU and I growing in the image and likeness of God, working our way through this life with the ultimate destination of eternal life. Let's examine this song in greater detail. A quick search on Google (Where would we be without Google or Wikipedia?) reveals that John Ondrasik, the singer for “Five for Fighting” spent 18 months writing this song and went through over 100 drafts until he came up with the final version. What began as a song on the meaning of life later evolved into a song about the love between a father and son, inspired by his relationship with his

own son. Now as you read through the lyrics, you can read through it from the perspective of a parent (if you are a parent) with your own child, from the perspective a child in relation to your own parent, or (even though he didn't write this with religious overtones), you could read it as the relationship between us (children) and God (our Father). Let's examine in greater detail.

*There was a man back in '95  
Whose heart ran out of summers  
But before he died, I asked him  
Wait, what's the sense in life?  
Come over me, Come over me*

A man whose heart ran out of summers—In 2017, we laid 9 members of our community to rest. We're all going to run out of summers. As we turn the page to 2018, there are people in the community who have had their final Christmas, who may have had their final Pascha, whose hearts may run out of summers in 2018. We do not know who they are going to be, it could be any of us really. Here is the thing though—if one does not know what is the sense in life, what is the point of life, then we are merely marking time, passing milestones, only to pass away from life and to what end. If there is no sense of God in your life, one has to wonder, "What is the sense in life?" And unless one is a famous figure in history, each person will be forgotten as the last person living who remembers them passes away. I didn't know my paternal grandfather. My father knew him, but now that my father is gone, with him goes the memory of my paternal grandfather. What was the point of his existence, if he is now forgotten? Again, it's the relationship with Christ that defines both this life and the life to come.

**Goal for 2018—A sense of gratitude and a sense of urgency**—first a sense of gratitude for making it to 2018, a sense of thankfulness for another year of life, with all the joys that life holds for us. Secondly, a sense of urgency—at some point every heart will run out of summers. Are we working TODAY to grow in our faith, in our love, in our gratitude!

*He said, "Son why you got to sing that tune?  
Catch a Dylan song or some eclipse of the moon?  
Let an angel swing and make you swoon  
Then you will see, you will see"*

*Then he said, "Here's a riddle for you  
Find the answer: There's a reason for the world  
You and I"*

So, now to the riddle—what is the reason for the world? It is YOU and I. God created the world. God created the human being in His image and likeness. God placed the human being in the world. And the world, in its natural state, was a paradise. You and I, the human beings, were set as masters of creation. God's intention was for us to live in oneness with Him. That was His hope for us. However, you cannot compel someone to love someone else. You can't compel someone to be grateful. So, God gave the human being free will—we could choose to be loving, we could choose to be grateful. But we chose the route of ingratitude, we chose not to love God. And the world then fell away from God. But God's intention for the world remains the same—it's supposed to be about love, about you and I together, and you and I together with God. The world now seems to be all about the "I," and not "you and I."

**Goal for 2018—Focus on "you and I," not just "I."** - Take time to develop meaningful relationships, and strengthen relationships that you already have. No one is perfect, therefore no one has truly mastered *anything*. There is ALWAYS room for growth and improvement. For those who are married, make one goal to change your marriage for the good. For those who are parents, make one goal to better your relationship with your children. For those who have parents, make one goal to better your relationship with your parents. Too often, we seem satisfied with settling, without challenging ourselves to become better. Make 2018 a year you look for opportunity for positive change and growth. Challenge yourself to set at least ONE goal in each of your meaningful relationships.

*Picked up my kid from school today  
Did you learn anything? Cause in the world today  
You can't live in a castle far away  
Now talk to me, come talk to me*

Many of us live in "castles far away." We live in front of our computers. It's hard to imagine what life would be like without the Internet, without emails, without cell phones. Constant emailing and texting has caused us to converse less and less. We're losing the human contact to the cyber world. How many of you sent an email this past year that was misunderstood, or fired off an email in anger, or instantly regretted hitting "send"? I know I did. And I know I received emails like this. The lesson here is that we need to be more careful and thoughtful in our interactions with people. And as the song says, we need to "come talk" more and email less. And when we are "talking" with someone, we need to listen more and speak less. Another problem many of us have, which is made worse by our quasi-addiction to our electronic devices, is that we are not "present." People walk up and down the street with their heads down on their phones and they miss opportunities to converse with other people, or enjoy the beauty of the outside. We are so distracted with things, we all have a hard time being present. And because we are so busy chasing after things, many times we also are not present, as if we are in castles far away.

**Goal for 2018—Focus on more thoughtful conversation**—If we were each given a limit on how many words we were allowed to say per day, we would use our words more judiciously. No one is going to put a limit on your ability to speak, but learning to use our words wisely is something we can all do. Save important conversation for face to face, don't have them over the internet or text. I read a book recently on marriage which used the phrase "speak the truth in love." Sometimes, the truth may be hard to hear, or it may be hard to say, but if you are speaking the truth in love, then the voice of love will be heard over the voice of a negative truth.

**Be Present**—Be present in conversation, put away the mobile devices when having conversation. Don't have both eyes on the future so that you are not enjoying the present. At our recent Sunday School Christmas program, I acted like a Dad to record our son to save this moment for future joy, but I also enjoyed the present moment. Many people are so concerned about the future that they do not enjoy the present.

*He said, "Dad I'm big, but we're smaller than small  
In the scheme of things, well we're nothing at all  
Still every mother's child sings a lonely song  
So play with me, come play with me"*

*And hey Dad, here's a riddle for you  
Find the answer: There's a reason for the world  
You and I*

"In the scheme of things, well we're nothing at all." Who is at the center of your world? Is it you? Your career? Your material possessions? Your family? Where do you spend the great concentration of your time and energy? Where do you spend the bulk of your money? How much of your time goes to volunteer work? How much of your money goes to church/charity?

When you think of Christ, what kinds of words come to mind? Do think of Christ as fitting in a compartment in your life? Do you think of Him as an obligation? Do you ever meditate on words like "Almighty God," or "I am the Lord your God." Do you ever read some of the powerful sayings of Christ in the Bible—"I am the good shepherd," or "I am the door," or "I am the way and the truth and the life." In the scheme of things, we really are nothing at all. I am one man, amidst 6 billion people. My life will last less than 100 years in a history of billions of years. My place in history will be significant only to my family probably. So, my sense of self-worth has to be tied to my eternal future, not my immediate material future. Because in the scheme of things, my material worth is not much at all. It's my spiritual worth that is of infinite value. And in order to realize my spiritual worth, I have to realize that in the big scheme of things, I am accounted as not much, but He who is accounted for much, Christ, is infinitely greater than me. This is why He must be afforded the greater effort from me than my pursuit of material gain. That doesn't mean to quit your job and spend all day in church, but it does mean to live your life under a frame-work of Christian spirituality, following the commandments of God, living in the joy of the Lord, preparing for what is to come at the end of your earthly life.

**Goal for 2018—Make Christ the Priority, or at least A Priority**—Where will you be on January 1? Will you start the year off in worship? Where will you be January 7? Will you be in church the first Sunday of the year? For those who have not made it a habit of coming to church, the New Year affords us a new start. You can come to church January 7 and say honestly, "I've been to church every Sunday this year." You can pray on January 1 and say you've prayed everyday this year. Same for reading the Bible. Start the New Year off with some spiritual goals—make them challenging but achievable. Write them down, refer to them daily. Make your practice of Christianity something you think about and act upon on a DAILY basis.

There is also a plea from child to parent, "*come play with me.*" When we were kids, we loved to play, I know I did. I would run through my homework (I did it well, mind you) but I couldn't wait to be done to go out and play. Our son is the same way—I guess that's how children are. And as the parent of an 11 year old, who still likes to play and to draw, I am often invited to play. And as I am able, I try to play, and at 45, I still enjoy the opportunities to "play" and not be so serious. We all need that.

**Goal for 2018—take time to play and relax**—Anyone remember the old Fred Flintstone cartoons? Fred would be working at the rock quarry, and then the bird would squawk at 5:00 p.m., and Fred would slide down the back of the dinosaur and head on home. Well, leaving at 5:00 p.m. isn't possible today in many jobs, mine included. But there has to be some time when we are "off," whether it is to sleep, to relax, to enjoy family, to exercise, whatever. So, here's some advice—for those especially who have jobs that you never finish, set a quitting time each day, work hard until quitting time (no Facebook, no time wasting) and when quitting time comes, quit and go home and don't feel guilty. People talk about working an 80 hour week as if it is some kind of trophy. I think it is very difficult to work 80 hours a week every week and think you are going to stay focused and sharp. Work hard, but take time to play and relax.

*I said, "Son for all I've told you  
When you get right down to the  
Reason for the world who am I?"*

*There are secrets that we still have left to find  
There have been mysteries from the beginning of time  
There are answers we're not wise enough to see  
He said, You looking for a clue? I love you free*

I'm not sure if it's nature or nurture that makes us see the glass as half empty or half full. But having a positive outlook is a game changer. There are people who are inherently trusting and people who are inherently distrustful. Each person has his own unique perspective on trust and on love. There are some who trust a new person until that person blows it, and there are others who will not trust until someone earns their trust. Just like there are some teachers who tell their students that everyone starts out with a 100 and the A is there to lose, while there are other teachers who say everyone starts out with a zero and they have to advance from there.

And in the area of love, there are some who give love freely, who truly know what it means to serve someone else. When we truly serve and we truly love, we do so without an agenda of any kind. We give expecting nothing in return. We give without disappointment if nothing comes in return. This is what it means to love and what it means to serve. It is said that nothing in life is free. And it seems to be true—even love, for the most part, isn't free. But it should be.

What is the mystery from the beginning of time? How God could exist in a perfect oneness, how could a Trinity at the same time be one? As the years go by, we are figuring out a lot of life's mysteries—there are better and better medical treat-

**Goal for 2018—Learn more about what it means to serve, to give and to love and you will learn more about what it means to be a child of God.** Make it a goal to do some volunteer work this year. It doesn't have to be every week or every month, but take at least two opportunities this year to do something for nothing. Take a couple of opportunities this year and go serve, do something that brings no material benefit to you. In loving freely, in giving freely, we will have a better sense of how God loves us freely and without condition, how He can forgive us so easily, and how He was motivated to give us His own Son, to serve us, to die for us, to save us.



ments as an example, and new technological advances. But the mystery we can't seem to figure out is how to love in the way that God loves us. Or maybe we can figure it out, we just choose not to do it. In either case, the clue to the mysteries that elude us as a society is, loving freely, and serving without expectation of reward.

*The batter swings and the summer flies  
As I look into my angel's eyes  
A song plays on while the moon is hiding over me  
Something comes over me*

*I guess we're big and I guess we're small  
If you think about it man you know we got it all  
'Cause we're all we got on this bouncing ball  
And I love you free, I love you freely*

It seems that so much of life is the pursuit of what we do not have, rather than the joy of what we do have. When you think about it, we've really got it all. Yes, there are some people out there who do not have a lot—they lack the basic necessities in life. But virtually everyone who is reading this article has food to eat, a roof over their head, a talent to offer the world which will bring financial and material gain, and most of us have the opportunity for a better tomorrow. What more can we really want! I look at my own life from a strictly material standpoint and think, other than some greater sense of financial security, what is it that I really need? And the financial security is not a high priority for two reasons—one, I believe that God is never going to let me go hungry. And two, I know that security is an illusion. Financial security can be wiped away by a health crisis or a natural disaster at any time for anybody. The gains I hope to make in 2018 are not material gains at all. I hope for a better sense of God, and in turn a better sense of myself and what I can and should be. Again, it goes back to gratitude and love—gratitude for what I have, and a desire to serve and love others freely, without agenda.

As for the notion “we’re all we got on this bouncing ball,” well, I’ll amend that to, “there is me, there is you, and there is God.” We can’t love a house that is here today and gone tomorrow. We can’t love a job that we will eventually retire from. We can’t love a car that eventually will break down. We can’t love a body that eventually will grow old. But we can love God and love one another and in doing so, we will gain everlasting life, where there will never be sorrow, sighing or loss.

We have individual talents that let us work. We have collective talents that are used to balance out our world. But no person is the center of the universe. The uniting force for everyone and everything is God. He is the source and center of all things.

Matthew 18:20 reads “Where two or three are gathered in My name, there I am also in the midst of them.” When it gets down to it, the only meaningful things we end up with on this earth are our relationship with God and our relationship with other people. And never is this verse more meaningful or actualized than when we receive Holy Communion—we gather two people, the priest and the communicant, Christ is there in the midst of us. That’s one of the many reasons that receiving Holy Communion is so important. But gathering in His name is not limited to Communion—when you gather with someone in love, in service, in joy, in any of the good and perfect gifts pro-

**Goal for 2018—keep Christ in your relationships with people**—thank God for the gifts of friendship he has bestowed on your life. And look for opportunities to bring a consciousness of Godliness into your interactions. One of the greatest joys I have as a priest is that I get ASKED to bring God into conversations. A growing number of people are asking me to pray with them, who ask if we can speak with God together in prayer. They don’t just ask me to keep them in my private prayers, but they ask me to pray with them. This need not be limited to the relationship between priest and parishioner. It can go between parent and child, husband and wife, friend and friend. Anytime two people are together, Christ can be there. And even if you aren’t praying, if you are having joy, having peace, or engaging in self-less service, this is how Christ is brought into our relationships.

vided by God to us, there He stands in the midst of us.

*Here's a riddle for you  
Find the answer: There's a reason for the world  
You and I*

There IS no riddle—there IS no mystery. There IS a reason for the world—it’s you and I AND God. Imagine your life as a car ride. At the beginning of the journey, there is nothing in the rearview mirror except your house, your origination point. At the end there is nothing in front of you except your destination point—it’s all in the rearview mirror. Thus it is in life. At the beginning of life, all of it is in front of us, in the rearview mirror is God our creator. At the end of life, all of life is in the rearview mirror, and the only thing left in front of us is God waiting as our judge. In between the beginning and end of the journey, we encounter countless people and countless opportunities to use the things which the Creator has blessed us with to our benefit, to their benefit and to His Glory.

No one knows for sure what this year will bring for any of us. I do know a few things, however. I know that at the end of this year, there will be less in the front window of my life and more in the rearview mirror. That I know for sure, and that holds true for all of us. The other thing I know for certain is that I will have countless opportunities to do positive things for other people and make positive choices that can affect positive things in my life and in the life of people around me. This, also, holds true for all of us.

**Goal for 2018—Make it about “you and I AND God”**—If you make an effort each day to focus on God, and to make it about “we” instead of “me,” you are going to have a great year. If we keep this focus as a parish, we are going to have a great year as well.

On behalf of Presbyteria Lisa and Nicholas, I wish you all a Happy, Healthy, and Joyful New Year 2018!

With love in the Lord,


+Fr. Stavros

# Liturgical Schedule for January 2018

**Monday, January 1**      **Feast of St. Basil/New Year's Day**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Wednesday, January 3**      **Royal Hours of Epiphany**      8:45 a.m. -10:00 a.m.

**Friday, January 5**      **Eve of Epiphany**  
Vespers Divine Liturgy      9:00 a.m.  
Blessing of the Waters      10:15 a.m.

  
**We Live-Stream every service!**  
[www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com](http://www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com)

**Saturday, January 6**      **Great Vespers for Feast of St. John the Baptist**      6:30 p.m.  
His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios will preside, assisted by Clergy from around the Tampa Bay Area.  
The Philoptochos Society of our parish will host a reception following the service.

**Sunday, January 7**      **Feast of St. John the Baptist**  
Orthros 8:30 a.m.      Hierarchical Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.  
His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios will officiate at the Divine Liturgy.  
The Parish Council will host a luncheon following the Divine Liturgy.

**Altar Boys:** Captains Only

**Ushers:** Brett Mourer, Josef Fenton, Amin Hanhan

**Welcome Ministry:** Greeters: Michael Palios, Bessie Palios; Ambassador: Skip Higdon; Caller: Vickie Peckham

**Sunday, January 14**      **Sunday after Epiphany - Vasilopita Sunday**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

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

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

**Welcome Ministry:** Greeters: Katherine Sakkis, Maria Koutroumanis; Ambassador: Despina Sibley;

Caller: Maria Karounos

**Coffee Hour:** Philoptochos

**Wednesday, January 17**      **St. Anthony**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Thursday, January 18**      **Sts. Athanasios and Cyril**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Sunday, January 21**      **15<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Luke**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

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

**Ushers:** John Christ, Byron Nenos, Chris Kavouklis

**Welcome Ministry:** Greeters: Genie Carter, Helen Cauthorn; Ambassador: Kalliope Chagaris; Caller: Julie Palios

**Coffee Hour:** Altar Angels

**Thursday, January 25**      **St. Gregory the Theologian**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Sunday, January 28**      **First Sunday of Triodion-Publican and the Pharisee**  
Orthros 8:30 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

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

**Ushers:** Tammy Christou, George Mitseas, Florin Patrasciou

**Welcome Ministry:** Greeters: Dwight Forde, Ewana Forde; Carole Fotopoulos; Caller: Vickie Peckham

**Coffee Hour:** AHEPA

**Tuesday, January 30**    **Three Hierarchs - St. Basil, St. Gregory, St. John Chrysostom**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.    Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Friday, February 2**    **Presentation of Christ in the Temple**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.    Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Sunday, February 4**    **Second Sunday of Triodion - The Prodigal Son**  
Orthros 8:30 a.m.    Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

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

**Ushers:** Nick Kavouklis, George Trimikliniotis, Peter Theophanous

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

Caller: Betty Katsamakakis; Get Acquainted: Mike Xenick, Maria Xenick

**Coffee Hour:** Philoptochos OCMC Luncheon

# Liturgical Notes for January 2018



## **Monday, January 1 - Feast of the Circumcision of Christ, St. Basil - New Year's Day**

Three things are commemorated on the first day of each year. First, the circumcision of Christ, which occurred historically 8 days after His Nativity. He was circumcised according to the rites of the Jewish law and given the name Jesus. Secondly, we commemorate the feast of St. Basil the Great, one of the Great Hierarchs of our church. St. Basil authored one of the Divine Liturgies used in our church, which is celebrated on his feastday. He also helped found monasticism. St. Basil was a friend to the poor, often baking bread with money in it and throwing it through the windows of widows and the poor. Hence the tradition of the Vasilopita, the bread with the coin baked inside, which we cut at the New Year. Finally, we are supposed to pray every day and commemorate all of life's milestones with prayer. So, we open a new year, 2018, with prayer and the Divine Liturgy.

## **Wednesday, January 3 - Royal Hours of Epiphany 8:45 a.m.-10:00 a.m.**

Like Nativity and Pascha, there is a service of the Royal Hours which is celebrated in anticipation of Epiphany. This service consists of prayers, Psalms, hymns and Gospel readings which both foretell and recount this Great Feast of the church year.

## **Friday, January 5 - Eve of Epiphany - Divine Liturgy, Blessing of the Waters**

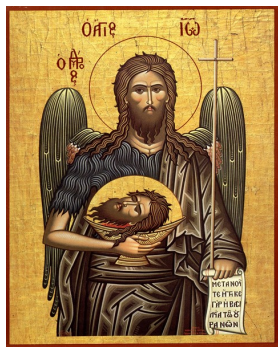
Also, like the Nativity and Pascha, the feast of Epiphany is commemorated with two celebrations of the Divine Liturgy, one of them on the forefeast (day before the feastday). Hymns of anticipation are sung at this service. Also, there is a service of Aghiasmos (blessing of the water) which is done at the conclusion of the Liturgy on January 5. Divine Liturgy will begin at 9:00 a.m. followed by the Blessing of the Waters at 10:15 a.m.



**On Saturday, January 6, we will NOT hold the Divine Liturgy at St. John the Baptist. Rather, we will all gather at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Tarpon Springs for Divine Liturgy beginning at 9:30 a.m., followed by the yearly diving for the cross at around 12:30 p.m.**

## **Saturday, January 6 - Great Vespers of St. John the Baptist - 6:30 p.m.**

The Vespers Service is the service that begins the liturgical day. In our church, the day begins at sundown. Thus the feast of St. John the Baptist, celebrated on January 7, begins with the sunset of January 6. Properly celebrated, all feastdays should begin with the celebration of Great Vespers, including every Sunday which should begin with Great Vespers on Saturday evenings. Because this is not practical in most parishes, Great Vespers is celebrated in most parishes on a limited basis. We will, of course, celebrate the complete cycle of services related to our feastday of St. John, which will begin with Great Vespers. His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta will preside at the Vespers, assisted by Clergy of the Tampa Bay area.



## Sunday, January 7 - Feast of St. John the Baptist

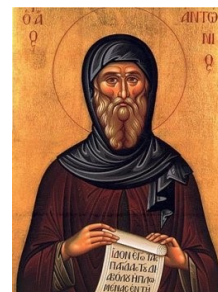
The day after a major feastday often commemorates the secondary figure of the Feast. On January 6, we celebrate the Baptism/Epiphany of Christ, who is obviously the major figure. The secondary figure of that feast is St. John the Baptist, whose feastday we commemorate the next day, January 7. St. John is the LAST of the Prophets before Christ and the first of the Saints, those who believed in Christ. Righteous figures who came before Christ are called either "Righteous" or "Prophet." Holy People who came after Christ are called Saints. St. John the Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist, as both titles. His life and his important work as the forerunner of the Lord is commemorated January 7. As this is the feastday of our church, many visiting clergy will be here to celebrate with us.

## Sunday, January 14 - Philoptochos' Vasilopita Sunday

If you would like to bake a vasilopita for our coffee hour to benefit St. Basil's Academy please call or email Jeanie Nenos 813 451-9116/ [jeanierrt@aol.com](mailto:jeanierrt@aol.com).

## Wednesday, January 17 - Feast of St. Anthony

St. Anthony is recognized as one of the fathers of monasticism. He lived in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. He founded a monastery in Egypt which still exists to this day. He authored many of the monastic rules that are still in practice today. He also was a major contributor to the First Ecumenical Council in Nicea in 325, where the Nicene Creed was first authored. He was one of the leaders against the heresies of Arianism.

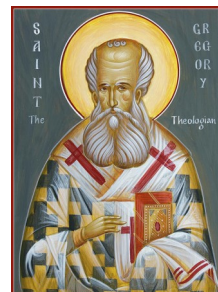
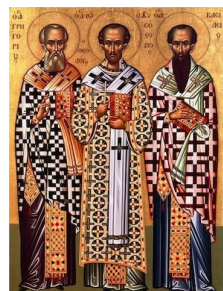


## Thursday, January 18 - Feast of St. Athanasios and Cyril

St. Athanasios was born in 297 and was ordained a priest in 319. At the tender age of 28, he was one of the leaders of the First Ecumenical Council in 325 in Nicea, and defended the Faith against the heresies of Arius. He contributed to the development of the Nicene Creed which was authored in 325 and edited in 381 at the second Ecumenical Council. St. Athanasios became a bishop and later Patriarch of Alexandria.

## Thursday, January 25 - Feast of St. Gregory the Theologian

One of the Three Hierarchs, also lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Was a friend and contemporary of St. Basil and St. John the Theologian. He was an accomplished speaker and writer, was the Bishop of Nazianzos and was one of the Bishops who presided at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381, which finalized the Nicene Creed that we recite to this day.



## Tuesday, January 30 - Feast of the Three Hierarchs

The Three Hierarchs are St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom. Each had his own feastday and all are honored together on January 30. Each of them lived in the 4th Century, each was an accomplished writer and speaker, each was a Bishop, each authored a Liturgy and each is remembered prominently in the history of our church to this day. The Three Hierarchs are Patron Saints of Teachers and Education.

**A Question for Father Stavros about baptism:** Was there a reason that Jesus was not baptized until He was 30 years old?

And how come we are baptized as babies instead of adults as Jesus was?

**Answer:** Baptism at the time of Christ, and before, was done as we now do confession. It was done periodically for spiritual cleansing, rather than a once in a lifetime event initiating one into the Christian faith. It was common for adults to be "baptized" once per year or so, and Jesus in coming for baptism was following the Jewish tradition of coming for spiritual cleansing. In fact, St. John was called "the Baptist" even at the time of Christ, because he was one of the people who was at the river baptizing those who were coming for their spiritual cleansing. It was after the Resurrection that Christ said that baptism would be the initiation into the Christian faith. The tradition in the original church was to baptize adults, the same way that Jesus was. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, a plague went through Europe killing a large percentage of the population including children who never got to be baptized. It was at THIS point that the church made a change to baptizing infants, so that all could become part of the Christian faith without having to wait (and hopefully survive) until adulthood.



# Community News

## Parish Registry

**Baptism**—Olivia Deanna (Pelagia) Tully, daughter of Shea and Katerina Tully, was baptized on Sunday, November 17. Eva Xioutas was the Godmother. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**—Margarita Anastasia Kyrus, daughter of Chris and Katherine Kyrus, was baptized on Sunday, November 26. Christina Kyriakides was the Godmother. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**—Emory Alexander Carreon, son of Delfin and Danae Carreon, was baptized on Sunday, December 3. Naomi Cardoso was the Godmother. Na Sas Zisi!

**Chrismation of the Robinson Family**—For the first time in our parish history, we had a Chrismation of SIX members of one family, all at the same time. On November 22, we welcomed the Robinson family into our church. Tanya (Theodora) was sponsored by Donna Hambos. Corinna (Maria) was sponsored by Maria Koutroumanis. Matthew (Paul) and Harry (Basil) were sponsored by Charlie Hambos. Carmen (Tabitha) and Wren (Maria) were sponsored by Donna Trakas. Congratulations and welcome to our church!

**Adult Baptism**—Michael Joseph Galovic, son of Gerald and Deborah Galovic, was baptized on Sunday, December 17. Godparent was Mike Trimis. Na Sas Zisi!

## Registry Statistics for 2017

	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
<b>Weddings</b>	9	9	8	12	8
<b>Baptisms</b>	20	36	22	18	25
<b>Funerals</b>	9	9	6	8	5
<b>Chrismations</b>	7	4	5	8	5

## Parish Council Elections Results

Congratulations to Alkis Crassas, Amin Hanhan, Sandra Pappas, Ryan Rindone and Mike Xenick, who were elected to the Parish Council for 2018-2019. They join George Chagaris, Demetrios Konstas, Catherine Mitseas, Aris Rogers II, Dante Skourellos and Gary Ward to comprise this year's Parish Council. Thank you to our Election Committee of Ed Gerecke, Skip Higdon and Julie Palios. A special thank you to Carole Fotopoulos for her long time service to the Parish Council!

## Community Outreach - Saturday, January 20

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



## Ye Holy Krewe of Tampa Gasparilla Parking Fundraiser

On Saturday, January 20 and Saturday, January 27, we will be renting out the church parking lot for Gasparilla Parking. This year the children's parade is on January 20, and the main event is on January 27. If you are interested in volunteering a few hours to help the church make some easy \$\$\$, and also have a good time socializing while directing traffic, please contact **John Kokkas, the Captain of Ye Holy Krewe**, at 727-992-4165 or [johnkokkas@hotmail.com](mailto:johnkokkas@hotmail.com). The primary hours needed are approximately 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. each Saturday. This is a very easy and fun way to generate income for our parish.

# Counting the Wins for our Community!

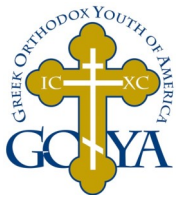
We've got lots of interesting people doing lots of interesting things in our community. If something notable happens in your life, please submit a short blurb to the office. We'd love to start "counting the wins" of our parishioners.

**Dr. Angel Alsina**, director of liver transplantation at Tampa General Hospital, and a team of four procurement surgeons, and 5 transplant surgeons successfully performed 4 liver transplants within a 24 hour period. A first time achievement for Tampa General Hospital. It was a concerted effort involving logistics, personnel, and great teamwork. Congrats to TGH liver transplant team for a job well done, and to Dr. Angel for being a big part in saving the lives of countless people!

**First "Come and See" Dinner a success**—On Tuesday, November 28, we had our first "come and see" dinner. People from our festival who wanted to come and see more about our church came to a dinner that evening. Several parishioners also invited neighbors and friends to come and see. Overall, there were 52 people in attendance, including 18 who are not members of our church. If we are called as Christians to call people to "come and see" who we are, this was indeed a great first step. Thank you for Maria Xenick and the Welcome Ministry of our church for organizing this event, and to all the ministry heads and parishioners who came.

## Young Adult Ministry

The YAL fellowship dinner will be on Sunday, January 14, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Please RSVP to Charlie if you are going to attend. Bring \$10 for dinner.



## January 21 Mother/Daughter "Retreat", Guest Speaker for Boys

The GOYA Meeting for January will be Sunday, January 21. All MOMS are invited to this meeting along with their daughters for a mother/daughter retreat. This will last from 5:00-8:00 p.m. with dinner, presentation, special time for moms and daughters to talk and a closing prayer in church. The boys will have dinner at 5:00 p.m. followed by a presentation by Brian Greenfield, an African-American motivational speaker, who regularly speaks to teens and young adults. Dads may attend this as well. He will be speaking on the topic of "The Importance of being a man of faith, and how truly knowing Christ shapes how you will live your life and the man you will become." At our February meeting (February 25), we will have a father/son event and a guest speaker for girls.

**GOYA Clearwater Event** - Our GOYAns will be participating in the GOYA Clearwater Winter Retreat on January 26-28. Anyone interested in attending needs to contact Maria Koutroumanis ([mrk1997@verizon.net](mailto:mrk1997@verizon.net)) by January 10.



## Prayer for Teachers on Sunday, January 28

On January 30, we celebrate the feast of the Three Hierarchs, who are also the patron saints of teachers. On January 28, immediately prior to Holy Communion, we will offer a prayer for all teachers and anyone who works in education in our community.

## Small Group Bible Study

**Our Bible Studies are going in full swing. New people are welcome at any time!**

### Monday Night Bible Study (for everyone)

We are studying the Book of Acts

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

**Group Leader:** Charlie Hambos

[Charlie.hambos@gmail.com](mailto:Charlie.hambos@gmail.com), 813-843-8471

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

**Meeting Dates:** January 8, 15, 22, 29

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

**Location:** Meets at the home of Debbie Kavouklis, 3315 Jean Circle, Tampa, FL 33629

**Group Leader:** Debbie Kavouklis

[dkavouklis1@verizon.net](mailto: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)

**Meeting Dates:** January 9, 16, 23 and 30 (at the church)

### 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 & Ellen Karaku

[bmp1126@yahoo.com](mailto:bmp1126@yahoo.com) 813-523-0347

[ekaraku@verizon.net](mailto:ekaraku@verizon.net) 813-835-0691

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

**Meeting Dates:** January 9, 16 and 23

# Orthodoxy 101 Class will be held in January

Fr. Stavros offers this class two times per year, in the spring and in the fall. This will be a Four-week course of study on Monday nights to make people aware of the basics of being an Orthodox Christian. The classes will be part lecture, part discussion, with lots of time for questions and answers.

## Who should attend the Orthodoxy 101 class?

- **Interfaith couples.** This will help the non-Orthodox person understand more about what is going on in our church.
- **Anyone who is considering joining our church.** Going forward, this class will be a requirement for those who wish to join our Orthodox faith.
- **New converts to Orthodoxy.** For those who recently joined our church and who want to know a little bit more.
- **Anyone who wants to know more about the basics of our faith,** or who wants a refresher course in the basics of Orthodoxy is encouraged to attend.

## The four sessions will be done as follows:

**Monday, January 22** A Tour of the Orthodox Church: What we see in the Church and what it means

**Monday, January 29** Orthodox Spirituality—Introduction to the Sacraments

**Monday, February 5** The Divine Liturgy—**This will actually be a “teaching” Liturgy on the solea of the church. If you have taken the class, or if you wish to only attend THIS session, please feel free to do so.**

**Monday, February 12** Orthodox Traditions—fasting, icons, prayer and separating Theology from “yiaiyalogy”

Classes will be held on these three Mondays from 6:30-8:30 p.m. and will be held in the CHURCH Sanctuary.

Please sign up with Fr. Stavros at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com), so he has enough materials for everyone. There is no charge for this class.



## Young at Heart Apokreatiko Dinner Dance - Saturday, February 3

The Young at Heart will have their annual Mardi Gras Ball (Apokreatiko) on Saturday, February 3 at 6:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. We hope that all will join us for a fun dinner dance. Tickets will be available soon. We promise lots of laughs and fun for everyone! It is all about family, friends

dancing and did we mention COSTUMES? Great prizes for the best costumes. We can't forget to say that John Demas will be entertaining us with the wonderful music of the Omega Project and his beautiful classical guitar during dinner.



## Sunday, February 4

Super Bowl Sunday of course, but it is also “Souper Bowl of Caring” Sunday as well. This is a nationwide, youth-led initiative to tackle hunger across our country. Over 3000 Churches, youth groups, and other organizations will be collecting non-perishable items and monetary donations for local food banks. Mark your calendars to help HOPE/JOY collect donations to be given to the children at HOPE CHILDREN’S HOME - a Christian home that takes abused, unwanted, discarded or orphaned children and is entirely supported by churches, private individuals and organizations.

## OCMC Mission Sunday

As they do every year, Philoptochos is going to sponsor it's 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Missions Sunday to support overseas Orthodox Missions. Philoptochos will sponsor a luncheon to benefit missions work, with all proceeds going toward the Mission Center.



**SAVE THE DATE** Our annual Parish Movie night for adults will be Friday, February 9. Details forthcoming.



THE SPRING  
OF TAMPA BAY

**Philoptochos** would like to thank all those who donated items for our Alpha House Diaper Drive. Your generosity provided over \$500 worthy of diapers, wipes and baby items. Additionally, we are thankful for those who helped make the “Season of Necessities” Luncheon a great success! In addition to the generous items donated, we collected over \$580 in cash and gift cards for the Spring of Tampa Bay. Thank you for your spirit of giving this Christmas season.



# “The Gifts of Christmas” were Received and We had Fun

Our Annual Sunday School Christmas Party and Christmas Program were a huge success. A big thank you to Debbie Nicklow for organizing the crafts, food and fun. Also, thank you to Bavaro's Pizza Napoletana & Pasteria for donating the pasta for lunch and to Emily's Restaurant for the beautiful Greek salad. In addition to the fun, games and crafts, the kids put together over 27 “Boxes of Hope” for Metropolitan Ministries. Thanks to all those who also donated gift cards and money as well as food for this initiative. Finally, everyone went into the church to rehearse for the Christmas Program, “The Gifts of Christmas,” which was our biggest program. Thank you to Maria Xenick for organizing, assigning and working close together with the students to make this a great program. Thanks also to Vickie Peckham and the entire Sunday School staff for making it all happen. (Photo credit: Olya Clifton)









## **A Rare Opportunity - A “Teaching” Divine Liturgy - February 5**

**For the first time ever in the history of St. John the Baptist, Father Stavros will offer a Divine Liturgy, where he will explain the mechanics and the mystery of this service which is central to our faith, worship and salvation. The service will start at 6:30 p.m.**

Christ the King Catholic Church and St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church  
will pray together in an

## **Ecumenical Prayer Service for Peace in the United States**

**Tuesday, February 6, 2018 at 6:30 p.m.**

**at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church**

**A reception will follow in the Kourmolis Center.**

Let us join our Catholic brothers and sisters for an evening prayer service as we come to  
together to pray for those afflicted by sorrow, disaster and turmoil.

## **Archangel Michael Winners from 2017 recognized!**

We congratulate again Elaine Halkias and Brett Mourer who were awarded the Metropolis of Atlanta Archangel Michael Award from our parish in 2017. Father presented the awards in church on  
Sunday, December 17.

We thank you for your stellar stewardship to our community!



**Elaine Halkias**

**Brett Mourer**



# Hope/JOY appreciates your support of Boxes of Hope

The Sunday School / Hope & Joy Christmas Party was held on Saturday, December 9 with over 40 children attending. The children kept busy with crafts, games, lunch, the pageant rehearsal and assembling 27 Boxes of Hope for the Metropolitan Ministries food drive. We also collected \$840 in gift cards and cash donations to go to Metropolitan Ministries.

I would like to thank all the Sunday School children who attended the Christmas Party, to ALL the parents that helped with crafts, lunch and clean up, to Bavaro's Napoletana Pizzeria & Pasteria for donating the pasta for lunch, to Charlie for helping behind the scenes and to Father Stavros for all his support with the youth. Also, a big thank you goes out to our St. John's community for all the donations made toward the Boxes of Hope. Together we helped 60 families of 4 enjoy a meal during the Christmas season!

Wishing everyone a very blessed and happy 2018!

In Christ, Debbie Nicklow, Hope & Joy!

**Thank you Debbie Nicklow for your dedication to our youth!**



Hope & Joy Presents

## Movie & Pizza Night

Featuring

# Sing

**Friday, January 20, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.**

at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in the Kourmolis Center

**Bring your favorite blanket and enjoy a night of fun, food & fellowship with your friends!** Please RSVP to Debbie by January 16 at [debbienicklow@hotmail.com](mailto:debbienicklow@hotmail.com) or

813-690-0671.

# ~ Sunday School News ~

We would like to wish everyone in our parish a blessed New Year and hope that you had a wonderful Christmas with your family. The first half of our Sunday School year has been extremely busy and successful thanks to all the teachers, Fr. Stavros, Charlie Hambos, the parents, and especially the students of St. John's.

This year's Christmas Program was the biggest and best ever. Our students are very talented and all the parts could be heard clearly. Weren't the animals adorable? We would like to thank all of our Sunday School students, teachers, and parents for helping to make this program a HUGE success. Maria Xenick has been producing this program for a number of years and we can not thank her enough for her commitment to our children, our music program, and our church.

A big thank you goes out to Debbie Nicklow for planning the Christmas Party on Saturday, December 9. We would also like to thank all the children who attended the Sunday School-Hope & Joy Christmas Party, and to all the teachers and parents that helped make the afternoon such a success! This year, in addition to all the Christmas crafts, the children put together over 27 containers of food for our Boxes of Hope program. Also hundreds of dollars of gift cards and money were donated. Thank you to all and a special thank you to Bavaro's Pizza Napoletana & Pasteria for donating the scrumptious pasta.

Our Sunday School topics for December were STEWARDSHIP and of course the NATIVITY OF CHRIST. **Charlie Hambos also visited the 5th Grade Class with the Church Vessels.**

## SUNDAY SCHOOL CALENDAR

### **Sunday, January 7**

Sunday School Resumes  
Topic: Epiphany/St. John

### **Sunday, January 14**

Topic: Vasilopita/St. Basil

### **Sunday, January 21**

Youth Sunday  
(6th-8th Grade Music at 11:50 a.m.)  
Charlie Hambos - 5th Grade  
GOYA Meeting  
Prospora - 1st Grade

### **January 26 - 28**

GOYA Clearwater Winter Event

### **Sunday, January 28**

Topic: Moral Choices  
Charlie: 2nd Grade

**Our Food Pantry is very active helping people near and far in the Tampa Community.**

**Here are some special requests we have:**

- Pasta
- Spaghetti Sauce
- Tomato sauce/chopped tomatoes etc.
- All kinds of white flour
- Canned Tuna
- Canned Chicken
- Canned fruits and vegetables
- Gluten Free Foods and Flours
- Cereal
- Whole wheat rice and pasta
- Men's and Women's razors and shaving cream (travel size)
- Toothbrushes
- Gift cards in any amount for Publix, Walmart or Save-a-lot



All food items offered are accepted. Thank you for supporting those who need it the most. For more info and questions about our Food Pantry please contact Anetta Alexander at 813-758-2689 or [exchange2861@yahoo.com](mailto:exchange2861@yahoo.com).



# ~ Stewardship Update ~

*"For every good endowment and perfect gift is from Above, coming down from the Father of the Lights." - James 1:17*

## Please give back your Time, Talents and Treasure in 2018

We wish everyone a Happy New Year and pray your time spent rejoicing in the birth of Jesus Christ, our Savior, brought peace and love to your Christmas Holiday. We thank our many loyal Stewards of 2017 that helped sustain our church Vision & Mission. We welcomed many new families into our community over the past year. Your 'Gifts Back to God' enable us to spread the word of Christ and support Orthodox and non-Orthodox charities throughout the year.

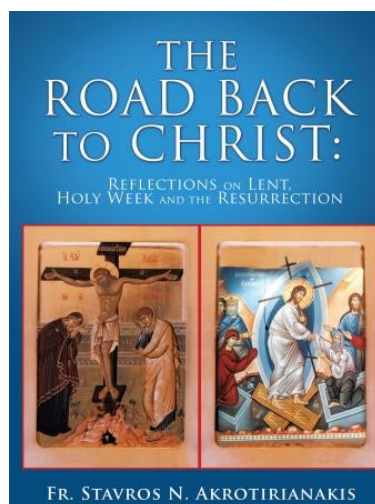
The month of December can be fulfilling, exhausting and joyous all at the same time. We suggest you take time in the New Year to commit your 'Gift of Time' to worship, prayer and study to deepen your Orthodox Christian life. The 'Gift of Time' personal commitment cards are a core part of our 2018 Stewardship materials. They also make wonderful book-marks that serve as a daily reminder. If you need extras please contact the church office, Sandra Pappas or Pete Trakas.

Next month we'll provide a summary of year-end Stewardship & updates for the new year. Stewardship Sunday celebrated on December 17, 2017 brought a show of community support for our beloved church with 122 pledges and \$286,000 pledged by that afternoon. We pray that everyone that attends St. John on a regular basis becomes a Steward of His church! Please don't wait to make your commitment for 2018. Our goal is 100% participation.

## ~ Good to Know - Stewardship Housekeeping ~

- ◆ It's not too late to complete your pledge commitment for 2017 – We can address any questions you have regarding your remaining commitment.
- ◆ Tax Letters will be compiled *in January 2018 to reflect donations received in the 2017 calendar year*. We can address any questions you may have regarding your remaining commitment.
- ◆ We now accept online credit card payments through PayPal. This option is provided for convenience. Consistent donations are a tremendous help for our church operations and easy to set up with Internet Banking or Electronic Funds Transfer directly through your bank. Please visit our website for more detail.
- ◆ **YES - Stewardship Pledge Forms really are required and can now be completed on-line.** They not only provide family information on areas of interest and talents but also help us determine how much income the Church can expect to support our operations. **Pledge Forms and current contributions are required to meet the Uniform Parish Regulations (UPR) of our Archdiocese as well as our local by-laws, which enable participation at Parish General Assembly Meetings, Nominations and Voting for Parish Council in December.**

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



### The Road Back to Christ:

**Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection is now on sale!**

It is a series of daily reflections to be read from the beginning of Triodion (this year that is February 5) through All Saints Day (this year that is June 11). Pick up your copy today so you can begin reading it on February 5. This book costs \$18.99 and all monies taken in at the bookstore go to the church.

### Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 1020 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 2 years! Over half of our parish receives it daily, as well as many people outside of our parish. Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email Charlie at [charlie.hambos@gmail.com](mailto:charlie.hambos@gmail.com) and ask to add you

# Christ's Gym

By Fr. Panagiotis Sotiras

As we enter 2017, the traditional New Year's resolutions are under way. One of the most popular resolutions is getting in shape. Gym memberships spike during the month of January and fitness centers are crowded as people strive to burn off the holiday calories and get healthy. Usually by the end of the first or second month, the gyms are not as packed and later on, it thins out even more. Nevertheless, the desire to work out stems from the fact that by going to the gym, we will feel better, happier, healthier, and full of life.

The Church also wants us to feel better, happier, healthier, and full of life but in a more profound way, of course. While our bodies may grow old and even become ill, our inner lives, our souls, can remain healthy and full of life. The Church does not want us to feel spiritually old, tired and burdened. God wants our souls to experience a life of newness. This life of spiritual renewal began at our baptism as Saint Paul reminds us, *"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* (Romans 6:4) God's desire is that our *"youth is renewed like the eagle's."* (Psalm 103:5) Christ Himself tells us, *"Behold I make all things new."* (Revelation 21:5)

Spiritually we grow tired, old and burdened because of unhealthy choices we make, which lead us to sin. When we sin, when our behavior is contrary to God's teachings, and we are burdened with experiences like guilt, denial, despair, anger, emptiness and bitterness. Sin and its consequences age our soul; we grow spiritually tired and sick. We are blessed that the Church offers us a way to reverse this process.

In some ways, the Church is like a gym – we come to work out spiritually so that our souls feel better, happier, healthier and full of life. We have trainers in our Bishops, Priests and Theo-

logians who instruct us and help us in our spiritual life. We also have friends in the Saints to encourage us and help us achieve our goals. The Church helps us feel spiritually invigorated and alive, no matter what our age may be. Part of the way the Church is able to help us feel this way is because the burdens of sin are lifted from our life through participation in the sacrament of Confession.

How can we experience this newness of life? First, just like the gym, we need to make Church a priority if we want to see results. We need to attend the Divine Liturgy and receive Holy Communion on a regular basis. We need to pray and read Scripture daily. We need to go to Confession. We need to surround ourselves with those who will encourage us, namely the Saints, by learning about their lives. We need to push ourselves and apply the virtues of patience, kindness, mercy, compassion and forgiveness to those in our lives, even to those who have wronged us. We need to accept the disciplines of fasting, but not just from food, but from gossip, hurtful words, and vengeance. We need to make sure we help the poor through our Philoptochos Society and through other philanthropic agencies.

As we participate in the spiritual gym that is the Church, and get stronger in our faith, I know that we will feel spiritually better, healthier, happier and full of life. At the gym people slowly stop going because exercising gets too difficult. Let us avoid this from happening with the Church. Like working out at the gym, it may not always be easy to go to Church or apply the teachings of the Church to our lives, but the results for our souls will be well worth the effort.

May our Lord bless you and your loved ones this New Year with His abundant love and peace!

*Fr. Panagiotis Sotiras is the Proistamenos of St. Basil Greek Orthodox Church in Stockton, CA.*

## St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!

### Sermons on Youtube Channel Each Sunday

Father's sermons each Sunday are available on our YouTube channel. Just go to YouTube and type in "St John GOC Tampa" and you'll find them. If you miss a sermon or wish to hear a sermon again, you'll find it there!

### Do you Like our Facebook page?

Like our page and suggest it to your friends. Announcements are posted frequently so you are up to date with everything going on at St. John the Baptist. You can find our page at StJohnGOCTampa.

### Live Streaming

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

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

**All of the services are available to watch at anytime.**

### Pictures

Go to Flickr.com and search "St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church" or go to [www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoc Tampa](http://www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoc Tampa)



# Our Joy and Work after Christmas

By Fr. John Angelis

**T**he joy of Christmas is not ephemeral, it does not last only for a day or a season. Christ's inner peace and joy for a Christian last forever; because Christ is the same, yesterday, today and the future. He is eternal.

The persons associated with the Birth of Christ, the shepherds, the Virgin Mary, the righteous Joseph and the Magi--the Wise Men, carried this heavenly event, the joy and peace which they received from the Incarnation of the Son of God, in their hearts.

The shepherds returned to their flocks inspired, because they experienced the divine revelation of the Angels and they saw the Divine Child in the manger, as the Angel of God had told them.

Guided by the heavenly Star, the Magi found the Christ Child and His Mother. They offered their gifts to Him and in exchange they received His gift of peace and joy which filled their hearts and lasted forever.

Joseph was delivered from his doubts, after the Angel of God informed him of the Divine Conception of the Christ Child. After that he assumed the role of the human father and served the Will of God and protected the Child and His Mother.

He accepted his refugee status in Egypt, as they were fleeing Herod's rage and persecution.

The Angels, the heavenly world, celebrated the Incarnation of their Divine Lord, Who became a God-Man to save the human race.

So, we do not discard our spiritual, inner joy and peace with the Christmas tree, nor do we hide them in the boxes where we store our beautiful Christmas ornaments. Rather we keep the joy and peace of Christmas, the coming of Emmanuel, which means "God is with us," we keep it in our hearts. We treasure them and ask God to warm our heart, to inspire our spirit and strengthen our will to do good, to imitate the holy witnesses of the Birth of Christ.

Our work as Christians is not finished; rather it has just begun—We

are called to feed the hungry, to clothe those who are cold, to protect the orphan, the widow, the helpless, to visit the sick and infirm, to protect the innocent from persecution—in summary, to keep and live the Great Commandment of God.

Times have changed since the Birth of Christ. But the human needs remain the same. We have as many, if not more, widows, orphans, poor, sick, confined in their beds, today, as they were at the time of the Incarnation of Christ. We need to continue the work of God in our own generation. Christ has not left us alone and helpless. In addition to His example, He has given us His Holy Spirit to empower us to respond to the needs of our fellow man.

I read a little story that I would like to share with you. A well-to-do father asked his young son to pray to God for their neighbor who was ill and lost his job. He told his son that the family is in danger of losing their home, because they cannot pay their monthly mortgage payment, even their electric bill. The child in all his innocence turned around to his father and said, "daddy, we don't have to pray to God to pay for that. We have enough money to pay his bills ourselves." As you can see, the child spoke the truth, we are God's hands and treasurer, to help our fellowman in his needs.

Our work is not finished with the end of Christmas. Rather it has begun again. Our service and duty to God is not finished at the end of the D. Liturgy. Rather it begins after we leave the Church building. For liturgy means the work of the people. We complete our worship of the Lord in His Temple, but we are called to start our service to His people, our fellowman, after the liturgy. The first part of the compound word "Liturgy," *laos*, means people, and the second part of the word, *ergon*, means work of the people for our fellowman.

As we wished each other Merry Christmas and participated in the Worship Service, let us now encourage each other to carry on the spirit of Christmas, to do the work of God, to help our fellowman, whoever he/she might be.

## A New Deposit from God

By Fr. John Angelis

Happy New Year!

God just made a generous deposit of 365 days into the bank account of our lives, but the deposit is not interest-free. In His instructions to us, God repeatedly advises us to use our time responsibly as His good stewards. Before we make any new appointments, God appeals to us to settle the accounts of the past year: "Repent, metanoete, rethink what you have thought and done, reconcile your past, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." In other words, He asks us to consider whether we have used our previous time allotment wisely. And He reminds us that we should plan the future with the same question in mind. Just as we give an account to the Internal Revenue Service for our taxes, in the same way we must plan to give an account to God for how we spent the previous year.

The ancient Greeks used to say that "time is money." (O Chronis einai chrima). As such, it is to be used properly and constructively. The Bible goes one step further and calls time *kairos*, or decisive time. There is no such thing as idle time for God. Every moment demands decisions through which we work out our salvation.

For Christ, *kairos* is His plan for our salvation, His time for suffering for us. By using our time wisely, we show that we are partners in His plan. When we are about to start the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, we say, "It is time *9kairos*) to serve the Lord." We are called to set aside everything else and concentrate on the worship of the Lord.

For this reason, God reserved one-seventh of our time, the Sabbath, for the Christians, Sunday, the Lord's Day, to help us remember His many blessings to us and spontaneously worship and thank Him for his great love.

It is a sobering thought for all of us that the same phrase is used in our funeral service. "*Kairos tou poieisai to Kyrio*" we chant; "It is time to serve the Lord." At the final reckoning, the end of our lives, once more, we are called to give an account to God for our lives, of how we have used His talents and gifts to us.

It is imperative, therefore, to settle our past account and reconcile our books as often as possible. The beginning of the year is a perfect time to take stock of our lives. We are called to redeem our past, rethink our actions, ask forgiveness for our sins and omissions, and be reconciled with God and the people around us in the Sacrament of Holy Confession—and then move on. Reconciled with our past, we can open our new account, the New Year, and treat it as *kairos*, as decisive time, as a great privilege that enables us to work for the Lord and serve our fellow man, making use of the talents and resources that the Lord has given us.

For indeed we are stewards of God and are called to use our time, talents, and treasure to serve Him and the people around us. It's time, *Kairos*, to work for the Lord. *Fr. John Angelis is a retired priest of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese with over 50 years of service.*

# Weddings, Divorces, Baptisms, Funerals, Memorials as well as Office, Fundraisers and Hall Use Procedures

*The Greek Orthodox Church is not a church of rules. But without some guidelines to go by, there would be chaos. The following guidelines are rooted in Orthodox Tradition and Canon Law. These guidelines are printed in **The Messenger** in the beginning of each calendar year, and it is a good idea from time to time for people to review them. These guidelines have been copied from the 2017 Yearbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Please review them, and keep them in mind when planning for your important life events. If you have any questions, please contact Fr. Stavros. (Special requirements specific to sacraments at St. John the Baptist appear in italics.)*

## Weddings

For the union of a man and woman to be recognized as sacramentally valid by the Orthodox Church, the following conditions must be met: The Sacrament of Matrimony must be celebrated by an Orthodox Priest of a canonical Orthodox jurisdiction, according to the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church, in a canonical Orthodox Church, and with the authorization of the Metropolitan.

Before requesting permission from the Metropolitan to perform the marriage, a Priest must verify that: a) Neither of the parties in question are already married to other persons, either in this country or elsewhere (if a person comes to the United States after age 18, they need to provide a letter from their country of origin that they are indeed free to marry); b) the parties in question are not related to each other to a degree that would constitute an impediment; c) if either or both parties are widowed, they have presented the death certificate(s) of the deceased spouse(s); d) if either or both of the parties have been previously married in the Orthodox Church, they have obtained an ecclesiastical as well as civil divorce. (The Ecclesiastical Divorce process is done after the civil divorce becomes final, and involves counseling with the parish priest, forms that are filled out, a review by the Metropolitan, a divorce hearing which in the Tampa Bay area is held in Clearwater, and this process usually takes several months to complete. *Fr. Stavros will not set a wedding date for anyone until an ecclesiastical divorce has been secured, so please plan accordingly, the ecclesiastical divorce process often takes several months.*) e) the party or parties who are members of a parish other than the one in which the marriage is to be performed have provided a certificate declaring them to be members in good standing with that parish for the current year; and f) a civil marriage license has been obtained from civil authorities.

No person may marry more than three times in the church, with permission for a third marriage granted only with extreme oikonomia.

In cases involving the marriage of Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians, the latter must have been baptized in water, in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Church cannot bless the marriage of an Orthodox Christian to a non-Christian. The couple should be willing to baptize their children in the Orthodox Church and raise and nurture them in accordance with the Orthodox Faith. *There is a list of religious groups that Orthodox are prohibited from marrying, i.e. Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, and others. Fr. Stavros can provide you with this list. **This is IMPORTANT to consider when you begin to date someone. Make sure your children are aware of this!** Because circumstances exist where a couple is dating where one of the two is not eligible to be married in the Orthodox Church, and this causes heartache in the relationship and often leads to someone leaving the church.*

A baptized Orthodox Christian whose wedding has not been blessed by the Orthodox Church is no longer in good standing with the Church, and may not receive the Sacraments of the Church, including Holy Communion, or become a sponsor of an Orthodox Marriage, Baptism, or Chrismation. A non-Orthodox Christian who marries an Orthodox Christian does not thereby become a member of the Orthodox Church, and may not receive the Sacraments, including Holy Communion, serve on the Parish Council or vote in parish assemblies or elections. To participate in the Church's life, one must be received into the Church by the Sacrament of Baptism, or in the case of persons baptized with water in the Holy Trinity, following a period of instruction, by Chrismation.

Canonical and theological reasons preclude the Orthodox Church from performing the Sacrament of Marriage for couples where one partner is Orthodox and the other partner is a non-Christian. As such, Orthodox Christians choosing to enter such marriages fall out of good standing with their Church and are unable to actively participate in the sacramental life of the church. While this stance may seem confusing and rigid, it is guided by the Orthodox Church's love and concern for its member's religious and spiritual well-being.

The Sponsor (koumbaros or koumbara) must provide a current certificate of membership proving him or her to be an Orthodox Christian in good standing with the church. A person who does not belong to a parish, or who belongs to a parish under the jurisdiction of a bishop who is not in communion with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, or who, if married, has not had his or her marriage blessed by the Orthodox Church, or, if divorced, has not received an ecclesiastical divorce, cannot be a sponsor. Non-Orthodox persons may be members of the wedding party, but may not exchange the rings or crowns.



## Days when marriage is not permitted

Marriages are not performed on fast days or during fasting seasons or on the feasts of the church as indicated: September 14 (Holy Cross Day), December 13-25 (Christmas), January 5 and 6 (Epiphany), Great Lent and Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, August 1-15 (Dormition Fast) and August 29. Any exceptions can only be made with the permission of the Metropolitan.

## Prohibited Marriages

The following types of relationships constitute impediments to marriage:

Parents with their own children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren or Godchildren of the same Godparents; Brothers-in law and sisters-in law; Uncles and aunts with nieces and nephews; First cousins with each other; Foster parents with foster children or foster children with the children of foster parents.

Godparents with Godchildren or Godparents with the parents of their Godchildren. (In the Chrismation of an adult, one has potential marriage impediment. For any questions regarding, please see Fr. Stavros)

*A date cannot be set for marriage unless one of the parties getting married, NOT THE PARENTS, contact Fr. Stavros, who sets all the dates for weddings. In order for the date to be locked in, one person in the couple has to come and meet with Fr. Stavros to go over the wedding procedures. Pre-Marital Counseling is also required for weddings at St. John the Baptist. There is a two-fold requirement. One is that the couples need to meet with Fr. Stavros for two sessions. Second, the Metropolis of Atlanta requires couples participate in a Saturday regional premarital counseling seminar. Contact the Metropolis of Atlanta or visit the Family Life Ministry section of their website for dates in 2018. For people who wish to be married at St. John the Baptist who are not members anywhere, a substantial fee is imposed for use of the church, thereby encouraging all those who wish to have the sacraments of the church to be members in good standing. Also, the Koumbaro/Koumbara for a wedding must be in good sacramental standing. If they are not members of St. John the Baptist, they must bring a letter from their parish priest saying that they are in good sacramental standing. Otherwise, there will be a fee imposed as well.*

## Baptisms

A person who wishes to sponsor a candidate for Baptism or Chrismation must be an Orthodox Christian in good standing and a supporting member of an Orthodox parish. A person may not serve as a Godparent if the Church has not blessed his or her marriage or, if civilly divorced, he or she has not been

granted an ecclesiastical divorce, or for any other reason he or she is not in communion with the Orthodox Church. Baptisms may not be performed from during Holy Week, or on any of the Great Feastdays of the Lord.

*For people who wish to have a child baptized at St. John who are not members anywhere, a fee is imposed for use of the church, thereby encouraging all those who wish to have the sacraments of the church to be members in good standing. Also, the Godparent must be in good sacramental standing. If they are not members of St. John, they must bring a letter from their parish priest saying that they are in good sacramental standing. Otherwise, there will be a fee imposed as well.*

## Funerals

Funeral services are permitted on any day of the year, except for Sunday and Holy Friday, unless permission is granted by the Metropolitan. If you wish to have a service outside of the church, it will not be a funeral service. It will either be a Memorial Service or a Trisagion. A funeral service must be in an Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church does not allow for cremation. This is based on Ezekiel's vision of a valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37) and St. Paul's writing that the Body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19) and thus must be treated with dignity even in death and allowed to return to its elements naturally. The Orthodox Church will not allow a funeral service for someone who has been cremated. *Many people have mentioned in their will their desire to be cremated. Please discuss this with Fr. Stavros if there are any questions regarding this, and make the appropriate changes, because Fr. Stavros cannot grant oikonomia (dispensation) and do a funeral service if someone has been cremated.*

Additionally, eulogies offered in the church at a funeral service may only be offered by an ordained Orthodox clergyman. If members of the family wish to offer testimonials, these may be done at the funeral home the night before the funeral or at the makaria luncheon.

## Memorials

Memorial services may not be chanted from the Saturday or Lazarus through the Sunday of Thomas, or on any Feastday of the Lord or any Feastday of the Theotokos. We customarily do not offer memorial services on the 1st Sunday of Lent (Sunday of Orthodoxy) or the 3rd Sunday of Lent (Sunday of the Holy Cross), or the Sunday after September 14. In 2018, the Sundays when NO memorial services will be offered include: January 7, February 25 (Sunday of Orthodoxy), March 11 (Sunday of the Holy Cross); March 25 (Annunciation); April 1 (Palm Sunday); April 8 (Pascha); April 15 (Sunday of St. Thomas); May 27 (Pentecost); September 16 (Sunday after Holy Cross Day).

*Memorial Services may be scheduled through the church office.*

*You must contact the church at least two weeks in advance of when you want the service. Memorial services for 40 days and one year will be done on the Sunday closest to the appropriate date. All other memorials will be done on the designated Memorial Sunday each month. Please let the office know when you call or email whether you will be providing your own kolyva or whether you wish for the Philoptochos to provide. If the Philoptochos does the kolyva, there is a \$75 charge for this service-checks may be made payable to "St. John Philoptochos." Also, please send the church office all of the names you wish to have commemorated at the memorial service, and how many pews, if any, you would like reserved for your family.*

## Organ Donation

The Orthodox Church allows the faithful to donate organs after death if they wish.

## Forty-Day Blessings

Forty-Day Blessings for babies may be done on any day. The prayers of this service connect the 40 day churching of the baby with the mother of the child (if she is Orthodox) receiving Communion. Thus, if this service is offered on a Sunday, Father Stavros schedules them at 9:30 a.m., prior to the Divine Liturgy, so that the new mother can receive Holy Communion in the context of the Divine Liturgy.

## Some Guidelines Unique to our Parish

*In line with the guidelines from the Archdiocese provided above, we also have some guidelines for things in our parish that are helpful to review as we start the new year. The Parish Council has adopted what is below with the approval of Fr. Stavros. Most of these guidelines are old, though a few of them are new. For the "Good of the Order" at our church, we ask that everyone cooperate in following these guidelines. Please read these over carefully and if you have any questions, please address them to the Parish Council or Father Stavros.*

## PROCEDURES FOR THE OFFICE:

- The deadline for submitting information for the weekly bulletin is Wednesday at 12:00 p.m. All submissions must be sent electronically to [officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com](mailto:officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com).
- The deadline for the Messenger shall be the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month. As a cost cutting measure we reduced the size of the Messenger, so no full page flyers will be put in. All submissions must be sent electronically via email. Simply send in your event information to [officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com](mailto:officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com).
- Events may be advertised a maximum of two months prior to the event date for *The Messenger* and four weeks prior for the bulletin.

• **Open Office Hours and Monday - Friday 10:00 a.m. - 2:00p.m. Or By Appointment Only.** If you wish to see Fr. Stavros or the office staff, you must make an appointment. Also, when meeting with the office staff, or when meeting with Father Stavros on a non-pastoral matter, please be efficient with your time. There is lots of work that goes on in the office and constant interruptions make for little progress. Planned appointments are fine, they are not interruptions.

## FUNDRAISERS/HALL USAGE:

- All fundraisers and events by ministries or church affiliated groups should be scheduled at the August calendar meeting. For those, not scheduled at this meeting; please submit your event request to the Parish Council; via the office email [officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com](mailto:officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com)
- **Please clean up the kitchen after your event.** No food, trays, utensils, etc., should be left on the counters, sink, or drying rack. Please throw away all trash and wash all dirty dishes, trays, etc. and return to the appropriate places.
- All sales of tickets and other fundraising items, shall take place at designated tables immediately outside of the foyer and in the center of the hall. These tables will be preset for your use. Our foyer has become increasingly crowded and we need to maintain clearance per fire code.
- All contracts for caterers, bands, etc., made in the church name that obligate the church for payment shall be submitted and signed by the Parish Council.

## COFFEE HOURS/FUNDRAISERS:

- Our time after Sunday Liturgy provides fellowship that we all look forward to and appreciate. This time is often a mix of simple to more elaborate coffee time and also includes fundraisers and more formal luncheons. As we begin a new year we would like to reiterate some procedures and policies. We have a calendar meeting the second Sunday in August to establish the schedule and luncheons that will be considered fund raisers during the year. Each Ministry is asked to give input before this schedule is finalized.
- The Parish Council discussed that each Ministry should determine what they bring to Coffee Hour without strict guidelines. With the end goal that our parishioners should not be pressured or asked to give additional money just to receive a cup of coffee and cookie. Luncheons/Fundraisers fall into a different category and will be published in the monthly calendar.
- Additionally, when a Ministry needs to setup a table for a special purpose - Information/Sales - **The ministry must call the church office to reserve a table during coffee hour.**
- Lastly any Ministry that wants to charge for a lunch (not on the original schedule) will need to get approval from the Parish Council by sending written notice prior to the monthly Parish Council Meeting.



## AHEPA FAMILY NEWS JANUARY 2018



THE AHEPA FAMILY OF TAMPA HOPES THAT EVERYONE HAD A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND WISHES EVERYONE A HAPPY NEW YEAR WITH HEALTH, HAPPINESS, PEACE AND PROSPERITY FOR ALL.

### AHEPA FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP DINNER AND CHRISTMAS SOCIAL



On December 15, 2017 the AHEPA FAMILY hosted the annual **SCHOLARSHIP AND CHRISTMAS SOCIAL DINNER** at the Floridan Hotel, once again awarding scholarships to the young members of our community. Scholarship recipients included **Stephanie Owens, Nicholas George Alsina, Karter Fitzgerald Lenardos, Corinna Maria Robinson and Savvas Christou Ferekides.**

The Ahepa Family Scholarship Program began in 2010 and this is the eighth year that we have awarded scholarships to worthy students of our community. To date the Ahepa Family has awarded 35 scholarships worth over \$40,000.

**EPIPHANY EVENTS IN THE TAMPA BAY AREA** Epiphany is a holiday which is celebrated throughout the Tampa Bay Area with many visitors joining us for the festivities. The following are some of the events that are scheduled.

**January 4** - Epiphany Golf Tournament at the Wentworth Golf Club in Tarpon Springs.

**January 5** - AHEPA Annual Epiphany Banquet Innsbrook Resort in Tarpon Springs

**January 6** - Church Services & Epiphany Procession - Orthos 8am, Blessing of Waters 12 p.m.

St. Nicholas Cathedral. Epiphany Glendi to follow at St. Nicholas Community Center Tarpon Springs

**January 9** - Greek Heritage Hockey Night at the Amalie Arena Tampa

**WALK TO END ALZHEIMERS** Ahepa and Daughters of Penelope participated in the "WALK TO END ALZHEIMERS" again this year. The event was led by Maria Zabetakis and the Daughters of Penelope. They raised over \$1,000 for the cause to end Alzheimer's as part of the Hillsborough WALK.

**AHEPA SERVICE DOGS FOR WARRIORS – Fund Raising Success** Ahepa Lycurgus Chapter 12 raised funds to contribute to the **SERVICE DOGS FOR WARRIORS PROJECT** The program was presented at the National Convention and was received with great emotion and pride. The program raises much needed funds to purchase service dogs for wounded warriors suffering from PTSD, 22 veterans die every day from suicide as a result of PTSD. The program has already purchased the first dog from AHEPA Chapter 517 and the dog's name is AHEPA! Ahepa Chapter 12 raised funds for this national project. We are proud to report that we raised \$1000 for this project and have sent a check in that amount to the project..



Become a member of AHEPA or Daughters of Penelope today...

**New Policy on Community Service Hours** - Effective immediately, it is going to be Fr. Stavros' policy to no longer sign community service hours for service in the altar, choir and Greek dancing. Service in the altar and choir take place at a time when one should be in church anyway. They don't represent any extra time, nor do they serve the greater community. They serve our church community. Greek dancing is done for fun, not for service. Hours worked at the Festival (not dancing) can be counted toward community service, as a portion of our festival proceeds benefit charities in the greater community.

**Also, a reminder about letters of recommendation** - Please submit requests for letters of recommendation to Fr. Stavros or Charlie at least two weeks before they are due. Please also submit a resume with extracurricular activities, where the letter needs to be mailed, what college one is planning to attend (or is attending), course of study and career objective. These are all helpful when it comes to writing letters.

# A Tax-Saving Way to Help St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

*If you are 70½ years old or older...See Your Generosity in Action*

## Join the St. John Legacy Society

If you are 70½ years old or older, you can take advantage of a simple way to benefit St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church and receive tax benefits in return. You can give up to \$100,000 from your IRA directly to St. John without having to pay income taxes on the money. This law no longer has an expiration date so you are free to pay your annual stewardship gifts to St. John this year and well into the future by making a gift through your IRA.

## Why Consider This Gift?

- Your gift will be put to use today, allowing you to see the difference your donation is making.
- You pay no income taxes on the gift. The transfer generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so you benefit even if you do not itemize your deductions.
- If you have not yet taken your required minimum distribution for the year, your IRA charitable rollover gift can satisfy all or part of that requirement.

If you include St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in your plans, please use our legal name and Federal Tax ID # 59-1170684. Additionally, please contact Fr. Stavros at 813-876-8830 ext. 103, (email [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com)) or call Debbie Gavalas at 813-505-8901 so that we may properly thank you and include you as a founding member of the St. John Legacy Society.

## Thank You to all of Our Friends!

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

Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL  
Bessie Bliziotes - Palm Cost, FL  
Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL  
Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL  
William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL  
Lillian Thomas - Highland, IN  
Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL  
Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD  
Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA

**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 the Baptist or afford membership rights and responsibilities, but gives one who is a member elsewhere, an opportunity to make a gesture of financial support to our parish.

## Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

**Friend of St. John the Baptist:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$200 \_\_\_\_\_ Other

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

# Has Sunday Lost Its True Meaning?

By Msgr. Anthony Czarnecki

We all agree that we experience the celebration of Sunday in a quite different way than when we were growing up. The day's character seemed quieter, calmer, and slower. On this special day of the week, there were no screeching chain saws, mowers, or leaf blowers piercing the serene atmosphere in the neighborhood. Cars zoomed by less frequently than during the regular weekdays. Stores were closed or nearly empty. Sports games yielded to higher pursuits. Whether it was driven by deep religious motivation ("Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy" Dt 5:12) or a purely social need for rest or family time together, nevertheless the relaxed pace of Sunday was readily recognizable. Even those individuals who did not practice the Christian faith still set Sunday for family, friends, and refueling physically and mentally. The special character of Sunday is no longer clearly visible, which is why it is worth revisiting its meaning and renewing its centrality in our schedules.

By divine commandment, the Jewish people set aside the Sabbath for rest and gatherings devoted to remembering God's covenant. There was a mixture between austerity and festivity, a tension between prohibition and liberation. Sunday eventually emerged as the paramount day of worship for Christians. The early Christians did not neglect to meet together (at sunrise!). They yearned to come together for the public worship of the Triune God and to encourage each other in the faith (Heb 10: 24-25). It marks the day that Jesus resurrected. Every Sunday was and continues to be a "little Easter" where Christians celebrate, as Saint Pope John Paul II reminded us in his Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*, "Christ's victory over sin and death, the fulfillment in him of the first creation and the dawn of 'the new creation.'"

The Emperor Constantine in the fourth century, for reasons debated by historians, enshrined Sunday as a day of rest for his empire, thereby cementing the Christian practice of gathering together for worship and fellowship on Sundays. Throughout Christian history, love for God is seen as having both a private, internal aspect and also a communal, outward dimension. Public worship cannot be neglected for Jesus promised: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20). In time, the liturgy on Sunday became seen as fulfilling the moral command of the Old Covenant.

Fast forwarding from the early Christians to the early settlers in Massachusetts, it is interesting that the Puritans were especially intent on linking Sunday with the Sabbath observance. The authorities of the Massachusetts Bay Colony made sure that the legal structure supported their conviction. Beginning in 1648, the law said: "Whoever shall prophane the Lord's Day by doing any servill worke shall be fined or whipped." All New England states had laws restricting various activities on Sundays in order to keep people focused on spiritual pursuits. Many today still remember the so-called Blue Laws, enacted by the Puritan settlers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and largely in force in some form until the 1980s.

The point isn't to complain about how societal norms have changed. Christians, after all, place their hope in the coming of the reign of God so we cannot be pall bearers of the past or perpetual mourners of bygone eras. We examine the past so that we can look at the present with a greater maturity and understand it with greater depth. Sunday has not only a religious dimension but is also for our common good. Material preoccupation which contemporary civilization favors; disregards spiritual, moral, and cultural values, and at the same time it negatively impacts humanitarian interests. In this scenario the family is affected and children are deprived of the highest values. The point here is that we, as a society, must

keep the real meaning of Sunday in our collective memory and common practice because a day of rest and recollection orders our lives rightly. It benefits us all to have a day set apart.

Ironically, a century ago only the head of the household worked to earn a wage for his family, but today both spouses work countless hours and still have difficulty paying the bills despite statistically having fewer children than in the past. Technology, which was supposed to lessen our loads and make life easier, seems to have made our schedules more complicated. When Sunday becomes just another day to do chores on a list, the spiritual life of Christians suffers, and the social fabric of the whole community begins unraveling because everyone is endlessly preoccupied with fulfilling some of their own egocentric needs and wants.

Even in countries where Christians are a single-digit minority, Sunday continues to be recognized as a day of rest. If places such as China, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Turkey, Thailand, and others can keep one day different, so can we with our rich historical, social, and theological heritage treat Sunday more than just the end of the week?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it nicely: "God's action is the model for human action. Evolution of social and economical trends influences human behavior and eventually the way we celebrate Sunday. If God 'rested and was refreshed' on the seventh day, human beings too ought to 'rest' and should let others, especially the poor, 'be refreshed' (Ex. 31:17). The Sabbath brings everyday work to a halt and provides a respite. It is a day of protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money (cf. Neh. 13:15-22; 2 Chr. 36:21)." When we rest—rather than running non-stop like money-making machines—we are more authentically human and, thereby, more divine. No man or community can continually work without rest. Sunday celebration relieves the person from many demands and opens a space for relaxation, regeneration, and enables a person to question the sense and orientation of his life.

Sunday for Christians is the preeminent day of strengthening our friendship with God, especially by attending a liturgy at church. The Lord's Day should be a day of rest—not total inactivity, but of spiritual exercises. Step away from the dizzying programs on television, and meditate on a passage from Sacred Scripture you heard in church or read another spiritually-beneficial text. Refrain from toilsome labor so that you can step back from a hectic routine and look at everything around you through a contemplative lens. Admire, for example, the beauty of nature with "a gaze full of joyous delight" (see John Paul II *Dies Domini* [*The Lord's Day*]). Let Sunday be a day of visiting the resting place of your loved ones who have already passed to the heavenly homeland. Let Sunday be a day of faith-filled service and good deeds. For at least that one day each week, step aside from consumerism and materialism, and—both communally and individually—reflect upon the things that are beyond any price. Let Sunday be a day of thanksgiving for all the blessings God has bestowed on your life. Let Sunday be the preeminent day of praising your creator, redeemer, and sustainer. Let Sunday be a day of family gatherings and personal encounters with friends to recall the good times and the bad—and how God's providential care has somehow always been there. Briefly speaking, Sunday should be a time when we reflect how to be more than to have more.

*Rev. Msgr. Anthony Czarnecki is the pastor of St. Joseph Basilica in Webster, MA.*

# Major Differences Between Orthodoxy and Catholicism

By. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

I am often asked the question of what makes us different from the Catholics. There have been entire books and complex theological articles written about this. I will try to answer this question in a way that is easy to understand.

In the beginning there was one church—the one, holy, catholic (not Roman Catholic) church. The word “catholic” means “universal.” Jesus did not found a fractured or divided church, but ONE church. The church was initially centered in Rome, as the Roman Empire was the center of the world. For the first three centuries after Christ, the church was mostly an underground church, because it was a persecuted church.

In the year 313, the Emperor Constantine, through the Edict of Milan, made the Christian church the legal religion of the Roman Empire. By the early 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Roman Empire was in decline. In the year 325, Constantine decided to move the capital of the empire from Rome to present day Istanbul, Turkey, which he renamed Constantinople.

In 325, the Roman Empire ended and the Byzantine Empire began. Rome was still a powerful city. It still was a major center for commerce, trade, government and religion. However, following 325, there was a rivalry with the Byzantine Empire on many fronts, including on the religious front. In the year 325, the First Ecumenical Council was convened in Nicea, near Constantinople. Representatives from all the churches were present, including from Rome. This Council drafted the Nicene Creed (later edited in 381) that was adopted as the statement of faith of the Christian Church. Over the centuries a phrase was added to the Creed by the Roman Church—the *Filioque*—Instead of saying “*And the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of life, who proceeds from the Father,*” the Latins added “*who proceeds from the Father AND THE SON.*” This may seem like a small and innocuous change, but it represented a monumental difference, because not the basic confession of faith between the two churches was different. The Bishop of Rome also fought to remain first among the Bishops, a title that had been given to the Patriarch of Constantinople. These two things led to the Great Schism in 1054, when the two church excommunicated each other.

These are the two chief doctrinal issues that separate our two churches—the difference in the Creed, and who is in charge. Other doctrinal issues include the immaculate conception of Mary and the infallibility of the Pope, two doctrines that came into being in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

There are a lot of differences in practices:

1. Orthodox used leavened bread in the Eucharist; Catholics use unleavened wafers
2. In the Orthodox Liturgy, the priest faces in the same direction as the faithful. In the Catholic church, the priests are on the opposite side of the altar and face the people.
3. The fasting requirements are different
4. Orthodox priests may marry, Catholic priests may not.
5. There is a sense of Catholic “guilt” brought on by the theology of St. Augustine. Thus, confession in the Catholic church is often seen as punitive rather than redemptive. In the Orthodox church, confession is meant to be more therapeutic than punitive.
6. And there are many others

Now, despite these differences in doctrine and practice, there are many more similarities. First, the two churches share the same first thousand year history, including all the pre-schism saints. Both churches are liturgical and Eucharistic, meaning that celebrating the Eucharist is the central act of the church. This is not the case in most Protestant Churches. Both churches are sacramental—they believe in regular participation in Communion and Confession. Both churches require ordained clergy to celebrate the sacraments. Both churches are Hierarchical (as opposed to congregational) in structure. Each church utilizes a lectionary system of reading the scripture, and both have practices that are universally done in their respective churches. Both churches would classify as “traditional” and both can make the claim of being the original Christian Church. It is interesting to note that the Catholic Church recognizes marriages performed in the Orthodox Church, and would allow an Orthodox Christian to partake in the Eucharist. They do not recognize Protestant sacraments nor permit Protestants to the Eucharist.

It should be noted, however, that the Orthodox do not permit intercommunion with even the Catholics, meaning we do not permit Catholics to receive Communion in our church, nor do we allow our members to commune in the Catholic Church. Also, the Orthodox recognize only marriages in the Orthodox Church.

In conclusion, there is a healthy dialogue between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Communication (though not Communion) between the two churches resumed in 1965 and continues to this day. The Pope and the Patriarch exchange visits to Rome and Constantinople twice per year, and they have also traveled on other occasions together. Our parish gathers once per year with the Christ the King Roman Catholic Church for a joint prayer service and this is encouraged and done in many areas of our Archdiocese. Even though our churches remain separate, there is indeed a lot we share in common, as well as a lot of good we can do for the common good.

# ~ January 2018 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
	<b>1</b> St. Basil - New Year's Day Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>2</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>3</b> Royal Hours 8:45 a.m.	<b>4</b> Young at Heart 11:30 a.m.	<b>5 **</b> Eve of Epiphany Liturgy 9:00 a.m. Blessing of Waters 10:15 a.m.	<b>6</b> Epiphany Liturgy in Tarpon 9:30 a.m. Great Vespers for St. John the Baptist 6:30 p.m.	
<b>7 Feast of St. John</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Metropolitan Alexios Officiating Feast Day Luncheon	<b>8</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>9</b> WBS 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>10 **</b>	<b>11</b> Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	<b>12 **</b> HDF →	<b>13</b> Sunday School Mid-year retreat	
<b>14</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Vasilopita Sunday YAL Maids of Athena	<b>15</b> MLK Day Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>16</b> WBS 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>17 **</b> St. Anthony Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>18</b> Sts. Athanasios and Cyril Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	<b>19 **</b> HOPE/JOY Movie Night 6 p.m.	<b>20</b> Community Outreach Gasparilla Kids Parade Parking	
<b>21</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday GOYA AHEPA/Daughters	<b>22</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m.	<b>23</b> WBS 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>24 **</b>	<b>25</b> St. Gregory the Theologian Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Adult Greek School 6:00 p.m.	<b>26 **</b> Clearwater Winter Event	<b>27</b> Gasparilla Adult Parade Parking Clearwater Winter Event	
<b>28</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Clearwater Winter Event	<b>29</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m.	<b>30</b> WBS @ church Three Hierarchs Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>31</b>	<b>Clothing Collection - Community Outreach - during month of January</b>  Ticket sales for Apokreatiko Dance 1/14-1/28  WBS - Women's Bible Study SBS - South Tampa Bible Study			

## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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

officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com

www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

NONPROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE

**PAID**

TAMPA, FL

PERMIT NO. 461

## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

### *Timetable of Services*

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

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

#### **Parish Priest** Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-394-1038 (Cell)

frstav@gmail.com

#### **Pastoral Assistant** Charlie Hambos

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

Charlie.hambos@gmail.com

#### **Parish Council**

Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867

Mike Xenick, VP 813-340-8737

Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898

Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747

George Chagaris 727-420-1920

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947

Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352

Catherine Mitseas 813-571-0658

Ryan Rindone 704-564-2046

Aris Rogers, II 813-309-5525

Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534

#### **Office Staff**

Office 813-876-8830

officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com

Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper

debstjohnntpa@gmail.com fax:813-443-4899

#### **Adult Greek School**

Magda Myer 813-909-2327

#### **AHEPA**

Gus Paras, President 813-254-6980

#### **Altar Angels**

Engie Halkias 813-932-5859

Sia Blankenship 813-968-8855

#### **Basketball**

Perry Katsamakias 516-403-3118

Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352

#### **Bible Study**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### **Chanter**

Nick Andreadakis 813-516-6081

#### **Choir**

Artie Palios, Director 813-831-1294

Ruth Losovitz , Organist 727-688-2782

#### **Community Outreach**

Betty Katherine Katsamakias 813-468-1596

#### **Dance Group**

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

Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347

Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963

Parea, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136

Anna Maria Bavaro 732-239-9085

Panigyri, Vanessa Aviles 813-221-2194

#### **Daughters of Penelope**

Maria Zabetakis, President 813-748-7709

#### **Finance Committee**

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

#### **Food Pantry**

Anetta Alexander 813-758-2689

#### **Gasparilla Parking**

John Kokkas 727-992-4615

#### **GOYA**

Maria Koutroumanis 813-245-3854

Kara Katzaras 863-669-6739

#### **Hope/Joy**

Debbie Nicklow 813-690-0671

#### **Junior Olympics**

Dean Koutroumanis 813-624-4620

#### **MOMS**

Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862

Lindsey Skourellos 813-503-7845

#### **OCF**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### **Oratorical Festival**

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

#### **Philoptochos**

Lisa Alsina 813-728-1094

#### **Small Group Bible Study**

Men, Mike Palios 813-523-0346

South, Bessie Palios 813-523-0347

Women, Debbie Kavouklis 813-258-5571

#### **Strategic Planning**

Marc Edquid 813-422-8940

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

#### **Stewardship**

Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747

Pete Trakas 813-505-2193

#### **Sunday School**

Vickie Peckham 813-406-5626

#### **Usher**

Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

#### **Visitation Committee**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### **Welcome Ministry**

Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

#### **Young Adult**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### **Young at Heart**

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947

Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

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

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