

THE MESSENGER

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

March 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

Father Stavros' Message Holy Week Words

It is always hard to write an article for *The Messenger* when Holy Week is the first week in April. I am always torn whether to write the Holy Week message for the March *Messenger* when you get it a month early, or write in April when you might not get around to reading it until we are already in Holy Week. I have opted for the first choice, so even though I'm writing this message before Lent has even begun, I'm writing a message about Holy Week. I suppose that this is appropriate in some way, because our Lenten journey points us to Holy Week. No one sets out on a trip without a destination in mind. And even though our Lenten journey will have just begun when you receive this, it is worthy to spend some time focusing us on the end of our journey. Plus, you have the whole month of March to plan ahead for this one special week of the year.

As you know by now, our one-word theme for our church this year is "Engaged." Many of us have chosen one word to focus on this year in our personal lives. The same is true for our ministries. With one month to go until Holy Week, I want to focus on six words that summarize Holy Week with the challenge to each of you to choose one word for your Holy Week journey.

There—This word can be taken in two ways. The first is obviously for YOU to be THERE, at the services. You won't get anything out of the Holy Week experience if you

are not THERE. The more often you can get THERE to services, the more you will likely get out of the Holy Week experience.

However, the other way to understand this word in the context of Holy Week is that through the Holy Week experience, you are THERE. You relive the events of the week of Christ's Passion. The services are designed to help transport us THERE, to Jerusalem in the year 29 A.D. We will reenact all of the scenes of Holy Week through 18 beautiful services. We'll see the children waving Palms on Palm Sunday. We'll listen quietly to the teachings of Jesus on Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday. We'll be washed through Holy Unction on Holy Wednesday. We will witness the Crucifixion on Holy Thursday, see the entombment on Good Friday and discover the empty tomb on Holy Saturday night. The colors, the sights, the sounds, the tones—these will also serve to transport us THERE.

Journey—Holy Week is a JOURNEY. I know when I open my Holy Week Book for the first time on Palm Sunday night, 501 pages of service text seems very daunting (and Saturday of Lazarus, Palm Sunday morning and the Pre-Sanctified Liturgies of Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday and Holy Wednesday are not even in it). Every year, Holy Week seems to begin as a slow march. And by Wednesday night, the JOURNEY picks up steam and momentum builds to a

glorious ending. I have heard many times in my life that the JOURNEY is as important as the destination. Think of running a race. What meaning will the race have if you only run the last few yards before the finish line? You won't even break a sweat. The runners who have toiled the whole race truly feel a sense of euphoria when they reach the finish line. The Holy Week JOURNEY works in the same way. It feels a lot like a marathon. There is lots of cheering at the end, but some of those miles feel mundane, even lonely. The joy of Holy Week is not only in the finish but in the JOURNEY to the finish.

Learn—Why do we do the same journey year after year? Doesn't it get boring, the same and the same? I don't think so. One of the reasons I don't believe this journey gets old is because every year, as we are making it, I LEARN something new, about the faith, about the Lord, and about myself. An elderly neighbor once asked me to help her plant a garden. She had this spot in her yard that got the perfect amount of sun and shade, making it an ideal location for a garden. The problem was that the soil in that area was full of rocks. So, I grabbed a few buckets and started emptying the rocks. First the big ones, those were easy to remove. Then I moved medium size ones, then the small ones, and after that, the pebbles, the smallest ones. I never did get all the pebbles removed, I probably would still be there removing the smallest impurities from that soil.

Every time I make the Holy Week journey, I LEARN something I didn't know. Yes, I believe I mastered the basic story many years ago, but there are new nuances, deeper layers of meaning, and greater challenges in applying what I've learned to my life, so there is also something new to be taken away from the journey. Part of what brings me back with such joy each year is the opportunity to LEARN something. I'm not likely to schedule 45 hours (the total amount of service time during Holy Week) of learning in my life in a given week or a given month. But when the calendar provides it for me, when it picks the week and the times of the services, well it is easy to take advantage of the opportunity to not just be present but to LEARN while I'm there.

Refocus—When I think of the word REFOCUS I think of a camera lens. If you take a bunch of pictures with different backgrounds, distances and levels of light, it will be necessary to REFOCUS the camera often. Life changes year to year, so does our world, and so we can't just focus our spiritual life one time for all time. I'm a much different person than I was twenty years ago. Our world is much different. Holy Week is a chance to REFOCUS on Christ given the changes in the world and in our own lives. Much of the time all of us, myself included, do many things without focus. Much of life is repetition. I don't necessarily "focus" while I'm mowing the lawn or folding the laundry. Sometimes I have a hard time focusing on other things that are "routine," including even prayer or the Divine Liturgy. Holy Week is a

chance to REFOCUS and to sharpen our focus on Christ, on salvation, on repentance, humility, sacrifice, love, joy, hope and other things which we all tend to forget about in our busy everyday lives. All of the things we need to live a successful Christian life are found in Holy Week—theology (what we believe), values (how we are to live), and salvation (the hoped for destination of every human life). Spending time each year reviewing these things REFOCUSES the lenses of our eyes, our hearts and our souls.

Recommit—At the end of Holy Week, when we've finished the journey, when the services are over, and we've broken the fast, when we go back to work on the day of Pascha, we are faced with two choices. Do we RECOMMIT ourselves to Christ, to taking our Christian life up a notch, or do we revert to where we were pre-Holy Week, with Holy Week just something we've checked off on our yearly calendar? When we receive the Light on Pascha, is it an empty ritual, or a jumping off point to greater commitment? Is our thought more of a "thankfully that is over," or "Lord, I love You even more, I want to serve You even more?"

I think we undersell the concept of RECOMMITMENT. We have to renew insurance policies, driver's licenses, and home warranties. But how often do we think of renewing our commitment to Christ, or to our marriage, or to our job, or to a friend—how often do we actually state some words of RECOMMITMENT to Christ, our spouse, a friend, a job or something else? The fact is that we don't for the most part. Years pass and we don't say to our spouse "I'm so glad I married you, let's take our relationship up to another level," or to our child, "I'm so glad I had you, let's take up our relationship to another level," or to Christ, "I'm so thankful for all of Your blessings, let's take up our relationship to another level." I hope that as we pray, sing and make our way through Holy Week, you will say to Christ, "I believe more," "I will do more," "I will love You and others more," "I will serve more."

Which brings us back to the one word resolution for our parish—**Engaged**. It is possible to attend Holy Week services and not be engaged in them. It is obviously very possible to not attend them at all. However, the best Holy Week journey is the one where we are engaged, where we pray together, sing along with the choir, listen attentively, put ourselves THERE in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, where we make the JOURNEY, where we FOCUSED, where we eagerly RELEARN and where we RECOMMIT ourselves to Christ.

At the beginning of the Triodion (pre-Lent), I had a parishioner ride a stationary bike on the solea. The bike had a collar around the back wheel so that one could pedal and the bike would go nowhere. I said that this is a metaphor for the Christian life in many circumstances. We pedal but feel we are going nowhere. During Lent and Holy Week, we pedal

harder, only to realize at the end that we are just more tired, and still haven't gone anywhere. The reason that the bike didn't go anywhere was that the rear tire was not ENGAGED with the ground. Biking harder wasn't going to change that. Removing the collar is what can change that.

Merely coming to the Holy Week services won't change anything in your life. Being ENGAGED in the JOURNEY can change everything. If you hear the words of Scripture not only with your ears but your heart, if you imagine what it must have been like for Christ to carry that cross for YOU, if you allow yourself to be washed with the oil of Holy Unction, if you gaze at the cross with humility, if you receive the Light of Christ with renewed hope, then you can carry something with you long after Holy Week is over.

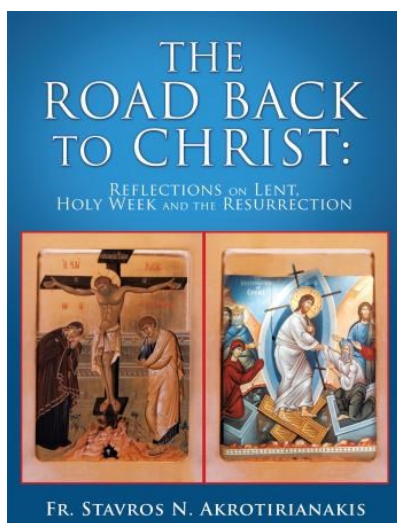
Please read through this issue of *The Messenger* in early March so that you can plan early for the kind of Holy Week journey you'd like to experience. And then read it again in late March before we begin Holy Week, so that again you'll see the roadmap of the JOURNEY so that knowing where the road is going, you can ENGAGE your "bike" with the road, so that when the JOURNEY is over, you won't be tired from pedaling nowhere but you'll have made progress toward the destination and be RECOMMITTED and REFOCUSSED on making greater strides not only during this one week of the year, but to be ENGAGED for the rest of it as well. I wish you a blessed remainder of the Great Lent, a meaningful Holy Week and a joyous Pascha!

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

Clarifying a comment I made about Holy Communion-

Several weeks ago in a sermon, I commented on a question I was asked recently about, "How late can I arrive at the Liturgy and still receive Communion?" I answered that ideally we are all at the Divine Liturgy from the very beginning. We should certainly be there for the reading of the Gospel. And most definitely we need to be there to recite the Creed. If we come in after the Creed, we should NOT receive Communion. There are people who are walking in at the Lord's Prayer and are then receiving Communion. This is NOT CORRECT. This is a difficult question to answer—Receiving Communion is important. So is coming to church on time. We get our children to their baseball games on time. We get them to school on time. We get to the movies on time. So, why wouldn't we get to church on time? My point in making that statement several weeks ago was that I think it is inappropriate for people who walk into church during the Lord's Prayer to receive Holy Communion. Receiving Holy Communion, receiving the Body and the Blood of Christ is an honor, a privilege, and an awesome responsibility. It blows away a sports game, a movie, school, job and anything else. If we afford sports and movies the effort to be on time, it really makes no sense not to honor the Lord by arriving to the Divine Liturgy on time. The Divine Liturgy reveals God's Kingdom in the present, NOW. We should be in church from the opening line—Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, NOW and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.



The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection is now on sale and available in our bookstore and online!

It is a series of daily reflections to be read from the beginning of Triodion, continuing on through Great Lent, Holy Week and the Pascha season, ending on the Sunday of All Saints (This year June 3). If you haven't picked up your copy, it's not too late to start. This book costs \$18.99 and all monies taken in at the bookstore go to the church.

Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 1100 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 3 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 and ask him to add you. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email Charlie or follow the link at the bottom of the daily emails to do so. If you want to forward to a friend, please use the "forward to a friend" option rather than simply forwarding from your email.

Called to be Disciples:

With Confidence and without Fear of Condemnation

A SIX-WEEK LENTEN STUDY TO HELP US ANSWER THE CALL TO BE DISCIPLES

*Join us to better understand the call to be disciples and walk as Christians
with more engagement, confidence, and conviction.*

Weekly Topics:

Wednesday, February 21
Wednesday, February 28

Called to be Disciples and the Awe of the Lord
The Cost of Discipleship - The Distorted Image and Total
Surrender

Wednesday, March 7

The Rewards of Discipleship - Ten Rewards You Can Reap
Today

Wednesday, March 14
Wednesday, March 21
Wednesday, March 28

Prayer: Abiding in God's Love
Living Out Our Calling: Giving to God What Belongs to God
With Confidence and Without Fear of Condemnation

Each Wednesday evening schedule:

6:00 p.m.	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
7:15 p.m.	Lenten Dinner (provided by one of our ministries)
7:45 p.m.	Presentation by Fr. Stavros
8:15 p.m.	Small group discussion
8:45 p.m.	Concluding Remarks and Closing Prayer



We will stream the
presentations live
and the videos will
be available on our
website.

**Childcare will be provided at no cost. Please contact the church office with the name and
age of each child so we can properly plan.*

Liturgical Schedule for March 2018



Friday, March 2

Salutations to the Virgin Mary—2nd Stanza 6:30 p.m.

We Live-Stream every service!
www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

Sunday, March 4

Second Sunday Lent—St. Gregory Palamas

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

Altar Boys: Captains Only

Ushers: John Christ, Byron Nenos, Chris Kavouklis

Welcome Ministry: Greeters: Helen Cauthorn, Kalliope Chagaris; Ambassador: Carole Fotopoulos;

Caller: Vickie Peckham; Getting Acquainted: Dwight Forde, Ewana Forde

Coffee Hour: Community Outreach/Food Pantry

Bookstore: Paulina Katsouli and Zhana Temelkova

Monday, March 5

Great Compline

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 7

Reading of the 9th Hour 5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Lenten Supper sponsored by the Small Group Bible Studies and the Discipleship Series to follow.

Friday, March 9

Salutations to the Virgin Mary—3rd Stanza 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 11

3rd Sunday of Lent—Veneration of the Holy Cross

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

Procession of the Holy Cross at the end of the Divine Liturgy

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John

Ushers: Tammy Christou, George Mitseas, Florin Patrasciou

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

Caller: Katherine Sakkis

Coffee Hour: AHEPA

Bookstore: Carole Fotopoulos



Monday, March 12

Great Compline

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 14

Reading of the 9th Hour 5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Lenten Supper sponsored by the AHEPA and the Discipleship Series to follow.

Friday, March 16

Salutations to the Virgin Mary—4th Stanza 6:30 p.m.

Fr. John Mamangakis from St. Nicholas in Fort Pierce will be our guest celebrant.

Sunday, March 18

4th Sunday of Lent—St. John of the Ladder

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

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew

Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, George Trimikliniotis, Peter Theophanous

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

Caller: Christene Worley

Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Bookstore: John Alexander and Anetta Alexander

Monday, March 19

Great Compline

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 21

Reading of the 9th Hour 5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Lenten Supper sponsored by the Sunday School and the Discipleship Series to follow.

Friday, March 23

Vigil of the Akathist

Akathist Hymn

6:30 p.m.

Divine Liturgy

8:15 p.m.

Sunday, March 25

Fifth Sunday of Lent—St. Mary of Egypt/Annunciation to the Virgin Mary

Orthros 8:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark

Ushers: Ron Myer, Jim Armstrong, John Alexander

Welcome Ministry: Greeters: Julie Palios, Tanya Robinson; Ambassador: Bessie Palios;

Caller: Betty Katsamakis

Coffee Hour: Greek Independence Day Program

Bookstore: Pam Irwin

Monday, March 26

Great Compline

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 28

Reading of the 9th Hour

5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy

6:00 p.m.

Lenten Supper sponsored by the YAL and the Discipleship Series to follow.

Saturday, March 31

Saturday of Lazarus

Orthros

8:30 a.m.

Service of the Proskomide

9:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy

10:00 a.m.

Pan-Orthodox Lenten Vespers Services

Second Sunday of Lent, March 4	St. George Serbian Orthodox, Clearwater	5:00 p.m.
Third Sunday of Lent, March 11	St. Andrew OCA, New Port Richey	5:00 p.m.
Fourth Sunday of Lent, March 18	St. Nicholas Antiochian, Pinellas Park	5:00 p.m.
Fifth Sunday of Lent, March 25	St. Gregory the Theologian, Tampa	5:00 p.m.

Special Altar Boy Schedule for Lent

Friday, March 2	Salutations 6:30 p.m.	Anyone in GOYA may serve
Wednesday, March 7	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.	Savvas Ferekides and St. Mark
Friday, March 9	Salutations 6:30 p.m.	Harry Koutroumanis and St. Luke
Wednesday, March 14	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.	Dean Mitseas and St. Matthew
Friday, March 16	Salutations 6:30 p.m.	Karter Lenardos and St. John
Wednesday, March 21	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.	Harry Koutroumanis and St. Matthew
Friday, March 23	Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m.	Savvas Ferekides and St. Mark
Wednesday, March 28	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:30 p.m.	Dean Mitseas and St. Luke

Liturgical Notes for Great Lent 2018

Mondays of Lent - Great Compline

The service of Great Compline will be read on the following Mondays of Lent—March 5, March 12, March 19 and March 26. This service lasts about an hour and consists of Psalms and hymns of repentance. Service Books for this service will be available in the Narthex.

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

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

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

Wednesday, March 7 Small Group Bible Studies

Wednesday, March 21 Sunday School

Wednesday, March 14 AHEPA

Wednesday, March 28 YAL

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

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

This service lasts about an hour and is a series of prayers and devotions that invoke the intercessions of the Virgin Mary for our salvation. It will be held on March 2, March 9, March 16 and March 23. Service Books for this service will be available in the Narthex.

What We Celebrate on the Sundays of Great Lent

Sunday, March 4 - 2nd Sunday of Lent - St. Gregory Palamas

On the 2nd Sunday of Great Lent, which is called the “Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas,” we commemorate the memory of St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Salonica. He dedicated his life to Christ, even though he was raised in the royal palace of Constantinople. He withdrew to Mount Athos, where he lived an exemplary life of asceticism and scholarship. He defended the Faith against Garaam the Calabrian (who was against monasticism). He taught that divine grace is not created, but the uncreated energies of God are poured out through creation; otherwise, humanity could never have authentic communication with God. He was appointed Archbishop in 1349 and served with distinction; he died at the age of 63 and his relics rest in Salonica.

Sunday, March 11 - Third Sunday of Lent - Veneration of the Holy Cross

On the 3rd Sunday of Great Lent we celebrate the Veneration of the Cross; the Cross helps us to prepare for the Crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are not just witnessing from afar the passions of our Lord, but we participate in them. In the Synaxarion we read, “Through the forty-day fast, we too are in a way crucified, dying to the passions.” Our efforts to keep up with the Fast, through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, might take a toll over our bodies; we need help and encouragement, and the help and encouragement comes from the power of the Cross. In the middle of Great Lent, the Church gives its faithful a sign of victory, one that can bring strength to them in this time of fasting. The Sunday of the Holy Cross is one that brings everything into perspective, especially with the Gospel reading (Mark 8:34-9:1), the Lord saying to all His disciples: *If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?*”

Sunday, March 18 - Fourth Sunday of Lent - St. John Climacus

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

Friday, March 23 - Vigil of the Akathist

It is the tradition of the Orthodox Church (practiced in monasteries and in a few parishes) that the Akathist Hymn is celebrated as part of an all-night vigil, culminating in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. A Vigil is when more than one service is held in sequence. Father Stavros has always made it a practice to celebrate the Akathist Hymn (the fifth Friday of Lent) and to immediately follow it with a celebration of the Divine Liturgy. So, as we do each year, we will begin the Akathist Hymn at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, March 23, followed by the Divine Liturgy at 8:15 p.m., with both services concluding by 9:30 p.m. This will afford us the opportunity to pray the Divine Liturgy together in a more subdued atmosphere (and how often do we get to celebrate Liturgy at night in our church?) and to receive Holy Communion on this very special feast day. For those who wish to receive Holy Communion, please abstain from food after 2:00 p.m. on that Friday.

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

The Angel Gabriel came directly to the Virgin Mary and told her that she was going to have a child. Naturally, she was alarmed at first and asked many questions. "Do not be afraid," said Archangel Gabriel, "the Lord is with you because God has chosen you among all the women in the world and in history." The word "Evangelismos" means not only "Annunciation" but "Good News." The Gospel is called in Greek, the "Evangelion," and the authors of the Gospels are called "Evangelists," meaning those who proclaim the Good News of Christ. The announcement of Christ's birth is placed on March 25, 9 months before the feast of the Nativity. We, in turn are told to spread the Good News of Christ as well, imitating the faithful example of the Virgin Mary. Greek Orthodox Christians celebrate March 25 not only because it is the Feast of Annunciation, but also because of its political significance. On this day, March 25, 1821, Bishop Germanos of Patras, Greece, raised the cross of Jesus Christ and proclaimed the freedom of Greeks from the Turkish yoke. March 25, 1821 was declared the beginning of the Greek Revolution against the Turks.

Sunday, March 25 - 5th Sunday of Lent - St. Mary of Egypt

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

Why does Liturgy seem longer on Sundays during Lent?

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

Saturday, March 31 - Saturday of Lazarus, Service of the Proskomide

Father Stavros has received the blessings of Metropolitan Alexios to celebrate the service of the Proskomide on the solea once a year, on the Saturday of Lazarus. The Proskomide is the service where the bread and wine are prepared to be offered at the Divine Liturgy. On Saturday, March 31, Father Stavros will celebrate this service at 9:30 a.m., on the solea at St. John the Baptist and will explain the service to those who are in attendance. He will also pray for everyone in attendance and offer a piece of bread on each person's behalf in the preparation of the Holy Communion. Please plan to come to this service to see this important aspect of the Liturgy.

Holy Week 2018 Guidelines

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

Traditionally, the Matins or Orthros is done in the early morning hours, ending with the sunrise, when the Great Doxology is sung or read. The Orthros or Matins Services of Holy Week are VERY long, lasting almost three and a half hours. During the Middle Ages, the services were transposed ahead several hours, from the early morning hours to the evening of the preceding night. Thus, the Orthros of Good Friday was moved to Holy Thursday evening, the 12 Gospels and the Procession of the Crucified Christ. The Lamentations, which is the Orthros of Holy Saturday was moved from Saturday morning to Friday night. The Vespers services, was moved from Holy Thursday evening to Holy Thursday morning. Our services commemorate events about 12 hours before they happened in real time, with the Last Supper Holy Thursday morning, the Crucifixion Holy Thursday evening, etc. The Descent from the Cross on Friday afternoon remains at its proper time, as a Vespers service, but the interval between the Vespers of Friday afternoon and the Orthros of Holy Saturday does not. The Resurrection Service takes place at the proper time. The schedule of transposing services begins Palm Sunday when we celebrate Orthros and Liturgy in the morning and celebrate the Orthros of Holy Monday on Palm Sunday evening. There is a vespers on Palm Sunday, which has been suppressed in modern usage.

Holy Unction

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

Bridegroom Service for the Last Supper

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

Holy Thursday Evening - The Service of the Passion

The service of the 12 Gospels and procession of the crucified Lord is the longest service of the Church year. On Holy Thursday, light and darkness, joy and sorrow are mixed. At the "upper room" and in Gethsemane the light of the kingdom and the darkness of hell come together. The way of life and the way of death converge. **However, one cannot truly celebrate the Resurrection if he/she has not stood at the foot of the cross of Christ.** As one prayer of the Sunday Orthros states, "Through the Cross, joy has come to all the world." Without the Crucifixion, there could be no Resurrection. Thus, after the Resurrection Service on Holy Saturday Night, one could argue that Holy Thursday evening is the next most-important service of Holy Week. **If you are unable to attend the entire service, then please come from 7:30-8:30 p.m., witness the Procession of the**

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

An All-Night Vigil at the Cross of Christ

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

Good Friday

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

Apokathelosis

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

The Lamentations and the Epitaphios Procession

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

Holy Saturday

Anastasis Service

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

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

Blessing of Baskets of Food

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

Reading of the Resurrection Gospel at the Agape Vespers

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

Holy Communion to be given only during Divine Liturgy

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

A Note on Kneeling and Sitting

It is the tradition of the church that we kneel or stand for the majority of the services. However, by dispensation, we now have pews in the church and the faithful are allowed to sit at certain points in the services. Because of the long lines for Communion and because the length of the services, **PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO SIT** as you need to during Holy Week, especially during Holy Communion. Also, for those with bad knees, just sit with your head bowed during times we are kneeling, do not attempt to kneel. Our church never

seeks our physical hurt in worship, nor do we want people passing out or becoming sick, which will only make us nervous and anxious.

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

Pascha versus Easter

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

No Kneeling until Pentecost

It is actually the Tradition in the Orthodox Church that we not kneel on Sundays in honor of the Resurrection of Christ. Because we do not worship on a daily basis in our church communities, priests have encouraged people to kneel on Sundays, the thought being that if we do not kneel on Sundays, that we'll never kneel in church. It is a Tradition, that for 50 days after Pascha, we do not kneel in honor of the Resurrection. The next time we will kneel after April 8 is on the Feast of Pentecost at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says "Again and again on bended knees let us pray to the Lord."

Fast Free the week after Pascha

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

Doing it all

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

Sacrament of Confession

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

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

IN PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HOLY WEEK AND PASCHA SCHEDULE FOR 2018 **ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΟΣ**
2018

March 31 **Saturday of Lazarus**

Commemoration of the raising of Lazarus from the dead

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

Divine Liturgy 10:00-11:30 a.m.

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

April 1 **Palm Sunday-The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

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

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

Procession of the Icon of the Nymphios

Theme: Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church; watchfulness

April 2 **Holy Monday**

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

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

Theme: The Parable of the Talents

April 3 **Holy Tuesday**

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

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

The Choir will sing the Hymn of Kassiane

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

April 4 **Holy Wednesday**

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

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

Matins of Holy Thursday

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

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

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

April 5 **Holy Thursday**

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

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

Reading of the 12 Gospels, Procession of the Crucified Christ

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

All-Night Vigil will follow the service

April 6 **Good Friday**

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

Standing vigil at the Cross of Christ

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

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

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

Singing of the Funeral Lamentations and

Procession with the Epitaphios

April 7 **Holy Saturday**

Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 8:30-11:00 a.m.

Reading of Prophecies foretelling the Resurrection of Christ

Great Canon 11:00 p.m.

April 8 **PASCHA**

The Service of the Resurrection of Christ-Midnight

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

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

AGAPE Vespers 11:00 a.m.-Noon

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

Easter Egg Hunt for Children at Noon

Σαββατο, 31 Μαρτίου

Σαββατο του Λαζαρου

Ορθρος 8:30-9:30 π.μ.

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

Θεία Λειτουργία 10:00-11:15 π.μ.

Κυριακή, 1 Απριλίου

Κυριακή των Βαίων

Ορθρος 8:30 π.μ. Θεία Λειτουργία 9:45 π.μ.

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Δευτέρα, 2 Απριλίου

Μεγάλη Δευτέρα

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Τρίτη, 3 Απριλίου

Μεγάλη Τρίτη

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:30 μ.μ.

Τετάρτη, 4 Απριλίου

Μεγάλη Τετάρτη

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

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

Ακολουθία Ευχέλαιον για τα παιδιά 3:00-4:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 5:45-6:30 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία Ευχέλαιον 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Πέμπτη, 5 Απριλίου

Μεγάλη Πέμπτη

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

Ακολουθία Σταυρώσεως 6:30-10:00 μ.μ.

Παρασκευή, 6 Απριλίου

Μεγάλη Παρασκευή

Οι Βασιλικές Ωρες 9:00-11:00 π.μ.

Αποκαθλώσις 3:00-4:15 μ.μ.

Επιτάφιος Θρήνος 7:00-10:30 μ.μ.

Σαββατο, 7 Απριλίου

Μεγάλο Σαββατο

Θεία Λειτουργία του Αγίου Βασιλείου 8:30-11:00 π.μ.

Ο Κανών 11:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία της Αναστασεως Μεσανυχτα

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

Κυριακή, 8 Απριλίου

Αγιον Πασχα

Μεγας Εσπερινος της Αγαπης 11:00 π.μ.

Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism - Emmaline Spiridoula Luciu, daughter of Daniel and Elizabeth Luciu, was baptized on Sunday, January 21. Ventsi Slava Petrova was the Godmother. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism - Selinda Emerald Smith, daughter of Bradley and Nicolette Smith, was baptized on Saturday, February 10. Isabel-la Aivialotis and Charles Tsambis were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Chrismation - Kurt (Daniel) Kucera was received into the Orthodox faith through the sacrament of Chrismation on Sunday, February 4. Fr. John Mamangakis served as the sponsor. Congratulations!

Wedding - Jennifer Menendez and Tyler Ketchum were married on Saturday, February 3. Fr. John Ketchum, Fr. Stavros and Fr. John Mamangakis officiated at the wedding. Kara Kazaras was the Koumbara. Congratulations!

Wedding - Wade Barker Hampton and Sarah Artzibushev were married on Saturday, February 10. Constantin Artzibushev was the Koumbaro. Congratulations!

Trisagion - Mareda Zoumberos passed away on Friday, February 2. A Trisagion was offered on Wednesday, February 7. May her memory be eternal!



Get Acquainted Sunday, March 4



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



Parish Level Oratorical Festival Competition Sunday, March 11

Join us in the church after the Divine Liturgy as we listen to our students who have been working really hard to think critically about current issues as they explore a deeper knowledge of their Orthodox Faith. We thank Peggy Bradshaw who has been a great source of inspiration for our students by encouraging them to participate in this festival.

2018 Philoptochos Spiritual Retreat—March 16-18, 2018

The Metropolis of Atlanta is pleased to announce the opening of registration for the Spring 2018 Philoptochos Spiritual Retreat, to be held at the Diakonia Retreat Center, March 16th-18th 2018. The theme of this year's Retreat is "**Reaching IN to Reach OUT: Preparing Our Lives for Philanthropy**". The presenter is Fr. Mark Leondis, Proistamenos of St. Mark Greek Orthodox Church, Boca Raton, FL. All relevant information, from the flyer, to the retreat registration form, and the waiver, can be found at the Metropolis website. All women of the Metropolis are welcome and encouraged to attend! We pray that you will strongly consider joining your fellow sisters in Christ, so that you too can be a part of this unique and uplifting spiritual event that is vital to the life of this important philanthropic ministry!

Excused Absences from School for Good Friday

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

A few reminders concerning Memorial Services....

- ~ 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.
- ~ If you wish to have a memorial service, please inform the office no less than TWO WEEKS before the date of the memorial service or memorial Sunday. Please provide the name(s) of those you wish to remember and interval of their passing.
- ~ If you wish to have the Philoptochos sponsor the kolyva, the cost is now \$100. Please let the office know if you wish for Philoptochos to provide the kolyva or if you wish to offer it yourself (plan to share with the entire community),* or if you've asked someone else to offer it. Also, please let the office know how many pews we can reserve for your family.

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. In this month's "Counting the Wins" section, in the absence of any submissions for individual wins, we have MANY community wins to highlight.

Thank You to Ye Holy Krewe for Successful Gasparilla Fundraiser—Captain John Kokkas and Ye Holy Krewe went to work for the two weekends of Gasparilla. On January 21 for the children's parade, John, Greg Tisdale, Brett Mourer, Dwight Forde, Mary Mass and Mike Xenick helped raise \$2,070. Our Krewe for January 28 was John, Mary Maas, Lisa Alsina, Brett Mourer, John Alexander, Greg Tisdale, Charlie Hambos and George Hambos. They raised \$5,345 for a grand total of \$7,415. Thank you John and the Krewe for another successful year.

Missions' Sunday - On February 4, we held our annual Missions' Sunday to benefit Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) and its worldwide efforts to spread Orthodoxy. Father Chris Rowe from OCMC gave an inspiring sermon. We had a beautiful luncheon sponsored by Philoptochos. And between a charitable giving line item in our budget and the luncheon, we were able to give OCMC \$3,077. A win for us and for them and for the world-wide Orthodox Church!

Ecumenical Prayer Service - On February 6, we gathered together with the faithful of Christ the King Roman Catholic Church for our annual Ecumenical Prayer Service. A combined choir from both churches offered hymns. Fr. Stavros and Fr. Len Plazewski (pastor of Christ the King) each offered a homily. A collection of \$453 was taken to benefit Catholic Charities USA. The theme for the night was "Peace in our country." A wonderful reception followed. We thank Carole Fotopoulos for chairing the reception and to everyone who brought desserts and assisted.

Souper Bowl of Caring - Our annual Souper Bowl of Caring was a huge success on Sunday, February 4. Our Sunday school kids did a great job cheering on the teams and collecting the contributions. The Eagles pot raised \$206 while the Patriots' pot raised \$120. We also collected over 50 pounds of food. Thank you all for your generous donations! THANK YOU!!

Two Successful Movie Nights - A big thank you to Debbie Nicklow for organizing a movie night January 19 for our JOY/HOPE kids. They saw the movie "Sing," enjoyed food and fellowship. We are our third annual movie night for adults on Friday, February 9. A special thanks to Wayne and Pauline Spencer for sponsoring the dinner. We saw the movie "Same Kind of Different as Me." We do movie nights each year for kids and for adults, so please be sure to check us out next January/February for the next installment.

Young At Heart Update on Apokreatiko Glendi - Our annual Young at Heart Apokreatiko Glendi was held on Saturday, February 3. Young at Heart raised over \$2,500 which they are donating to the church to help pay down the mortgage. Thank you for Carole Fotopoulos, Mary Nenos and all the people from Young at Heart for sponsoring this event and to all the people who came and supported it. A great time was had by all!

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, 813-843-8471

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

Meeting Dates: March 5, 12, 19 and 26

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, 813-690-0155.

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

Meeting Dates: March 6, 13, 20 and 27

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 813-523-0347

ekaraku@verizon.net 813-835-0691

For the month of March, this group will be meeting after Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday evenings as part of the "Called to Be Disciples" series. They will resume their regular Tuesday night gatherings in April after Pascha.

*Thy word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.*

-Psalm 119:105

Philoptochos Membership & Mimosas Brunch

March 3, 2018 @ 11:00 a.m.



13914 Pepperrell Drive, Tampa, FL

Please R.S.V. P. By March 1

Edith Mitchell

813 962-0551



Wear your finest Pajamas or Loungewear

We will be collecting new & used blankets for the homeless

Philoptochos 2018 Membership Drive!

We are on the MOVE for a Great New Year!

We invite all women ages 18 to 118 to join the St. John the Baptist Philoptochos Annunciation Chapter!

Membership Drive: January thru April, Suggested Stewardship is \$35.00. However, we accept whatever you have in your heart to give. Your donation makes you a member of the National, The Metropolis and our Local Chapters of Philoptochos. **Members 80 years of age or older are honorary members- NO DUES NECESSARY.**

THANK YOU SO MUCH AND HAVE A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR 2018

Name _____ Date _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell _____

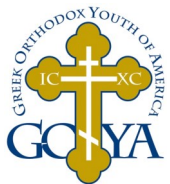
Please circle which number is the preferred contact: **HOME/ CELL**

E-mail address _____

Please return form to: Jeanie Nenos,
14506 Nettle Creek Rd,
Tampa, FL 33624
Or the Philoptochos mailbox in the
church office.

The Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, Inc., is the duly accredited women's philanthropic society of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The mission of the Society shall be:

- *To aid the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the aged, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widowed, the handicapped, the victims of disasters, to undertake the burial of impoverished persons and to offer assistance to anyone who may need the help of the Church through fund raising efforts; and*
- *To promote the charitable, benevolent, and philanthropic purposes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, through instructional programs, presentations, lectures, seminars and other educational resources;*
- *To preserve and perpetuate Orthodox Christian concepts and the Orthodox Christian Family, and through them, to promote the Greek Orthodox Faith and traditions, in accordance with its doctrines, canons, discipline, divine worship, usages and customs;*
- *To promote participation in the activities of the Greek Orthodox community, with the cooperation of the Parish Priest and the Parish Council.*



GOYA Lenten Retreat - March 2-4

Our 14th Annual GOYA Lenten Retreat will be held March 2-March 4. We will welcome GOYAns and advisors from around the Tampa Bay area who will be with us for the Salutations service on Friday, March 2 and the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, March 4.

GOYA Meeting - March 25 - Special Retreat for "Siblings" so bring your Bros and Sistass

The GOYA Meeting for March will be held on Sunday, March 25, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmoulis Center. All GOYAns are invited to participate. For this particular meeting, Fr. Stavros is going to do a special seminar for all GOYAns who have siblings in GOYA, a "sibling" retreat, similar to what we did last year. All other GOYAns who do not have a sibling will meet with Charlie that night.

Luminaries for Good Friday and Easter

These are little bags with votive candles inside that line the way of the procession of Christ's tomb around the church on Good Friday and are lit around the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. On each bag names can be written of loved ones, either for their health and well-being if they are living (Easter), or in memory of someone who has passed away (Good Friday evening). The GOYAns will be selling the luminaries after church on Sundays, March 18, March 25 and April 1. This is a wonderful way to honor those who are living, those who passed away, to make our services even more beautiful and to help out our GOYAns.



Community Outreach - Saturday, March 17

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!**



Ushers Meeting - March 18

A meeting for all ushers will be held on Sunday, March 18, following Divine Liturgy, in the Zaharias Room. All ushers are re-requested to attend. Tom Georgas is the Head Usher for our parish and we will be re-organizing the groups as well as going over the procedures for Holy Week. Are you interested in serving as an usher? We are looking for some more people to serve in this capacity. If so, please come to the meeting on March 18. If you are on the list as an usher and do not wish to serve in this capacity, please notify Tom Georgas at Georgas@verizon.net.

Young Adult Ministry - Sunday, March 18

The YAL fellowship dinner will be on Sunday, March 18, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmoulis Center. Please RSVP to Charlie if you are going to attend.



Ζήτω η Ελλάδα!

Sunday, March 25
Greek Independence Day Luncheon

We will be hosting our annual Greek Independence Day Luncheon and program on Sunday, March 25, following the Divine Liturgy, in the Kourmoulis Center. There will be several performances by our dance groups, singing of some folk songs, Greek poems from our Adult Greek School and a tasty lunch. All proceeds will go to our church. Thank you to the Kalojiannis family for again sponsoring and donating this luncheon.

Hope /Joy News—Thanks for Supporting our Souper Bowl of Caring

Our annual Souper Bowl of Caring was held on February 4. Our kindergarten kids did a great job cheering on the teams and collecting the contributions. The Patriot's pot raised \$120 and the Eagles' pot raised \$206. Eagles won the Super Bowl but the Hope Children's Home was the Big Winner with a total of \$336 and about 50 pounds of food donated to the home. Thank you to all our parishioners who give hope to the children there, through your generous donations! THANK YOU!!



On January 19, Hope / Joy hosted their 2nd Movie and Pizza night. Thank you, Charlie, for all the help and a special thank you to all the families that came and enjoyed a fun night of fellowship, pizza, popcorn, candy and the movie SING!



Great and Holy Friday Youth Retreat

Friday, April 6, 2018 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

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

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

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

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

All Parents are encouraged to attend!

Lunch and snacks included **Please r.s.v.p. your child by Monday, April 2, 2018** *Parent volunteers are needed*

Call or email Debbie Nicklow at Debbienicklow@hotmail.com or 813-920-0892.

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

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

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

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

****You only need to list the first name of the person you wish to be commemorated. You may list names of people who are Orthodox or non-Orthodox. Please mail to the office or bring to church by April 2.**

Young at Heart Apokreatiko Glendi 2018

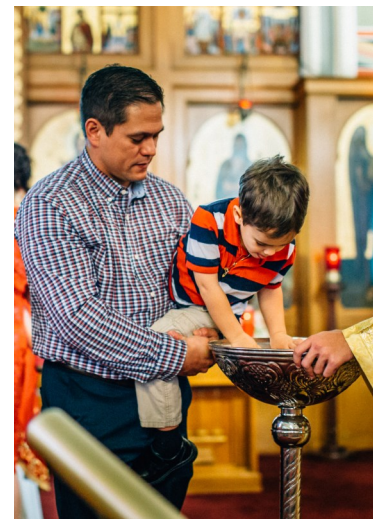
We thank them for their hard work and dedication to our community. They raised \$2,500 to put towards the mortgage on the school building.





Happy Hearts are Healthy Hearts

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me." Psalm 50(51):10



Photography Ministry We thank Olya Clifton for taking all of these beautiful photos. We are starting a new photography ministry, to document the activities of our parish. Olya Clifton is going to head this ministry. If you are interested in participating in this ministry, please contact Olya at Olya at 661-243-9352 or email her at olyacliftonphotography@gmail.com. We are looking for many photographers to document our upcoming Holy Week Services.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

February was a very busy month for the Sunday School. Our topics were The Prodigal Son, The Last Judgement, Icons, and the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Charlie Hambos was also very busy with our students. He always does a children's sermon on Youth Sundays and he worked with our Pre-K and Kindergarten this month. These students learned about the Priest's Vestments. Charlie taught them about what each part of the vestments represents. The children were also able to try them on. We would like to thank our 5th Graders for making 14 loaves of Prosphora on February. 11.

Our February YOUTH SUNDAY took place on February 4. We need to thank our children who are singing louder and more beautifully than ever. We also would like to thank our Epistle Reader, Antonio Bavaro. He did an exceptional job on such short notice. Our children are truly great stewards of St. John's.

On February 11, the Sunday School sponsored the Coffee Hour to support our Sunday School Lenten Retreats. We would like to thank our Sunday School parents and teachers for donating so many treats. The 5th graders served the food and passed out Valentine's with the scripture verse John 3:16, to all of our parishioners.

Our PRE-LENTEN RETREAT took place on February 18. Our Topics were:

- o Saturday of Souls and a Kolyva lesson taught by Cindy Xenick and Melissa Krinos.
- o The Sundays of Lent and Holy Week taught by Charlie Hambos.
- o Lenten calendar, Lenten covenant, and Prayer of St. Ephraim taught by Maria Xenick.

Afterwards all the children and their parents met with Fr. Stavros in the church. He spoke to them about Lent and close our retreat with a prayer. We would like to thank Father, Cindy Xenick, Melissa Krinos, Charlie Hambos, and Maria Xenick for doing such a great job with our students.

Father Stavros heard the CONFESSIONS of our 6th, 5th, 4th, and 3rd Graders. On March 4 our 1st and 2nd Graders will participate in this important Sacrament. Our 7th - High School students will participant in Confession during the GOYA Lenten Retreat on March 2nd-4th. One of the best ways to prepare for Pascha is to participate in the Sacrament of Confession. We would like to thank Father Stavros for hearing the confessions of all of our Sunday School children. It is a wonderful thing to see our children going to Confession year after year.



SUNDAY SCHOOL CALENDAR

March 2-4

GOYA Lenten Retreat

Sunday, March 4

Youth Sunday

Topic: Being a good friend/Paralytic

Confession: 1st & 2nd Grade

No Classes for 7th-H.S.

Charlie: 3rd Grade

Sunday, March 11

Topic: The Holy Cross

Oratorical Presentations

Sunday, March 18

Topic: Holy Week

Wednesday, March 21

**Sunday School Sponsoring
Lenten Dinner**

Sunday, March 25

Topic: Annunciation

Charlie: 7th-12th Grade

Sunday, April 2

Topic: Palm Sunday

Procession in church

~ Stewardship Update ~

For every good and perfect gift is from Above, coming down from You the Father of Lights. ~From the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (adapted from James 1:17)

Please give back your Time, Talents and Treasure in 2018

~ Stewardship Housekeeping ~

Our heartfelt thanks to the loyal Stewards of St. John for your gifts to our beloved parish. Our 'Give Back' 2018 Stewardship campaign is well underway and YOU have answered this calling by completing a 2018 Pledge Form. We highlighted an article this month from Fr. Harry Pappas talking about Stewardship as a way of life centered on God. And how true Christian stewardship deepens with our conversion and commitment to Christ. Without your ongoing gifts our parish could not continue to flourish and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is all good however we have a 'needs improvement' category. How do we get ALL of our Stewards from the previous year to pledge on Stewardship Sunday in December or soon after into the New Year? We still have over 120 that have not completed a pledge form in the new year. We understand life gets busy and financial circumstances may have changed. Which is ok and to be expected. But if it's simply procrastination please don't wait. Our giving speaks to the state of our heart. And if we aren't giving to our sacred place of worship we must question our priorities.

Year to Year Comparison ~	2018*	2017*
Pledged Year to Date	\$358,442	\$330,151
Received Year to Date	\$112,414	\$111,245
Average Pledge	\$1,675	\$1,535
Median Pledge	\$1,000	\$840
# of Individual/Families Pledged	220	215

*YTD as of 2/8/18 & 2/22/17

'Do I need to complete a Pledge Form each year?' YES – A pledge form is required every year per our current Bylaws to be considered a 'member in good standing' at St. John. (If you are over age 18 and are not a student, you should fill out a pledge form. If you are married, you only need to fill out one stewardship form for your family). We will publish a list of our Stewards in the April & October *Messenger* of this year. We make things easy with the option of our online pledge form. Stewardship Payments and General Donations are also easy and convenient using Online Banking, PayPal or traditional checks.

Pledge forms are available in the Church Narthex, Office, Bookstore and Online. We make it easy! **Don't hesitate to call our office or email our office – officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com or speak directly with Fr. Stavros, Sandra Pappas or Pete Trakas - your Stewardship Co-Chairs with any questions. We are here for YOU!**

OFFER YOUR TALENTS!

Our church and members of our community are always looking for people who can offer their talents. Please fill out the talents portion of your Stewardship Pledge Form or call the office to update your talents today.

Orthodox Christian Stewardship

By Fr. Harry Pappas

Unfortunately, when most of us hear or read the word “Stewardship,” we instinctively think of it spelled as “Stewardship,” a code word for giving money to church. It may be politely asked for. It may be clothed in pious language. It may be linked to giving of time and talents. But, in the end, stewardship still means, for most of us: “I must give some of my money so that we can operate the church.”

However, we may have not yet learned to spell this key word as “S+ewardship.” The Bible from beginning to end identifies what we now call stewardship as a way of life centered on God. And for Christians, this means discipleship centered on Jesus Christ as Crucified and Risen Lord. The cross thus dramatically signifies both our identity as disciples of Christ and our calling to a life of sacrificial giving directed toward God, others, and all creation.

Many people know how to raise money. There are professional experts who work full time. There are more opinions and ideas than parishes know what to do with. And, in fact, raising funds has become a favorite American pastime for public and private schools, political parties, charitable organizations, and legions of athletic and recreational activities. Who needs another fundraising campaign when we are already inundated with them!

But while there are legions of experts, opinions, and efforts, how many of us are genuinely committed to Christ and the Church and have learned a sound teaching about stewardship based upon Holy Scripture?

In the Old Testament, our Hebrew ancestors based their very existence upon what God had first done for them: through the promises given to the patriarch Abraham, the sacred covenant at Sinai given through Moses, and messianic kingship through David. Since God was their Creator, Savior, and King, ancient Israel worshiped him regularly and on special feast days. They considered the very land upon which they lived as a precious gift from God, and not the result of their own hard work or of their pious virtue. This meant that all products of their livelihood ultimately belonged to God. The biblical tithe (10%) meant that the first and best portion of these material assets were to be returned to God for support of the sanctuary or temple, the ordained ministers, and various human needs (including charity). The rest (90%) was not to be used as each person decided, but rather according to the will of God through each person’s family, home, and vocation. Further, as emphasized by the prophets like Amos and Isaiah, the people of God were to seek justice and righteousness in all their relationships –through business, commerce, legal courts, government, and society. In particular, ancient Israel was to protect, support, and advocate for the poor, oppressed, and weakest members of society.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ affirmed this Old Testament stewardship as a way of life based upon God’s gracious salvation and his natural gifts through creation. He clearly approved of worship, of tithing, of seeking justice and righteousness in all human relationships, and of service especially to the poor, oppressed, and needy. However, Jesus went way beyond these in offering himself as the perfect steward of God’s gracious gifts by his voluntary

suffering and death on a cross. In this event, he exemplified that true sacrifice for the sake of others has absolutely no limits. The one who truly loves God and passionately seeks the truth is called to die to self, take up the cross of unjust suffering, and be prepared to live and even die for others, especially those who are hardened in sin and blinded by ingratitude.

In the Church, everyone is called to be a disciple of Christ. This involves conversion – and inward turning of mind and heart toward Christ – and a conscious and deliberate commitment to follow the Lord, no matter what the cost. And true Christian stewardship springs very naturally from such faith and obedience, since it recognizes God as the origin of life, the giver of salvation, and the source of all blessings, visible and invisible. The deeper the conversion and commitment to Christ, the deeper the thanksgiving for these spiritual and material gifts that we have received, and the greater the readiness to use them to show our love for God and those around us.

Jesus Christ sets the true standard of Christian stewardship by which we can measure ourselves. Our stewardship of the good news of salvation should be shown in the following ways:

- Creation – joyful appreciation for the wonder and beauty of nature; protection and preservation of the environment; bringing the gifts of creation to the Church for blessing (altar bread, wine, fruits, oil, incense, etc.); development of the material world through holy work (physical labor, professions, arts and sciences); respect for and protection of the sanctity of human life from conception to death.
- Vocation – fulfillment of our God-given calling in life as married or single people, adult or child, working or retired, clergy or laity, to extend the love and truth of God in Christ to those around us.
- Church – becoming active participants in working out our salvation as members of the Orthodox Church through the Christian nurture of children, regular worship and fellowship; spiritual formation through on-going education; service to one another and to the poor, sick, and needy; cooperating to make our parish a vibrant source of faith and work; and supporting Metropolitan, Archdiocesan, and international ministries that link us to the worldwide Church.

In a culture that frequently encourages us to focus on ourselves, Jesus Christ challenges us to re-orient our priorities according to the Kingdom of God breaking into this world. The antidote to greed and selfishness, even when it is masked by religious piety, is genuine repentance and conversion toward Christian stewardship as a new way of living. And what joy there is now for those who turn toward God, learning and living as stewards of the manifold grace that has been offered to us through Christ in the Church!

Fr. Harry Pappas serves as Proistamenos of Archangels Greek Orthodox Church in Stamford, CT.

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

Over the course of several Sundays, I heard the confessions of most of our Sunday School students. I want to thank all of our Sunday School teachers for preparing our students for what was a moving experience for ME, as well as for them. The relationship with a spiritual father is something of great importance in the Orthodox Church. The relationship is akin to that of our relationship with a doctor. The doctor is the physician of the body. The priest is the physician of the soul. So, as we go to the doctor regularly for check-ups on our physical health, we should be going to the priest for a check-up on our spiritual health. We know that as we get older, our doctor's appointments get more complex. More tests are needed. More visits are needed. It's the same thing with our spiritual check-ups.

As children, they are brief. What we did over the past several weeks was to get our children to understand that we go to God, through the person of our priest, to not only confess our sins but to try to form new habits in our Christian walk. With them getting used to this at a young age, when they get older, when they are teenagers and adults, the mechanisms will already be in place for them to come to their priest with the more serious issues that we all face. Thank you for supporting the Sunday School program. Thank you to our teachers for preparing our children for a wonderful experience. Thank you to our children for taking their first steps in what is a beautiful tradition in our faith. And thank God for continuing to bless our community in so many ways.

And a note for the rest of the community, the procedure



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

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

All of the services are available to watch at anytime.



Pictures

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

Parish Council - FOCUS CORNER

~FOCUS: Fellow Orthodox Christians United to Serve~

The Parish Council has decided to use the word "Focus" as it's word for 2018. Every month a Parish Council member will write an article related to our word.

FOCUS ON GRATITUDE

By Dante Skourellos

A few months ago I was focusing on all the challenging and difficult areas in my life, forgetting the blessings that grace me daily. A friend encouraged me to retrain my brain and make a commitment to focus on gratitude. I was told that by focusing on gratitude, I will go through the day with a more positive outlook on life...and it worked!

By focusing on being grateful, I give thanks to God for everything! This has changed my life, helping me to become a more positive individual. I believe this has impacted every area of my life. Gratitude helps me to be present throughout the day, recognizing the blessings that surround me and being engaged in what is happening. At times, I revert back to my old habits. The devil, through negative thoughts, is always around the corner waiting to pounce. On those occasions I remind myself of Philippians 4:13, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* This verse reminds me to focus on God and to be grateful for the strength he provides me.

I encourage you to participate in the Gratitude Challenge, whether you feel content with your life or not. Challenge yourself to a week of cultivating gratitude. In the morning, before you get out of bed, thank God for two things in your life. As you go through your day, recognize and vocalize gratitude for the traits and kindnesses of others. Before bed, say a prayer of thanksgiving for two challenges you're experiencing. Give it a week and see how you feel. Remember that you can make the decision to be thankful.

If the above seems too daunting, as it did initially for me, start with a daily gratitude list. At the end of each day, write down all things that occurred that day that you are grateful for. Nothing is too big or small. A typical entry for me is that my 3-year old daughter ate her breakfast. Too often, we go through the day without acknowledging the parts of our lives in which we are blessed and should be thankful for. Taking a few minutes at each end of the day, thinking and writing all that transpired that you are grateful for is a way to retrain yourself to acknowledge the good in your life.

There are many bible verses regarding Gratitude and I recommend you conduct a quick Google search to find one that speaks to you. For me, there were several, but I am especially drawn to:

Philippians 4:6-8 King James Version (KJV)

⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

I am grateful for you taking the time to read this essay and I hope you have a blessed day.

Other PC News...

New Document/Ministry Material Storage Policy - The Parish Council and Administrative Office would like to ask parishioners and ministry heads to bring unwanted material generated by their volunteer efforts to the front office, rather than storing it on campus without our knowledge. Any documentation that needs to be filed or stored must go through the office. This new policy will allow our office spaces to remain clear of clutter and ensure that important documents are not stored incorrectly. If you find your ministry needs ongoing, regular storage on campus, please let us know and we will arrange to assign you the appropriate space. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Donations Needed for Great Lent and Holy Week

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

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

March 2	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 2 nd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
March 9	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 3 rd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
March 11	Veneration of the Holy Cross	Flowers for Tray for Procession	\$350
March 16	Salutations to the Virgin Mary – 4 th Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
March 23	Akathist Hymn	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$75
April 1	Palm Sunday	Flowers for Icon of Palm Sunday	\$75
		Palms Strips & Branches	\$250 total
Holy Week		Pillar Candles for Windows (20)	\$15 each
April 2	Holy Monday	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex	\$75
	Bridegroom Service	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom on Solea (2)	\$75 each
April 4	Holy Wednesday	Flowers for Icon of Last Supper	\$75
	Holy Unction	Olive Oil, Flour, Prosphora (2)	See Fr. Stavros
April 5	Holy Thursday	Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion	\$75
		Wreath for Top of Cross	\$250
		Wreaths for Bottom of Cross (2)	\$150 each
		Scattered flowers at base of cross	\$50
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)	\$15 each
April 6	Good Friday	8 Bags of Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers	\$50
		Flowers for Epitaphios	Several
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Apokathelosis	\$15 each
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Lamentations	\$15 each
		Icon of Extreme Humility	\$75
April 8	Pascha	Flowers for Icon of Resurrection	\$75
		Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb	\$75
		Silk Flower for Royal Doors	\$100
		Easter Lilies (many)	\$25 per Lily

Millennials and the Future of the Faith

By Charissa Giannopoulos

My name is Charissa, and I'm a millennial. As a millennial, my generation and I are constantly being accused of ruining everything. I've read article after article exclaiming with frustration that millennials aren't doing things the way their parents did, and it's collapsing the world as we know it!

Are millennials buying houses? No.

Are millennials going on cruises? No.

Using bar soap? Enjoying wine corks? Having dinner dates at casual chain restaurants?

Forget it.

As one such destroyer of all things deemed good and pure, I've had my fair share of grown-ups accusing my generation of ruining one thing after another

But the number one frustration on my list?

Are millennials going to Church? Well, no.

The Worship Conundrum

Much like Forbes speculating which industry we will destroy next, I've listened to countless conversations with adults throwing their arms up in confusion—as if the idea that young people aren't coming to Church is one of those great unsolvable mysteries. As though 21 to 34 is the Bermuda triangle of Orthodoxy, the great lost years.

And over the years, I have watched more and more of my friends do just that.

Without the structure of GOYA or OCF to lead the way, they did exactly what I did at that age.

They stopped showing up.

Eventually some of us find our way back, but I still look around the Church every Sunday and wonder where my friends and peers are. I wonder if these really are the years we stop taking ownership of our Faith. I wonder what will happen if we continue to not show up.

The Power of Example

I grew up in a small Parish. There were young adults who taught our Greek dance lessons and coached our basketball teams, but few who attended Liturgy regularly, fewer who participated in the Church beyond that. As a kid in a small community, I thought they were the coolest people I could imagine.

Now, I am certainly not the coolest person imaginable (by anyone's standards) and looking back, neither were they. But when I was young, they were my role models. They were what it meant to be an Orthodox young adult.

The thing about millennials is that when it comes to things like wine, or soap, or cruises, we're just looking for ways to be more efficient. We want to innovate. We want to forge our own paths. We watched the generations before us, and we learned what works and what doesn't.

Kids watch young adults as a way of understanding what being a bigger kid looks like. I struggled to find a place in the Church in

my early 20s because I didn't know what that was supposed to look like. And if we keep not showing up, neither will the next generation.

When we are staffers at camp or we teach Sunday School, it's easy to remember to put on our best faces. We remember to listen when kids are talking, watch the words we use, speak with intent and kindness. Be patient and compassionate. Even when running on zero sleep, Orthodox Summer Camp is the best iteration of me that there is.

Everything around me is a reminder that the kids are watching.

We often forget that they are always watching us.

The example we set as young adults is one they will remember. They notice when we come to dance practice, but don't teach Sunday School. They see when we make their basketball practice, but not Liturgy. Every time we do these things, they notice. They don't understand our excuses. They just understand that we aren't there.

We are subtly showing them what is important.

And they will remember that when it is their turn to take ownership of their Faith.

In 10, 15, 20 years, the young adults teaching the Sunday School classes, the people spending their summers at Orthodox Camp, those are the 10-year-olds who today are watching me walk into Liturgy twenty minutes late. Those are the kids that we are actively setting an example for every day.

In the same way that millennials are changing industries to suit their needs, the next generation is going to find better, newer, more relatable ways to serve their Church. But only if we give them a place to start.

Embracing a Faithful Future

I worry daily about why our young adults aren't showing up to Church. I think constantly about ways to get my generation engaged, what to offer them, how to entice them to be involved. I still don't know exactly what that looks like. I don't know what combination of fellowship and ministry will suddenly click and young adults will flood back to where they belong.

But I do know that we can't expect anything to change if we don't start to take ownership of our Faith. We can't expect the children in our communities to grow up to be active young adults if we aren't active young adults.

We can't underestimate the power of just showing up.

Father Stavros' Note: I think this is an excellent article. It lends credence to something I've always believed—that dance groups and basketball are not what are going to keep our young people in church. There are those who argue, at least if the kids are dancing and playing sports, they are “around” the church. There is no substitute for being “in church.” When WE, the adults, treat church casually, casually coming late, when we are not engaged in worship, well then the young people learn by example that being cavalier towards worship is not only ok, it's normal. And then when there are a million other possibilities of things to do on Sunday mornings, they don't come to church.

Featured Book of the St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Bookstore

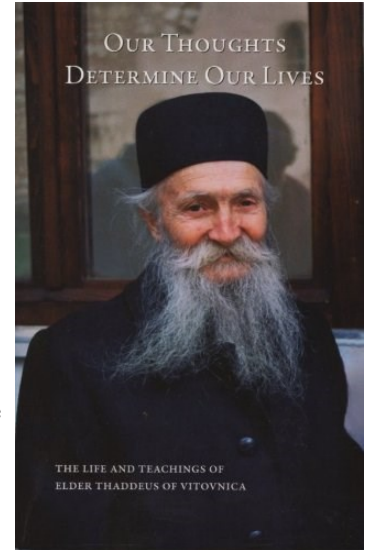
"Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives--The Life and Teaching of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica." Father Thaddeus was one of the most renowned spiritual guides of Serbia in the 20th century. He sojourned on this Earth from 1914-2002. From a disciple of the Optina Elders, he learned the Prayer of the Heart and the selfless love that came to characterize his whole ministry to the suffering Serbian people. He taught, counseled and prayed for all who came to him in pain and sorrow. His words of love and hope provided spiritual balm for people from all classes of society. His life, teachings and spiritual conversations with his spiritual children are presented in this very insightful book.

The title tells it all as evidenced by the following quote: "We must bear everything patiently and forgive all. If we have good thoughts and desires, these thoughts will give us peace and joy in this life and even more so in eternity. Then we will see that there is no death, that the Lord has vanquished death, and that He has given us eternal life."

This book is available in the bookstore. We would love to hear from you and what you think of the book after reading it.

P.S. If you have an Orthodox book that you have read and would like to share with others, please let us know about it!

Brett and Ana Mourer



Metropolis of Atlanta's St. Stephen's Summer Camp Registration OPENS on March 20th!



Week #1 June 24 - June 30

Week #2 July 01 - July 07

Week #3 July 08 - July 14

Week #4 July 15 - July 21

Week #5 July 22 - July 28

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

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

Coupon Code: SIBLING

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

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
- Body Wash
- 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

Continue Supporting Our Beloved St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church After Your Lifetime

Join the St. John Legacy Society Today!

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

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

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

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

If you include St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in your plans, please use our legal name and Federal Tax ID # 59-1170684. Additionally, please contact Fr. Stavros at 813-876-8830 ext. 103, (email 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.

Family Calendar for Great Lent 2018

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

~ March 2018 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 ** Young at Heart 11 a.m. Adult Greek School Choir Practice	2 ** Salutations to the Virgin Mary 6:30 p.m. GOYA Lenten Retreat	3 ** GOYA Lenten Retreat
4 ** Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday	5 ** Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:45 p.m.	6 ** WBS No Basketball	7 ** 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner Small Group Bible Studies Discipleship Series	8 ** Adult Greek School Choir Practice	9 ** Salutations to the Virgin Mary 6:30 p.m.	10 **
11 ** Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Oratorical Festival	12 ** Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:45 p.m.	13 ** WBS Basketball	14 ** 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner AHEPA/Daughters Discipleship Series	15 ** Adult Greek School Choir Practice	16 ** Salutations to the Virgin Mary 6:30 p.m.	17 ** Community Outreach
18 ** Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Luminaries Sale Usher Meeting YAL 5:00 p.m. Greek Independence Day Parade (Tarpon Springs)	19 ** Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:45 p.m.	20 ** WBS Basketball	21 ** 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner Philoptochos Discipleship Series	22 ** Adult Greek School Choir Practice	23 ** Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m. Liturgy 8:30 p.m.	24 **
25 ** Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Luminaries Sale Greek Ind. Luncheon AHEPA/Daughters GOYA 5:00 p.m.	26 ** Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:45 p.m.	27 ** WBS Basketball	28 ** MBS 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner YAL Discipleship Series	29 ** Adult Greek School Choir Practice	30 **	31 ** Saturday of Lazarus Orthros 8:30 a.m. Proskomide 9:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Philoptochos Bake Sale

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

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St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Timetable of Services

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

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

Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

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Pastoral Assistant Charlie Hambos

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AHEPA

Gus Paras, President 813-254-6980

Altar Angels

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Sia Blankenship 813-968-8855

Basketball

Perry Katsamakias 516-403-3118
Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352

Bible Study

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Bookstore

Brett Mourer 813-376-9315

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

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H XAPA MAE, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668
Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963
Parea, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
Anna Maria Bavaro 732-239-9085
Panigyri, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

Daughters of Penelope

Maria Zabetakis, President 813-748-7709

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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

Dwight Forde 727-685-9028

MOMS

Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862
Lindsey Skourellos 813-503-7845

OCF

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

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Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

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Olya Clifton 661-243-9352

Philoptochos

Lisa Alsina 813-728-1094

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South, Bessie Palios 813-523-0347
Women, Debbie Kavouklis 813-258-5571

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Gary Ward 813-846-3898

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Pete Trakas 813-505-2193

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Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

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Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Welcome Ministry

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Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

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

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