

# 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*

## June & July 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

## Time, J.O.Y., Healthy Habits and Twenty Years

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:*

*A time to be born, and a time to die;*

*A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;*

*A time to kill, and a time to heal;*

*A time to break down, and a time to build up;*

*A time to weep, and a time to laugh;*

*A time to mourn, and a time to dance;*

*A time to cast away stone, and a time to gather stones together;*

*A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;*

*A time to seek, and a time to lose;*

*A time to keep, and a time to cast away;*

*A time to rend, and a time to sew;*

*A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;*

*A time to love, and a time to hate;*

*A time for war and a time for peace.*

*Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

Many of us are familiar with this passage of Scripture, and if not, we've probably heard the song "Turn, Turn, Turn," by the Byrds ("To everything, turn, turn, turn, there is a season, turn, turn, turn"). If you've never heard this song, it's worth four minutes to have a listen. Indeed there is a time for every purpose under heaven. We won't always be happy, we can't always be sad.

As summer begins, our children look forward to "a time to sleep in" and "a time to be off." As many of us take vacations, we look forward to "a time to relax" and "a time to recharge."

The theme of this month's message is "TIME" and "J.O.Y."

I'll get to my acronym "J.O.Y." in a little bit. For, now, let's talk about time. Specifically time with God.

I wrote a recent message on the Lord's Prayer for the Prayer Team daily writings. A book I recently read says that it takes an average of 21 seconds to offer the Lord's Prayer. As I am writing currently on the Prayer Team (and if you'd like to join, there is information later in this issue of *The Messenger*), many of us, myself included, struggle to build a consistent and rewarding prayer life.

There are many more who don't know how to pray at all. When asked how they pray, I have heard many people say, over the years, "well, I say the *Pater imon* (the Lord's Prayer) once a day." That means that their prayer life consists of twenty-one seconds with God each day. The most important relationship we have in our lives merits twenty-one seconds each day for some of us. That's not a lot of time.

In Greek Orthodox Churches (I can't comment on other Orthodox churches, or Protestant or Catholic churches), many in the congregation have always had the habit of arriving late. I generally refrain from speaking about this subject in church. The people who come on time don't want to hear the priest complain about those that came late. And I'd prefer to use the pulpit for a motivating message, rather than one of consternation.

But I have noticed in recent months that a large percentage of our congregation arrives late. We are generally standing-room only by the time we get to Holy Communion, but there is a large segment of the congregation that arrives after the reading

of the Gospel. Even more disturbing are those who bypass worship all together and head straight for the community center, get a cup of coffee and wait for their meeting to start.

As we enjoy our “time” relaxing and recharging this summer, I hope that we’ll think about our time with God, both in prayer and in worship. Coming late doesn’t deprive God. Offering a prayer for 21 seconds doesn’t deprive God. These things deprive US of the experience of prayer and worship. They deprive us of the relationship we should all want to enjoy with God.

Perhaps we are the way we are because of habit. This is what we’ve learned. This is how we were taught. Maybe this is the way our parents modeled the faith for us. For many of us, our parents didn’t go to college—that doesn’t mean we didn’t go. So, just because we may have learned something one way growing up doesn’t mean we are bound to do it that way forever. None of us had an iPhone growing up if we are over age 20. Now, we all have them. Just because many of us grew up not knowing how to pray doesn’t mean we can’t learn now. Just because many of us grew up coming to church late doesn’t mean we can’t start coming on time now.

## J.O.Y. as it Relates to Time

I’m sure many of us are familiar with the acronym **J.O.Y.**—**Jesus. Others. Yourself.** Let’s talk about J.O.Y. as it relates to time. Many of us, if we are honest, do not do well on all three components of J.O.Y. We are strong with one or two, but are lacking the third. Here are the various combinations of J.O.Y.

**Y** - If a person is a “Y”, he or she is all about himself or herself. This is not a good category to be in. While there is no harm in looking out for oneself—exercising, hobbies, relaxation—to exclusively focus on oneself is sinful. For Christ told us the two greatest commandments are to love God (J) and love others (O). One can’t be a Christian if he or she is exclusively a Y.

**O** - If a person is an “O”, he or she is all about helping the other guy. Is that bad? I’m not sure that a person can be strictly an “O” because service to others brings, if nothing else, some intrinsic joy, which would then make a person a OY, and not just an O. There are probably not many O’s out there.

**J** - One can’t be a Christian without loving others, so if one is a J, then naturally he or she has some O.

**JY** - Again, if one can’t be a Christian without loving others, then one cannot be a JY.

**OY** - There are lots of OY’s out there. There are lots of people who help others. In helping others, we also take some joy for ourselves. As pointed out above, there really can’t be an O without at least a little Y. However, if we are OY’s, where is the place of Jesus in our service to others? Service to others not done under the framework of Christ ultimately becomes somewhat self-serving. The most frequent example cited is that of the good driver. If I am a good driver, in the sense that I don’t crash into other people, then I have some O in me. Most of us are OY’s when it comes to driving, however. Because our motivation to be a good driver is so that we don’t wreck our cars or get tickets. Most of us are not Godly drivers—we don’t use “love our fellow travelers” as motivation. Most of us would be happier if there were no other travelers on the road. If we are not doing good for God, ultimately we become the beneficiaries of goodness, making it likely that OY ends up

leaning more towards Y.

There are a lot of good people that are good OY’s. They have great families, they take time for themselves, they are great in their careers, they may even contribute a lot to the greater good. But at some point, when all the things of life are in the rear-view mirror, there will be a profound emptiness for an OY, because what is there to look forward to, if the door to Paradise is not on the horizon.

**JO** - Being a JO can be a dangerous thing! Why is that? Isn’t serving God and serving our neighbor Christ’s two greatest commandments? Isn’t it self-less to be a JO? Doesn’t adding Y in there make us somewhat selfish? These are good questions. Serving others is a great thing. Loving God is a great thing. These fulfill the two great commandments, after all. The problem with being a JO is that one important foundation is missing—often it is family, or loss of a sense of self. People who are JO’s often end up with significant health problems, because they don’t exercise or rest. People who are JO’s may also have marriage and family issues. Because they are so concerned for others, even serving the church, that they forget their family foundation. They forget their spouses. They neglect their children. Some of the best church people I have met over the last twenty years are struggling in their marriages. They make other things a priority, and use it to rationalize not dealing with issues at home. Y does not only include you, but it includes your spouse if you are married. Children fit in both the Y and the O category. They are part of helping others but mostly they are a part of you. There are many people who are Christian and have great families, but they forget the O of helping others who are not in the family.

**OYJ, YOJ, OJY, YJO** - Yes, there are other combinations of the J, O, and Y. And many times, this is due to circumstance. For instance, when we are on vacation (which hopefully many of you will be at some point this summer), the Y may take precedence. That doesn’t mean that we can’t do something for others, even on vacation, like thank the maid who makes up your hotel room, or thank the waiter or waitress for good service at a restaurant. It doesn’t mean that we can’t offer a prayer each day, or attend a church in the place in which we are travelling. If one is a OYJ or a YOJ, you have to ask yourself how limited is the J in your life? A 21-second thought? A few moments as we are falling asleep?

**JOY** - The most well balanced person is the JOY. Because this person puts Jesus first. He is among the first thoughts of the day. Prayer is offered at the beginning of the day. We make a habit of giving Him our best, not the left-overs. And we do everything under the umbrella is His love. The person who is a JOY has loving concern for others. They are eager to help their children, offer their best to the people they encounter at work, are courteous when driving, encourage others, and have concern for the greater good of society. They also have enough energy to be a good spouse and a good parent. They give their family their best and give to them in abundance. They allow themselves to have JYO days, but J is always in the front. On days when the O is big, there still make time for Y. They also find time for just themselves. They find time to pray, to exercise, to have healthy hobbies. JOY is the most well-rounded person.

So, of all these combinations, you can be a Y, an OY, a JO or a JOY. Which one are you? Spend time over this summer evaluating the J, the O and the Y in your life and work to achieve the balance of a JOY.

# Healthy Habits

Speaking of balance, I want to write a few words about healthy habits. And I'm not talking only about prayer, diet and exercise. I recently read a book which I highly recommend to people who are married or dating (or thinking about doing either). This book can also be used for anyone who is in any kind of relationship (parent, friend, co-worker). The book is called *Getting Together and Staying Together: Solving the Mystery of Marriage* by William Glasser and Carleen Glasser. They talk about the seven deadly habits of marriage, which can also be transferred to other relationships as well. The seven deadly habits are:

*Criticizing ~ blaming ~ complaining ~ nagging ~ threatening ~ punishing ~ bribing/reward to control*

These habits kill marriages and other relationships as well. They kill relationships between parents and children, and among friends. They represent something that the author called "External control." If we try to control others using these external controls and bad habits, it's going to be hard to have normal, healthy, loving relationships.

On the flip side, the authors espouse something called "Choice theory." The seven caring habits of choice theory are:

*Listening ~ supporting ~ encouraging ~ respecting ~ trusting ~ accepting ~ always negotiating disagreements.*

Ridding ourselves of deadly habits and working to establish caring habits will strengthen not only marriages but every other relationship we have, including even our relationship with Christ.

As we spend our *time* learning to become people of *J.O.Y.* we will make great strides if we start to develop more *healthy habits*.

## Twenty Years

Which bring me to the final topic of this message. On May 15, I completed twenty years as an ordained Orthodox priest. I served as a Deacon for one year prior. For twenty years, I have been the Proistamenos (head priest) of a parish. For the first two of those years, I was at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Enfield, Connecticut. For the next four-plus years I served at Holy Trinity in Asheville, North Carolina. And now for nearly fourteen, I have served at St. John in Tampa. I want to thank everyone in this parish who has been part of the last 14 years of my ministry. I am also thankful to everyone who came to the Divine Liturgy on May 15 to celebrate this milestone with me. It was very humbling to see so many people in church that evening. I am especially thankful to the choir who came in large number and sang so beautifully as they always do. Thank you also for the gift certificate for a get-away for a few days. We plan to use that over the summer as soon as we find a few days in a row that we can use it for. Thank you also for the notes of thanksgiving and appreciation that many of you sent. I do not work for accolades, however, the positive feedback I received from so many people boosted my spirit and also serves to let me know that many people are pleased with how, by God's grace I am leading this community.

I was a history major in college. I like historical things. From the beginning of my ministry, I have kept a logbook of all the services and sacraments I have done for 20 years, so that as I look back, I can see a history of what I've done in this ministry,

especially as far as services and sacraments go. Here are a few fun facts from 20 years:

I have celebrated the Liturgy 2,040 times, with 1,661 being alone. There are 379 that I have celebrated with someone else—a visiting priest, summer camp, the Metropolitan, or when I was a visitor somewhere else. I have had the privilege to baptize 373 people and chrismate 84 others. That is 457 people who have come into the faith during my 20 year ministry, enough to fill our church 1.5 times. It's so amazing to see how many children I have baptized that are growing up and now serve in the altar and are part of GOYA. Sadly, at the same time, I have buried 146 people. Many of these I fondly remember. I have had the privilege to know and to minister to some pretty incredible people who have now gone on to eternal life. I have also celebrated 175 weddings. I've gotten to meet some incredible couples and be there for the start of marriages that are producing children of their own. And there are some families where I have had the opportunity to do multiple sacraments—In one family in particular, I have buried one parent, married three adult children and now baptized eight offspring of those three marriages.

Of course, the biggest challenge in ministry is how to keep all of these people active and engaged in the church. If everyone who I have baptized or chrismated remained with the church, imagine how large our congregation would be? This is probably the greatest challenge in ministry—to keep everyone engaged and moving in God's direction.

I mentioned on the occasion of my 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination that the last twenty years have not passed by in the blink of an eye. Many people describe raising children this way—that the time passes by quickly. The twenty years of ministry has been long and arduous. Many steps are difficult and painful. Many are joyful and rewarding. Most, even the joyful ones, require care, planning and work. I feel sustained in this ministry by three things—God's grace and mercy, your prayers and help and the love of family and friends. Thank you most sincerely for whatever positive role you play in this ministry with which God has blessed me!

## Concluding Thoughts

Summer will pass by in the blink of an eye, at least for me. There is the continual work in our parish, planning for the fall, summer camp, and family time and it will be like a well-choreographed dance to get all of it in. So, please continue to pray for me that all these things fall into place in order to have J.O.Y in all of them. Please also be patient. I will be out of the office from June 28-August 2. There will be Divine Services each Sunday. Priests are available to cover emergencies as well. I will celebrate Liturgy on Sunday, July 15. However, from June 28-July 14 I will be at summer camp and from July 16-August 1 I will be on vacation. We will also take a couple more short trips. Everything will get done, just be patient.

I hope that each of us will reflect a little bit more on how we are spending our time, particularly in prayer and in worship. Spend some time reflecting on your J.O.Y. equation. Make an effort to replace deadly habits with caring habits.

And I hope you'll have a time to relax and a time to recharge.

To everything there is a season—enjoy your summer! But keep God at the center of it. J.O.Y.!

+Fr. Stavros

# Liturgical Schedule for June & July 2018

**Sunday, June 3**

**Sunday of All Saints**

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

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

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

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Tanya Robinson, Donna Hambos; Ambassador: Skip Higdon

Caller: Betty Katsamakis; Getting Acquainted: Dwight & Ewana Forde

**Coffee Hour:** Young at Heart

**Bookstore:** Thom & Angie Bougas



**Sunday, June 10**

**2nd Sunday of Matthew**

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

**Altar Boys:** Captains Only

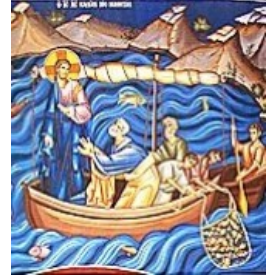
**Ushers:** Tammy Christou, George Mitseas, Florin Patrascioiu

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Lisa Alsina, Helen Cauthorn;

Ambassador: Maria Karounos; Caller: Tanya Robinson

**Coffee Hour:** Junior Olympics

**Bookstore:** Paulina Katsouli & Zhana Temelkova



**Sunday, June 17**

**3rd Sunday of Matthew / Father's Day**

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

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

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

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Maria Koutroumanis, Edie Kavouklis;

Ambassador: Debbie Kavouklis; Caller: Katherine Sakkis

**Coffee Hour:** AHEPA

**Bookstore:** Thom & Angie Bougas



**Sunday, June 24**

**Nativity of St. John the Baptist**

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

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

**Ushers:** Ron Myer, Jim Armstrong, John Alexander

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Donna Trakas, Vickie Peckham;

Ambassador: Despina Sibley; Caller: Christene Worley

**Coffee Hour:** Philoptochos

**Bookstore:** Thom & Angie Bougas



**Thursday, June 28**

**Evening Divine Liturgy for Sts. Peter and Paul**

Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

**Sunday, July 1**

**5th Sunday of Matthew - Fr. Gregory Waynick, Guest Celebrant**

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

**Altar Boys:** Anyone attending may serve

**Ushers:** Brett Mourer, Tom Georgas, Amin Hanhan

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Elaine Halkias, Julie Palios;

Ambassador: TBD; Caller: Lisa Alsina

**Coffee Hour:** TBD

**Bookstore:** Pam Irwin





**Sunday, July 8**

**6th Sunday of Matthew - Fr. Stavroforos Mamaies, Guest Celebrant**

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

**Altar Boys:** Anyone attending may serve

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

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Genie Carter, Helen Cauthorn;

Ambassador: TBD; Caller: Betty Katsamakis

**Coffee Hour:** AHEPA

**Bookstore:** Carole Fotopoulos

**Sunday, July 15**

**Sunday of the Holy Fathers - Fr. Stavros, Celebrant**

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

**Altar Boys:** Anyone attending may serve

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

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Kalliope Chagaris, Carole Fotopoulos;

Ambassador: TBD; Caller: Vickie Peckham

**Coffee Hour:** Young at Heart

**Bookstore:** Brett & Ana Mourer



**Sunday, July 22**

**8th Sunday of Matthew - Fr. Vasile Mihai, Guest Celebrant**

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

**Altar Boys:** Anyone attending may serve

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

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Dwight & Ewana Forde;

Ambassador: TBD Caller: TBD

**Coffee Hour:** The Paras Family

**Bookstore:** John and Anetta Alexander



**Sunday, July 29**

**9th Sunday of Matthew - Fr. Gregory Waynick, Guest Celebrant**

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

**Altar Boys:** Anyone attending may serve

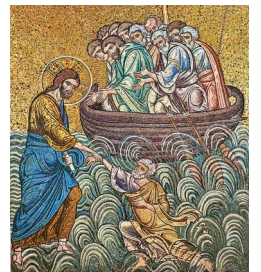
**Ushers:** Nick Kavouklis, George Trimikliniotis, Peter Theophanous

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Donna Hambos, Skip Higdon;

Ambassador: TBD Caller: Christene Worley

**Coffee Hour:** Philoptochos

**Bookstore:** TBD



**Friday, August 3**

**Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.**

**Sunday, August 5**

**10th Sunday of Matthew**

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

**Altar Boys:** Anyone attending may serve

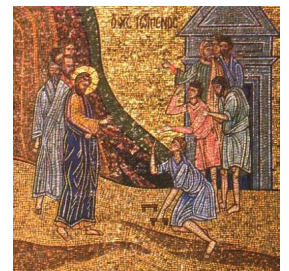
**Ushers:** Ron Myer, Jim Armstorng, John Alexander

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Debbie Kavouklis, Donna Trakas;

Ambassador: Julie Palios; Caller: Maria Karounos; Getting acquainted: Michael & Bessie Palios

**Coffee Hour:** AHEPA

**Bookstore:** TBD



**Monday, August 6**

**Feast of the Transfiguration of our Savior**

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

# Liturgical Notes for June & July 2018



## **Sunday, June 3 - Sunday of All Saints**

The period of the Pentecostarion is now complete with the commemoration of “All Saints.”

## **Sunday, June 24 - Nativity of St. John the Baptist**

This marks the feastday of the Nativity (birth) of St. John the Baptist, the Forerunner of the Lord and patron saint of our parish.

## **Thursday, June 28 - Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul (evening Liturgy)**

The Paramounts of the Apostles, Sts. Peter and Paul, have their feastday together on June 29. Sts. Peter and Paul are not only two of our greatest saints but they are two of the greatest sinners. St. Peter denied the Lord three times and St. Paul was persecuting Christians in the early church. They show us that through repentance, anyone can become a saint. We will commemorate this feastday with an evening Liturgy on Thursday, June 28 at 6:00 p.m. (Orthros at 5:00 p.m.)

## **Don't Take a Vacation from God this summer**

Services will be held each Sunday and on many weekdays throughout June and July. On a few Sundays, we will have visiting priests. So, please keep worship as part of your weekly schedule. If you are going to be out of town, we encourage you to visit an Orthodox parish in whatever town you are visiting.

## **St. John the Baptist to Participate in the Metropolis of Atlanta's St. Stephen's Summer Camp**

Our parish is tied for the largest contingent of campers who will be participating in St. Stephen's Summer Camp—33 of our children this year! Several adults will also go as staff members. Nine adults will also serve as staff member. Fr. Stavros will be serving as the director for sessions 2 and 3. One Sunday after the campers return, they will give presentations on their experience in church.

## **Fr. Stavros to be out of town for parts of June and July**

Fr. Stavros will be taking vacation time as follows this summer: Fr. Stavros will also be at the Metropolis of Atlanta's St. Stephen's Summer Camp from June 28 - July 14. Fr. Gregory Waynick (Charlotte) will celebrate Divine Liturgy on July 1 and July 29. Fr. Stavroforos Mamaies (Durham) will celebrate Divine Liturgy on July 8. Fr. Vasile Mihai (Vasile) will celebrate Divine Liturgy on Sunday, July 22. Father Stavros will celebrate all other Sundays of June and July. Please come and welcome our guest clergy. Father will also be taking several additional days off in June and in August.

**If you have a pastoral emergency while Father is out of town, please contact the church office. Father will not be answering his cell phone or email while on vacation or at summer camp.**

## **Paraklesis Services of Supplication to the Virgin Mary**

The service of Paraklesis or “Intercessory Prayer” to the Most Holy Theotokos, the Mother of God, is chanted during the fasting period of the first fourteen days of August, preceding the Feast of the Koimisis or “Falling Asleep” of the Virgin Mary, which is August 15. In this service we ask the Theotokos to pray for us and to intercede for us with her Son and our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not the Theotokos who saves us. God saves us. Thus we do not pray to the Theotokos, but we pray through the Theotokos, that through her intercession, we may find favor with God. The Paraklesis service is chanted not only for fourteen days in August, but can be chanted in at any time of the year, for those who are in need of prayer in time of sickness, despair, struggle, or any occasion, since any of life's experiences provide us an opportunity for prayer. The Paraklesis Service consists of soft, melodic chants of supplication to the Virgin Mary, and lasts about an hour. It is also one of few services in the church where we commemorate individuals out loud during the service. You will find a place to write the names of you and your families, loved ones and friends (who are living) to be commemorated at the Paraklesis Services in the August Messenger. The Feast of the Dormition will be celebrated on Wednesday, August 15. We should all attempt to keep the fast, at least from meat, during the first fourteen days of August, and we should each plan to receive Holy Communion on August 5, 12 or 15. Paraklesis dates after August 3 to be announced.







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

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

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



**Interested in Joining the Prayer Team? Want to be more ENGAGED?  
Has God called you to be one of His Disciples? Learn about the benefits  
and rewards of becoming His Disciple today.**



Over 1260 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](mailto: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. Also, make sure [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com) has been added to your contacts so that these emails stay in your Inbox rather than going to the Junk or Spam folders.



# Pascha Picnic 2018 Rain or Shine

A big thanks to our Parish Council for putting on our annual Parish Pascha Picnic on Sunday, April 15. Rain forced us to change plans at the last minute but we had an awesome afternoon eating and enjoying fellowship on the church grounds. Thanks to Charlie for setting up a bunch of great games for our children.





# 20 Years of Love, Service & Sacrifice

## We Love You Father Stavros!!!!



### 20 Years in Numbers

2,040 Divine Liturgies

373 Baptisms

84 Chrismations

175 Weddings

146 Funerals

And many many more....



# St. John the Baptist Community News

## Registry

**Baptism**-George Pangiotis Ciampolillo, son of Marcello Ciampolillo and Doukissa Moshos, was baptized on Saturday, April 28. John Papavasiliou, Michalitsa Moshos and James Kalyvas were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Petra Kyra (Petroura) Silber, daughter of David and Niki (Berdos) Silber, was baptized on Saturday, April 28. Frank Berdos was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-Declan Peter Setzer Torres, daughter of Michael Torres and Michelle Skourellos, was baptized on Sunday, April 29. Nicole Snyder, Petros Skourellos, and Dante Skourellos were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-William Jackson (Vasilios) Rindone, son of Ryan and Megan Rindone, was baptized on Sunday, April 29. Theodore Megremis and Matthew Megremis were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

**Trisagion**-Ilona Deac passed away on Wednesday, May 2. A Trisagion was offered on Friday, May 11. May her memory be eternal!

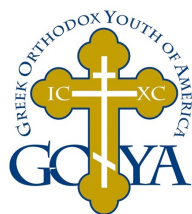
**Trisagion**-Nicholas Cather passed away on Tuesday, May 8. A Trisagion was offered on Monday, May 14. May his memory be eternal!

**Funeral**-George Pavlopoulos passed away on Saturday, May 12. Funeral services were held on Thursday, May 17. May his memory be eternal!

## Get Acquainted Sunday, June 3 & August 5



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



**GOYA Meeting - Sunday, June 3** The GOYA Meeting will be Sunday, June 3, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. We will be preparing for the Junior Olympics. Dinner, as always, will be provided. We invite all students who are finishing 6th grade, entering 7th grade this fall, to join GOYA and to join us for both the June 3 meeting and participate in the Junior Olympics.

**Sun State Eastern Orthodox Junior Olympics** will be on June 8-10, 2018.

**GOYA Lock-in on June 25** We are planning a GOYA lockin for June 25-26. More information to follow. Contact Maria Koutroumanis if you are interested in attending.

**Junior Olympics - Volunteers Needed!** We will be hosting our annual Sun State Eastern Orthodox Junior Olympics on **June 8-10**. This event brings GOYAns (teenagers) from all over Florida to our parish for a weekend of athletics and spirituality. In order for the event to be a success, we need many other volunteers to assist him in many capacities, including working at various athletic venues, cooking and serving at the church, and some administrative jobs, such as entering data as to who won various contests while the event is going on. This event is a chance to not only showcase our community and to do something meaningful for our young people, it is also a chance for us to work together on something and get to know one another better. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Dwight Forde (forde.d2@gmail.com) 561-310-5034 or Maria Koutroumanis (mrk1997@verizon.net) 813-245-3854.

## Community Outreach - Saturday, June 16 & July 21

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



## Young Adult Ministry - Sunday, June 10 & July 22

The YAL fellowship dinners will be on Sunday, June 10 & July 22, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Please RSVP to Charlie if you are going to attend. Dates may change. Charlie will send an email.

# AFGLC Tampa Bay Scholarship Recipients Announced

The American Foundation for Greek Language & Culture (AFGLC) is proud to award the following Scholarships in the Tampa Bay Community:

AFGLC Peter & Sophia Kourmolis Scholarship Recipients for 2018

**Mr. Gregory James Koutroumanis**

**Ms. Katherine "Chace" Sibley**

AFGLC Dr. Demetrios G. Halkias Scholarship Recipients for 2018

**Ms. Nedi Christou Ferekides**

**Ms. Samantha Ann Horan (Holy Trinity Clearwater, FL)**

AFGLC Dr. Byron P. Palls Scholarship Recipient for 2018

**Mr. Michael Anastasios Vlahos (Holy Trinity Clearwater, FL)**

AFGLC Dr. Byron P. Palls Student Essay Reading

**Mr. Dimitrios Kartas (Clearwater)**

The AFGLC each year presents "13" \$1,000.00 scholarships in the Tampa Bay Area as well as Canton/Akron Ohio area for the above Scholarships.

The Legacy of Dr. Halkias, Dr. Palls and Peter & Sophia Kourmolis lives on.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE 2018 RECIPIENTS !**



## Interested in serving as an altar boy?

Any of our young men who will enter 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the fall, or who are older and are not serving presently, are welcome to serve in the altar beginning in August. If you are interested in having your son added to an altar team, please contact Fr. Stavros by June 30. New teams will take effect on Sunday, August 12.

Father has scheduled two teams for each Sunday of June (except June 10—Captains only) knowing that there will be people absent each Sunday because of vacation. Please do not serve unless it is your turn, even if you know someone is not serving. Anyone is welcome to serve July 1- August 5.

**IMPORTANT  
NOTICE**

*"I will wash mine hands in innocence: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord: That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwells." Psalm 26:6-8*

## We have many parishioners in need of help!



Here is just one example. Her caregivers that come throughout the week, genuinely do love her but do not understand her language, her culture or her Orthodox Christianity. Since she is unable to get to church and needs the interaction with people of the same culture and mind. It is becoming more and more difficult to get her out of house to do some activities. We would like to propose that we help this parishioner by making a schedule of different people to spend some time with her during the week while the caregivers are home. We are looking for about an hour visit of conversation, to keep her company, speak to her about Greek culture, cooking and music. She loves to speak in Greek but, she also speaks very well in English, as well as, Italian, French and Arabic fluently. This is an open invitation to all members of our community. We are simply looking for someone to visit her on a weekly basis. We want to try to brighten her week with a visit so that way she doesn't get so lonely that she gives up the will to live. The visitors can be of any age. We have many people in our community that are in need of visits and assistance. As a part of our community and Body of Christ, it is our responsibility to take care of them and show them some love. We have many people like this. Some just need a visit and others need rides to church, or maybe a phone call or a card. If you are interested in fulfilling this need and perhaps helping organize the Visitation Committee, please contact the church office at 813-876-8830 and we can get you in contact with these parishioners and talk more about creating an outreach opportunity here at St. John's.

# The Young at Heart Staying Busy in the Summer

The Young at Heart will have their next meeting on June 7 at 11:30 a.m. in the Kourmolis Center. We would also like to announce that we will be starting game days to play Bingo, Bunko and the like once a month. It will be for grab bag prizes and we will have a "pot luck" lunch at the church. The first one is going to be on Thursday, June 21. We would love to have you join us for the fun and fellowship. We are also going to meet at the church for a "pot luck" luncheon on

Thursday, June 7 to put together "Well Wishes Bags" that will be given to those of our church family who are sick at home or in hospital. We will include such things as lotions, dry shampoo, reading materials, icons etc.. So, if you have any of these such things and would like to donate them or join us for that, we would love to have you.



The Young at Heart would also like to take a moment to thank all of you who came out to support our dance last February. With your help we will be able to write a check for the St. John mortgage in the amount of \$3,500 this year. We could not have done this without the love and support so many of you give us each year. It truly lifts us up to have so many wonderful caring people in our church family!

We love you all so much!

-The Young at Heart



## A BIG THANK YOU to Catherine Mitseas!

Catherine is leaving the Parish Council after four years of faithful service. Catherine has been instrumental in establishing our Youth Protection Program (which she will still oversee) as well as organizing all parish records in an extensive records retention project. Thank you Catherine! Edie Kavouklis has been appointed by the Parish Council to serve the remainder of Catherine's term. Welcome Edie!!

## A BIG THANK YOU to Nicholas Andreadakis!

Nick has served as our chanter for the past 17 years. Nick and his family are relocating to Pennsylvania to be near their children. We thank Nick for his many years of exemplary service as our chanter (and for most of that as our administrator). We will miss Nick's angelic voice and welcoming personality. God bless you Nick!



## Extra Services for Sundays must be Scheduled through the Office

Extra services include Memorial Services, Artoklasies, Forty-Day blessing of babies and blessing of Fanouropita breads. Please do not just bring these things or arrive at church on Sundays or feast-days expecting these services to be done with no notice. Please schedule through the office. Thank you for your cooperation. We are more than willing to do these services. We try to plan each service accordingly so that there is a sense of order to our Liturgical and Sacramental Life.



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

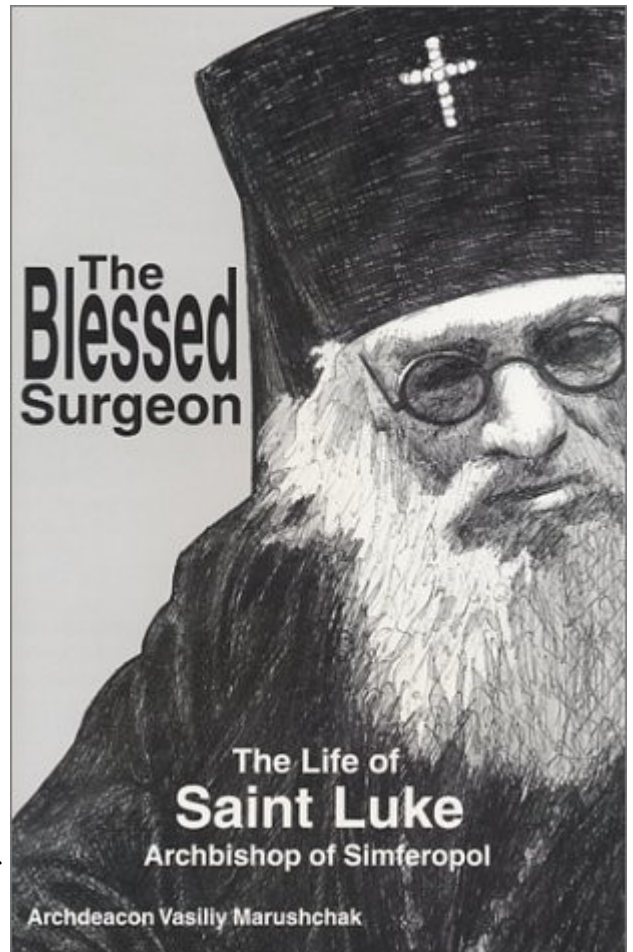
“The Blessed Surgeon—The Life of Saint Luke Archbishop of Simferopol”—World-famous pioneering surgeon, tortured confessor, archbishop, and miracle-worker---Saint Luke is one of the most intriguing victims of Soviet oppression. Outspoken regarding his faith---he would lecture on surgery in universities wearing his cassock and cross---he was exiled and tortured multiple times. Yet the authorities could not deny his exceptional medical skills; he was appointed a chief surgeon overseeing the treatment of injured soldiers during World War II, and he received the Stalin award for his innovative surgical work. This book documents his personal spiritual struggles, his self-sacrificing love for patients, his miracles, and his bold spiritual guidance during the Church’s most difficult period in Russia.

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

P.S. We hope you can join us on Sunday, June 3, 2018, for a book review. We will continue our discussion of “Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives—The Life and Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica.”

P.P.S. If there is any Orthodox Christian religious item that you would like the bookstore to order, please contact us. We are often able to get a discount as a bookstore.

Brett and Ana Mourer



## 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](mailto:exchange2861@yahoo.com).

# Class of 2018



**Nicholas Alsina** (top left) graduated from H.B. Plant High School and will be attending the University of South Florida - St. Petersburg.



**Alexa Alsina** (top right) graduated Cum Laude from the University of Florida with a Bachelor of Science in Biology. Currently applying to Physician Assistant School.



**Karter Lenardos** (left), graduated with honors from Cambridge Christian School and will attend The University of Tampa in the fall.



**TAMPA SPARTANS**

**Stephanie Owens** (right) graduated from Joe E. Newsome High School, Lithia FL. She will be attending Florida State University in the Summer. She is majoring in Criminology.



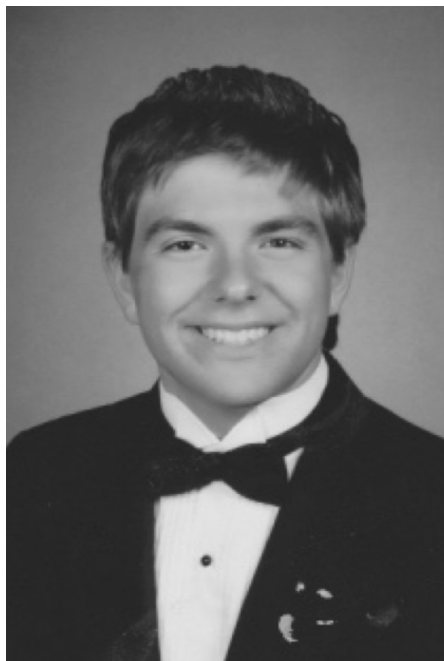
**Savvas Ferekides** (right), graduated from Hillsborough High School International Baccalaureate Program and will be attending the University of Florida to study Computer Engineering.



**Christos Nenos** (left) graduated from Pepin Academy of Tampa (High School). He plans to enter the job force and take classes at Hillsborough Community College.

**HILLSBOROUGH**  
Community College





**Dean Mitseas** (left) graduated from Strawberry Crest High School, where he finished among the top 12 percent of students. He will attend the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in the fall and has been accepted into the School of Business.



**Anna Thomas** (above) graduated from Robinson High School. She will be attending Christopher Newport University in Virginia and will be studying Communications.

THE UNIVERSITY of  
**TENNESSEE**   
KNOXVILLE



**Corinna Sue Robinson (left)** graduated from Grace Christian School and will be attending Florida Southern College in the fall and will double major in Psychology and Biology.

  
**CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT**  
UNIVERSITY

**Congratulations  
Graduates!**



**Alexandria Katherine Stilian** (left) graduated from The University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Human Communications.





# Why Should I be a Christian?

By Brett and Ana Mourer

*(Note: Brett and Ana Mourer are extremely faithful stewards of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church. Most recently they have done an amazing job in revitalizing the church bookstore. The following article was the result of a question which was brought up during the Monday Night Bible study with Charlie Hambos. With their blessing and Father Stavros' we have published it in this issue of The Messenger.)*

Often we have encountered family or friends who have told us "Why should I have to believe in Jesus?" "Why can't I be a good and moral person on my own without Christ?" "Why do I need Him?" "There are plenty of other people who are not Christian who are more moral than Christians."

We are sometimes puzzled as to what to say to our family or friends concerning these comments because we have to admit that to a certain degree that they are right. There are, in fact, very good and moral people who are not Christians who we know are trying hard just like all of us to be good people. We sometimes wonder what our response should be when we hear comments like these.

A good place to start will be to define ourselves and understand what Christianity is in comparison to other "religions." Like our fellow Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians, we Orthodox Christians are also guilty to a certain degree of putting Christianity in the same category as other religions. We simply view Christianity as another religion of this world that a person can choose from, when it comes to leading a spiritual life. But this is far from the truth. Christianity is NOT a religion!

We may ask ourselves if it is not a religion, then what is it? Christianity is a KINGDOM. At the beginning of each Divine Liturgy, Fr. Stavros chants: "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of The Son and of the Holy Spirit..." Which Kingdom is Fr. Stavros talking about? He is talking about an actual Kingdom that exists now in heaven and also on earth through the Church. We have a King, Jesus Christ, who unlike other earthly kings is willing to share His Kingdom and allow us to sit on His throne and become priests and kings by adoption even though we are not of any royal bloodline. None of us is a god, but God is calling us to become gods through theosis and share in the rulership of His Kingdom.

There is no other religion or belief that teaches that. Many religions teach similar moral codes to Christianity. If we simply focus on these moral codes, without the King, we will Miss the Kingdom. This is why it is not about the moral code. It is about becoming children of God, becoming part of His Family, and sharing in the rulership of His Kingdom.

This is why you can have a Christian who might not be as moral and as good as someone who is not a Christian, but still be considered a friend of God, and be dearly loved by God. To give you an example of that let's relate the story of a monk who lived on Mount Athos who was very pious and prayed regularly.

You might not know this, but on Mount Athos animals were not allowed. One day the Mother of God appeared to this pious monk and told him: "Go and get the three pigs from the ditch." The monk wondered what this was about since no animals were allowed on Mt. Athos. But he was obedient and he started looking throughout the forest and all of a sudden he came upon a ditch. He looked inside and he saw three monks who were drunk and because of their drunkenness, had fallen into the ditch. He understood now what the Mother of God wanted him to do, and he said to himself: "Truly they are pigs." But the Mother of God answered him and said "Yes, they are pigs, but they are my pigs." These monks were behaving like pigs, but they did not leave the monastic life. They were still hanging in there with all their faults.

What this story shows us is that when we say that we accept our dearest Jesus to be our Savior and King and that we want to be adopted into the Family of God, we become His children with all of our faults and weaknesses. We are His Family. So, even if we are worse off morally or are not as wise, or are not as good as some heathens, we are still the children of God and He loves us because we are not His enemies, we recognize Him as our King, and we want Him to be Our King.

This does not mean that we should take God's grace for granted and just keep sinning. We know that we must keep reaching to become like our King. We must continue on the journey of Theosis (i.e., working out our salvation with the help of Jesus) by becoming more and more like our Elder Brother and our Heavenly Parent. However, in this process of becoming like Him, He judges us individually and does not compare us to anyone else and is merciful to each and every one of us.

There are many other differences, but we will only discuss one more difference that Christianity has that other religions of this world do not have. No other religion has a Savior like our Savior. Our Savior willingly sacrifices Himself and gives His own body and blood to his children in order to feed them. No other



religion has this. By partaking of Christ Himself, we mystically become like Him. So, the process of Theosis does not depend only on us and our good works, but the Mercy of God because by partaking of Him we mystically become like Him. This is all beautifully and symbolically presented in the image of the pelican (who represents Christ) who wounds himself in order to feed his children with his own blood.

A good reference book on discussing differences between Christianity (The Kingdom of God) and various other religions please read the book: "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy" by Priest Andrew Stephen Damick.

If we ever find ourselves feeling more superior or better for being in the Kingdom of God in comparison to other people of other religions or atheists, we need to remind ourselves that we are not the judge of people; God is the judge. He will judge each individual according to His love and mercy. It is not our responsibility to judge others. If we have been called to be part of this Kingdom we call Christianity, then let's focus on our responsibility which is the process of our own Theosis.

We wanted to circle back to what we should say to our friends or family who feel that in order to be a good person they don't have to have Christ. In our liturgical books, there are prayers that the priest says before receiving Holy Communion. Father Stavros says it out loud, but we are supposed to say it silently if we are partaking: "I believe Lord, and confess that You are truly the Christ, the Son of the living God.....I will not reveal Your mysteries to your adversaries. Nor will I give you a kiss like Judas. But as the thief I confess to you Lord, remember me in your Kingdom, Master, remember me in your Kingdom, Holy One, remember me in your Kingdom."

In our conversations with our family or friends, if we see that a person is an adversary to our Lord, it is better not to reveal the Mysteries of Christ because the conversation might not turn out so well, and the person might end up being a worse adversary from before. The New Testament references that either the Lord or the Holy Spirit added souls to the Church. It does not say Peter or Paul or Timothy added to the Church, but it was the Lord or the Holy Spirit. It is our duty to spread the Gospel, but it is the Holy Spirit that does the converting of the hearts of men. We sow seeds, but it is the Holy Spirit that turns the hearts of men. We have to use discernment with each person we talk with. If someone is truly and honestly interested in knowing more about Orthodoxy, it is our duty to share with them the mysteries of Christ our King and what Christianity truly is. But if we sense that the person is an adversary, it is best to pray for that person. In other words; "Less words, more prayer." Let's remember the words of St. Porphyrios who said: "Words enter the ears, but prayer enters the heart."

Concerning praying for our friends and our loved ones, we oftentimes feel that we must say something that will convince a person to become a Christian. This is very much a Protestant way of thinking. What Orthodoxy teaches is "Save yourself and you will save many others." Orthodoxy is not trying to say that we should not evangelize. It is simply saying that in order to truly help others, you must help yourself FIRST. It is like the instructions we get when we are on a plane. The stewardess tells the adults that in case of an emergency to put oxygen on themselves first, and then put it on the child. The same idea applies to Christianity. If we don't work on ourselves first, then we will have less wisdom as far as what to say and what not to say to our friends and relatives.



Several years ago, we had to deal with a loved one who told us that they no longer believed in Christ. We realized that words were going to do more harm than good and that we had to resort to prayer only. What we realized is that we had a lack of faith in God that He actually can turn the heart of our loved one. We thought that it was some magic words that we needed to say that would change this person's mind. But we soon realized that this was not so. This situation also tested our faith in God. Did we believe that God CAN change the heart of a person? We finally put God to the test and He came through. We had to be patient and loving and continue to pray and finally the person had an epiphany and of their own choosing wanted to know more about God. Once our loved one expressed a desire to know more, we shared many things about our Lord.

The answer to our prayers for our loved ones may not come quickly. God does things in His own timing, but we must not get tired and stop praying. Some answers to prayers take a lifetime. We must ask ourselves, are we patient to pray that long for our family and friends?

So, each situation will vary as to what we should do or say, or remain silent with our loved ones and friends who are not interested in Jesus as their King. If we see there is little interest, it may be best to only share a little about the mysteries of our Lord. If a person has a lot of interest, we can share much more of the mysteries of God. If we sense that the person is an adversary, it is best to simply pray. We have to pray for discernment as to what to do in each situation. Every person is different and unique. This discernment is gained through the process of Theosis. Philippians 2:12-13 says, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

Please join us on during the Monday Night Bible Studies or one of our other Small Groups to keep conversations like this going. Thank you to Brett and Ana for their contribution.



# June & July 2018 SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Our last day of Sunday School was on May 20 and we would like to thank everyone for a successful Sunday School Year and Graduation Ceremony. Rick and Vickie Peckham hosted our end of the year party and everyone had such a fabulous time. We can't thank them enough for opening up their home to us.

Congratulations to our all of our students and especially our High School Graduates for an amazing Sunday School year. At the End of the Year Ceremony each student was given a gift and a certificate from the Sunday School and our graduates received a Holy Week Book.

The following students had PERFECT ATTENDANCE for the ENTIRE YEAR of Sunday School and were acknowledged at our Graduation Ceremony.

+++Congratulations to Santino Bavaro, Gianni Bavaro, Niko Bavaro, Lola Bavaro, Antonio Bavaro, Kris Christopher, Kyra Christopher, Aspasia Panos, Vasilios Panos, Ariana Thatcher, Andrew Thatcher, Yanni Trimikliniotis, George Xenick, Elizabeth Xenick, and Artemis Xenick.

FATHER STAVROS and CHARLIE HAMBOS are such an inspiration to all of us and we appreciate everything that they do for the Sunday School. We are very thankful for their leadership, guidance, and teachings throughout this school year. We would like to thank all of our parents for bringing their children to Sunday School and to their children who are always eager to learn more about their faith.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank the SUNDAY SCHOOL STAFF for making this Sunday School year a success. THEY ARE:

Director of Sunday School: Vickie Peckham

Director of Music/Special Programs: Maria Xenick

Music Assistant: Pam Irwin

Toddler Two's: Mary Ann Konstas and Anastasia Stonestreet - Co-Teachers

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

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

Grade 1: Melissa Krinos - Teacher and Eleni Pessemier - Assistant

Grade 2: Oliviana Catrone - Teacher and Georgia Kane - Assistant

Grade 3: Amy Kafantaris

Grade 4: Debbie Ferekides

Grade 5: Vickie Peckham and Ana Mourer - Assistant

Middle School: Marina Choundas and Heidi Borgeas - Co-Teachers

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

We are blessed to have most of our teachers returning next year. Unfortunately Peggy Bradshaw, Melissa Krinos and Heidi Borgeas will not be returning as teachers, but will continue with the Sunday School in another capacities. Peggy will continue to be the Director of the Oratorical Festival and Melissa Krinos will continue teaching all the students about Prospora and at the same time providing over a hundred loaves of this special bread for the church. She also makes the Vasilopita, with the coin inside, for the Sunday School. We can't thank both these amazing women enough, for all that they have done and will continue to do for our Sunday School.

Our last Youth Sunday of the year took place on May 20. Our children have joined the choir in singing our liturgical hymns throughout the year, on a monthly basis, under the leadership of Maria Xenick. Melissa Krinos also conducted lessons on the meaning and making of Prospora with each classroom this year. We would like to thank both of them their valuable service and all the high school students who read the Epistle throughout the year. These Youth Sundays have been a blessing and a wonderful opportunity for our children.

We would like to wish everyone a joyful summer vacation and we hope to see everyone in church during these next few months. We will start back in August following the public school calendar and we are already planning for next year. If you have any suggestions on how we can improve our Sunday School Program, please e-mail Vickie Peckham at [vickiepeckham@gmail.com](mailto:vickiepeckham@gmail.com) or call 813-758-3102.

# June & July 2018 Stewardship Message & Update

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

***We thank our loyal Stewards of St. John the Baptist.*** Your pledge is a sign of your growing commitment to Christ to share fully your gifts. And this comes with the understanding that your treasure is needed to sustain and grow our beloved church!

As you go about your summer enjoying family, friends and travel remember the church is our second home. A place to come together to learn the teachings of Jesus Christ and enjoy Orthodox Christian fellowship. Our loyal Stewards understand in order to sustain our place of worship, we are obligated to fulfill certain needs, both functional and financial. The Church requires the time, talents and treasures of all our members to operate successfully!

Engagement is the word Fr. Stavros has expanded upon and we see this growing every day in our parish with expanding ministries and outreach and many volunteers. Our Orthodox Christian Stewardship is a way of life, which acknowledges accountability, reverence and responsibility before God. Stewardship calls on the faithful to cheerfully offer back to God a portion of the gifts with which they have been blessed which includes Time, Talent and Treasure!

Year to Year Comparison ~	2018*	2017*
Pledged Year to Date	<b>\$417,947</b>	\$386,636
Received Year to Date	<b>\$224,967</b>	\$209,278
Average Pledge	<b>\$1,476</b>	\$1,366
Median Pledge	<b>\$900</b>	\$750
# of Individual/Families Pledged/Giving	<b>313</b>	320

\*YTD as of 5/11/18 & 5/17/17

We are deeply grateful to our loyal Stewards of St. John your gifts and talents that help sustain our church and enable us to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. ***May today be your day to Glorify God!***

## ~ Stewardship Housekeeping & Need to Know ~

- A list of Pledged Stewards was printed in the April Messenger. We will print a list again in October and as a reminder you must be a ‘Member in Good Standing’ to participate and vote at Parish Assembly meetings or run for Parish Council in the fall or become Godparents or sponsors in an Orthodox Christian church.
- We remain with over 71 Families that pledged last year but not this year and encourage you to complete a pledge form TODAY!. The work of Christ truly depends on all of us and your pledge is a sign of a growing commitment to Christ.
- Mid-year Stewardship Summary Statements will be mailed near the end of June providing a recap of your individual/family pledge and dollars received year to date. Please take time to review for your records and contact the church office or a Stewardship Committee member with any questions.
- We love hearing from our parishioners, if you would like to share something regarding your calling to Stewardship, please contact Sandra Pappas at [spappas11@gmail.com](mailto:spappas11@gmail.com)
- Our Online Pledge Forms are easy to complete. Hard Copy forms are also available in the Church Narthex or Bookstore. Stewardship Donations and General Donations may also be made online via PayPal as a one time or recurring commitment or setup with auto deductions from your bank account.
- Visit <http://greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com/2018-stewardship/> to complete your Stewardship Pledge Form and make your gift today. For any questions, please speak directly with Fr. Stavros, Sandra Pappas or Pete Trakas-Stewardship Co-Chairs. We are here for YOU!



# The Day the Chalice Ran Out...

by Fr. Mark Sietsema

## Imagine a Sunday ...

You are in line for Holy Communion. Ahead of you were the Sunday School children and the first five rows of parishioners. But now it's your turn. You make the Sign of the Cross and step forward to the chalice. You say your baptismal name, you raise your head, and you open your mouth nice and wide ...

... and nothing happens.

You look at the priest. He shrugs. "I'm so sorry," he says. "It's all gone. There just wasn't enough for everyone who wanted some."

You nod sympathetically. (Though it puzzles you how this could happen.) You turn and head for the andidoron bowl and grab a piece and walk back to your pew.

As you head down the side aisle, something catches your eye. You turn and see ...

... that the Communion line is still running! The priest is still dipping the spoon in the chalice and still placing the Holy Gifts in the mouths of your fellow parishioners.

Wait one second! He said there wasn't enough for everyone. He said it was all gone. How could he lie like that to me!?!?!

Wouldn't this be an outrageous scene? How would you react? What would you say to the priest, who had enough Communion for everyone else, but nothing for you? Would it not be a scandal?

It would. A terrible sin.

But let's turn the tables on this one for a moment ... Isn't this precisely what some of us have done to God?

The Parish Council makes many appeals throughout the year for stewardship contributions. Some of our parishioners are very cheerful givers, and whether their gifts are big or small, they give from the heart, readily and speedily. We thank them and bless them for their generosity.

Others, however, are reluctant givers. They have to be asked many, many times, and often the response is. "I don't have any money to give. There just isn't enough for everyone who wants money from me."

And the parish and its leaders nod sympathetically and move on. Except ... we notice that those who had nothing to give to God have plenty of money to spend on entertainments and pleasures—cable TV and a new iPhone, Starbucks coffees and restaurant meals, nights at the Wharton Center and great vacations.

When the church came calling, they said there was no money left. But there was money, and money to spare. We are all fooling ourselves if we think that we don't have a little bit each week to give back to God from the material blessings He has given us. It just means denying ourselves a few creature comforts (some of which are perhaps not so healthy for us anyway).

So far this year, over 170 parish families have responded to the call for stewardship. We are grateful for their faithful support of this church and her ministries. But as we review the ledgers, we find another 120 parish families that have yet to make that commitment. The church has been there for them, when they wanted to receive Communion, or have a baptism, or a wedding, or needed a funeral or a confession, ... The Church has yet to tell anyone: So sorry ... no can do ... we ran out ...

If you are one of those who has yet to respond in 2017, please step forward now and be counted. The weeks of summer bring beautiful weather outdoors, but emptier coffers here at the church. Your timely stewardship gifts will be greatly appreciated.

AND ... you can have the satisfaction of knowing, the next time you step into the Communion line, that no one is running out in any way.

A Blessed Summer to All!

Fr. Mark Sietsema is the Proistamenos of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Lansing, Michigan. (Written for his church, but we like the message).

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

### Do you Like our Facebook page?

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



### Live Streaming

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

To access this page

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

All of the services are available to watch at anytime.

### Pictures

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



# Join the St. John Legacy Society Today!

## Make a Plan to Amplify Your Impact

**Please consider including St. John Greek Orthodox Church in your estate plans.**

Whether you would like to put your donation to work today or benefit our church after your lifetime, you can find a charitable plan that lets you provide for your family and at the same time supports St. John. After you've considered how much you'd like to leave each of your heirs, would you consider leaving what might be left over in your estate to St. John? Take care of yourself and your family, plan for your future, do everything you want to do in your lifetime – and then consider leaving what is left (or the residue) to our church. Whatever you do, please be sure to consult your financial and legal advisors and let your family members know of your intentions.

Become a founding member of the St. John Legacy Society. For more information about this new dimension to stewardship, please contact Fr. Stavros at 813-876-8830 ext. 103 or email at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com) to learn how you can have an impact on our church.

### 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  
Nicholas & Vaso Anton - Dunedin, FL  
Gerald & Deborah Galovic - Tampa, FL

**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.

# Oratorical Festival Speeches Continued



The Parish Level Competition of the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival was held on Sunday, March 11. Nine of our young people participated. A special thank you Peggy Bradshaw for organizing this event each year and to the judges and everyone who assisted her.

Congratulations to all the participants – John Palios, Elizabeth Xenick, Angelina Krinos and Antonio Bavaro who were in the junior division. Harry Koutroumanis, Savvas Ferekides, Artemis Xenick, Anna Thomas and Sophia Krinos were in the senior division. Antonio Bavaro, Angelina Krinos, Artemis Xenick and Anna Thomas advanced to the district level of competition held at St. George Greek Orthodox Church in New Port Richey on Saturday, April 28. From there Anna Thomas and Angelina Krinos moved on to the Metropolis Level held in Charleston, SC on May 18-20. Again we want to thank all the adults who helped out during our local level competition—Nicole Mantzanas, David Voykin, and Kenny Kleanthi Henderson were the senior judges. Stavrula Crafa, Tom Georgas, Brett Mourer (Head Judge) were the junior judges. Dory Passalaris was the timekeeper. This month, we are including the four speeches of our finalists.



## The Rich Man and Lazarus

By Antonio Bavaro

Researching the parables that are mentioned in Luke, really opened my eyes and sparked my interest. But the one that really stands out to me is the one about the rich man and Lazarus. I wonder, am I more like the rich man or am I like Lazarus? It bothers me because I want to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven one day, but what if I become someone as arrogant as the rich man?

Today, we see so many stories of wealthy people flaunting their wealth everywhere. There are reality shows about rich people and some of them seem to embody the rich man that Jesus spoke about over 2000 years ago.

The parable starts out explaining what the rich man was wear-

ing. It said “he was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day.” I wonder what people thought of this rich man.

I bet he was probably not very approachable, and I think he probably enjoyed what a modern day celebrity experiences.

I notice how people in school talk about their dad knowing someone famous in Tampa, and it seems like they are really proud of it. It’s almost like they base their self-worth on knowing a person who knows a person who is in the NBA. But, what I really have noticed is how some people who seem to have some sort of an “in” with someone else becomes influenced by them. After, reading this parable, I don’t know why they are so impressed with these famous people. And for all I know they could be as cruel as the rich man. That just doesn’t seem to be something that followers probably think about.

Thankfully, I do see famous people, for example Dwayne Johnson, who do extraordinary things to help underprivileged people. People who don’t even know where their next meal is going to come from or when they are going to get out of a hospital.

But the rich man in this parable could care less about anyone but himself, least of all Lazarus.

Lazarus was worse than any homeless person I think I have ever seen in Tampa. The parable states that the, “dogs licked his sores”, and “he longed to eat just crumbs that fell off of the table of the rich man.” He must have been in so much agony.

The parable directly calls Lazarus a “beggar”. When I think of the word beggar, it really bothers me. Why can’t they get a job or get help. I am not even 15, and I was able to get a job at Publix, so why can’t a grown man or woman get a job?

But unlike the rich man, I feel sorry for modern day “beggars”. I’m sure it’s not even their fault.

So, who do I identify with? The rich man or Lazarus?

Really neither one. I am not poor but, If I want “fine things like the rich man” I have to work for it. Also I can’t identify with the beggar, because, I have never missed a meal.

On Judgement Sunday, the Gospel Lesson states that those who feed the hungry, those who clothe and shelter other people are the ones that get into heaven. The ones that don’t do those things are thrown into the “eternal fire” of hell.



That is a very scary thought to me. What if I forget to feed someone in need? What if I meant to give to the poor, but just never got around to it?

What if there was a kid at school that I could have made my friend, but just didn't take the time to do it? God doesn't seem to be very forgiving about these type of neglection. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man begged "Father Abraham" to have pity on him.

As the parable goes on, "Father Abraham" reminds him of all the good things he had on earth while Lazarus had none. Lazarus received terrible things on earth and is now confronted in Heaven.

I have to conclude that these are the most important parts of Christianity. Loving thy neighbors, having empathy, looking out for others and sharing our wealth with others who have none.

*Antonio Bavaro just finished 9th grade. He is the son of Dan and Anna-Maria Bavaro.*



## Have We Been Saved?

By Anna Thomas

“Have you been saved?”

That was one of the first things I was asked when I walked into my new, Christian high school freshman year.

“Have you been saved?” I wasn't quite sure what the question meant, but I assumed the answer was yes. I mean, I am a Christian and I go to Church every Sunday. So, yes, I guess I'm saved.

Over the course of my two years at that high school, I found myself running into that same question over and over again. I wasn't confident with saying yes or no, so I found ways to avoid giving a direct response.

But I wanted to know. *Have I been saved?*

I went to my dad for some answers. What are they asking? What does this mean? What do I say? He smiled, as if he was all too familiar with the situation I was in, and said something I will never forget: “You have been saved, you are being saved, and you will continue to be saved.”

In the icon of The Ladder of Divine Ascent, we see Christ's followers making their way up the ladder, toward God and the angels in heaven, one step at a time. But, as the icon shows, the demons are pulling them off track, forcing them to start from the bottom again.

Our walk with Christ is just like that; everlasting. The moment we believe we have reached salvation is the moment we let our pride get the best of us. And we, consequently, start all over. Step by step, day by day, prayer by prayer.

So, as a 17 year old high school kid, I'm always struggling with my faith. It's not an easy thing to dedicate your mind and heart to God, and if I'm not thinking in Christ-like ways, it's very easy for me to not act in Christ-like ways.

My classmates see me in the halls at school every day with my cross around my neck. And what do I do? I'll yell out a curse word or gossip about a friend, all while I'm portraying God's love on my heart. If that's what they witness, then they aren't seeing the cross, they're just seeing jewelry. And I fall back to the bottom of the ladder.

I was given a children's prayer book when I was about seven years old. And there's one page that has been bookmarked ever since. It says this: Just before yielding yourself off to sleep, say: Into Thy hands, O Lord Jesus Christ my God, I commit my spirit. Do Thou bless me, do Thou have mercy on me and grant me eternal life. Amen.

I try to say that prayer every night, whether I'm at the bottom of the ladder or rising above the next step. But my private prayers aren't what my classmates see. It isn't enough to check the prayer box off of my to-do list. Prayer is constant. In a way, my cross holds me accountable for my faults; for not constantly trying to act in that Christ-like way.

The good news is that I get to keep going. Every morning-- every minute, is a chance to do right.

If I could summarize everything I have learned about the Orthodox faith in one word it would be “eternal”. Eternal faith, eternal works, eternal awareness, and eternal love.

Accepting Christ for who He is alone will not save me. I can't say the prayer one night and be guaranteed salvation. Walking with Him, walking *towards* Him, no matter how many times we trip and fall-- that's what's saving us.

So, I'll keep my cross on. Because I've learned-- and I'm still learning, that I can't just abandon my faith when I want to sin, or when I don't want to try anymore because I've said my prayer that night. I am always a Christian. He is always our God.

So, yes. We, as Orthodox Christians, through constant prayer and awareness, have been saved. We have been saved. We are being saved. And we will continue to be saved as we grow in our faith.

*Anna Thomas just graduated from Robinson High School. She is the daughter of John and Stephanie Thomas.*



## Christ's disciples made the commitment to follow Him without knowing what the outcome might be.

### What does it mean to follow Christ today?

By Artemis Xenick

**T**here are roughly seven billion people in the world, each one with a distinct identity and culture. As of 2015, about 31% identified as Christians. So how do we stand out in a world where the majority is not like us?

Because of social media and advanced technology and transportation methods, spreading Christianity is said to be easier than ever. But following Christ is hard. To be truly committed to Him, we have to be prepared to drop everything for Christ, be different and not fall into the strict conforms of society, and be connected to Christ through prayer and scripture.

The disciples are perfect examples of sinners transformed by Christ. Mark 1:17+18 says, *"Follow me," Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.' At once they left their nets and followed Him.*" Instantly, Simon and Andrew, the first disciples, FOLLOWED. Even with doubts, fears, insecurities, imperfections; they FOLLOWED.

Take Matthew. He was a tax collector - the most dishonorable job a person could have. He probably spent a lot of his time in the backs of taverns, counting the money he corrupted from innocents. When searching for disciples, Matthew should've been the last person for Jesus to consider, but Jesus chose him BECAUSE he was flawed. Though Matthew was undoubtedly in shock of Jesus's decision and was probably doubtful of himself, he STILL dropped his entire lifestyle to follow Christ.

We must strive to follow their examples and put EVERYTHING else aside to follow Christ. In the solar systems of our crazy chaotic lives, Jesus must be the sun; everything else must simply be stars.

Surrendering to anything is discouraged in our broken society, because surrender connotes weakness, submissiveness. Yet we as Christians see that surrendering yourself to Christ is something that only the strongest people can do. Because of the intense friction between these definitions, showcasing our meaning of surrender means standing out and being different, yet another one of society's taboos. Because our world is so thickly coated with lies, selfishness, and immorality, it is up to us to be the difference, to be the CHANGE.

Our world is said to be predetermined with rules and boundaries but WE, the beholders of the Way, the Truth, and the Life, are called to break through these barriers. You are the only person in the entire universe that can make YOUR special contribution, so you shouldn't be held back by your own fear. YES, being different is hard. NO, not every person will approve of you. But the world didn't approve of Christ either. And to follow Him, we need to be like Him.

Esther 4:14 says, *"Perhaps you were born for such a time as this."* In light of recent horrific events occurring in our world, such as school shootings and terrorist attacks, people are living in fear and wishing that times were different. But Christ teaches us to embrace our world as it is and to share the light of our faith with the world. We were made for this. You were made for RIGHT NOW.

Truly being different for Christ means not being afraid to stand up for Him. Yes, it is scary when the world judges you. John 16:33 provides consolation, *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* We get so caught up in ourselves that we forget that the reason why we are here is to carry out the mission bestowed on us by our Creator.

A true connection with Christ comes from knowing Him. So how do we do that? It's just like any relationship: constant contact. Through prayer and scripture, I have gotten to know God in a personal way. I know Him as a God of powerful emotion, intense mercy, and almighty love. My prayer and scripture habits were ultimately changed by The Purpose Driven Life, by Rick Warren. It taught me how to have raw, honest conversations with God and transformed the way I worship. My relationship with God is certainly not perfect but prayer and scripture have enhanced it. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the desert, he combatted him with scripture. By memorizing verses, we can do the same. Scripture is one of the most powerful tools we can use to tackle the devil and inspire others to follow Christ.

Being a Christian cannot just be another simple obligation in your life. It must be a passion, a commitment, and the center of your life. Dropping everything to follow Christ, standing out for Christ, and prayer and scripture, all help us achieve a lifestyle centered around Him. By dying on the cross for us, Jesus crushed our sins to dust and willingly placed Himself in harm's way to save us. He loves us so much and we can repay Him by living out His beautiful, unique, perfect plan for each of us and loving Him to our full capacity.

*Artemis Xenick just finished 10<sup>th</sup> grade. She is the daughter of Mike and Maria Xenick.*





## More to Life than Just Surviving

By Angelina Krinos

**T**here is more to living than just surviving. I'm drawing that line. To be forever static, regardless of your misery, begets madness. Anyone can exist, anyone can breathe; yet it is only those who dig their heels into their beliefs that truly experience life.

A moment of truth. If that cliché makes you cringe, don't worry, I'm the same. Or rather, I was, before I spent a week hospitalized. I never want to go back; I remember the terror, the anxiety, and the endless waiting.

All people seek a sign from God, a white dove bringing salvation, but not everyone receives one. I did. Opening myself up to others has always been my greatest challenge. The effort was *too* great. I spoke less and less and before I knew it, I had been stranded. My sisters all pushed forward, consumed with excit-

ing lives, and my parents, though incredible, were wrapped up too. At school I was a freak. I was almost alone. I cried, I wept, I begged; *I* didn't like myself, either. I did not want of God's protection, but for Him to take control entirely – please, I asked, remove this pressure on me to perform. After that day, I stopped talking to Him, too. *Then*, I thought, I was completely, totally alone.

But the church's purpose isn't to play puppeteer. Sometimes we pray to better ourselves, but never take the first step. My first step was taken for me – the first night, stirred every hour by nurses I thought I'd die. By my final night I was relieved that in a sense I had died, and been reborn with new eyes. I think my faith is like a candle. If I wanted to get out of the darkness I found myself in, it had to burn brighter.

My third night, we found a battered Bible in a tiny patient library. My dad told me to bring it. "It'll be a nice distraction." I started flipping through Isaiah. From 66:9 I read: "I will not cause pain without allowing something new to be born, says the Lord." I saw myself in the verse; my candle flared.

I hated the world for passing me by curled in a hospital bed. I was a prisoner to my illness, an inmate of my predicament. But the world didn't ignore me. I expected no visitors at all. Within *hours* I had my first: our pastoral assistant. We took a selfie; he promised to come back. I cried and I cried. Next came Nicole, an old friend, and with her, a bouquet. "I want to go home," I whispered. "You will. When you're out we're going to Tokyo." My flame got brighter.

My priest arrived and blessed me with a prayer crafted entirely for me. I cried again! Finally, after an exhausting day, my Sunday school teacher sat with me for dinner. I was spoken to not as a patient being treated, but a person; I received a pendant with a lock and key. *You are a treasure*, she said.

My faith soared. My sign had come. In my disappearance, so many sought me out, brought my grey room vibrant color with flowers. Hope flooded my system, and I opened my borrowed Bible, and from Revelation 12:1 I read: "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no more sea." It was the fire and flood which reconnected me to my God. I may still be watching my step, still afraid to take the plunge, to change. Yet today I live with confidence that I can change, I will change, I must change, and for that: thank you.

*Angelina Krinos just finished 9th grade. She is the daughter of Dimitri & Melissa Krinos.*

## Summer Small Group Bible Study

Our Monday Night Bible Study will continue over the summer on June 4, 18 and July 30.

New people are welcome at any time!

The remainder of our Small Group Bible Studies will reconvene sometime in September.

### Monday Night Bible Study (for everyone)

We are studying the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans

**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 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

**Meeting Dates:** June 4, 18 and July 30

*For whatever was written in former days  
was written for our instruction, that by  
steadfastness and by the encouragement of  
the scriptures we might have hope.*

*-Romans 15:4*

~ June 2018 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1						
<b>3</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. <b>Oratorical Speeches</b> <b>In church</b> <b>Book Review Meeting</b> <b>GOYA 5:00 p.m.</b>	<b>4 **</b> <b>Beginning of</b> <b>Apostles' Fast</b>  <b>Bible Study 6:30 p.m.</b>	<b>5 **</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>6 **</b>	<b>7 **</b> <b>Young at Heart</b> <b>Basket of "Well</b> <b>Wishes" Making</b> <b>11:30 a.m.</b>  <b>Adult Greek School</b> <b>6:00 p.m.</b>	<b>8 **</b> Junior Olympics	<b>9 **</b> Junior Olympics
<b>10 **</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. <b>Junior Olympics</b> <b>Luncheon &amp; Awards</b> <b>YAL 5:00 p.m.</b>	<b>11 **</b>	<b>12 **</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>13 **</b>	<b>14 **</b>	<b>15 **</b>	<b>16 **</b> Community Outreach 8:00 a.m.
<b>17 **</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Father's Day	<b>18 **</b>  <b>Bible Study 6:30 p.m.</b>	<b>19 **</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>20 **</b>	<b>21 **</b> <b>Young at Heart Bingo</b> <b>11:30 a.m.</b>	<b>22 **</b>	<b>23 **</b>
<b>24 **</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. AHEPA/Daughters	<b>25 **</b> St. Stephen's Week One <b>GOYA Lockin</b>	<b>26 **</b> Basketball	<b>27 **</b>	<b>28 **</b> <b>Evening Liturgy for</b> <b>Sts. Peter and Paul</b> Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.	<b>29 **</b> <b>Fr. Stavros</b> <b>out of the</b> <b>office from</b> <b>6/29-8/2</b>	<b>30</b> <b>Charlie out</b> <b>of the office</b> <b>from 6/29 -</b> <b>7/9</b>

~ July 2018 ~							
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
<b>1</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fr. Gregory Waynick, Guest Celebrant	<b>2</b> St. Stephen's Week Two	<b>3</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>4**</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6**</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>8</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fr. Stavroforos Mamaies, Guest Celebrant	<b>9</b> St. Stephen's Week Three	<b>10</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>11**</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13**</b>	<b>14</b>	
<b>15</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fr. Stavros, Celebrant AHEPA/Daughters	<b>16</b> St. Stephen's Week Four	<b>17</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>18**</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20**</b>	<b>21</b> Community Outreach 8:00 a.m.	
<b>22</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fr. Vasile Mihai, Guest Celebrant	<b>23</b> St. Stephen's Week Five	<b>24</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>25**</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27**</b>	<b>28</b>	
<b>29</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fr. Gregory Waynick, Guest Celebrant	<b>30</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>31</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.					



## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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

officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com

www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

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## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

### Timetable of Services

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

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

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

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-394-1038 (Cell)  
firstav@gmail.com

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

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-843-8471 (Cell)  
Charlie.hambos@gmail.com

#### **Parish Council**

Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867  
Mike Xenick, VP 813-340-8737  
Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898  
Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747  
George Chagaris 727-420-1920  
Amin Hanhan 813-846-2957  
Edie Kavouklis 813-758-0305  
Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352  
Ryan Rindone 704-564-2046  
Aris Rogers, II 813-309-5525  
Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534

#### **Office Staff**

Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper  
debstjohntpa@gmail.com fax:813-443-4899

#### **Adult Greek School**

Magda Myer 813-909-2327

#### **AHEPA**

Gus Paras, President 813-254-6980

#### **Altar Angels**

Engie Halkias 813-932-5859  
Sia Blankenship 813-968-8855

#### **Basketball**

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

#### **Bible Study**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### **Bookstore**

Brett Mourer 813-376-9315

#### **Chanter**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### **Choir**

Artie Palios, Director 813-831-1294  
Ruth Losovitz , Organist 727-688-2782

#### **Community Outreach**

Betty Katherine Katsamakos 813-468-1596

#### **Dance Group**

H XAPA MΑΣ, 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

#### **Finance Committee**

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

#### **Food Pantry**

Anetta Alexander 813-758-2689

#### **Gasparilla Parking**

John Kokkas 727-992-4615

#### **GOYA**

Maria Koutroumanis 813-245-3854  
Kara Katzaras 863-669-6739

#### **Hope/Joy**

Debbie Nicklow 813-690-0671

#### **Junior Olympics**

Dwight Forde 727-685-9028

#### **MOMS**

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

#### **OCF**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### **Oratorical Festival**

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

#### **Photography Ministry**

Olya Clifton 661-243-9352

#### **Philoptochos**

Lisa Alsina 813-728-1094

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

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

#### **Strategic Planning**

Marc Edquid 813-422-8940  
Gary Ward 813-846-3898

#### **Stewardship**

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

#### **Sunday School**

Vickie Peckham 813-406-5626

#### **Usher**

Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

#### **Visitation Committee**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### **Welcoming Ministry**

Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

#### **Young Adult**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### **Young at Heart**

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947  
Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

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

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