

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 2019

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

The Goal Can't Be Happiness - It's Got to be More

If you ask the majority of people what their number one goal in life is, the answer is "to be happy." How one defines what it means to be happy probably varies from person to person. To be happy might mean getting to travel extensively for one person, to be wealthy for another, to be famous for another, to have a great marriage for another, to have successful kids, a big house, lots of money in the bank, live a long time, being healthy, and many more.

There are a couple of problems with "happiness." The biggest one is that it is temporary. All of the things on the aforementioned list stop when life ends. We don't take wealth or travel or money or fame or family or house with us when we die. Happiness is fleeting. Thus, if happiness is the number one goal in life, we are consigned to chasing something that we can never have. Because even if we "achieve" happiness, it is temporary.

The next problem with happiness is that it pits us against other people. It creates competition. Why? Because if my greatest goal is happiness and YOU stand in the way of MY happiness, then you become the enemy, you become a threat to my happiness. Thus you become my competitor, and my road to happiness is paved by defeating you.

Three kinds of relationships— Cooperative, Competitive and Indifferent

I spoke in my sermon on Palm Sunday about relationships, and how we relate to one another in one of three ways—we are either cooperative, competitive or indifferent in our relationships.

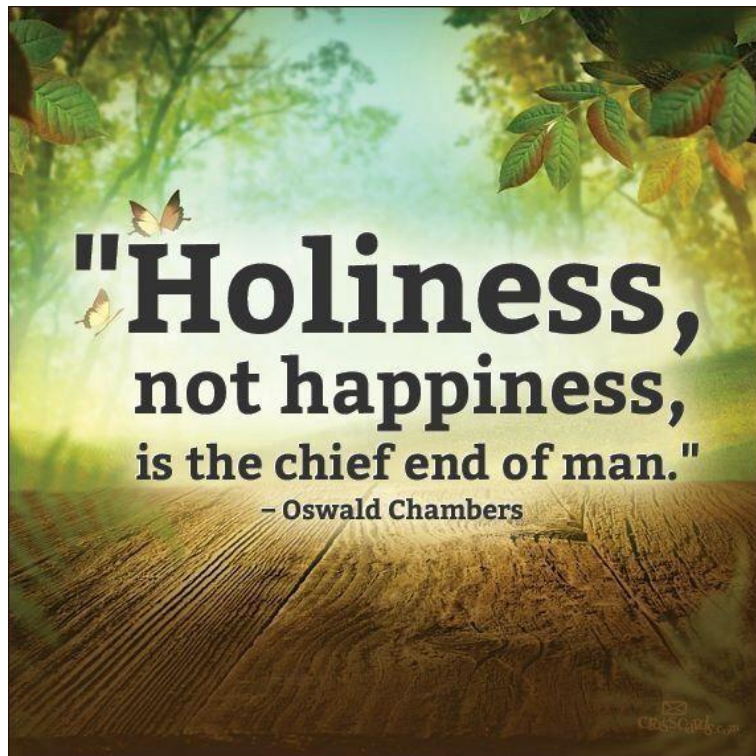
A "competitive" relationship sees someone as an enemy to be defeated. There can only be one winner in a competition. So, when we compete with one another, there is one winner and one loser. In the competition, there isn't much room for love, because love is about giving rather than taking, about building up rather than tearing down, about encouragement rather than beating someone.

A relationship of "indifference" is in some ways worse than a relationship of competition. In a competitive relationship, there may be respect for an "opponent". We find the opponent worthy of our competition. To be indifferent to someone means that we don't even find them worthy to engage with in competition.

The healthiest way to relate to someone is through "cooperation." In a cooperative relationship, people encourage one another, bring out the best in one another and see the best in one another. Forgiveness is easier in a cooperative relationship. So is honesty, and trustworthiness and so many other things.

If the thrust of our life is happiness that can only be achieved through competition, then we've lived a rather narcissistic existence. Of course, there are ways to achieve happiness that do not involve competition. Sitting in front of the TV eating pizza with one's family produces happiness without competition. That is a wholesome expression of happiness.

Getting home quick from work when there is no traffic produces happiness. However, trying to get home quicker while driving like a maniac in heavy traffic produces happiness through competition and ultimately narcissism.



Our purpose in life, according to God, is to love God and to serve one another. God has given each of us the tools to do both. Those tools differ from person to person. The fallen world also gives challenges to each of us in using our tools to love God and serve others. We each have “handicaps” and limitations which inhibit us at times, or at the very least challenge us. Our purpose in life is to live cooperatively with God and with one another.

The same three metrics—cooperation, competition, and indifference—can also be applied to our relationship with the Lord. During Holy Week, all three were represented in our church. The easiest to spot were the indifferent. Those are the ones whose names aren’t known by anyone because they rarely come. Some didn’t come at all. This shows an indifference to Christ—He’s just not a priority or maybe even a thought.

There are people, even people who faithfully attend church, who live in competition with God. They oppose Him all the time by the way they behave. Some may come to church as a way to “let God win” and keep the competition to a minimum, or even make it appear as if they are cooperative.

Those who relate to the Lord in a cooperative way work together with Him in worship, and most especially on days when they don’t worship. Because it is easy to look cooperative when everyone is cooperative. It is a challenge to be cooperative when we are not in church and are surrounded by situations that beckon us to be competitive.

The Highest Goal is Holiness, not Happiness

The highest goal in life can’t be happiness. So, what then is the highest goal in life? The answer is “theosis,” (which can also be described as holiness, or deification) to be “like God.” Theosis is not just a destination, but a journey. And it is not a journey we can “achieve” in this life because if we could, it would be a competition to see who could get there first. To choose to live in cooperation with God is a daily choice, actually it is a

choice we make multiple times a day. When we have a situation where happiness is only possible at the expense of someone else’s happiness, the journey to Theosis dictates humility, putting someone else ahead. So that we are not obsessed with our place in the line of other people, but that we are obsessed with being in the line of sheep waiting for the security of the sheep pen which is the gate of heaven. (See John 10, when Christ talks about being the Good Shepherd)

Again, let’s look at our relationship with Christ based on the metrics of competition, cooperation and indifference. Do we live in cooperation with how He tells us to live? Are we indifferent to Him most of the time? Does what we do compete with Him?

Christ came to change the world. He didn’t come to take all the fun out of the world. Rather, He came to bring hope to the hopeless, and to bring purpose and focus. Instead of seeing the sand emptying out of the hourglasses of our lives as we get older, and losing our sense of happiness as our earthly lives come closer to the end, living a Christian life should give us hope that as we get to our earthly end, we will reach our heavenly beginning.

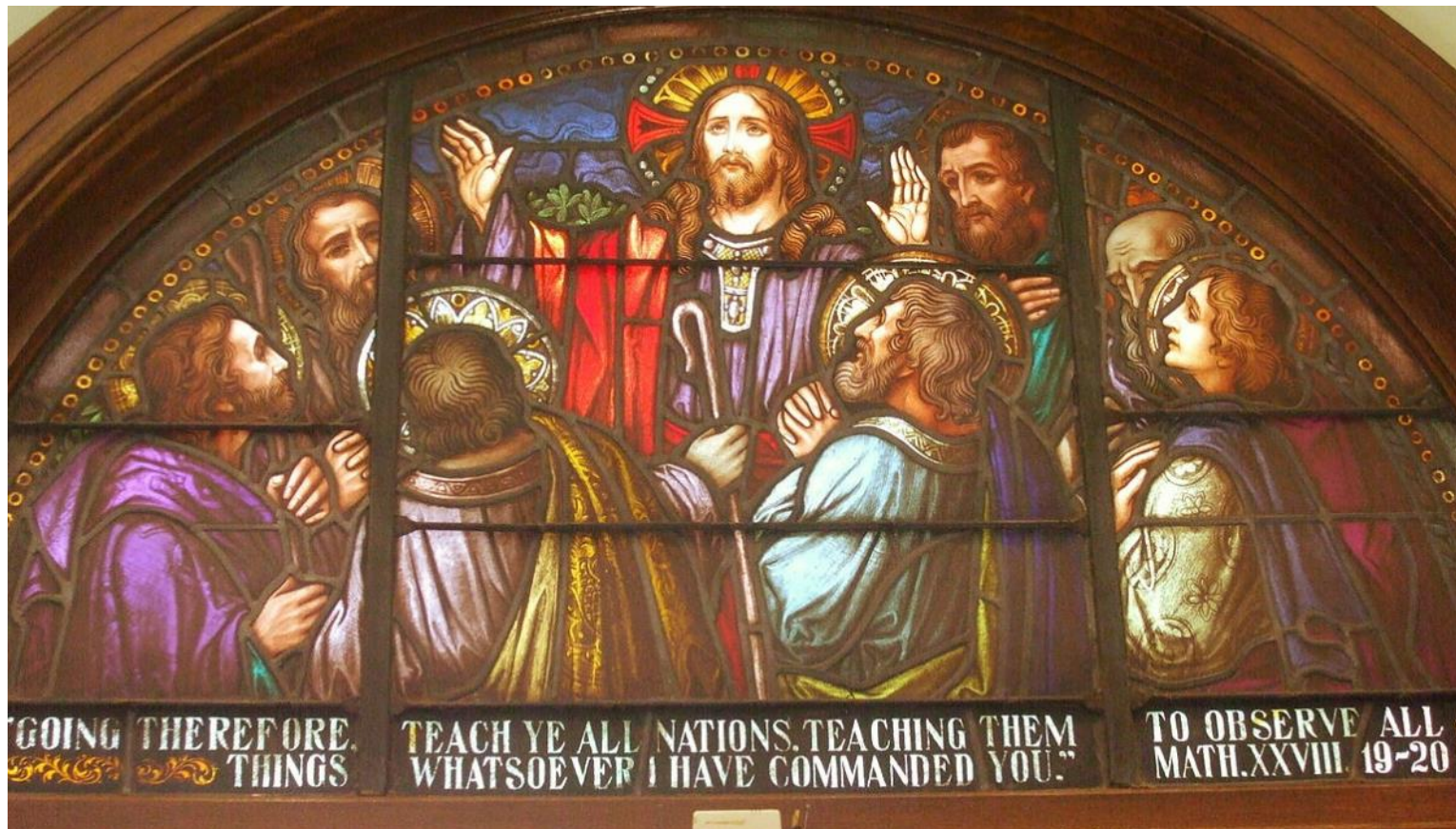
This becomes possible when we change our goals from personal happiness to serving others (and securing their happiness). This becomes possible when we lead with humility instead of pride, when we self-empty, instead of self-indulge. Jesus did not drive a fancy car. He rode on a simple donkey. He didn’t lead by expecting others to bow down to Him, He led by bowing His head and dying for us.

Light—The Characteristic We share with Christ

In order to encourage us, teach us, help us and sustain us, in order to help us focus on cooperation rather than competition, to strive for spiritual fulfillment rather than material happiness, Christ gave us the Church. Founded by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, which we will celebrate on June 16 this year, Christ intended for the Church to change the world, to bring the message of salvation to the world. In Matthew 5:14, Jesus said “You are the Light of the world.” And in Matthew 5:16, He said “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven.” In John 8:12, Jesus said “I AM the light of the world.” Thus, being a light in the world is THE one thing we share with God. In fact, “light” is the only thing that Christ ascribes to Himself and to us. We cooperate with Him by following His light, and being lights to others.

The Church Makes Disciples, Not Just Decisions

The church is supposed to make disciples, not just decisions. It is not an organization to which we belong, but an organism that we are a part of. The human body has many parts. What if the pinky doesn’t work? Or the thumb? We all play a part in this body. When we don’t do our part the body doesn’t work properly, and sometimes doesn’t work at all. An organism is alive and dynamic, not static. An organism moves, it doesn’t sit still. Likewise, the church should be dynamic. And so should its parishioners. Because it is not the building that determines what kind of Church we have, but the people who enter the building. Do they come to be transformed? Or enter-



tained? Do they come as soldiers, eagerly ready to hear the message and go do it? Or do they come as their own general of their life without interest in being transformed by the message?

This summer, we will hopefully have a little bit of down time from the stressful pace of life. When school ends, traffic gets lighter, that alone is a relief. There aren't as many activities, the weather will be warm, the beach and the sun will beckon to us. And hopefully everyone will have opportunities to travel, or at least to relax a little bit. I hope you'll spend some time reflecting on your relationships with others—are they primarily competitive, cooperative or indifferent? And I hope we'll spend some time thinking about our relationship with Christ—is it cooperative, competitive or indifferent?

We've all got a role to play in God's plan for the salvation of the world. And it's a cooperative role. Thus, we've got to move away from happiness and strive for fulfillment. Because true fulfillment means being filled with God, which doesn't mean competing constantly but cooperating. It means serving rather than getting.

I look forward to both some additional service as well as some down time this summer. I look forward to serving at St. Stephen's Summer Camp, where we can unplug from technology to get back to the basic human beings that we are without all of that. To get back to being creative, supportive and cooperative. Everyone truly wins when everyone finds Christ, when everyone hears His message, when everyone gets encouragement to follow the message. Thus we must ask ourselves: Do we want a church that is going to change the world? Do we want to be the church that can change our little corner of the world? Do we see our church as more organization or organism? And is our involvement based on cooperation, indifference or competition?

Most of all, what is our highest goal in life? It is happiness, or something even higher than that? I like being happy. There is

nothing wrong with being happy. God doesn't tell us to be miserable. To the contrary He tells us not to advertise our prayers and fasting, so that these things don't become part of a pursuit of happiness through bragging on our spirituality. God wants us to be happy. Yet, He wants us to be more than happy. He wants us to be holy, as He is holy. That should be the greatest and most important goal for every human life.

We, the Church, and everyone in it, is supposed to reflect His light, to be His voice—at home, at work, on the ballfield—to be His hands and His heart. We can't have two things be our number one priority. There are no ties when it comes to priorities. Something sits in the first spot and something sits in the second spot, and so on. If the Lord sits in the first spot in our lives, when personal happiness threatens personal salvation, it means that salvation wins. Ultimately, salvation is the destination. Everything else we have will be shed across the way. And we'll be left with God, who will show mercy and compassion on it. Or we'll end up without God, because we didn't make Him the priority.

I wish you all to have a restful break this summer. As we sit on the beach, let's remember who created the water and the sand. As we travel, let's remember who made the mountains and the hills. As I said repeatedly during Lent, this is either all a lie and we're all fools, or it is all real. If it is a lie, well go and be happy, because at the end of life, there is nothing greater. But if it's all true, let this message transform you and your life into a life that reflects hope, faith and joy. There is nothing wrong with being happy, but Christ is about so much more than happiness. So, make the Lord the priority, and you'll see that personal happiness will follow. The goal isn't to be happy. It's to be holy, in this life and for eternal life.

With love in the Risen Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

Kill Pain with Kindness

Pain is a part of life. Some pain is necessary, even good. For instance, it's not all that pleasant at the dentist when they are scratching the plaque off of your teeth. I can't exactly say I look forward to that. However, after I'm done, the pain is worth it, to have clean teeth.

Inflicting pain on others is also necessary at times. If you tell your child to turn the TV off and do his or her homework, you are causing pain to your child, who gets upset. But ultimately, that pain is for the child's own good, because if he or she doesn't do well in school, they won't do well in life.

Most pain, however, is bad. It is no fun to be home sick. I would gladly give up being sick to go back to work. However, sickness is unavoidable. At many points in life, we get sick, that's just part of living in a fallen world. So that pain is "justifiable." We can rationalize that we will all have the pain of sickness.

The pain of losing a loved one really stings. Many of us have felt it this spring. The hardest thing to wrap our heads around intellectually is when someone dies. It's the finality of it that is so hard to comprehend. We can lose a job, and go get another one. We can lose money, and then go get more. We can get really sick, and still have hope for recovery. Our children will leave and go to college, but it's not like we won't ever see them again. When someone passes away, the finality of no tomorrow is very hard to comprehend. This pain is awful. However, even this pain is normal, we will all go through it.

There is another kind of pain that is avoidable. It's not a good pain either. It is not a purposeful pain. It is the pain we inflict on one another for no reason. No, this is not the pain a parent causes a child when he tells his son he's had too many French fries this week and tonight he's eating asparagus. This is not even the pain of a relationship breaking up because it is not working. It is the pain that is senseless. It's the pain of a bully who picks on someone mercilessly. That is not necessary, productive or positive in any way. It is the pain of someone who pokes at a needles someone for no reason. It is the pain of someone who puts people down constantly. It is the pain of someone who speaks loud enough to trample on anyone who raises a voice in opposition. It is the pain of someone who goes and speaks against someone and ruins their reputation for no reason. These kinds of pains are really unnecessary. And yet we experience them all the time. We all are on the receiving end of pains like this. And sadly, we are all on the inflicting end of pain like this.

I know that I cause pain to people, sometimes unintentionally, and sadly, sometimes intentionally. This is an area in which I want to improve. There are people who also cause me pain, unintentionally and sometimes intentionally. When it is unintentional, there needs to be forgiveness. When it is intentional, there needs to be patience on my part, and repentance on the other person's.

Some people inflict pain and they don't know it, or they don't think what they are doing causes pain to others. It's just "Johnny (or insert any other name) being Johnny." It's hard to



know what to do with people in this category. Most people who do wrong deep down know that what they are doing is wrong, even when they pretend it isn't. Those who do wrong and who can't conceive that what they are doing is wrong exhibit sociopathic tendencies. Left unchecked, people in this category inflict a lot of pain on a lot of people.

The key, I believe, to the problem of pain, is kindness. If we resolve each day to be kind, to speak kindly, to think kind thoughts, it will be much harder to turn around and inflict pain on others. Even if pain is involved, as it is in when we correct a child, we can deliver the message with kindness. And when we find "Johnny being Johnny," we should encourage (even strongly encourage) Johnny to be kind by modeling kindness and applauding him when Johnny is kind. You'd be surprised how encouragement results in better behavior. Better to "kill with kindness" or rather "build up with kindness" than to meet meanness with even more meanness.

I'm writing this message as an add-on to my monthly message because I see acts of kindness and unkindness on a daily basis. I also see pain on a daily basis—some of which is necessary, and a lot of which is not. Most of the pain we inflict on other people is totally unnecessary. And I don't know what drives it, though most likely it is insecurity. Kindness and encouragement breed confidence which tends to lessen insecurity. So, be kind today. If you have to say something negative, say it as kindly as possible. Look for opportunities to encourage others. Lend an ear to someone who wants to talk. Lots of times, unkindness rears its head simply because someone is crying out for attention. There are lots of ways to express kindness. I'm sure there would be a lot less pain in the world if there were a little more kindness. Kindness can't stop all pain, and all pain isn't bad. However there is a lot of pain that is unnecessary, and kindness can go a long way to stopping this kind of pain.

Be intentionally kind today!

+Fr. Stavros

Many Thanks from Holy Week 2019

by Fr. Stavros

I want to first express my thanks to everyone for a beautiful and memorable Holy Week journey in 2019:

First and foremost, I am thankful to Charlie Hambos, our Pastoral Assistant, who is fulfilling that role in every way that it can be fulfilled. He provides so much assistance so that when I as the Pastor step in front of the altar, so much of the background stuff is all set. Charlie did a great job in his first Holy Week as our lead chanter, chanting hundreds of hymns during our Holy Week journey. He did a great job leading our services throughout Lent of the Great Compline, Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and the Salutations Services. For the seventh year in a row, he also led our vigil at the cross. Throughout the week and throughout Great Lent, Charlie did a great job interfacing with all of our ministries, and filling in all of the many blanks. He really has become the glue that holds a lot of our operation together.

The choir did a fantastic job throughout Lent and Holy Week. I am thankful for their many hours of practice which made for a flawless celebration of the liturgical services. Obviously, this year's Holy Week was very challenging, with the untimely passing of our choir director, Artie Palios. Thank you for Pauline Spencer for stepping in to direct and to all the choir members who sang with such joy, even amidst your great sorrow. You were an inspiration to everyone.

Our readers—Pauline Spencer, Mike Xenick, Alex Limberatos, Peggy Bradshaw, Bill Manikas and others, who read from the Psalms at the many services throughout Lent and Holy Week.

Our Light-Bearers, Sandra Pappas, Angela Johnston and Paulina Katsouli, who played the role of the women who came to the empty tomb on Pascha and spread the Light of the Risen Christ.

Our young people played a big role in the Holy Week services:

~Many of them are now singing in the choir

~Many of our young girls served as Bridegroom Maidens at the Bridegroom Services of Palm Sunday night, Holy Monday night and Holy Tuesday night.

~Seven of our 6-7th grade girls took on the role of the myrrh-bearers at the Lamentations service. A special thanks to Vickie Peckham who organized both the maidens and myrrh-bearers this year

~ An “army” of altar boys served during the week and it was especially moving to see them standing guard at the foot of the Cross and at the tomb.

For the seventh year in a row, we kept “vigil” at the Cross of Christ. For many people, this was THE highlight of the week, reading Psalms at the Cross in the early morning hours of Good Friday as well as throughout the day. We began our Holy Thursday service of the Passion of Christ at 6:30 p.m., immediately followed by the Vigil from 10:00 p.m. until 9:00 a.m. on Good Friday, followed by the Royal Hours from 9:00-11:00 a.m. The vigil continued after the Hours until the service of the Unnailing, and then from the end of the Unnailing Service until the Lamentations. This means that there was a continuous service in our church for over 28 hours. Thank you to Charlie for organizing this again and for the many people who came at intervals throughout the night to keep vigil at the Cross. If you

missed this year, plan from now to come next year!

Thank you Lisa Alsina for leading the effort to decorate the eggs. And on Pascha, thanks to Genie Carter for organizing the Easter egg hunt.

Thank you Engie Halkias and all of her helpers for decorating the church, for cleaning it between all the services, and for decorating the Kouvouklion. Thank you to all those who donated flowers during Lent and Holy Week as well.

Thank you to Tom Georgas and the ushers for having everything in good “order.” Thanks to the men who carried the Epitaphios on Good Friday evening.

The Palm Sunday luncheon, sponsored by our Philoptochos Society, was well attended, enabling our Philoptochos to raise funds for its various charities and ministries, and I am thankful to all who attended.

Our annual Sunday School retreat had over 50 participants. In addition, 20 GOYAns helped prepare the eggs, candles, and bay leaves for Good Friday and Holy Saturday. A special thanks to Debbie Nicklow for organizing the retreat this year, and to the many parents and teachers who lent a hand.

Thank you to all those who took photographs, and to Karina Findlay who leads our photo ministry - **please go to our website and click on the Flickr link to see all of the pictures from Holy Week.** Thank you to our many photographers for taking some great shots. If you want to re-live any of Holy Week, all the services are uploaded on our web page as well.

Thank you to the Parish Council for hosting the dinner after the Anastasi. Thank you to Carole and Tony Fotopoulos for donating the entire Paschal reception and for leading the Paschal reception, the Holy Tuesday evening reception, the Saturday of Lazarus Breakfast and the picnic. Thank you to the GOYAns for hosting the Good Friday reception.

Thank you to our Welcoming Ministry for welcoming our parishioners throughout the week.

Thank you to Charlie and Deb for all the behind the scenes work in the office.

And thank you most of all to YOU, the faithful, who came to the services. Your presence and your prayers are what make us a church. You can have beautiful music and beautiful flowers but the most important ingredient in Holy Week is beautiful people who come to pray, to worship, to relive, to remember and to renew themselves in the Light of the Resurrected Christ.

One Final Note on Holy Week: Holy Week reflects, in my opinion, the church at its best. The greatest church attendance by the most number of people occurs during Holy Week. Imagine the kind of community we could have if this many people were stewards, if this many people attended on a regular basis. Imagine the kind of witness we could give for our faith. Imagine how many people we could help. Imagine the difference we could make. Let's move from imagining to DOING. Let's strive to be that community that we are during Holy Week all year round.

With love in the Risen Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

A Holy Week Like No Other - Pascha Sermon 2019

By Fr. Stavros

This has been a Holy Week like no other. Before it even began, we were shocked and saddened by the sudden passing of our dear friend and our choir director, Artie Palios. Many of us have experienced this Holy Week journey through the lens of our grief, including me.

There are others in church tonight who have experienced the loss of a loved one in this past year. It seems that last night, when we offered a prayer for all those who are connected with our community who have passed since last Pascha, the list was longer than usual.

There are still others who have suffered other kinds of challenges this past year—some have lost a job, some have seen their marriage break up or decline, some have had the joy of being a parent tainted by a challenging child, and others have had countless other kinds of loss or challenge.

Tonight, we come to the Feast of Feasts, the Festival of Festivals, the night when we are supposed to be filled with joy, the night we are supposed to sing in triumph. And yet, for many of us, using the word “triumph,” might seem hollow at best, even disingenuous.

Why do these bad things happen? The simple answer is, because we live in a fallen world. God did not create us to be sad people. He created us in order for us to be joyful people. When the world fell through sin, humanity became collectively sad. As the years of life passed by, people felt like the sand was draining out of their hourglass. Jesus Christ changed all that. He came to earth two thousand years ago and reversed our curse. He took on the sins of the world. He was nailed to a cross to atone for them. He went to the prison of Hades to set free all those who were being held captive there. And in the Resurrection, He opened for each of us the path to Paradise. He gave us each a way to come back to Him.

A person must be born in order to get to God. A non-entity cannot be saved. When we are born, it is with one purpose, to get to be with the Father. Our whole life is supposed to be a journey back to the Father.

Along the way, we will have some triumphs and we will have some setbacks. We will receive many good and perfect gifts that come from God, and we will receive many sorrows and trials that come from the fallen world.

As I have reflected on my own life this week, there are three verses of Scripture that continually come to mind. In I Thessalonians 5: 16-18, we read, “*Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*” In the ideal life, we’d be rejoicing always, we’d see the good in all circumstances, we’d see God’s goodness, or at least a measure of it, in all circumstances, even in sad ones. It is not much of a challenge to love God when everything is going right. The greater challenge is to love Him when everything is going wrong. Our judgment before God will be based on whether we loved Him and loved others by serving them every day, not only on the good days.

In Philippians 4: 6-7, we read “*Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will keep your hearts and*



minds in Christ Jesus.” The message here is that the peace of God is available in all circumstances, even in circumstances of stress. Peace normally means absence of conflict. The peace of God means there is comfort, and reassurance, even in the midst of conflict. Having God’s peace does not mean you’ll never have conflict or sadness or uncertainty. It means that you’ll have His comfort, His strength, and His grace when you do.

I Thessalonians 5: 14 tells us “*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up.*” It is not only God that brings peace in times of stress. We can do that as well, through encouragement. It’s something we all need. It’s something we can all do. It’s something none of us gets enough of, or gives enough of. One of the best ways to serve someone else is to simply be encouraging to them.

Which brings us to Church and the Resurrection. The Church exists to spread the message of Christ, to teach us, to encourage us, to empower us as recipients of His grace. We exist in the church in order to learn, to live in sync with how God calls us to live and in turn to encourage and empower others with His grace. This means we all have a role to play in the church. Each person’s role, while expressed differently, is the same—to encourage others to come to Christ, even as we are coming to Him ourselves. If we only come to Church on Pascha, we cannot receive the benefits of Christ through the Church. And if we never talk to others about Christ, we cannot meet the commission to spread the Gospel that Christ gave to each of us.

Which brings us to the Resurrection. Tonight is a chance for a spiritual restart. It is also supposed to be an experience of encouragement. The Light of Christ is the only true light, the only Light that shines in the darkness, the only Light that cannot be overtaken by darkness. Every person who carries His light within them will find joy even in times of sorrow, and will shine even in places of sadness and stress. The service tonight is a reminder that Christ lives within us even in our darkest moments. And that we are supposed to shine His light in all of our circumstances.

When we think of life in its totality, it is overwhelming. This is why it is important to focus on today. If we are living in yesterday’s or yesterday sorry, in tomorrow’s hope or tomorrow’s anxiety, we cannot be present today. Focusing on today re-

minds us to love God and love our neighbor in the circumstances that are right in front of us. So whether our circumstances are good or bad, joyful or sad, our purpose, remains the same, to glorify God in all things. Because when the lights go out on our lives for the last time, which they inevitably will, God is going to ask us two questions—Did you love Me? And did you serve others? And because we don't know how many todays we're going to have, there has to be a sense of urgency to love God and serve others today, no matter what circumstance we face today.

If we have lived each day to its fullest, if we have loved to the greatest measure, and if we have served to the greatest measure, they won't be a need to worry as the years of life pass by. So receive the Light of Christ this year. Honor Him tonight. Honor Him tomorrow. Put Him at the front of your life today and

every day. And be part of His church—so you can be encouraged, so you can encourage others, so you can live out His commission to spread the Gospel, and so you can get the help and support that we all need, as we live out today, on our way to our eternal tomorrow!

I will close our Lenten journey with the words of Psalm 118:

Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free. The Lord is on my side I will not fear. The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation. Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118: 5-6, 14, 24)

Come Receive the Light, from the everlasting Light, and glorify Christ, Who is risen from the dead!

Toward a Better Understanding of the Divine Liturgy and the Bible

“Understanding” and “Application” are two of the challenges we face as Christians. First, we have to understand what it is we believe and what it is we are to do. And second, we have to go out and do what we've learned. We can't go do something if we don't know what we are doing or why we are doing it. This is one of the things that motivates me to write. Since February 2015, I've written a daily reflection, called “The Prayer Team”.

Each day includes a verse (or sometimes several verses) of Scripture, a reflection on the Scripture, and a prayer. This allows the reader to connect with Scripture, enjoy an interpretation of that Scripture, and connect Scripture with prayer. Realizing that prayer is a challenge for many people, including me, having a prayer or a Psalm to “pray” at the conclusion of the daily reflection allows this to truly become a spiritual devotional.

I have been very blessed to have published three books from Prayer Team Reflections. The first book is entitled “Let All Creation Rejoice: Reflections on Advent, the Nativity and Epiphany.” The purpose of this book is to help readers get more out of the Advent season, the forty days before Christmas, so that we can prepare for this feastday with more purpose than just shopping and decorating.

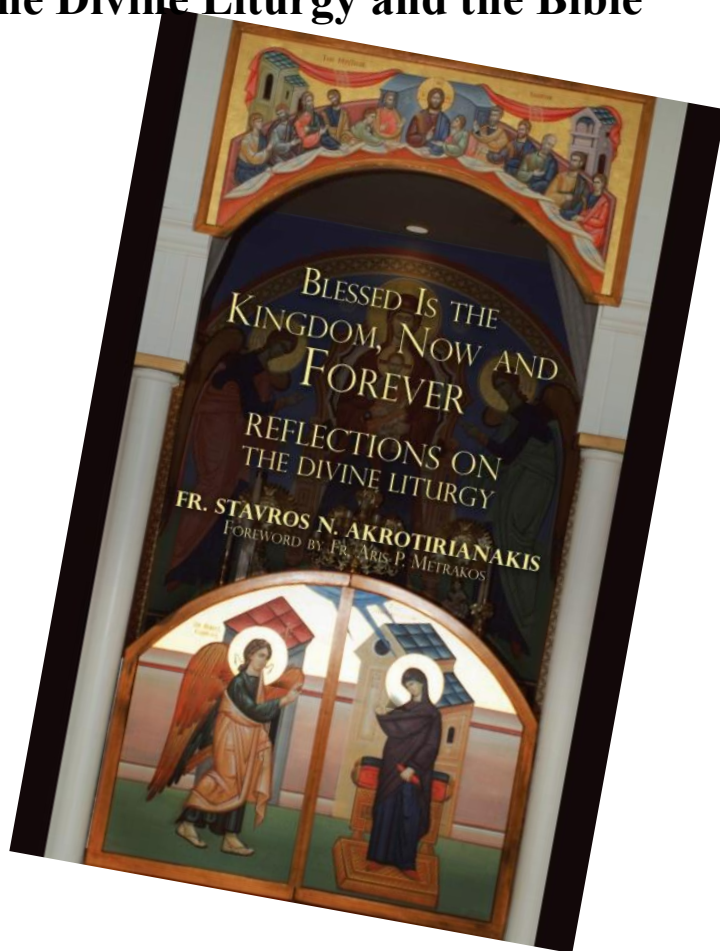
The second book is called “The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection.” The purpose of this book is to provide reflection and inspiration throughout Lent and Holy Week, but also in the eight weeks that follow Pascha. There is a tendency after Pascha to “fall off” as far as worship, prayer and reading, so that new habits that were formed during Lent quickly die. The most important part of this book is the part read after Pascha, because for eight weeks after Pascha, it will build on the new habits we began in Holy Week.

The third book is called “Blessed is the Kingdom, NOW and Forever: Reflections on the Divine Liturgy.” It is now on sale in the bookstore. Brett Mourer has written a review that appears later in this issue of the Messenger. The purpose of this book is to give us something to think about during the Divine Liturgy. There are distinct thoughts we can and should have on each line of the Liturgy. While it would be virtually impossible to have big thoughts on every line every time (there are so many lines and we do not pause in between them to give us time to reflect), this book will give you plenty of things to think

about and pray over during the Liturgy for a long time to come.

This ministry of writing daily is a significant commitment. However, at present, the majority of our parish receives this daily Prayer Team as well as many people outside of our parish. I asked another priest who writes daily “What is your motivation to write every day?” He answered, “One day I'm going to die and I want to be able to tell the Lord I did everything I could to get His message out to as many people as possible.” This is my motivation as well. To do everything possible to get the message out to as many people as possible.

“Blessed is the Kingdom, NOW and Forever: Reflections on the Divine Liturgy” is now on sale! It is a series of reflections on the Divine Liturgy. Pick up your copy today! This book costs \$19.00 at the church bookstore.



Fifty-Two Verses in Fifty-Two Weeks: The Bible Project

By Fr. Stavros

In January, we began the “Fifty-Two Verses in Fifty-Two Weeks” Bible Challenge, to memorize one Bible verse per week for fifty two weeks. I will provide a verse per week (four or five per month in *The Messenger* and then repeated weekly in the bulletin). I will choose verses that are meaningful to me. You are welcome to submit verses via email to me as well, as many of you have.

Most of us don’t spend enough time in the Bible. Sadly, some of us don’t spend any time. If you want a challenge, do the following:

- Memorize the verse of the week.
- For a greater challenge, read the entire chapter of the book that the verse comes from.
- For a greater challenge, read the entire book where the verse comes from.

Another challenge to consider is to keep a journal and contemplate the verse each week. Read it, memorize it, and then contemplate it. Allow the Holy Spirit to move your mind and your thoughts and then write down those thoughts and keep them in a journal. If you do one reflection on Scripture each week, you will have the best book that could be. A book written by you, for you, guided by the Holy Spirit, who will guide your thoughts as you read the Scriptures.

Below are verses for the months of June and July. There is one verse for each week. I have written a few comments below each verse to get your mind going. Don’t let my thoughts be your interpretation. Contemplate the Scripture each week and let it speak to you. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you through your reflection on Scripture.

June 2-8

And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Job 1:21

The story of Job is told in a book of the Old Testament. Job was a very wealthy man, who had a beautiful family and lots of possessions. Job also loved God. Satan went to God and told God that Job loved God only because Job had so many things going for him. Satan told God that if God would allow Satan to take away everything from Job, that Job would curse God. God allowed Satan to take Job’s property, kill his family and afflict Job with illness. Job’s answer was this week’s verse. Job would not turn his back on God no matter how hard his life became. That doesn’t mean that Job didn’t lament his situation. In fact, just about the whole book of Job is Job’s lament to God. At the end of the book of Job, his patience was rewarded with great blessings from God. In life, most of us feel like Job at times. We wonder why so many bad things happen to us, and where is God in all of it. We may not always understand God’s plans. The key is to remain faithful despite our circumstances, just like Job, who still found the capacity to praise God, even when everything was going wrong.

June 9-15

“Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” Romans 12:2

Do we want to conform to the world, or do we want to be transformed into the image of God? And when there is a conflict between going the way of the world and going the way of the Lord, which way do we choose? These are two very important questions to meditate on. Saint Paul tells us that we should not conform to the world, but to be transformed, modeling our will after the will of God, choosing what is good and acceptable and perfect. Each of us has many decisions to make every day. Some decisions do not pit God and the world against each other. For instance, there is no “competition” when we make a decision to eat vanilla ice cream or chocolate ice cream. However, many decision we make each day pit the two against each other—be unkind versus being kind; driving with courtesy or driving like a maniac; using our mouths to encourage or discourage; and many other examples. Make your decisions based on conforming with God, when there is a conflict between His way and the way of the world.

June 16-22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

As we celebrate Pentecost this week, we commemorate the day that the Holy Spirit descended upon the Disciples and gave the grace to spread the Gospel in all the languages known to humanity. The grace of the Holy Spirit has been planted in each of us at our baptism. The grace is nurtured through our participation in prayer and the sacraments. How we nurture this grace determines the kind of “fruit” we produce. There are nine fruit of the Spirit. They are all related. If you are doing one well, you will produce the other eight. If you don’t do one well, the other eight will not mature. If you can’t remember all nine, or focus on all nine, focus on one of the nine at a time, maybe one each day or one each week. Nurture your life through prayer and the sacraments, as well as discipline and allow these fruits to grow in your life.

June 23-29

Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you. 1 Peter 5:7

This verse reminds me of years ago, when my dad was really sick and it seemed like he was going to pass away soon. However, my life at that time was complicated by not only family responsibilities, but responsibilities to direct our summer camp. I remember feeling very anxious about how I was going “to touch all the bases,” to get everything done and to do it appropriately, respectfully and well. In a moment of actual panic, I remember going into the church and kneeling before the altar and asking the Lord to help me touch all the bases. Then I cast my anxiety on Him, and left my anxiety at the altar, at least I

really tried to. I didn't ask Him for anything specific, I didn't ask for my dad to live longer, I just asked God to allow me to touch all the bases, as He wanted me to. And God came through for me. Everything happened in such a way that I was able to honor my dad and meet my responsibilities easily and well. I will always be grateful to God for the circumstances surrounding my dad's passing, and I will always remember that in this instance, I really did cast all my anxieties on God, and could feel how much He cares about me. Hopefully, everyone has a similar story. And if not, work at casting anxiety before Him, trusting Him and seeing how He comes through for you.

June 30 - July 6

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Joshua 1:9

I share this verse this week because I will be at summer camp this week. I am excited to go, but also nervous. I'm sure many of us have places we "go" that make us nervous. It might be "going" to work, or "going" to have conversation with someone, or "going" to the doctor, and many more examples. This week's verse is a lesson for us to not be frightened or dismayed, because God goes with us wherever we go. Faith in this will give us the courage to be strong in all the things we do, because we know we don't go alone, we go with God. I leave home to go to camp, I leave my comfortable life, supportive family, and familiar job, to go far away, to a stressful and unknown environment. For sure this trip will have its joy and for sure it will have its challenges, but most important, it will have God at the center and this will bring both strength and confidence. Keep God at the center of what you are doing and not only will this bring blessings to your life, but it will bring comfort and take away anxiety.

July 7-13

He determines the number of the stars, He give to all of them their names.

Psalms 147:4

Part of the reason we struggle with faith is that we are surrounded by things that we have made. In my office, I sit at a desk that I bought, in a building that people built, with walls that they painted with paint that they made. I have books written by people and a computer bought at a store. The list goes on and on. When we are surrounded by man-made stuff, it is easy to feel that we are at the center of the universe. Look up at the stars. On a clear night, (and you have to get out of our busy cities to see this) there are more than you can count. This is not the work of some great science project or college thesis but the work of our Creator. He put all the stars in the heavens, and He knows the name of each. Just like He knows each of our names. If He created the stars, which are not in His image, how much greater beauty have we, the human beings, that are created in His image. Spend some time in silence, in nature, this summer, and appreciate all that God has made for us.

July 14-20

O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all.

Psalms 104:24

People often ask, "What do I need to believe in order to be a Christian?" There are three things we need to believe. First, God created the world from nothing and created it perfect. Second, the world fell through sin. Third, the world is redeemed through Jesus Christ. The message of Christianity is that we are redeemed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, before we can internalize that, we have to understand that we need redemption, which means we have to recognize that the world is fallen and that as part of the world, we are fallen and need redeeming. To understand how the world is in a fallen state, it is necessary to understand how it was created. God created everything, from nothing. And God created everything perfect. God didn't create seas that are polluted, or air that is polluted. He made all things, in His perfect wisdom. When we struggle with our faith, one of the best ways to reconnect is in nature. As we enjoy the warm summer weather spend some time in nature—go to the beach, appreciate the infiniteness of the sand and the ever moving force of the sea, that God made these things and made them perfect. The first step on our path to salvation is the understanding that someone greater than us made us, and when we fell He redeemed us as well.

July 21-27

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

Proverbs 27:17

A blacksmith would understand the meaning of this verse. In metalwork, iron is heated so that it softens and then it is struck with iron or bent around iron so that it can be shaped. We are shaped in our life by others. We shape others by our life. They go hand in hand. There is no one who isn't shaped by their environment and there is no one who doesn't have a hand in shaping those around them. The challenge is how we are shaped and who we allow to shape us, and how we shape others and who we are shaping. Are we making others "sharp" or making them dull—emotionally, spiritually, morally, etc. Be a good influence to others. Sharpen their focus towards God, faith, family, friendship, peace, encouragement, forgiveness, positivity, etc. We have a great ability to influence these things in others. We have a great capacity for these to be influenced in us by others.

July 28 - August 3

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Proverbs 17:17

It's easy to be a friend when everything is going right. It's harder to be a friend when you've had an argument with someone. It's hard to be a friend when one friend is sad. It's hard to be a friend when one friend is away. A true friend, however, is one who loves at all times, especially in times of adversity. Real friendships are those that last even when communication is not as frequent, even when adversity eats away at joy. Some young people don't see friends over the summer and wonder if those friendships will still be there in the fall. If they are good friendships, they will be. Even though quantity is a necessary component to friendship, quality is even more important. So whether you see your friends today or not, pray for them, and love them. And when a friend is facing adversity and doesn't feel especially joyful, be supportive and encouraging, be the shoulder they need to cry on. When your friend returns from a trip or returns to normal after adversity, pick up as before, for a friend loves at all times.

Stewardship Update June/July 2019

On a recent Sunday during Holy Week I sat next to a former parishioner now relocated to Greece. We talked about his beautiful island location and the three churches within walking distance. Knowing I was involved with volunteers for our Greek Festival, he told me the story about walking down to the closest church with an offer to volunteer. The priest/staff advised him ‘we don’t need volunteers we are supported by the government’. I had to laugh out loud at this interaction, with all due respect to our mother country and its historic roots.

<i>*Comparison based on YTD as of *5/7/19 & 5/2/</i>	2019*	2018*
Pledged Year to Date	\$483,466	\$416,698
Received Year to Date	\$224,105	\$216,912
Average Pledge	\$1,534	\$1,367
Median Pledge	\$1000	\$657
# of Indiv/Families Pledged/Giving	336	282

That structure does not work long term. Is it not working for Greece and is not the setup of our churches in America. People (We, You, Us, I) support our church. We need volunteers more importantly we need people to worship and use the church as a refuge in good times and bad. Liturgy, Vespers and other services, Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals, Holy Unction, 40 Day Blessings, House Blessings, Counseling, Fellowship etc. We all call upon the church for many of these needs and even more so in times of distress. This year has been a particularity difficult one for many of us that have lost parents. The support of the church and counsel of Fr. Stavros has helped guide us down this difficult path. We often take the church for granted and a given to be there for all of our needs and requests.

Your support through Stewardship is key to keep the wheels turning at St. John and take us to the next level. Love God, Love our Neighbor and Spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Take time today to examine your giving (overall). Do you sacrifice 10% as we are called to do or do you give an ‘automatic amount’ each year with little change? Did you help ‘Bridge the Gap’ at St. John this past year? We are no longer on a dues system as was started years ago in the churches of North America. I found a recent ‘dues’ card from my parents’ church outside Chicago area dated 1968 and it helps tells the story of the difficult transition from a ‘dues mentality’ to one of Stewardship over the years.

Our church is growing and vibrant and we are deeply grateful for the giving and sacrifice of our many loyal parishioners. Our Stewardship Giving has increased over the years. We are also vulnerable with 15 Individuals/Families representing 35% of our overall pledges. Take time today to examine your giving and relationship with the church. Don’t take for granted the accessibility of our church and priests in times of joy and in times of need. It only happens with the sacrificial giving of our Parishioners and friends of St. John.

Sandra Pappas – Stewardship Co Chair

Please let us hear from you today if you haven’t submitted your pledge form. Or visit <http://greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com/2018-stewardship/> to complete a pledge form and make your gift today. Forms are also available in the Narthex and Bookstore

Please consider leaving a charitable gift in your will to St. John Greek Orthodox Church. Help make your annual stewardship gift continue beyond your lifetime.

Names to be Commemorated for Paraklesis

Please write the names of all those whom you wish to be commemorated in the Paraklesis Services this August.
Please mail into the office or bring to church as soon as possible.

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

Our Holy Week Journey 2019









The Great and Holy Friday Youth Retreat

Christos Anesti! Christ is Risen!

On Good Friday 45 children, Pre-K thru 6th grade, spent an amazing day together respectfully preparing for the Triumphant Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Their day was filled with prayer, reflection on Holy Week, Pascha crafts and fellowship with their church friends. The children also participated in decorating the kouvouklion. It took the help of many hands to come together to make this retreat such a success.

Father Stavros, thank you for leading us in prayer at the Foot of the Cross, teaching the kids the meaning of the Epitaphios and for your continual support throughout the retreat! You are an amazing teacher and example to our youth!

Thank you to Vickie Peckham, Penny Christopher, Peggy Dilles, Cindy Xenick and Artemis Conner for each teaching a lesson on the meaning of Holy Week and the Passion of Christ. The children took home a treasure and craft from each station.

Thank you to the GOYAns and 6th graders who help with the retreat and crafts!

Thank you to ALL the parents who helped out where needed to make the retreat a success! Thank you for helping with the crafts, setting up lunch, serving lunch and clean up. Also, thank you to everyone that brought food items and waters in for lunch. Could not have done this without you!

Charlie, thank you for all the behind the scenes help you continually give the Hope/Joy and Sunday School ministries!

Finally, thank you to all the parents for taking the time to bring your children to the Good Friday retreat! Our children are our future... together let's continue to guide them and teach them our Orthodox Faith and the Lord's love for us!

With love in the Risen Christ,

Debbie Nicklow, Hope/Joy Ministry



Congratulations Graduates!

CLASS OF 2019



Christina Stilian (top left) graduated with honors from The University of Central Florida on Friday, May 3, 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts in Communications, a minor in dance, as well as Certification in Proficiency in American Sign Language. Christina plans to take the LSAT in June, and then travel abroad throughout the summer. Charge On, Coco!



Eleni Stilian (top right) graduated, Summa Cum Laude, from Fort Myers High School on Sunday, May 19, 2019. After spending the summer in Canada and Greece, Eleni will be attending University of Florida full time in the fall. Go Gators!



John Brigham Sibley (left), graduated Valedictorian from Pepin Academy and will attend The University of South Florida St. Petersburg as a USF Scholar. Brigham will also achieve the rank of Eagle Scout on June 9.



Joe Hambos (left) graduated from Grace Christian School and will attend Southeastern University and will be studying sport management with an emphasis in kinesiology.

Harry Nicholas Koutroumanis (right) graduated from Jesuit High School and will attend the University of Florida in the fall.

If your graduate was not featured in this issue of The Messenger, be sure to let the office know, we would love to feature them in the August issue.



Nicholas John Katzaras (right) graduated from Geneva Classical Academy and plans to attend Polk State College in the fall for his AA and then transfer to USF to study Orthopedic/Sports Medicine.



2019 Graduates Continued



Arianna Isabella Krinos (left), who will graduate Summa Cum Laude from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University with three degrees. From the College of Engineering she will receive a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science. From the College of Science she will receive a bachelor of science in biological sciences and a bachelor of science in Computational Modeling and Data Analysis. She will continue her education as a PHD student at MIT in the joint biological oceanography program with Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute. She will also be a Department of Energy Computational Science Graduate Fellow.

Sophia Elizabeth Krinos (right) graduated with Honors from the International Baccalaureate program at Robinson High School in Tampa. She will attend the University of Florida in the fall.



Peter Hanhan (left), will be graduating from New York University (NYU) Shanghai, China with a Bachelor Degree in Economics.



"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

New Archbishop of America Elected

Announcement of May 11, 2019

Today, Saturday May 11 2019, the Holy and Sacred Synod, continuing its work, proceeded to fill the vacated seat of the Archdiocese of America following the voluntary resignation of its shepherd, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios Geron of America.

Therefore, following the suggestion, permission and exhortation of His-All Holiness, the holy synodical members dully casting their votes unanimously elected as Archbishop of America His Eminence Metropolitan Elpidophoros of Bursa, Abbott of the Holy Monastery of the Holy Trinity in Halki and Professor of the Theological School of the Aristoteleian University of Thessaloniki.

His Eminence Metropolitan of Bursa and Exarch of Bithynia, Elpidophoros (Lambriniadis) was born in 1967 in Bakirköy, Istanbul. He studied at the Department of Pastoral Theology, Theological School of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, from which he graduated in 1991. In 1993, he finished his postgraduate studies at the Philosophical School of the University of Bonn, Germany submitting a dissertation entitled, "The Brothers Nicholas and John Mesarites". He was ordained a Deacon in 1994 at the Patriarchal Cathedral and was appointed as the Codecographer of the Holy and Sacred Synod.

In 1995, he was appointed Deputy Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod. From 1996-1997 he studied at the Theological School of St. John the Damascene in Balamand, Lebanon, where he improved his knowledge of the Arabic language. In 2001, he presented a doctoral dissertation at the Theological School of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki under the title: "Severus of Antioch and the Council of Chalcedon" proclaiming him a Doctor of Theology. In 2004, he was invited to Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Boston, where he taught as a visiting professor for one semester.

In March 2005, at the proposal of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, he was promoted by the Holy and Sacred Synod to the position of Chief Secretary and was ordained to the priesthood by the Ecumenical Patriarch in the Patriarchal Cathedral. In 2009, he submitted two dissertations to the Theological School of Thessaloniki and was unanimously elected Assistant Professor of Symbolics, Inter-Orthodox Relations and the Ecumenical Movement. The dissertations are entitled: "The Synaxis's of the Hierarchy of the Ecumenical Throne (1951-2004)" and "Luther's Ninety-five Thesis. Historical and Theological aspects. Text - Translation - Commentary".

In March 2011, he was elected Metropolitan of Bursa and in August



of the same year was appointed Abbot of the Holy Patriarchal and Stavropegial Monastery of the Holy Trinity on the island of Chalki. He has served as the Orthodox Secretary of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Lutheran World Federation and as a member of the Patriarchal delegations to the General Assemblies of the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches. He was the Secretary of the Pan-Orthodox Synods in Sofia (1998), Istanbul (2005), Geneva (2006), and Istanbul (2008). He has been a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches since 1996.

Archpastoral message of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros to the Faithful

May 15, 2019

My Beloved Faithful of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America:

Χριστός Ανέστη! Christ is Risen! He is truly risen!

Even though I am, as the Apostle Paul once said, "absent in the body" from you, I am very much with you in heart, in mind, and in spirit (cf. I Cor. 5:3). I wanted to take this moment to communicate with you through this marvelous tool of social media, to express how much I desire to embrace all of you as spiritual children, and to manifest to you the love with which God has graced my heart for the precious flock of the Holy Archdiocese of America.

In the coming days and weeks, we will all be learning about one another. I have already received and continue to receive warm greetings and messages of congratulations from across America, and I am heartened by them all. You will be learning about me, but what I want all of you to know most importantly, is that that I am coming to America not only to be your Archbishop, but I am coming to be your spiritual friend and brother, your servant in the Lord, your co-worker in

Christ, and your fellow steward of all the gifts of God that have been bestowed upon the Greek Orthodox Faithful of America. Together we will bring the Holy Archdiocese of America to the greater understanding that we are the Body of Christ, and each of us a precious member.

To you and to all our Orthodox Christian Brethren across America, I bring the blessing of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. I am coming to you as your brother in Christ. And, on June 22nd at my Enthronement, I look forward to embracing our ecumenical and interfaith friends as well, and the whole pluralistic American society that values freedom of conscience and religious liberty with such intensity.

Let this be a time of hope and positive expectation for us all. We have much to accomplish together, and by God's grace and with His strength, we must surely be victorious.

Χριστός Ανέστη! Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!

In the Risen Lord,

Archbishop Elpidophoros of America

Liturgical Schedule for June & July 2019

Sunday, June 2

Sunday of the Blind Man

Orthros 8:15 a.m. Doxology 9:30 a.m. **Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.**

Choir will sing the Liturgy of Peace by Chris Kypros, who will be our guest director

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

Ushers: Ron Myer, Jim Armstrong, John Alexander

Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Skip Higdon, Charlie Hambos Caller: Christene Worley;

Coffee Hour: In Memory of Artie Palios **Bookstore:** MaryAnn Rose & Rita Bedran

Tuesday, June 4

Leave-Taking (Apodosis) of Pascha

Orthros 5:15 p.m. **Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.**

Thursday, June 6

Ascension

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

Sunday, June 9

Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

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

Altar Boys: GOYAns may serve

Ushers: Brett Mourer, Tom Georgas, Amin Hanhan

Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Julie Palios; Ambassador: Bessie Palios; Caller: Helen Cauthorn

Coffee Hour: Junior Olympics Awards, No Coffee Hour **Bookstore:** Thom and Angie Bougas

Saturday, June 15

Saturday of Souls

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

Sunday, June 16

Holy Pentecost - Father's Day

Orthros 8:15 a.m. **Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.**

Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit (Kneeling Vespers) 11:00 a.m.

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

Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas

Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Tanya Robinson, Katherine Sakkis; Ambassador: Despina Sibley;

Coffee Hour: Families E, F, G **Bookstore:** John and Anetta Alexander

Monday, June 17

Feast of the Holy Trinity (To be held in Clearwater)

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

Sunday, June 23

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, Tom Georgas

Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Cindy Xenick, Lisa Alsina; Ambassador: Genie Carter; Caller: Vickie Peckham

Coffee Hour: Families H, I, J **Bookstore:** David Voykin & Elaine Daniels

Monday, June 24

Nativity of St. John the Baptist

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

Sunday, June 30

Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles

Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. *Fr. Ken Anthony, Guest Celebrant*

Altar Boys: Anyone Attending may serve

Ushers: Tammy Christou, George Mitseas, Florin Patrascioiu

Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Elaine Daniels, Axl David; Caller: Christene Worley

Coffee Hour: AHEPA/DOP **Bookstore:** Zhana Temelkova

Sunday, July 7

3rd Sunday of Matthew

Orthros 8:45 a.m. **Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.** *Fr. Ken Anthony, Guest Celebrant*

Altar Boys: Anyone Attending may serve

Ushers: Tom Georgas, George Trimikliniotis, Peter Theophanous

Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Dwight Forde, Ewana Forde; Caller: Katherine Sakkis

Coffee Hour: Families K, L, M **Bookstore:** MaryAnn Rose & Rita Bedran

Sunday, July 14

Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the 4th Ecumenical Council

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Fr. Stavros, Celebrant

Altar Boys: Anyone Attending may serve

Ushers: Skip Higdon, Jim Armstrong, John Alexander

Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Elaine Halkias, Donna Hambos

Coffee Hour: The Paras Family **Bookstore:** Thom and Angie Bougas

Sunday, July 21

5th Sunday of Matthew

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Fr. Stavros, Celebrant

Altar Boys: Anyone Attending may serve

Ushers: Brett Mourer, Tom Georgas, Amin Hanhan

Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Skip Higdon, Carole Fotopoulos; Caller: Julie Palios

Coffee Hour: Families N, O, P **Bookstore:** John and Anetta Alexander

Sunday, July 28

6th Sunday of Matthew

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Fr. Ken Anthony, Guest Celebrant

Altar Boys: Anyone Attending may serve

Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas

Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Bessie Palios, Michael Palios; Caller: Christene Worley

Coffee Hour: Families Q, R, S **Bookstore:** David Voykin and Elaine Daniels

Friday, August 2

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

Sunday, August 4

Getting Acquainted Sunday

Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Fr. Stavros, Celebrant

Altar Boys: Anyone Attending may serve

Ushers: John Christ, Tom Georgas

Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Vickie Peckham, Donna Trakas; Ambassador: Katherine Sakkis; Caller: Elaine Daniels;

Getting Acquainted: Dwight & Ewana Forde

Coffee Hour: AHEPA/DOP **Bookstore:** MaryAnn Rose

Monday, August 5

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

Tuesday, August 6

Transfiguration of our Savior

Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, August 7

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

Wakes to be held temporarily at St. John - Many parishioners choose to use Blount Curry Funeral home on MacDill/Swann for their funeral needs. The chapel at that location is being renovated and currently unavailable for use. During this time, anyone utilizing Blount/Curry on MacDill is welcome to hold the wake for their loved ones in our church sanctuary. Once the chapel is completed, the wakes will once again be held in the funeral home chapel. A reminder that it is the policy of the Metropolis of Atlanta that laypersons are not allowed to speak in the church without written permission from the Metropolitan. This policy will remain in effect for wakes held at the church.

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.

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 13. Fr. Stavros will also be on vacation from July 15-August 1. Fr. Ken Anthony, one of the assistant priests at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Annunciation in Atlanta will be the guest celebrant on **June 30, July 7 and July 28**. Father Stavros will celebrate all other Sundays of June and July. Please come and welcome our guest clergy.

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.

Liturgical Notes for June & July 2019

The choir will sing the Liturgy of Peace on Sunday, June 2—The Choir will sing the Liturgy of Peace on Sunday, June 2. Chris Kypros, the author of the responses to the Liturgy will be our guest conductor. The Doxology will begin at 9:30 a.m., followed by the Divine Liturgy. The 40 day memorial for Artie Palios will be offered at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy.

The Pentecostarion - The 50 Days After Pascha The period of 50 days between Pascha & Pentecost is referred to as the “Pentecostarion.” The period of forty days between Pascha Sunday and the day of the Ascension is known as the period of Pascha (or Easter). It is a period set aside by the Church for the specific celebration of Christ’s glorious resurrection. It is a celebration of “rebirth”. . . The rebirth of God’s creation which surrounds us, and the rebirth of the spirit within each and every one of us! This period is not merely a ritualistic celebration but a celebration which can be seen, felt, heard and talked about. It is a very REAL celebration which CAN make our entire being jump with JOY. It is a celebration which offers us HOPE. It is a celebration which offers us the TRUE FREEDOM found only in Jesus Christ! During the 40 days of Pascha, we are to greet each other with the greeting “Christ is Risen” or “Χριστὸς Ανέστη!,” to which the response is “Truly He is Risen” or “Ἀληθῶς Ανέστη!”



No Kneeling until Pentecost It is actually the Tradition in the Orthodox Church that we not kneel on Sundays in honor of the Resurrection of Christ. Because we do not worship on a daily basis in our church communities, priests have encouraged people to kneel on Sundays, the thought being that if we do not kneel on Sundays, that we’ll never kneel in church. It is a Tradition, that for 50 days after Pascha, we do not kneel in honor of the Resurrection. The next time we will kneel after April 28 is on the Feast of Pentecost at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says “Again and again on bended knees let us pray to the Lord.”

Some of the remaining feasts of the Pentecostarion include:

Tuesday, June 4 - Apodosis (Leave-Taking) of Pascha -This marks the end of the Paschal Season. It is a repeat of the Resurrection Service and Liturgy of Pascha and is the last time of the Liturgical year that we sing Χριστὸς Ανέστη. We will celebrate this feast on Tuesday, June 4, with an evening Liturgy at 6:00 p.m. (Orthros will begin at 5:15 p.m. and is a replication of the Resurrection Service from Pascha).



Thursday, June 6 - Ascension This marks the feast where Christ ascended to heaven, 40 days after the Resurrection, thus completing His earthly ministry.

Sunday, June 9 - Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council We pay homage to the collective triumph of the Church over false doctrine. The first Ecumenical Council authored the Creed. It took place in Nicaea in the year 325. This is why we call the Creed “The Nicene Creed.” This Council also established the date of Pascha and decided on which books would comprise the Bible.

Saturday, June 15 - Saturday of the Souls There are four Saturdays set aside during the year for us to honor our loved ones who have fallen asleep. One of them is the Saturday before Pentecost, this year on June 15. We will have Divine Liturgy and a memorial service that day. Please bring Kolyva (boiled wheat) along with a list of names of those whom you would like to have commemorated (separate sheet provided).

Sunday, June 16 - Pentecost This feast commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles fifty days after Pascha, filling them with power, strength, wisdom and courage to spread the GOOD NEWS of Jesus Christ to the entire world. Pentecost is the celebration of the birth of the Christian Church!!!. A special Vespers Service will be held after Divine Liturgy on Pentecost (June 16), where three prayers will be offered, asking for the Holy Spirit to descend upon us as we mark this feast day. As a reminder, we do NOT kneel in church until AFTER the Divine Liturgy on Pentecost (**we do not kneel at the Divine Liturgy on Pentecost**) at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says “Again and again ON BENDED KNEES let us pray to the Lord.”

There is no fasting the week after Pentecost. However, there is a fast for the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul which lasts from the Monday after all Saints Day (June 24 this year) - June 28. So there is a 5-day fast before the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul. When Pascha falls earlier, this fast period is longer.

Sunday, June 23 - Sunday of All Saints The period of the Pentecostarion is now complete with the commemoration of “All Saints.”



Monday, 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.

Sunday, June 30 – Synaxis of the Holy Apostles The Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul is commemorated each year on June 29. On June 30 the Church commemorates the Twelve Apostles.

Tuesday, 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 prefigured His glory at the Resurrection and Ascension.



Paraklesis Services of Supplication to the Virgin Mary to be held in August



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 4, 6, 11 or 15. Paraklesis dates after August 2 to be announced.

Interested in serving as an altar boy?



Any of our young men who will enter 4th 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 11.

Father has scheduled two teams for each Sunday of June (except June 9—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 6- August 4.

“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

St. John the Baptist Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism - Isadora Violetta Chrysoula Panopoulos, daughter of Theodoros and Marisa Panopoulos, was baptized on Saturday, May 11. Michael and Bessie Palios were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism - Lennon Liv "Olivia" Donato, daughter of Clay Donato and Vanessa Beauparlant, was baptized on Saturday, May 11. Chloe Tsepelis as the Godmother. Na Sas Zisi!

Chrismation - Raleigh (Nectarios) Rodriguez and Carlos (Thomas) Rodriguez were Chrismated Orthodox on Sunday, May 5. Roberto Rodriguez was the sponsor. Congratulations!

Funeral - Artie Palios passed away on April 18. Her funeral was held on Monday, April 22. May her memory be eternal!

In Memory Eternal of Artie Palios by Fr. Stavros



It was one year ago that Nick Andreadakis retired from being our chanter. We had a farewell coffee hour for him, I read a letter to him in church, we gave him a gift, and we thanked him also in *The Messenger*. Artie's sudden passing didn't afford us the opportunity to do that, not that she was planning on retiring, and not that she wanted or needed public acknowledgement. I would like to say how profoundly grateful I am to her for her many years of service to the church. All told, she was involved with our choir for over forty years, most of them as the director, and was the director long before I arrived at St. John. We know that she is the matriarch of a large family, who is very involved in the life of our church. However, I want to say personally that I am grateful to the service that she offered to our church and the valuable assistance that she gave to me, these past nearly 15 years. It was a joy to work with her, to prepare and to celebrate the Divine Services of our church. It was a joy to work with her behind the scenes to put Greek music into English. She may be gone, but her memory will live on in our music for years to come. She helped to develop our choir into one of the largest and best choirs in our Archdiocese. She did it all with grace, class and humor. Between her, me and Nick, we never had a cross word or an argument. That is no small accomplishment. Usually the chanter, choir director and priest don't all get along. Usually it's two against one. Not here. And for that we, and I, were very fortunate. The choir will keep singing in the years to come. Another choir director will continue to build on the choir. Artie, however, put down a firm foundation for the choir. And as the choir continues and grows, the foundation she laid will never be forgotten. Well done, good and faithful servant! Memory eternal, Artie!



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

Our parish has the second largest contingent of campers who will be participating in St. Stephen's Summer Camp from the Metropolis—39 of our children this year! Nine adults will also serve as staff members. 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.

No Basketball on Sundays - Sunday coffee hour is for fellowship, not for sports. Basketballs flying in all directions makes it unsafe for people who are sitting and eating. We've tried to curtail this but to little avail. Please cooperate by refraining from playing basketball in the Kourmolis Center during coffee hour.

Get Acquainted Sundays, June 2 and July 7 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.

Kourmolis Center Wooden Floor and Stage Resurfacing Starting June 10

After many years we are finally sanding down and resurfacing the wooden floors of the gym and the stage. The process will take several weeks during the month of June. The gym will be off limits. Coffee Hour will be held outside in the Lunch Area of the Administration Building, behind the church office. For bathrooms, the Administration Building will be open. For any questions, please contact the church office.

GOYA Meeting - Sunday, June 2 - Canceled The GOYA

Meeting on Sunday, June 2, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center has been canceled. **Sun State Eastern Orthodox Junior Olympics** will be on June 7-9, 2019.

Junior Olympics - Volunteers Needed!

We will be hosting our annual Sun State Eastern Orthodox Junior Olympics on **June 7-9**. 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 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.



St. John's is proud to offer a new ministry for families with special needs:

Connect Through Christ

According to the US Census, 18.5% of American Children under age 18 are Special Needs Children. That doesn't mean that they aren't smart, talented or capable. Just that they have specific challenges that a "typical" student would not face.

There are four major types of special needs children:

- Physical – muscular dystrophy, chronic asthma, epilepsy, etc.
- Developmental – down syndrome, autism, dyslexia, speech delays, processing disorders
- Behavioral/Emotional – ADD, bi-polar, oppositional defiance disorder, etc.
- Sensory Impaired – Blind, visually impaired, deaf, limited hearing

Our mission is to break down barriers that keep children with disabilities and their families from being able to participate in the Church community. By discretely identifying families that Connect Through Christ can serve we hope to assist in providing a life long relationship with Christ. For more information please contact Lindsey Skourellos at 813-503-7845 and lskourellos@yahoo.com or Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534 and d_skourellos@yahoo.com

Youth Protection Update

Dear Parishioners,

As many of you are aware, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America passed a resolution last summer mandating Youth Worker screening, training, and background checks for all Greek Orthodox churches in North America. Luckily, we've already implemented a youth protection program and many of us are familiar with the processes.

Please be aware that the youth protection enrollment for ecclesiastical year 2019–2020 will occur between June 1 and August 31. Prior to this starting date, you will receive email communication regarding what steps to take if you are volunteer who works with children or leads our Church. We ask that you keep an eye out for these emails and read the Messenger for updates as our methodology may change due to the new requirements. Thank you for serving so faithfully at St. John's.

Yours in Christ,

Catherine S. Mitseas, ministry head
Nick Kataras, Parish Council Liaison



Young Adult Ministry - Sunday, June 16 & July 28 - The YAL will have our dinner and discussion. We'll meet at 5:00 p.m. in the Kourmolis Community Center, walk somewhere close by to have dinner, then walk back for some discussion. Please RSVP to Charlie if you are going to attend. Dates may change. Charlie will send an email.

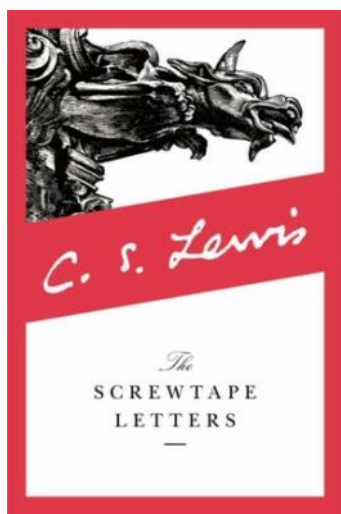


No passing of trays —As of January 1, 2019, there will no longer be a tray passed at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. It is our hope that everyone will increase their stewardship in order to bridge this gap. Increased stewardship and less nickel-and-diming (trays) are the mark of a strong parish. This new policy is in line with our desire to be a strong parish. There will be a tray in the narthex. You can deposit your stewardship checks in that tray, give additional donations in that tray or ignore the tray. There is no charge for the small candles. The large candles (the red 7-day ones) will still cost \$5.

NEW PROCEDURE FOR UNCLAIMED COFFEE HOURS - We are excited to present a NEW procedure for hosting our weekly parish coffee hour for the weeks where no ministry has signed up for coffee hour. Certain letters of the alphabet according to last name, have been assigned to each open date. We will be emailing a link to a Sign-Up Genius. Please sign up for those Sundays which correspond to your last name. You may sign up for one or more items which include, set-up, serving, bringing items or clean up on any particular date. Please see the dates and suggested items below. We would like to see as many different people as possible sign up, so that the burden will not fall on anyone repeatedly. It is also important that our worship experience not be compromised by putting on the coffee hour. Finally, if a family would like to pool together to go a coffee hour, to honor a loved one who has passed, or mark another occasion, please let us know and we'll reserve that date for your family. If there are any questions, don't hesitate to call the church office at 813-876-8830. Thank you for helping us to create an environment that encourages fellowship and community.

Summer Small Group Bible Study

The Monday Night Bible Study with Charlie Hambos will continue throughout the summer. The group meets in the Administration Building Meeting Room. We will meet on Monday, June 3, June 10, June 17, June 24, July 15, July 22, July 29 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.



Small Group Study of Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis

Will meet in the Administration Building Meeting Room

On Sundays after Pascha - Stay Tuned

1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Please purchase the book soon.

Contact Mary Maas at 813-215-7688

Here are the required readings for each session:

First third of the book pages 1-61

Second third of the book pages 63-127

Last third of the book pages 129-209.

In this humorous exchange, C. S. Lewis delves into moral questions about good v. evil, temptation, repentance, and grace. Through this wonderful tale, the reader emerges with a better knowledge of what it means to live a good, honest life.

Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 1810 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 4 years! Over half of our parish receives it daily, as well as many people outside of our parish. Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email Charlie at charlie.hambos@gmail.com and ask to add you.

AFGLC Awards Scholarships to Brilliant Students



The American Foundation for Greek Language & Culture (AFGLC) honored the 2019 Scholarship Recipients on Saturday, April 13, 2019 at our Annual Conference. CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR STUDENTS!!!

The AFGLC Dr. Byron P. Palls Scholarship Recipient is Mr. Harry Nicholas Koutroumanis
The AFGLC Dr. Demetrios G. Halkias Scholarship Recipients are: Ms. Anastasia Maria Gregory &
Ms. Evangelia Sofia Manias
The AFGLC Peter & Sophia Kourmolis Scholarship Recipients are: Mr. George Hambos Jr. &
Ms. Corinna Sue Robinson

Two Meetings for Ministry Heads in August

Our Ministry Heads will gather twice in August. On **Sunday, August 11**, we will gather after Divine Liturgy for our annual calendar meeting. Information will be mailed to you prior to that date. Also, we will meet on **Monday, August 19**, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. to continue our work as we plot the future course of our parish. Please make sure at least one ministry member is in attendance for each of these meetings.

Calling All Men

If you are interested in a men's group, please respond to Fr. Stavros by July 15

We had a dinner for dads on a Sunday evening a few months ago. We had about ten people in attendance and it was a wonderful evening of laughter and fellowship. If there is interest in getting a group going on a regular basis, we will look into doing that. We need a minimum of 10-15 people to commit to this on a regular basis in order to start. The group would gather for dinner, fellowship and discussion on topics that are of interest to the group ONCE a month at night. Here is the information that we'd like send in by July 15 if you are interested. (please email this to Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com.)

1. Your name, phone number and email address
2. Your age
3. Do you have kids in high school or below (including if you haven't had kids yet)
4. What nights could work for you—please list all that could work.
(most likely this group would meet once a month on either a Friday night or a Sunday night)
5. Is there a night or two that you would prefer?
6. Would you prefer a group for men of all ages; or would you rather see a group of dads with kids at home and a second group of older men? (do you want two groups to reflect different stages of life or would one group be sufficient?)

Please send your thoughts to Fr. Stavros. If we have more than 25 people, we will consider a second group, broken down according to age.

MEN'S
GROUP

Community Outreach

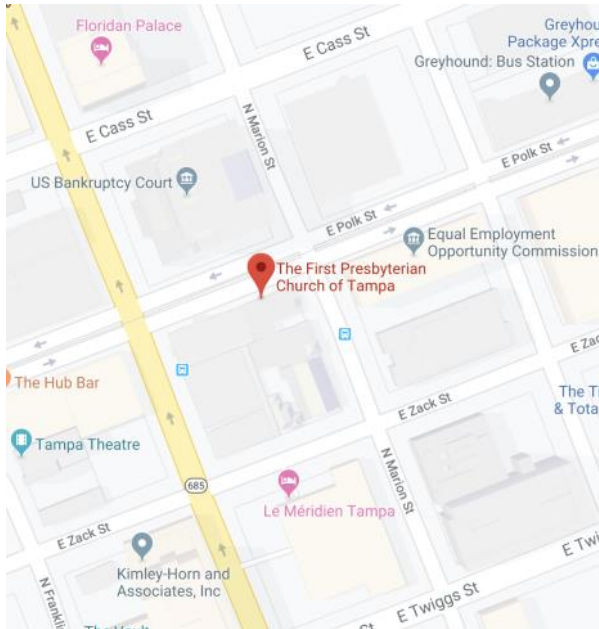
Saturday, June 15 and July 20

We Want You to Serve with Us!

Hello and WELCOME! My name is Greg Melton and on behalf of our Community Outreach Ministry I want to thank you for your interest in participating with our group. **On the third Saturday of each month**, we volunteer our time to provide for the needy of our community in downtown Tampa. We partner with Matthew 25 local charity, USF Medical School and Metropolitan Ministries to serve breakfast, provide clothing and medical needs for our guests.

To Volunteer: Go to our Sign Up Genius, see URL below or scan the QR CODE and sign up.

Place: First Presbyterian Church @ 412 Zack Street, downtown Tampa. The entrance for volunteers is on the Polk Street side of building.



Time: 8:00 AM to 10:30AM

Volunteer Check-In Process:

- 1) Sign in and choose the job you want on the Duty Sheet
- 2) Prepare and wear your name tag
- 3) Don't be shy...if not sure where to go or what to do to get started, Ask someone who looks like they know what they're doing.
- 4) Set up and Preparation 8-9AM, Serving 9-10:15AM, Cleanup 10:15-10:30AM.

Matthew 25 founders Peggy & Mike Kanter, as well as Bill Stone from Metro Ministries, are Go To people if you have questions or need direction on where you may be needed when you arrive.

Here is the URL for the Sign Up Genius for every upcoming 3rd Saturday of Month. Find the dates that work for you and sign up.
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f48a5a62da3f49-community>



Scan with your
Smartphone to
Sign-Up Today

Please don't hesitate to ask any questions. Thank you and God Bless

Greg Melton 813-967-2074 gmelt12@gmail.com

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.

JUNE is cataract awareness month

Have you had an eye exam recently? “It’s never too late to save your vision” and “prevention is better than cure”

Cataracts are the leading cause of blindness in U.S. A cataract is a clouding of the normally clear lens of your eye.

For people who have cataracts, seeing through cloudy lenses is a bit like looking through a frosty or fogged-up window. Clouded vision caused by cataracts can make it more difficult to read, drive a car (especially at night) or see the expression on a friend's face.

Most cataracts develop slowly and don't disturb your eyesight early on. But with time, cataracts will eventually interfere with your vision and if left untreated can cause blindness.

Signs and symptoms of cataracts:

- Cloudy, blurred vision
- Difficulty with vision at night
- Sensitivity to light
- Need for brighter light for reading and other activities
- Seeing "halos" around lights
- Double vision in a single eye

Factors that increase your risk for developing cataracts:

- Increasing age
- Diabetes
- Exposure to sunlight without eye protection
- Smoking
- Obesity



- High blood pressure
- Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol

Prevention:

Wear sunglasses when outdoors. Ultraviolet light from the sun may contribute to the development of cataracts.

When to see a doctor:

Routine eye exams should be done yearly or as recommended by your doctor.

Marcelle Triantafilou, RN-BC, BSN



Metropolis of Atlanta's St. Stephen's Summer Camp

Week #1 June 23 - June 29**Week #2** June 30 - July 6**Week #3** July 7 - July 13**Week #4** July 14 - July 20**Week #5** July 21 - July 27

Registration was on March 20. A few spots may still be open. In the meantime, visit <http://atlmeteropolis.org/st-stephens-summer-camp> to help with the Camp Wish List!

PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE SATURDAY OF THE SOULS

MEMORIAL SERVICES – June 15, 2019

[illegible]

Running on Empty

By Fr. Luke Veronis



Christ is Risen!

The other day I was driving my car and didn't realize that the tank was almost empty. I began to get nervous, and kept praying to God that the car wouldn't run out of gas before I reached the next gas station. When I checked my GPS, the closest station was 11 miles away! Thank God, though, I did reach the station and didn't end up having to actually push the car!!!

As I thought about my carelessness in allowing the car to almost reach that critical point of empty, I reflected on what a great analogy this situation offers for our spiritual lives.

How many of us are close to running on empty in our spiritual lives? How many of us don't even take the time to look at our spiritual gage, and see whether we actually have gas in our tanks. In fact, how many of us are now sitting in our cars, not moving at all because our spiritual tank is empty, and as we sit there not moving, we don't actually do anything about it! It does no good to "wish" our tank was full. Instead we have to actually do something to refill our tank!

This month, as we continue to bask in the joy and wonder of our Lord Jesus' Resurrection, we celebrate two other special feastdays of the Church - the **Ascension** of our Lord into heaven and **Pentecost**, which marks 50 days after Pascha when the Holy Spirit came down with power upon the followers of Jesus Christ.

Both these feasts remind us how Christ longs to fill our "tanks" with His Spirit. Our Lord doesn't want us to run on empty as we journey through life. He wants to fill us and empower us each and every day of our lives. He even offers Himself to us daily through our connection with Him in prayer, through reading of Holy Scripture, and whenever we approach to unite with Him through Holy Communion. But remember, He will never push Himself on us, or force us to fill our spiritual tanks with His Presence. It's up to us to see whether we have a need, and then to ask, and willingly accept to be filled with His Spirit.

Here are a few promises that our Lord Jesus offered to His followers:

"Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give will never thirst. But the water that I shall give will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

"I am the bread of life, anyone who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

"Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

"I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly."

"I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you."

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you."

"And remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Christ didn't abandon the world when He ascended back into heaven. In fact, He promised that He would send down upon us a powerful Comforter, an Advocate, the Spirit of Truth. God will never abandon His children. God is with us and will always be with us! He is ready to fill our tanks, our lives with His Presence. Yet, will we allow Him to do this?

Here is the great promise and blessing of Pentecost. God's Holy Spirit is ready to come and dwell within us! All we have to do is open up and invite Him. All we have to do is accept Him. And the more we open our hearts each day to receive Him, the more we will experience the peace and joy of the living God active in our lives!

So let us not sit in our cars with an empty tank! Let's not go through life feeling empty, like we are going no where! Instead, let's fill up our minds, hearts and souls with, as the Apostle Paul said, all that is "good, true, noble, just, pure, lovely, virtuous and praiseworthy" (Philippians 4:8). Let us begin each day with a Prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to come and be present and active in our lives:

Come O Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who are present everywhere and fill all things, the Treasury of blessings and Giver of Life, Come and Abide in us!

Fr. Luke Veronis is the Proistamenos of Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Webster, Massachusetts.

Oratorical Festival Speeches Continued



The Parish Level Competition of the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival was held on March 31. On March 31, the parish level of competition for the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival was held at St. John. Our participants in the senior division were Hannah Passalaris, Dimitrios (DI) Tsetsekas and Angelina Krinos, with Hannah and DI moving on to the district competition in Sarasota. In the junior division, the participants were Demetri Passalaris, Madeline Moran, Jason Owens, Lola Bavaro and Andrew Thatcher, with Demetri and Madeline moving on to the district competition. Special thanks goes to Peggy Bradshaw for again organizing our Oratorical Festival, to our judges—Helen Cauthorn, Brett Mourer and Dante Skourellos—and to our timekeeper, Charlie Hambos. The district competition was on April 13 at St. Barbara in Sarasota. Hannah Passalaris placed 3rd. Great job by everyone!

From ancient Greece to the present, politicians have aligned themselves with religious concepts and constituencies. How is an Orthodox Christian to discern whether today's politicians do this out of genuine piety or in order to manipulate the electorate?

By Hannah Passalaris

How often do you hear a politician end a speech with God Bless America or have a candidate running for office share their religious affiliation or local church of choice? Despite the founding of this nation on the principle of the separation of church and state, politicians align themselves with religious constituencies and concepts time and again. Conservatives on the right will court the influential evangelical vote and espouse family values as synonymous with moral righteousness, while politicians on the left will demonstrate their religiosity through endorsements by their spiritual leaders and attendance at church services. As Orthodox Christians we need to discern whether politicians do this out of genuine piety or in order to manipulate the electorate.

The pessimist in me says it is most definitely the latter. Most politicians regardless of political party will say and do whatever it takes to garner our vote. How any god-fearing Christians especially evangelicals could support our current President who is completely devoid of any moral compass or genuine spirituality is beyond me. Of course, I do not want to get mired in the amoral political climate of the current era where bullying your opponents, lying about undeniable facts and even denigrating the memory of esteemed Senators somehow is common place.

Yet as long as the current President attends the National Day of Prayer Banquet and has Mike Pence at his side, he somehow secures the support of the majority of evangelicals. But I digress. This after all is supposed to be a speech for the Oratorical Festival where I as a devout Orthodox Christian somehow share my personal beliefs with an assortment of scriptural references to answer the question.

According to Romans 13:1, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God Therefore, no matter who we decide to elect to represent us the authority to govern comes from God and not the people. Therefore despite who is elected and what we think of them are we supposed to simply follow them blindly and pray for the best? Well actually, yes.

Each Sunday during the petitions the priest will pray "for our country, for the president, and for all in public service, let us pray to the Lord" And the people respond, "Lord, have mercy." In addition, in Timothy 2:1-3 St. Paul writes, "I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for all people- for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our savior." Hopefully our prayers and the prayers of our politicians to guide them in a Godly way will help them be moral leaders. However, can prayer alone and being a Christian make you an effective leader? Sadly, no.

If politicians do not decisively act in times of crisis but merely offer their prayers to the victims they are not strong leaders. We must judge our politicians based on their actions and their characters, not just their words. Scripture offers us a guide to determine good leadership. "Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders" Exodus 18:21. In addition Proverbs 16:12, "Kings detest wrongdoing, for a throne is established through righteousness." In other words, we want to choose politicians who are not afraid to do the right thing for the right reasons.

Finally, we can look towards Jesus Christ himself as an example of good leadership. He spoke for all people, and was humble in his service to others. Jesus tells his disciples in Mark 10:43-45, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus Christ martyred himself on the Cross for our salvation--the ultimate sacrifice as a selfless leader. His constituents became Christians and it is our moral obligation to find Christ-like leaders today. In a few years, when I am old enough to vote I trust that I won't be manipulated by the vote mongering demagogues but cast my ballot for truly worthy and humble leaders. One can only hope and pray they still exist.

Hannah Passalaris is going into the 11th Grade and is the daughter of Isidoros and Jolie Passalaris.

Many of the Church's services employ objects from the natural world (such as wheat, wine, oil, or water) in order to confer a blessing upon the faithful. Why does the Church do this, and what does this suggest about our responsibility for the natural world?

By Demetri Tsetsekas

The church employs many objects to assist in blessing the congregation. Wheat, wine, oil, and water. One of the most prominent in liturgy is water. But why water? Water is in almost, if not every service in the Orthodox faith. Wheat, wine, and oil are important in some services such as Communion and Holy Unction. Yet they do not appear as often as water does. So, let's talk about water for a little bit. Water... It makes up 70% of the human body. It covers 75% of the earth's surface. Life depends on water. It is made up of two hydrogens and one oxygen, very common elements. Water connects all of God's creations. God made water the key to sustaining life. So why would we not have it in the service that honors him? Water, in many services, is blessed and sprinkled on the crowd to cleanse their souls. When I go to St. Stevens camp every year, the first thing that happens is the Blessing of the Waters Service. This is done so we can be blessed in all our actions for the upcoming week. So our souls can be clean while we walk the path that God wants. God used water in many ways throughout The Bible. God used water to cleanse the earth of sin with the great flood. He split the Red Sea to help Israelites escape from Egypt. He used water as a symbol of purity and renewal. Jesus, while he walked among us, preformed many miracles and impossible actions with water. Jesus helped Peter walk on water. He turned water into wine. He healed a man born blind by cleaning his eyes with water. He also used water in many teachings and lessons. Yet, when you look at it, water is a very abundant resource. Why do you think Jesus would center so many teachings and miracles around such a common resource? Why not

use luxurious oils or expensive objects to perform such greatness? Because he wanted us to see something. He wanted us to make a connection. Water by itself sustains all life. When scientist look for life on other planets they look for one essential thing...water. But God shows us that even though water is very common, through Him, water can achieve the most uncommon of things.

"But straightway Jesus spoke unto them, saying, be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:24-32)

Through Jesus and his belief, Peter walked upon the water. Yet, when he looked away from Jesus he began to sink as he normally would. Peter stood on water but the second Peter showed lack of faith, he was no longer in communion with God and the water became normal again. Water is needed by all. Even Jesus needed water while he walked on earth. Water is included in service because through God, it can bond people or separate them. It can fix and it can destroy. Something so simple as two hydrogens and one oxygen can have such an impact on our lives when put into perspective. Water is what binds us as a living creature and God binds us as a spiritual one. So putting water as the base of life in church, the house of the creator of life, nourishes us inside and out. It binds a community to grow stronger in our faith and as a species. It makes us who we are. At least 75% of who we are.

Demetri Tsetsekas is going into 12th Grade. He is the son of Steve & Deanna Tsetsekas.

My One Word for 2019 - Attentive

By Dr. Nick Fallieras

As we make our way through 2019, anyone who has chosen a word for this year is welcome to submit a testimonial for the Messenger each month. If you'd like to share your word and how it's shaping your year, please email Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com. This month's testimonial is from Dr. Nicholas Fallieras.

When Father Stavros asked the parishioners to share their word and the impact it has nurtured moving forward, I wondered why I would choose ATTENTIVE. While working as a medical professional for over forty years, being ATTENTIVE to patients was absolutely necessary to provide appropriate care. A thorough physical exam and attentive listening would provide the information required so that a diagnosis and a care plan could be instituted. Being attentive carried over to other aspects of my life. OK, so I was attentive - but then I retired. Suddenly, I was aimless, restless, and disjointed. I was not engaged with meaningful events or conversation. I could never find my wallet or car keys. I was good at making travel plans but that was it. I hesitate to mention that recently during Church service my mind would wander and, therefore, I was not receiving the full spiritual benefit that I was accustomed to. In order to recapture the joy of attending Church, I had to

closely follow the liturgy with the liturgical books provided. Being more attentive was very satisfying. Now I know what is required to fully enjoy all the Lenten services I plan to attend.

Recently I visited several friends in the hospital. During a visit to the labor room I ran into a Nurse Educator that I knew when I was actively working. She requested I attend a conference that afternoon that she was hosting for her nursing students. When I arrived, she asked me to deliver a lecture comparing obstetrical care years ago and now. I was about to bolt but I stayed and lectured. As I spoke I was rewarded with the ATTENTIVE faces of the students. This encounter reinforced that being ATTENTIVE works in positive ways for both sides. There's benefit to choosing a single word and applying it to one's life. Just writing this made me realize that it work.

Dr. Nicholas and Susan Fallieras are long time members of our church. Dr. Nick worked for decades as an OBGYN and delivered a lot of our children, some of whom are adults, bearing their own children.

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

“Blessed Is the Kingdom, Now and Forever: Reflections on the Divine Liturgy” is the latest book authored by our very own priest,

Father Stavros Akrotirianakis.

Father Stavros' latest book encourages us to pray the Divine Liturgy instead of just watching it. This book exhorts us to understand and appreciate the mystery so that the Divine Liturgy becomes more powerful and meaningful in your life.

Many Orthodox Christians “witness” the Divine Liturgy without being real participants in it. Perhaps this is why Orthodox Christians are perpetually late or miss the Divine Liturgy altogether. After all, for many, it is just a ritual that will be repeated virtually the same way next week. However, when we examine each petition and action of the Divine Liturgy, we realize that each one calls us to participate.

The word “liturgy” comes from two Greek words: “leitos” (meaning “people”) and “ergon” (meaning “work”). Liturgy literally means “the work of the people” and implies that this is a divine work of all the people. When one comes to worship and truly does the work of the Divine Liturgy, it becomes more than a ritual; it becomes alive.

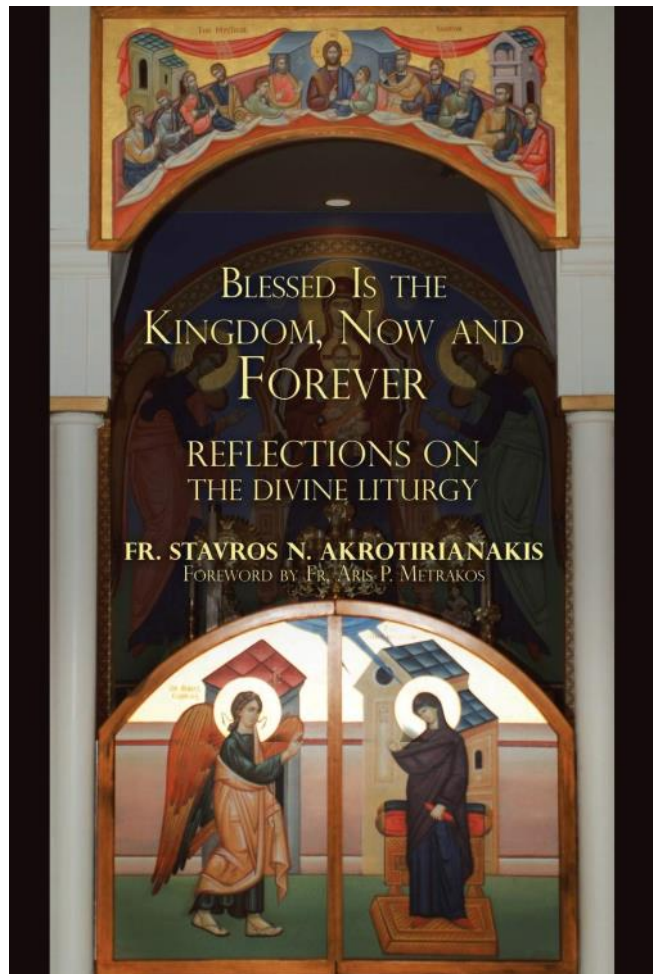
The Divine Liturgy is a parable. To the untrained eye and the unopened heart, it is a ritual involving a man in robes, a choir, altar boys, processions, incense, and candles. But to the one whose heart is open, whose eye is trained, and who yearns to experience God in the Divine Liturgy, the Divine Liturgy opens the gates to the Kingdom of Heaven and allows the most common of people to enter the Kingdom of Heaven for a short period each week.

Father Stavros' newest book will help the reader understand and appreciate the Mystery that unfolds before us each time this service is celebrated. This book will arm you with knowledge on how to pray the Divine Liturgy so that this service will become more powerful and meaningful in your life.

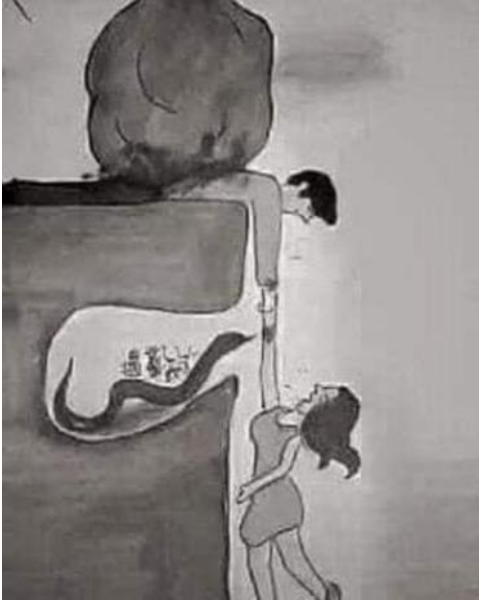
This book is available in the bookstore. We would love to hear from you, particularly what you think of the book after reading it.

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



A Matter of Perspective



The man doesn't know that there is a snake underneath.

The woman doesn't know that there is a stone crushing the man.

The woman thinks: "I am going to fall! and I can't climb because the snake is going to bite me! Why can't the man use a little more strength and pull me up!"

The man thinks: "I am in so much pain! Yet I'm still pulling you up as much as I can! Why don't you try and climb a little harder?!" The moral is: You can't see the pressure the other person is under, and the other person can't see pain that you're in.

This is life, no matter whether it's with work, family, feelings or friends we should try to understand each other.

Learn to think differently, perhaps more clearly and communicate better.

A little thought and patience goes a long way.

****copied from Matthew Wood**

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

George & Maria Andros - Birmingham, AL

Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA

William J Camarinos - Alexandria, VA

Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC

Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL

Gabriel & Irene Hurst - Tampa, FL

Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL

Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI

John & Cathie Koch - Tarpon Springs, FL

Perry & Fay Stamatiades - Asheville, NC

Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI

Wesley & Melissa Thompson - Clearwater, FL

Demitrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH

Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL

Bessie Bliziotes - Palm Cost, FL

Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL

Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL

William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL

Lillan Thomas - Highland, IN

Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL

Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD

Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA

Nicholas & Vaso Anton - Dunedin, FL

Kay Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA

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.

Is Your Parish a Cruise Ship or Battleship?

By Fr. Aris Metrakos

Recently, some of our church leadership had the opportunity to spend a couple of hours with professional church consultant Rev. Dr. Roy King. In one concise analogy, Roy (as he likes to be called) put parish-based ministry into crystal clear focus. After having helped many congregations in their struggle to grow and improve, he has concluded that 85% of all churches are “cruise ships,” and these cruise ships need to become battleships.

Cruise ships and battleships. What could be more clear and simple!

Think about what happens on a cruise ship. We don't have to do any work. All of our needs are taken care of by someone else. All events (except for lifeboat training) are optional. There is no accountability. We have no responsibilities.

Isn't this the way most people approach the Church? Developing and executing services and programs is someone else's job. We can go to services once or twice a year and still feel entitled to call ourselves “members.”

Since all work falls under the job description of the paid staff or handful of core volunteers, we have no responsibilities. Even our duty to support the Church is mitigated through the use of the term “stewardship,” which is often interpreted to mean “So what if I pledge \$52 per year, that's between me and the Almighty.”

Then there's the battleship. The warship has a life or death mission. Every member of the crew has a job that must be executed to the utmost of his ability. All hands must work, and all depend on one another both for the success of the mission and for their mutual survival.

No doubt about it. A healthy parish must see itself as a battleship. The mission of the Church is life and death. We are called to bring the Gospel to the world and to provide for those in need. No other vocation is as critical or crucial. Each member of the “crew” (the Body of Christ) has a divine calling to find and fill his particular niche in the life of the parish. And when



all members do not work together they jeopardize both the work of the Church and their own salvation.

Anyone among us who has spent time aboard both cruise ships and warships knows that the respective lifestyles aboard these two types of vessels are polar opposites. Cruise ship passengers are relaxed, tanned, and well-fed. Battleship sailors are sleep deprived, grungy, and edgy. No one in his right mind would want to vacation on a warship.

But the life of the Church isn't a vacation—it's life and death combat with the evil one. And just like the cruise ship passenger that can't fit into his wardrobe after three nights and four days of stuffing his face, “members” of cruise ship churches are unfit for spiritual warfare. Perhaps this is why so many parishes are afloat but bloated.

There are few things as satisfying as being part of a focused, disciplined, hard-working team that knows its mission, understands and fulfills its responsibilities, is well-trained, and strives constantly to improve its knowledge and skills. God is calling all of us to find our place among the crew of a spiritual battleship.

Fr. Aris Metrakos is the Proistamenos of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in San Francisco, CA, and is Spiritual Father to Fr. Stavros.

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,
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



Like



Daughters of Penelope Asking You to Join them in Volunteering with the DOD Warrior Games

June 21-30



I wanted to encourage to join me in supporting the 2019 Department of Defense (DoD) Warrior Games June 21-30. As previously mentioned, three very close friends working at MacDill AFB are on the organizing committee for the event and it should be an amazing experience! See details about the event at the bottom of this email. If you are interested in volunteering as part of Team DOP, please following the instructions below. I would like to have at least 15 volunteers! I have already registered as a Team Lead, but you need to register individually:

1. Go to dodwarriorgames.com
 2. Click the "volunteer" button on the main screen
 3. Fill out the form
 4. When you get to "What days would you like to volunteer on?" select Saturday, June 22
 5. When you get to "Pick a shift" select Shift 2 (10 am - 2 pm)
 6. When you get to "Skills and Areas of interest" please enter With Team DOP at USF Track
- If you register please send me an email and let me know so I can confirm our group details with the Volunteer coordinator.

Friday, June 21

Golf Prelim, Eagles Golf Course
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 22

Track, University of South Florida
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Golf Finals, Eagles Golf Course
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Mountain Bike Demonstration, Alafia State Park
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Opening Ceremony, Amalie Arena
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 23

Field, University of South Florida
8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Wheelchair Tennis, University of South Florida
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Cycling Time Trial, Bayshore Boulevard
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Monday, June 24

Archery Prelim, Tampa Convention Center
8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Powerlifting, Tampa Convention Center
2:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Wheelchair Basketball Prelim, Tampa Convention Center
3:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Tuesday, June 25

Archery Finals, Tampa Convention Center
8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Indoor Rowing, Tampa Convention Center
2:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Wheelchair Basketball Prelim, Tampa Convention Center
3:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Wednesday, June 26

Cycling Road Race, MacDill Air Force Base
8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Wheelchair Rugby Prelim, Tampa Convention Center
8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Sitting Volleyball Prelim, Tampa Convention Center
3:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, June 27

Shooting Prelim, Tampa Convention Center
7:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Wheelchair Rugby Prelim, Tampa Convention Center
8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Sitting Volleyball Prelim, Tampa Convention Center
3:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Friday, June 28

Shooting Finals, Tampa Convention Center
7:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Wheelchair Rugby Finals, Tampa Convention Center
8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Wheelchair Basketball Finals, Tampa Convention Center
3:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 29

Swimming, Long Aquatic Center
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 30

Wheelchair Volleyball Finals, Yuengling Center
12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Closing Ceremonies, Amalie Arena
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.



Congratulations to Christopher Scarfogliero

Christopher will be entering the United States Air Force as a 2nd Lieutenant and will be stationed at Whiteman Air force Base in Missouri.
God bless your service to our country!

Lenten Retreat Partnered with Love INC to Help Those in Need

As a part of our ongoing relationship with Love INC of Metro Tampa Bay, during our annual GOYA Lenten Retreat we assembled 16 welcome baskets for men entering the Portico Workforce Housing Solutions program, that included towels, sheets, body wash and pillows. 20 Bucket Brigades of cleaning supplies will be given to guests when they move into new permanent housing. This is God's Love in action - and Love INC was so grateful!



Our Mission

To mobilize local churches to transform lives and communities in the Name of Christ.

Our Vision

To see Christian churches united in purpose and fully engaged in actively living out their faith by lovingly serving people in need in their communities.



Love INC
Love In the Name of Christ
of Metro Tampa

We want to get more involved with Love INC and we want more people to get involved. If you have interest in getting involved, or have more questions of how to get involved, please contact Charlie Hambos, 813-843-8471 or contact Lindsay Hale, lhale@loveinctampa.com

Opportunity to Work or Volunteer at Brookdale Bayshore Senior Living

With hopes to further the relationship between St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Brookdale Bayshore an Independent/Assisted Living building located at Gandy and Bayshore in South Tampa. They would like to offer volunteer opportunities and also encourage any that would be interested to apply to work here now or in the future. They also have perks, trainings, and other offers for those willing to volunteer with a heart for seniors. Work opportunities are for 18 and up, but volunteers of any age are welcome! Great for students looking for something to do over the summer! We would love to get you plugged into any upcoming special events or have you join in when other student volunteers are coming in to start out. Contact, Kayla Drawdy, a Business Office Coordinator, Brookdale Bayshore, 4902 Bayshore Blvd, Tampa, FL 33611, 813.835.4475

Interested in Improving Your Speech Possible classes to be offered to our community

Want to develop a more expressive sound that gets people's attention? Do you sometimes feel that people ignore what you have to say because your voice is a small, ineffective one? Or do you find that your accent stops you from easily interacting with native-born citizens? Why put up unnecessary blocks between yourself and most of the people that you interact with on a daily basis? With a little effort in this workshop and by following the speech exercises offered you can increase your confidence in public and give yourself opportunities that will help you achieve your aims in life. With a little bit of effort you can develop a sound that serves you. So often I find young actors who have a lot of emotional, inner life but who aren't able to share that rich inner life with their audience. These workshop classes are free of charge and will begin in June. Reservations required. (so we can have some idea of the size of a class.). Limited enrollment because small class size is more effective. Younger (17) or older folks (any age) are welcome - it's never too early or late but please come with serious intentions. Once a week at the church hall (?). Approx 2 hrs/ session. Participants should bring a notebook, something to write with and be prepared to take notes. Some sheets will be available to take home but it's important to do the exercises in the room with guidance. Any questions feel free to ask. **Stephan Morrow 973-896-0804**

June & July 2019 SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Our last day of Sunday School was on Sunday, May 19 and we would like to thank everyone for a successful Sunday School Year and Graduation Ceremony.

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, Aspasia Panos, Vasilios Panos, Emily Nicklow, Maria, Nicklow, 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: Anastasia Stonestreet - Coordinator

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

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

Grade 1: Jenevieve Elly, Teacher and Maraquet Edquid - Assistant

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

Grade 3: Amy Kafantaris and Stacie Garcia - Co-Teachers

Grade 4: Debbie Ferekides

Grade 5: Vickie Peckham and Ana Mourer - Assistant

Middle School: Marina Choundas and Vivian Samuel - Co-Teachers

High School: Mary Ann Konstas and Isidoros Passalaris – Co-Teachers

Our last Youth Sunday of the year took place on May 12. 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 Prosphora 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 or call 813-758-3102.

First Day of Sunday school will be August 18

All Youth Registration - August 4, 11 and 18

Hope to see everyone throughout the summer

~ July 2019 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Denotes Strict Fasting Days	1 GYM FLOOR RESURFACING	2 GYM FLOOR RESURFACING No Basketball	3 GYM FLOOR RESURFACING	4 GYM FLOOR RESURFACING Young at Heart 11:30 a.m.	5** GYM FLOOR RESURFACING	6 GYM FLOOR RESURFACING
7 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fr. Ken Anthony, Guest Celebrant	8	9 Basketball 8:00 p.m.	10**	11	12**	13
14 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fr. Stavros, Guest Celebrant	15 Bible Study 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	16 Basketball 8:00 p.m.	17**	18	19**	20
21 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. AHEPA/Daughters Fr. Stavros, Guest Celebrant	22 Bible Study 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	23 Basketball 8:00 p.m.	24**	25	26**	27
28 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fr. Ken Anthony, Guest Celebrant	29 Bible Study 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	30 Basketball 8:00 p.m.	31**	Fr. Stavros will be out of the office from June 27 - August 2 Charlie will be out of the office from June 27 - July 15		

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

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St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Timetable of Services

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

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

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

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Mike Xenick, VP	813-340-8737
Gary Ward, Treasurer	813-846-3898
Ryan Rindone, Secretary	704-564-2046
Sandra Pappas	813-785-3747
Jim Armstrong	954-295-6665
George Chagaris	727-420-1920
Amin Hanhan	813-846-2957
Nick Katzaras	863-581-2430
Edie Kavouklis	813-758-0305
Jimmy Konstas	813-220-7352

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

Adult Greek School

Magda Myer 813-909-2327

AHEPA

Gus Paras, President 813-254-6980

Altar Angels

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

Basketball

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

Bible Study

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Bookstore

Brett Mourer 813-376-9315

Chanter

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Choir

Ruth Losovitz , Organist 727-688-2782

Community Outreach

Greg Melton 813-967-2074

Connect Through Christ -

Special Needs Ministry for Children
Dante and Lindsey Skourellos 813-765-9534

Dance Groups

H XAPA ΜΑΣ,	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

Nicole Leontsinis, President 703-585-7490

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

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

Orthodox Christian Fellowship

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Oratorical Festival

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

Photography Ministry

Karina Findlay 813-476-9632

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

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

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Catherine Mitseas 813-571-0658

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

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