

# 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*

# August 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

## Encouragement, Discouragement and Indifference, and We All Need Somebody to Lean On

One highlight of my ministry each year occurs away from St. John in Tampa. It is St. Stephen's Summer camp, where, with the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios, I have the privilege to serve each summer for two weeks. As the 2019 camping season draws to a close, I now have 36 weeks (over the course of 17 summers) directing camp. I work hard at camp. I push my body to its physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual limits with non-stop activity and only a few hours rest each night. I spend a great deal of time preparing to go to summer camp and execute this program. I am very thankful for your support of this program, and for your prayers while I am doing it. I am also very proud to say that this summer, we had 40 GOYAns participate as campers and 10 adults participate as staff. All told, we were the number one parish in terms of participation of children and adults from the entire Metropolis of Atlanta.

**I'm not going to write the usual summary of activities. PLEASE KEEP READING. What follows are some critical lessons we all need to reflect on. The body of this is heavy. The conclusion is light.**

**Encouragement, Discouragement and Indifference—**Participation in summer camp is an encouraging exercise. At camp, people feel safe to be vulnerable. There is a lot of positivity and encouragement. It is a fact that people need to hear five encouraging things for every one discouraging thing they hear in order to be in any kind of balance. It is a fact that no one is in balance. At camp, everyone is in balance for this. You'll read in the reflections that follow by our kids how they

feel "full." Camp makes them feel full. We did several exercises in encouragement, building up each other. One of them involved giving compliments to people while we were walking to an activity. I asked the kids afterwards how they felt. Those who had received the encouragement felt great. Those who had given encouragement felt great. The lesson here "It didn't cost you any time to encourage, we were walking down here anyway."

I told the campers that one night, the kitchen staff had served ribs for dinner. They were awesome. As I was leaving the hall, without breaking stride, I yelled to them, "That was the best meal I've ever had here." Their faces lit up. I was so happy. Everyone won there. And you know what, they served ribs again. And it cost me nothing to do that. In a world where we often have a high cost for low benefit, encouragement is an activity where there is little to no cost and high benefit.

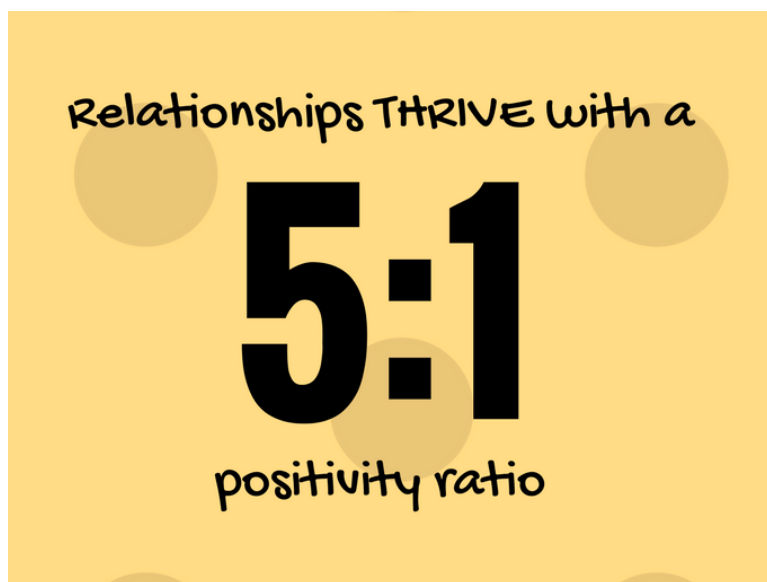
After one of our encouragement exercises, I asked the kids how they felt. They said they felt full. I asked them, "What if I told you we were going to drink alcohol now, or smoke weed?" They said, "That would be totally inappropriate and unneeded. We feel full, why would we do that?" Then we got into a discussion about how when people feel empty, and there are empty spaces to fill, that's when they turn to alcohol, weed, vaping, pornography. There are a lot of empty spaces for teenagers and for adults, and that's why people are turning to these things more and more.

Here is a simple formula to remember:

**Encouragement boosts confidence which affects performance in a positive way.** When we encourage others, they perform better. It's pretty common sense.

**Discouragement creates doubt, which kills confidence, which affects performance in a negative way.** When we discourage others, there is a negative outcome.

**Here is a critical point: When we offer neither encouragement or discouragement, when we are indifferent, it creates doubt, kills confidence and affect performance in a negative way.** So, giving no feedback is the same as giving negative feedback. In some ways it's actually worse. Sometimes it is better to know that you stand in a negative space with someone than not knowing where you stand at all.



**Are you giving encouragement versus discouragement at a 5:1 ratio?** If not, you need to. If not, why not? Encouragement is something we can all learn. It is something we all need. This does not mean we can't correct people, but there is a constructive way to do it. We don't have to do it in a destructive way. And even if we do it in a destructive way periodically, we need to continue to use encouragement. We need to encourage our children, we need to encourage adults. We need to actively fill the empty spaces we all have, because when there are empty spaces, they get filled with other things—alcohol, drugs, pornography, overeating, habitual TV watching, negative thoughts, isolation, self-doubt. No one gets enough encouragement.

One other comment on encouragement: When you put something positive into someone, unless they are a sociopath, you are going to get a positive response. When you compliment someone or encourage someone, you are going to get something positive in return—maybe a smile, maybe a thank you, maybe the knowledge that you have lightened someone's mood or made their day. I'm convinced more and more that violence is a result of a need to fill empty spaces that could be filled with encouragement so that they wouldn't be empty in the first place.

**Safe Spaces** - One theme of confession this year, both in our parish and at camp, is that people don't have safe spaces in which to put their "stuff." "Confession" (naming of sins) takes only a minute or two. Most people who have gone to confession this year list off their sins and then ask, "can we just talk

about a few things?" And then they talk about things that no one else knows—failings, fears, sadnesses, stresses. And confession quickly becomes a counseling session for thoughts that people have nowhere to put. I can't tell you how many times I heard "I have no one to talk to." If everyone says that, everyone can be a solution for that. If I have no one to talk to, anyone reading this message can help me. If I'm having trouble paying my mortgage, no one is going to help me with that. But if I need someone to talk to, everyone can solve that problem.

Needing someone to talk to is a problem that shouldn't be a problem. **WE ALL ARE THE SOLUTION** to this problem. We need to get busy solving a problem that is within the grasp of all of us to solve. Again, this is not a church issue, it is societal issue. But the Church should be in the lead in taking care of this issue. We need to be the safe space, the tranquil harbor, for people who need a safe space in which to talk, or a safe space in which to be.

**Consistent Messaging** - One of our challenges in society is that we are a victim of mixed messages. As an example, the Bible tells us to live simply, that if we have two coats, we should give one to the one who has none. Turn on the TV or read media and you'll be bombarded with messages to buy the most expensive handbag because anyone who is anyone has one. This is an inconsistency. If you asked people, which is the greatest influence on your life—church, parents, friends or media—the winner if you are over age 15 is the media. The church has little influence on our lives. Why? Because we are not stepping up to make ourselves a positive influence. When our meetings degenerate into slugfests about rights, when people are apathetic about worship because they come late and don't participate, we are not sending the message that Christianity gives structure to your life, gives hope when you are hopeless and that Jesus Christ is our Lord, our Savior, our friend and our hope. We need to be giving consistent messaging to our kids and ourselves.

**You are Pretty** - Most teenage girls have insecurities about the way they look. Most teenage boys do as well. Many adults still do. Many adults have given up on their body image—I'm bald, I accept that—but also many adults and teens are struggling with self-esteem and self-confidence. Women's products are marketed based on the premise that women are not pretty, if you think about it. They market themselves by saying "You will be pretty if you wear our makeup, or our lipstick, or our eye liner, or this sweater." People are so desperate to be "pretty" that they will buy anything. And still they don't feel pretty. Because the beauty of the human being is the eye. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6, that if the eye is sound, the rest of the body is sound. Thus, if the eyes are pretty, the rest of the body is pretty.

Most people do not have pretty eyes, because their eyes are beset with sadness, loneliness, tiredness, and discouragement. People are not being encouraged to be honest, truthful, decent and noble. No, they are being taught that winning is the only thing, even at the downfall of your neighbor. We are taught that there is a threshold of beauty or success that is almost unattainable, but that doesn't stop people from trying to attain the unattainable.

I saw kids at camp who were so attractive—because they were honest, because their burdens were lightened because they felt encouraged and full. I am actually sad coming back from camp because I'm stepping out of that bubble and back into the discouraging world in which I live. Most of my input is actually

negative (especially when you add in the media), and with negative input, it is hard to have a positive output. I told many kids at camp that they were pretty. However, they need to hear that from their own peers, and from their own parents. We all become more pretty when we are honest, so let's foster environments that encourage honesty, that promote safety, that make it safe to be honest and vulnerable. People don't have relationships where it is safe to be honest, so many of us live in false relationships, where we are less than truthful, and with every untruth (because we can't afford to say the truth or have no one who can hear it), our eyes become darker and less pretty.

**Are We Attractive?** One icebreaker that we did about catching fish and living out the Great Commission, to make disciples of all nations. The exercise involved campers making a fishing pole out of a dowel, yarn, and a clothespin. The "bait" was a gummy worm. They had to catch fish by getting people to eat the gummy worm without using their hands. Here were the keys to that exercise: First, the "fishermen" needed to go to the fish. The fish didn't come around on their own. We as a church need to be intentional about going to where the "fish" are—the fish are those who don't know Christ whom we want to attract so that they will know Him. Are we interested in fishing? Do we want to add to our population? Do we want to bring others closer to Christ? Do we understand that the Great Commission (Make disciples of all nations—Matthew 28:19-20) was not a "Great suggestion" but a command given by God to all who are disciples? Second, the bait needs to be attractive. Had we put a piece of liver on the hook, perhaps many people would not have wanted to participate. Because the gummy worm is attractive and tasty, campers eagerly went for the bait. Are our churches attractive? Why or why not? What can we do to make them attractive? What are we not doing right? Making our church in Tampa more attractive is definitely a goal for the coming year.

**Carrying Around One Rock is Better than Carrying Five -** People who know me well know that the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) is my favorite Bible passage. In the parable, one man received five talents, another two and another one. The one with five made five more, the one with two made two more and the one with one hid the talent in the ground. The master of those servants rewarded the first two equally—they did the best they could with what they were given. The man with the one was punished because he didn't use what he was given. There are many messaged in this parable. One of them is that no one received NO talent. Everyone was given something. In life, it is the same way. We each have been blessed by God in a different way, with different skills and gifts. Not everyone has the same gift. God expects us to do the best we can with what we have been given. The talent also represents your life—we are accountable to God for what we do with our lives, in total, as well as today. Did we do something to serve God today?

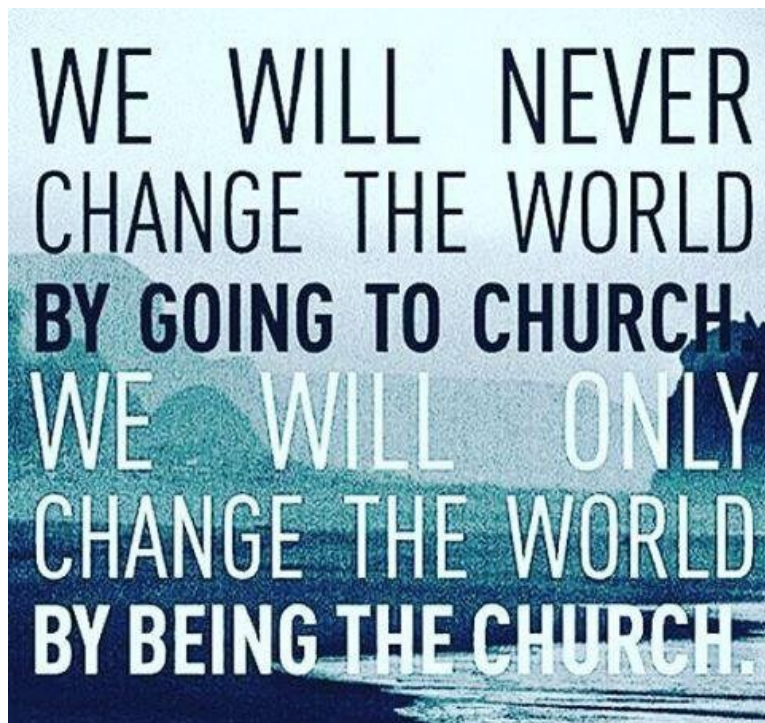
At camp, we studied this passage, as part of our theme that we are "called to be disciples." Our "talent" is part of our call. One morning, we gave each of the campers a small rock and told them they had to carry it, in their hand, for 4 hours. They had to have it in their hand at all times, while eating, while cleaning their cabins, etc. Any priest or staff member could ask to see their rock at any time. If they still had their rock after 4 hours, they would get a reward. We wanted ALL of them to get the reward. This wasn't a contest where we hoped for few winners and many losers. We wanted all of them to win. The rock represented our lives, our talents and our souls. God may

require us to answer to Him at any time, we just don't know. But here was another application: I told the campers, if I was passing out \$50 to some people, \$20 to some people and \$10 to some people, everyone would want the \$50 and would probably be offended if they got the \$10. But imagine if I handed out 5 rocks to some people, 2 rocks to others and one rock to others. Everyone would want the one rock, not the five rocks to carry around. Carrying around five rocks would be hard, it would be an inconvenience. So, we have to be careful what we wish for. Just because someone has more doesn't make them better. More may mean more responsibility, more stress. More isn't necessarily better. It's all about doing the best we can with whatever we have. One more application—one person said they had lost their rock. The answer there was, we were about to go to confession. If we've lost our sense of God, our sense of purpose, our identity as Christians, if we think we've even lost our soul, come to confession and you can get a new "rock".

**IF YOU'RE NOT  
PART OF THE  
SOLUTION,  
YOU'RE PART OF  
THE PROBLEM**

**Part of the Solution or Part of the Problem?** Take Your Pick. There is not one problem in the world. And there is not one solution either. No one person is either the problem or the solution. We each play a part in one or the other and sometimes both. When we make a bad decision, or say a bad thing, or cut someone down, we are part of the problem. When we make good decisions, when we say good things, when we build others up, we are part of the solution. Look critically at your life and ask yourself: Am I more part of the problem, or am I more part of the solution? Does what I do contribute to the problem, or to the solution? Are the words I say contributing to the problem or to the solution? Each of us leans one way or the other. We either lean to the problem or to the solution. It's a choice each of us has to make. I can think of ways that the church is both part of the solution and part of the problem. When the church is not welcoming it's part of the problem. When the church does not provide an environment where one can be vulnerable, it is part of the problem. When the people at the church can't sit at the table and have polite conversation, it is part of the problem. However, when the church is welcoming, when it provides an environment where people can be vulnerable, when it comes together to solve problems, then the church is part of the solution. Which brings us to a final topic to lay on the table:

**What are we as a church doing about any of this? Are we more of an organization to which we belong or a movement to change the world?** I think if we are honest, the church is



more organization than movement to change the world. But we can change that. We can't change all churches but we can certainly change ours. We can control the environment at the church. We can control whether we come on time, whether we sing, whether we worship with enthusiasm, whether we are welcoming, whether we gossip, whether we hold a confidence, whether we contribute to an environment where people can be vulnerable, etc. Christ changed the world through twelve men. We are way more than twelve. What are we doing to change the world around us?

**Some words of encouragement** - I come home from camp highly motivated each year. I also come back tired and exhausted. Which is how I feel as I'm writing this message two days after returning home. I had the privilege to live and to serve in an environment where there was solid ministry without much administration. Back home, there is a lot of administrative work that I end up doing and not as much pure ministry. If there is one goal I have for our parish, it is that—less administrative red tape (less meetings, get our stewardship done quickly, etc.) and more ministry. That being said, I am:

1. Very proud of our parish. I am proud of our teenagers and our counselors who represented us so well. I am thankful to the parents who encourage their children to go to camp. I am very happy that our church continues to be filled every Sunday, even during summer.
2. Very thankful for your support and encouragement. I received several messages while I was away, telling me that people were praying for me. This was very confidence boosting. I received several messages each Thursday. People who know that on Thursdays we hear confessions reached out to say that prayers were coming especially that

day. That was encouraging and inspiring. Random messages of encouragement are always positive. I encourage everyone to make encouragement a regular part of life.

3. Our parish is doing a lot right—I believe that our successes and our growth is a result of a community consciousness to grow and to welcome new people. Many of the children who went to camp were not part of our congregation years ago, and they are here and have stayed because they felt welcomed.
4. We have an environment of encouragement—there are a lot of encouraging ministries here. So many ministries have encouragement as their backbone. The ministry leaders are so positive and so solid and this creates environments that are attractive.
5. Very grateful to God that I serve here—At the end of August, I will complete 15 years of service to St. John. I love serving here, I love serving you. I have a great sense of love and devotion to the people of this parish. I love watching our children grow up. Kids that I baptized are the altar boys, summer campers, and choir members. Young people that went through GOYA are now counselors at camp, they have gone from my kids to my co-workers. This is awesome.
6. We have some great kids—the light of Christ shines brightly on many of our kids. That is a credit in part to their parents and in part to our parish which fosters Christ, I hope, above all else.
7. We have some very “pretty” people in our parish—I have the privilege of sitting with people in their most vulnerable times. I have seen people at their worst, which is sad but also inspiring. When a person is vulnerable, they are very pretty. I've seen a lot of vulnerable people here, which means we have a lot of “pretty” people in our parish.
8. While we still have our share of problems, I believe our parish is more solution than problem. I believe there is more work for all of us to do though. Everyone has something contribute to the well-being of our community and its members.
9. Confession is actually a form of encouragement—It's where people are told, “God still loves you, despite what you have done.” Many people are taking advantage of this sacrament. The number grows each year. I hear confession all year.

In August and September, new programs will start concurrent with the new Academic year and the new ecclesiastical year. I'm excited and eager for some new ventures. Your help, encouragement and participation are key in making these things possible. I hope we continue to make our church an environment that encourages encouragement to everyone who is part of our parish family.

With love in Christ,

+Fr. Stavros

**Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20**



# Liturgical Schedule for August 2019

Friday, August 2

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

Sunday, August 4

7th Sunday of Matthew - 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, Peter Theophanous

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

Getting Acquainted: Dwight & Ewana Forde

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

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.

Friday, August 9

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

Sunday, August 11

8th Sunday of Matthew

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

**Altar Boys:** Anyone Attending may serve

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

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Tanya Robinson, Cindy Xenick; Ambassador: Lisa Alsina; Caller: Elaine Halkias

**Coffee Hour:** Dance Groups **Bookstore:** MaryAnn Rose & Rita Bedran

Monday, August 12

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

Wednesday, August 14

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

Thursday, August 15

Dormition of the Virgin Mary (Koimisis)

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

Sunday, August 18

9th Sunday of Matthew

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

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

**Ushers:** Skip Higdon, George Trimikliniotis, Peter Theophanous

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Genie Carter, Helen Cauthorn; Ambassador: Kalliope Chagaris; Caller: Vickie Peckham; G

**Coffee Hour:** TBA **Bookstore:** Thom and Angie Bougas

Sunday, August 25

10th Sunday of Matthew

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

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

**Ushers:** Tammy Christou, Jim Armstrong, John Alexander

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Axl David, Carole Fotopoulos; Ambassador: Elaine Halkias; Caller: Christene Worley

**Coffee Hour:** Philoptochos Fanouropita Sunday **Bookstore:** John and Anetta Alexander

Thursday, August 29

Beheading of St. John the Baptist (Strict Fast Day)

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

Sunday, September 1

Beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year (The Indiction)

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

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

**Ushers:** Tom Georgas, Skip Higdon, John Alexander

**Welcoming Ministry:** TBA

**Coffee Hour:** TBA **Bookstore:** David Voykin and Elaine Daniels

# Liturgical Notes for August 2019

## 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 for 2019 are: August 2, 5, 7, 9, 12 and 14. All services begin at 6:00 p.m.



**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 pre-figured His glory at the Resurrection and Ascension.

### Thursday, August 29 - Beheading of St. John the Baptist St.

John the Baptist, according to the Gospel accounts, was beheaded in prison. St. John had spoken out against Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. This man had a lawful wife, the daughter of Arethas, the King of Arabia. Without any cause, and against every commandment of the Law, he put her away and took to himself Herodias, the wife of his deceased brother Philip, to whom Herodias had

borne a daughter, Salome. He would not desist from this unlawful union even when John, the preacher of repentance, the bold and austere accuser of the lawless, censured him and told him, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark 6: 18). Thus Herod, besides his other unholy acts, added yet this, that he apprehended John and shut him in prison; and perhaps he would have killed him straightway, had he not feared the people, who had extreme reverence for John. When Salome, Herodias' daughter, had danced in order to please him and those who were supping with him, he promised her -- with an oath more foolish than any foolishness -- that he would give her anything she asked, even unto the half of his kingdom. And she, consulting with her mother, straightway asked for the head of John the Baptist in a charger. Hence this transgressor of the Law, preferring his lawless oath above the precepts of the Law, fulfilled this godless promise and filled his loathsome banquet with the blood of the Prophet. So it was that that all-venerable head, revered by the Angels, was given as a prize for an abominable dance, and became the plaything of the dissolute daughter of a debauched mother. As for the body of the divine Baptist, it was taken up by his disciples and placed in a tomb (Mark 6:21 - 29). We commemorate this event each year on August 29, which is also a strict fast day. As St. John the Baptist is the patron saint of our parish, we honor this feast day, and we pray for his intercessions over each of us and our parish.

### Sunday, September 1 - New Ecclesiastical Year/Day of the

**Environment** - His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, declared many years ago that September 1, the day on which we begin the New Ecclesiastical (Church) Year, also be set aside to pray for our environment. Not only do we thank God for His blessings of the past church year, and ask for Him to bless us in the new year, but we also offer prayers for our environment, which are needed more and more in the world where our environment is threatened as time passes.



# 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 month of August. 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.

## August 4 - 10

*Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have; for He has said, “I will never fail you nor forsake you.” Hence we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me?”*  
*Hebrews 13:5-6*

August is back to school month for many people. It is a time of excitement and also of stress. Instead of stressing about making new friends and doing well in classes, people are stressed before school even starts about what kind of clothes they will wear and will they be judged on them. This seems kind of silly but it is a cruel reality. Many times, we live our lives as the total opposite of these verses from Hebrews. We keep love of money at the center of our lives, and we never seem to be content with what we have. We are always looking for more. We forget that God will never fail us or forsake us. Sometimes, however, it feels like God is distant and far away, like He’s not listening. I confess I feel that sometimes. I pray and I pray and nothing changes, for years! It’s hard to keep confident at times like this. These verses raise the bar of faith and sufficiency very high. Faith should bring us confidence. We should learn to be content with what we have. These are lessons it will take a whole lifetime to learn. I’m still learning.

## August 11 - 17

*Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up. I Thessalonians 5:11*

Most public schools start this week. If you want to make one verse your verse of the year, make it this one. Schools are often environments of stress and discouragement. If you want to give a good Christian witness, resolve to be an encourager this year. Build others up, rather than tearing others down. One of the greatest encouragement messages was a text I received one year at the beginning of summer camp. I was nervous. The text inspired confidence. It said simply “Go do it!” To me, this meant that this person had confidence in my abilities, and knew that God was going to have my back as well. As we return to school, I encourage our students with the same words “Go do it—do it with God, do it by encouraging others.”

## August 18 - 24

*Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day. Matthew 6:34*

There are at least two lessons from this verse. First, we shouldn’t get too far ahead in our worries about the future. Worrying isn’t going to change it. Working will change it. Worrying doesn’t do anything except paralyze us. Second, we need to learn to be present. Many people live with one eye on the past and the other on the future with no eye on the present. We need to be present in conversations, in work, etc. Many people are not present—they are either feeling regret over the past, anxiety over the future, or looking down at their phone or on social media in the present. We need to learn to stay focused on each conversation, each moment, each opportunity. If we are thinking of yesterday or tomorrow, we are not present today. If we are multi-tasking, we are not present in one task.

## August 25 - 31

*“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*  
*Matthew 5:16*

The light of Christ is in everyone. There is no one who does not have it. Therefore, we are supposed to let His light shine on us and through us. The good works we do should not be for human reward, but to glorify God, who gives us the life and the talent to do the good works. Good works should be for His glory. We also should not be ashamed of doing good works or giving glory to God. Each of us will have ample opportunities to either let our lights shine or cover them up. We will have opportunities to do good works that will glorify God or advance ourselves. Remember that everything good comes from God, so that when we do good with the good we have been given, it really is a testament to God and we should not be shy about giving Him the glory He deserves as the giver of all that we have that is good.



# Let us ascend to be transfigured by Christ

By Charlie Hambos

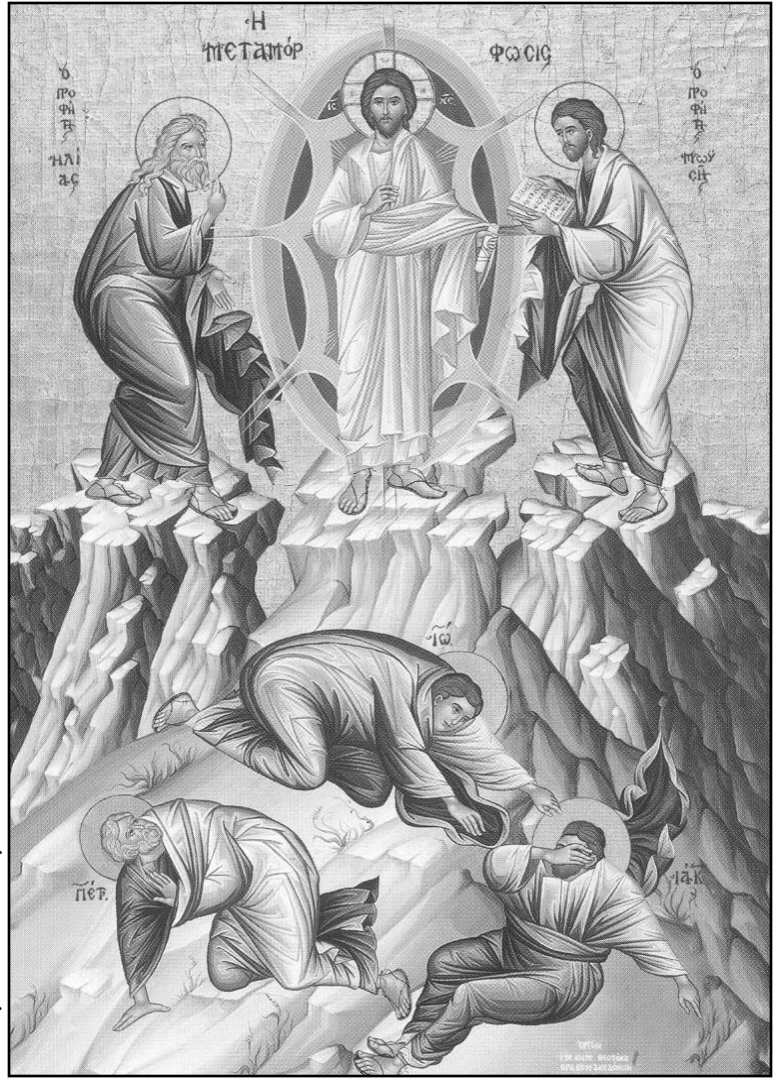
**T**he Webster's Dictionary definition for transfigure is "to change the appearance of something or someone." In Greek, the Transfiguration comes from metamorphosis. In science or in the field of zoology, metamorphosis is (in an insect or amphibian) the process of transformation from an immature form to an adult form in two or more distinct stages. In other words, it's when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. That is quite the change.

On August 6, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ or the Metamorphosis of Christ. He didn't exactly go from a caterpillar to a butterfly but like most things in His life, it was for us. The Gospel accounts of this story can be found in Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36.

Jesus needed to go pray. Imagine that, Jesus, the Son of God needed to go pray. The Transfiguration happened at critical point in Christ's ministry. He was about to start His Journey to Jerusalem where he would experience, torture, suffering and eventually death for OUR salvation. Christ also went off by himself to pray. This time however, He decided to bring his closest friend with Him: Peter James and John. They ascended Mt. Tabor. Christ began to pray and "he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as dazzling as light (Matt. 17:2)," "his clothes became brilliantly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them." Then Moses and Elijah stood there with Him. Once the Peter, James and John saw this: one fell backwards, the other prostrated himself trying to cover his eyes and the other wanted to build three monuments for each. They were a mess. Finally, a voice from heaven came saying, "This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to Him! (Matt. 17:5)" We have heard this before but there is a bit of metamorphosis here, a little bit of maturation, a bit of a change. At the Baptism of Christ, the Theophany, we hear the same voice say, "This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him." What's the difference? The voice from heaven adds, "Listen to Him!"

So, what's the big deal? Why did Christ have to go get Transfigured? For what purpose? In the Scriptures, it says that Christ needed to speak with Elijah and Moses about the future things. Presumably, Christ's passion and death. It appears that Christ needed a little pep-talk from the one representing the Prophets (Elijah) and the one representing the Law (Moses) because we know that Christ is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Christ did it in front of Peter, James and John because those were His closest companions and he needed to reveal his divinity to them to also give them the sustenance needed for the future. St. Gregory Palamas says this on the matter, "Therefore, and precisely because of this, God manifests Himself upon the Mount, on the one hand coming down from His heights, and on the other, raising us up from the depths of abasement, since the Transcendent One takes on mortal nature."

In other words, here again we see another manifestation of the Holy Trinity. We have the Son, Jesus Christ, being transfigured by a bright light or cloud which is the Holy Spirit radiating out through Him and we have the voice of the Father. Christ ascends the mountain with Peter, James and John. The Holy Spirit descends and is transfigured. It is the exact same notion when St. Athanasius says, "Christ became man, so that man could



become like God."

He had to show his glory to Peter James and John. This is the same glory he would appear in at the second coming. "There are some standing here who shall not taste death, until they have seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" (Mt 16:28). This is exactly how we say it in The Creed, "He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead." As He became at His Transfiguration, Christ will come again.

Now, it's time for our transfiguration. From Christ's baptism to this point, we are charged to "Listen to Him!" We fail to do this time and time again. We fail to stop talking and listen. Christ went off to pray by himself, just as we should. If Christ, the Son of God, had to go pray by himself, then we have no excuse. We are human but we must struggle. There is no point in blabbering non-sense to Christ. Just enter into His transfigured presence and stand in awe of his Divinity and Humanity. It is God who spoke and the creation came into existence. Christ is the "Word of God," we must Listen and let the "Word of God," penetrate our thoughts and minds. Let us change our appearance. Let us change our minds. This month, meditate on the icon of the Transfiguration.

**Christ.** He is the centre and focus of the icon. His right hand is held in a blessing and his eyes are directed at the ob-



server of the icon. His clothes are as “white as light” as described by the Gospel writers. The Glory of God is depicted around him in the almond shaped Mandorla. The rays emanating from Christ reach each of the five visible figures present in the icon: Moses, Elijah, Peter, James and John. Christ took Peter, James and John with him to the top of Mt. Tabor. He is pictured on his own mountain and Moses and Elijah on their own as well.

**Moses.** Moses ascended Mt. Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. In the icon of the Transfiguration, Moses is holding a book, representing the Torah (The Law) and bowing in reverence to Christ. While Moses was on Mt. Sinai, he had a conversation with God and the presence of God came in the form of a cloud. Moses also wanted to see the face of Christ. The conversation Christ had with Moses during the Transfiguration shows that He is the fulfillment of the Law. Moses also represents the dead because he experienced death.

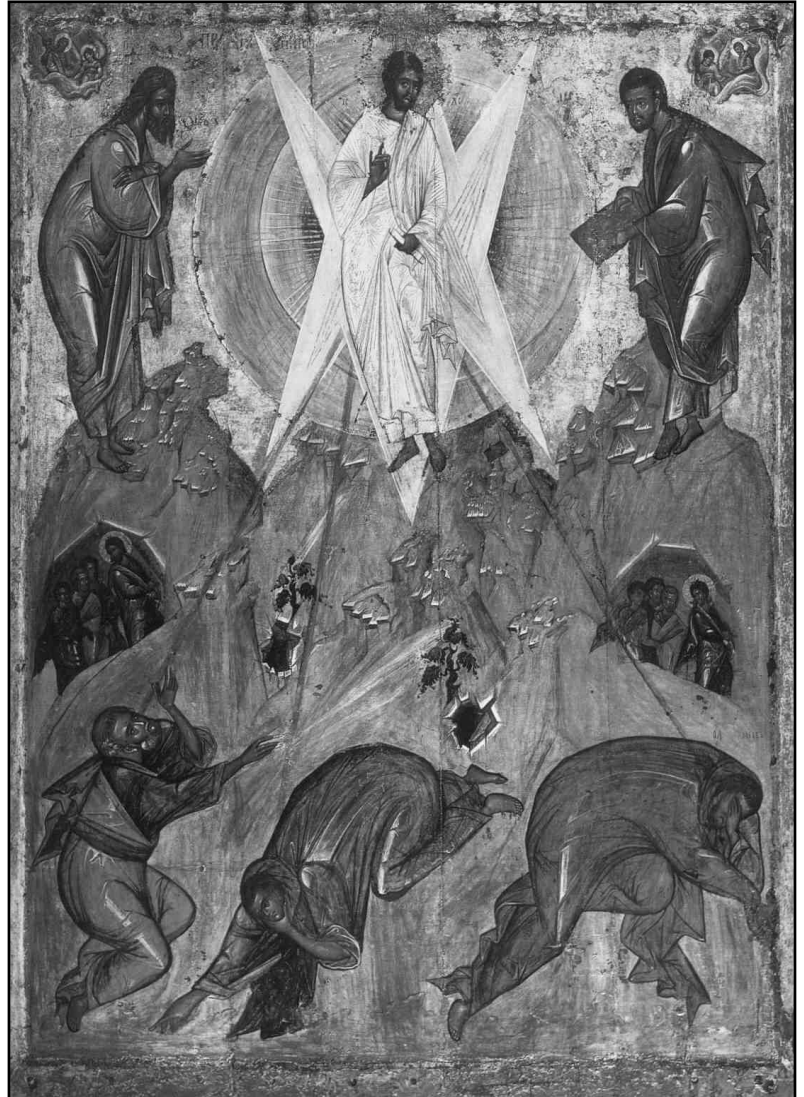
**Elijah.** Elijah ascended Mt. Horeb where he heard the voice of God in the “gentle breeze.” Elijah is depicted wearing animal skins like St. John the Baptist, representing the prophets and bowing in reverence to Christ. The conversation Christ had with Elijah during the Transfiguration shows that He is the fulfillment of the Prophets. Elijah also represents the living because he was taken up into heaven by a chariot of fire.

**Peter.** Peter is depicted on the bottom left of the icon. Christ chose Peter to join him on this trip up the mountain be-

cause of the love he had for Christ. As it is written in John 21:15-17, “When they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He replied, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Look after my sheep.' Then he said to him a third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, 'Do you love me?' and said, 'Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.’” Peter also declared at the Transfiguration, how great it was to be there and he offered to build three monuments, one each for Christ, Elijah and Moses.

**James.** James has fallen over backwards with his hands over his face. According to St. John of Damascus, “Christ took James as the one who before all the Apostles would die for Christ, to drink His cup and be baptized with His baptism (Acts 12:2).”

**John.** John is depicted in the middle fallen down prostrate. “Christ took John, as the virgin and purest organ of theology so that he, after having beheld the eternal glory of the Son of God has thundered these words: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God....”



# Ephebiphobia - The Fear of Teenagers

By Fr. Sampson Kasapakis

I will break the ice. Hi! My name is Fr. Sampson Kasapakis. My favorite color is blue. If I could become any superhero, I would be Batman. I am a new parent, and I am terrified about raising my children in the world today. I am even MORE terrified of the future world my three-year-old and two-year-old will have to experience as teenagers.

Well, that escalated quickly, huh? But let's be honest, you are relieved you are not the only one. All parents experience fear for their kids. They worry about their children getting sick, doing well in school, whether or not they'll be able to get a job and succeed in life. Being afraid for your kids is very normal, but being afraid of your kids is a phenomenon that has developed over the past several decades, and something that parents need to look at closely. And by the way, sometimes these two fears are tied together. Fears about their child being able to make it in life actually will cause some parents to think they have to give in more; they become a cushion for their kids. But let me be clear: that's exactly what you don't want to do. They don't need a friend. They have those. They need a parent, a guide, and a person who challenges them, who empowers them when they fail and celebrates with them when they succeed.

This new phenomenon of being afraid of our kids has a name: ephebiphobia. The word *ephebiphobia* is formed from the Greek ἑφηβος (*éphēbos*), meaning "youth" or "adolescent," and φόβος (*phóbos*), meaning "fear" or "phobia." Ephebiphobia is primarily studied by sociologists and youth advocate organizations. Their research has found that the media, marketers, government, schools, businesses, and products overselling safety to parents have all created this phobia. They have also found that this phobia manifests itself in different ways. For example, you can fear teens because you cannot trust them, or the phobia might exist because a parent feels inadequate to parent in today's world, or it might exist because as a parent/adult you will have to have conversations about difficult topics such as relationships, sex, drugs, alcohol, body image, bullying, and so on.

With any phobia our natural response is either to fight it or to avoid it by running away. Why overcome our fear when we could just keep avoiding it? This mentality is a large part of why parents today do not talk to their kids about the real issues that they will experience. It is easier to say, "My child isn't involved with that stuff" or "That will never happen to my kid." With this mentality we dismiss reality. The reality is that Orthodox youth throughout America are doing drugs. Our youth are drinking alcohol. Our youth are being bullied or are bullying. Our youth are having issues with body image. Our youth are dealing with mental health issues like depression or anxiety that result in suicide. Another harsh reality is the majority of parents do not know because **51% of teens are afraid of talking to their parents about personal problems** (*Psychology Today*). Further compounding the problem here is that **42% of parents have difficulty discussing moral topics with their teens** (*Psychology Today*).



Working within this age group, I have found that teens hesitate to speak to their parents because of the following reasons: they do not want to overwhelm you, they do not want you to fix it, they do not want you to get mad, and some believe that you will not understand. So how do we bridge this gap?

Parents, it is time to make our relationship with God a priority in our lives. I know that seems like exactly what a priest should say, and I am sure you have heard it before, but seriously, actually do it. It is time to make the Church and our participation in her worship and ministry a nonnegotiable item within our families.

It is time to pray for the strength to overcome our fears, to pray together as a family, and if we don't know how to pray, that is okay, but it is time to learn. It is time to be patient and listen to our youth and use the wisdom within us to find the words to guide them through the difficulties of their lives. It is time to drop our pride and ask for help and guidance from our friends, ministry workers, and clergy. It is time to talk to our teens about the hard topics. It is time to have the conversations on relationships, sex, drugs, alcohol, body image, bullying, and so on. Talk to your teen with love and respect. With an open heart and mind, LISTEN TO THEM.

My ministry experience has taught me that teens do not want to be spoken down to but want to be heard. Teens need someone to simply be there—not to fix, or do anything in particular—just to let them know they are cared for and supported.

"Easier said than done" is an understatement when it comes to talking with teens; however, we must stop making excuses. For the sake of our youth, and for this generation of teens, it is time to overcome our fears and begin opening the communication lines to our teens. Because if you do not, where do you think they will get their information? As I said earlier in this article, with any phobia, our natural response is to fight it or run away from it. No more avoiding. No more excuses.

Kali dynamis! Good strength!

*Rev. Fr. Sampson Kasapakis serves as the assistant priest at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Tarpon Springs, Florida.*



# Junior Olympics was A Huge Success

Our annual Junior Olympics was held on June 7-9. Special thanks to Dwight Forde for organizing this for the second straight year. Thanks also to all of the volunteers who made the weekend happen. Nearly 150 GOYAns from around the Tampa Bay area participated in our weekend of competition and fellowship.





# Stewardship Update August 2019

With grateful hearts, we acknowledge our loyal Stewards of St. John the Baptist. Your sacrificial giving supports the Vision of our Church to Love God, Love your neighbor and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ as an Orthodox Christian community!

We sincerely hope each and every one of you enjoyed time with your family and friends over the summer. And possibly enjoyed a trip or two out of the Florida Heat! As we quickly approach a new Liturgical Church Year you will see a faster pace within our church community. With meetings of our Ministry Heads discussing the vision of our church and planning underway for our Annual Greek Festival. Your input and voice is welcome and needed in all of these areas! We encourage you to get involved in a ministry and match your God given personal gifts with the ministry needs. Look for more Ministry info coming soon to learn about individual opportunities.

Without the commitment of our parishioners dedicating of their time, talent and treasure our church would not be sustainable. The Stewardship Committee expresses sincere appreciation and thanks.

If you have not completed a Pledge Form in 2019 please take time to do so today. It is never too late – We are called as Christians to give back and our beautiful church in Tampa would not flourish without our cheerful givers and faithful servants of Christ. When you give to God, you discover what God gives to you!

- Individual/Family Stewardship Summary statements were mailed in late July, please call the church office with any questions.
- We will publish a list of ‘Stewards’ at St. John the Baptist in the October Messenger as we prepare for our Fall General Assembly and Parish Council Nominations and Elections.
- On Line Pledge Forms and General Donations (via Pay Pal) are up and running on our website. Many of our Stewards have taken advantage of submitting their pledge form on line and setting up systematic payments for Stewardship. And don’t forget online banking as an easy and convenient option for automatic payments if you chose not to use paypal.
- We love hearing from our parishioners, If you would like to share something regarding your calling to Stewardship, please contact Sandra Pappas (Stewardship Co-Chair) at spappas11@gmail.com or call 813-785-3747

	2019*	2018*
<b><i>Pledged Year to Date</i></b>	<b>\$506,464</b>	\$427,117
<b><i>Received Year to Date</i></b>	<b>\$299,934</b>	\$271,565
<b>Average Pledge</b>	<b>\$1,483</b>	\$1,350
<b>Median Pledge</b>	<b>\$900</b>	\$725
<b># of Indiv/Families Pledged/ Giving</b>	<b>353</b>	322

*\*Comparison based on YTD as of \*7/17/19 & 7/10/19 -  
We require a completed Pledge Form to be considered a Steward of St. John*

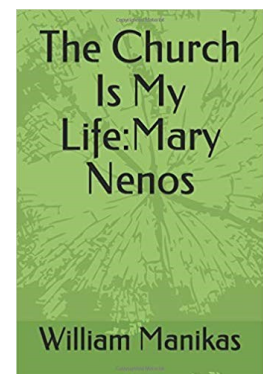
## Featured Book of the St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Bookstore:

### “The Church Is My Life: Mary Nenos” by William “Bill” Manikas, Ed.D.

Mary Nenos is a beloved member of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church. She is a true servant. She is always willing to help and give to anyone in need. She has dedicated her whole life to God’s service; she especially loves to do things for the Church and its members. We are inspired by her and are confident that you will be inspired by her life story. This book is available in the bookstore. We know you will thoroughly enjoy reading her biography.

P.S. If there is an 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





# St. John the Baptist Community News

## Parish Registry

Double Baptism-Pete (Panagiotis) Jayant Kapur and Anna Kovita Kapur, children of Himanshu and Maryann Kapur, were baptized on Sunday, May 26. Chrissa and Yianni Rabotas were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Catherine Eleni DeYoung, daughter of John and Jenna (Sanders) DeYoung, was baptized on Saturday, June 15. Christine Gabski was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Alexander Kempton Halikoytakos, son of Alex Halikoytakos, was baptized on Sunday, June 23. Georgia (Lalotis) Kane and George Fallieras were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Wedding—Basileios Roussos and Anna Laoudis were married on Saturday, May 25. Fr. James Rousakis and Fr. Stavros officiated. Dikea Roussos-Ross and Michael Ross were the sponsors. Congratulations!

Funeral—George Triantafyllopoulos passed away on May 21. His funeral was held on May 24. May his memory be eternal!

Funeral—Nicholas Kavouklis passed away on May 23. His funeral was held on June 1. May his memory be eternal!

Funeral—Anna Karvouniari passed away on July 5. Her funeral was held on July 16. May her memory be eternal!

Condolences to Maria Speagle and family, on the passing of her sister Athanasia Keenan. May her memory be eternal!

**Get Acquainted Sunday, August 4** In an effort to get to know one another better, we are going to continue our "Get Acquainted Sundays" one Sunday of each month. We will have nametags and markers in the entry way of the Kourmolis Center and will ask that each person put one on during coffee hour and introduce yourself to at least one person that you do not know.

## 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.

**Prayer for School Students - Sunday, August 11** All school students and teachers (high school and below) are invited to participate in a special prayer that will be held at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on August 11, prior to the beginning of the public school year. Fr. Stavros will offer a special prayer for all of our students and teachers as they begin the new school year.

**Prayer for College Students - Sunday, August 18** All college students and professors are invited to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, August 18 with us. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, Fr. Stavros will offer a prayer for all college students as they begin a new school year.

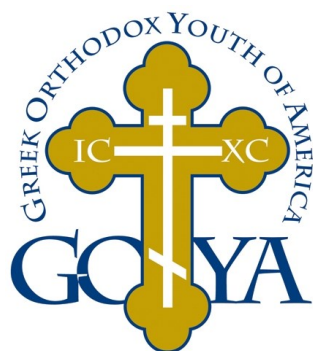


## Parish Assembly - Sunday, August 18\*

\*If you have any questions regarding your pledge payments or membership status please contact the church office. All members in good standing shall have the right to participate and vote at meetings if they are current in pledge payments 30 days prior to the date of the parish assembly. **This is the rescheduled Parish Assembly from Sunday, May 26.**

# Welcome John & Dina Kokenis!!!

John Kokenis, a 2019 Graduate of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, will be joining us on August 15 as the Second Pastoral Assistant (The Parish Council has decided to utilize a second pastoral assistant instead of hiring an administrator, a slot that has been unfilled since Monica Gjerde left, therefore, we are still in budget). He and his wife, Dina are originally from the Chicago Area. With John's assistance we hope to bring more quality to all of our ministries, offer a few new things and increase our bandwidth in the office and throughout our greater ministry in the Tampa Bay area. John visited us back in April to help with the Annual Lenten Retreat. We enjoyed having him with us and he enjoyed being with us so, please welcome John and Dina to our community.



**GOYA Meeting - Sunday, August 18** Our first GOYA meeting of the new school year will be held on Sunday, August 18 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner will be provided. One parent of each GOYAn is asked to attend the meeting. Also, there will be a parents' meeting, while the GOYAns meet with Fr. Stavros, to go over procedures for the year, review the yearly calendar, fill out emergency forms and arrange for parents to sign up to do a meal for one of the meetings.

**New GOYA Advisors** - Michael and Bessie Palios will be assuming the role of GOYA advisors this August. A special thank you to Maria Koutroumanis, who has been our GOYA advisor for the past three years. Maria has done an outstanding job as our lead GOYA advisor, making our

GOYA the largest it has ever been. Maria will continue working with the GOYAns as we transition to our new leadership. Thank you Maria!

**GOYA Lock-in - Saturday, August 24** Our GOYA will have an end of summer lock-in on Saturday, August 24, beginning at 4:00 p.m. and ending after Divine Liturgy on Sunday, August 25.

## Mandatory Altar Boy Meeting & Training Sunday, August 25

All altar boys are requested to attend a meeting on Sunday, August 25, following the Divine Liturgy. We will go over procedures on how the altar boys serve, updating and making a few small changes. This meeting is important for new altar boys but also older ones, as we seek to continue to improve our service. The meeting will last approximately 1 hour. Each boy is asked to have at least one parent present. New Schedule to take effect on August 18. As of publication time, the new altar boy schedule is still being finalized. All altar boys will receive a copy of the new schedule prior to August 18.



## Adopt a college student Project

We are asking that ALL college students (or their parents) please send us their contact information (school address, email and phone number). We are starting a new ministry called "adopt a college student." We would like to match each of our college students up with at least one parishioner who will "adopt" them for this coming year, sending care packages and notes of encouragement throughout the year. If you would like to "adopt a college student" please send your name in to Charlie and Father Stavros by August 12.

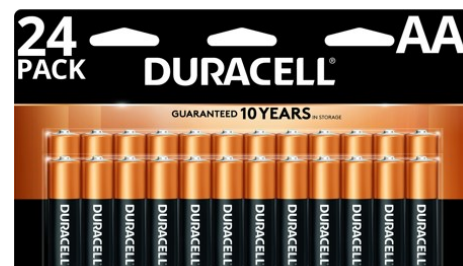
**Young Adult Ministry - Sunday, August 25** - The YAL will have our dinner and discussion. We'll meet at 5:00 p.m. in the Kourmolis Community Center, walk somewhere close by to have dinner, then walk back for some discussion. Please RSVP to Charlie if you are going to attend. Dates may change. Charlie will send an email.



## Monday Night Bible Study Continues

The Monday Night Bible Study with Charlie Hambos meets in the Administration Building Meeting Room. We will meet on Monday, August 5 and Monday, August 12 from 7:15 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. There will be no Bible Study on Monday, August 19. It will be rescheduled for Tuesday, August 20 from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. On Monday, August 26 from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

**We need AA batteries - if interested, please donate either Duracel or Energizer.**



## Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 1919 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](mailto:charlie.hambos@gmail.com) and ask to add you.

## Looking Ahead to September

**We are going to roll out some new ministries.**

**MEN'S**  
GROUP

**Men's Ministry** - which will meet once a month on Sunday evenings beginning in September. The date will be announced in mid-August.

**Grief-Share** - This is a new ministry which will minister to people who are in grief over loss of a loved one. We have actually been contemplating this ministry for years and we will be putting that together in September.



**Bible Studies** - We will be regrouping our Bible studies and there is another new ministry in the works, details forthcoming.



# St. John Greek Orthodox Church's Young-At-Heart Ministry

We want to thank Carole Fotopoulos for her many years of hard work and leadership. Our new president is Mike Trimis and we hope we can enrich our lives through “**Community Fellowship**”.

**MEETING DATE AND TIME: First Thursday of Each Month at 11:30 AM (unless otherwise posted)**

**LOCATION: Zaharias Room in Peter and Sophia Kourmolis Hall at St John Greek Orthodox Church.**

**Everyone is welcome.** There are no age restrictions.

We will have either a pot-luck lunch or go visit one of our local parishioners' restaurants.

## OUR ACTIVITIES INCLUDE

Welcome new members  
Celebrating birthdays  
Wellness committee visitations and calling  
Sharing and giving thanks to recent happiness events  
Humor and story reading sessions  
Games and activities

For more information, contact  
Michael Trimis, President, 813-784-4872 (vm/t)  
[TrimisM@gmail.com](mailto:TrimisM@gmail.com)  
Mary Nenos, Vice President 813-508-5553  
[MaryNenos@gmail.com](mailto:MaryNenos@gmail.com)

## TRIPS IDEAS TO BE SCHEDULED INCLUDE

- |                                                |                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) Visit neighboring Greek Orthodox Churches   | 11) Sunken Gardens                                                              |
| 2) Visit St. George Coptic Orthodox Church     | 12) Support parishioner businesses (ABC Pizza, Bavaro's Pizza & Pastaria, etc.) |
| 3) Visit St Philip the Apostle Orthodox Church | 13) Picnic Island Beach Dog Park (picnicking)                                   |
| 4) Lowry Park Zoo (Zoo)                        | 14) Phillipe Park (picnicking)                                                  |
| 5) Big Cat Rescue (Animals)                    | 15) Rays Baseball (\$15)                                                        |
| 6) Phelps Farm Orchids (Flowers)               | 16) Lakeland Black Swans                                                        |
| 7) Florida Bee Farm (Honey)                    | 17) open                                                                        |
| 8) Florida Botanical Gardens                   | 18) open                                                                        |
| 9) USF Botanical Gardens                       | 19) open                                                                        |
| 10) Hard Rock Casino                           |                                                                                 |

**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.

**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.

**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.



# ~Save the Date~



**The Annual St. John the Baptist Greek Festival is Coming Soon!**

**November 8, 9 & 10, 2019**

## **Things We Know**

- It takes the effort of our entire Church Community to host a successful festival and highlight our Greek Culture/Heritage but more importantly OUR Orthodox Christian Faith!
- Our festival is a lot of fun but only happens as a result of many volunteers dedicating their time and talent!
- Planning meetings will be announced soon with Volunteer Sign-ups coming in September.
- Many opportunities will be available for participation; from planning, advertising, baking, decorating, dancing, raffle sales, donations needed for silent auction to the hundreds of opportunities over the festival weekend!
- This is our opportunity to showcase our faith, culture and beautiful place of worship at St. John the Baptist.
- Our Kick-Off MEETING will be announced soon. Stay tuned to the bulletin and emails.

**We do it for our Church and We do it for the Greater Community of Tampa. Let's show Christ's Love through our food and hospitality.**

# Raffles Sales ARE STARTING!!!!

*Save the Date – Our Annual Tampa Greek Festival is set for November 8-10, 2019*

**RAFFLE TICKET**  
Support the church! Win a BMW!

BMW  
3 Series BMW

Enter for a chance to win a new BMW or \$20,000 cash or other prizes! See back for details.

Tampa Greek Festival Raffle Ticket  
Suggested Donation \$100

Sponsored in part by  
**MORGAN**  
AUTO GROUP

Planning is underway for our 2019 Tampa Greek Festival and we are excited to get a jump start with Raffle sales beginning THIS MONTH! Last year, we set a record in raffle sales and it has a lot to do with us starting early. This year we hope to do even better. Tickets will be available online through the Tampa Greek Festival Website and the Church office very soon. Stay tuned to the bulletin and emails for further announcements. Remember, we limit sales to the first 1,000 tickets and really count on our parishioners promoting the Raffle to friends and family.

Imagine the relief, if we could start the weekend with a solid start of pre-sales for the Raffle and not be so reliant on good weather or attendance to make the necessary profit our church currently needs. Our Festival is an opportunity to showcase not only our Greek culture but more importantly our Orthodox Faith! It requires a great deal of planning and effort BEFORE the weekend even kicks off.

The raffle is one of the easiest, most profitable methods to make this happen. With your support early in the season, we can make it the best sales year in history!

**For 2018, our net festival profit was \$129,048!**

**This year, we will do even better.**

**For 2019, in addition to LifePath Hospice, a large portion of our proceeds will go to help LOVE Inc. of Tampa Bay.**

# 5th Annual Philoptochos Fanouropita Event

## Sunday, August 25

Saint Fanourios, Patron Saint of “things lost,” is commemorated on August 27. Metropolitan Alexios has asked all of our Philoptochos Chapters to honor this Saint as we do Saint Basil (with a VASILOPITA in January), to bake a “FANOUROPITA.” The Funds we raise will help underwrite the youth programs in our Metropolis, such as: Oratorical Festivals, St. Stephen’s Summer Camp, Hellenic Dance Festival Dancers, Winter Youth Rally, GOYA and YAL activities, OCF, and Acolyte retreats. **Our Youth are not Just the” future” of our Church, but our “Present.”** On Sunday, August 25, bring your cakes to church and we will have a table set up so Father can Bless them. The cakes will then be taken to the Community Center and served for coffee hour. All cakes that are not cut will be sold with all proceeds going to the youth ministries list above. Please call or email Lisa Alsina with any questions. 813 728-1094 or [lisaalsina@gmail.com](mailto:lisaalsina@gmail.com).



### Ingredients

3 cups flour  
1 cup sugar  
¾ cup olive oil  
1 tablespoon baking powder  
1 teaspoon vanilla

1 teaspoon cinnamon  
¾ cup orange juice  
¼ cup brandy  
½ cup chopped walnuts  
Zest from ½ orange  
Powdered sugar for topping

### Instructions:

1. In large bowl, combine ALL dry ingredients: flour, sugar, baking powder, cinnamon, and walnuts, mix.
2. Add in remaining wet ingredients: olive oil, vanilla, orange juice, brandy, orange zest, mix well until batter is formed.
3. Pour into cake pan (we used a bundt pan) greased with some olive oil.
4. Place in preheated oven at 350F for 40-45 minutes, until toothpick comes out clean and nice color is achieved.
5. Remove, top with powdered sugar, let cool for about 10 minutes.
6. Slice and serve!

## 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](mailto:lskourellos@yahoo.com) or Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534 and [andd\\_skourellos@yahoo.com](mailto:andd_skourellos@yahoo.com)

## Youth Protection Update

Please be aware that the youth protection enrollment for ecclesiastical year 2019–2020 has begun and will continue this month. 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 Katzaras, Parish Council Liaison





# Community Outreach

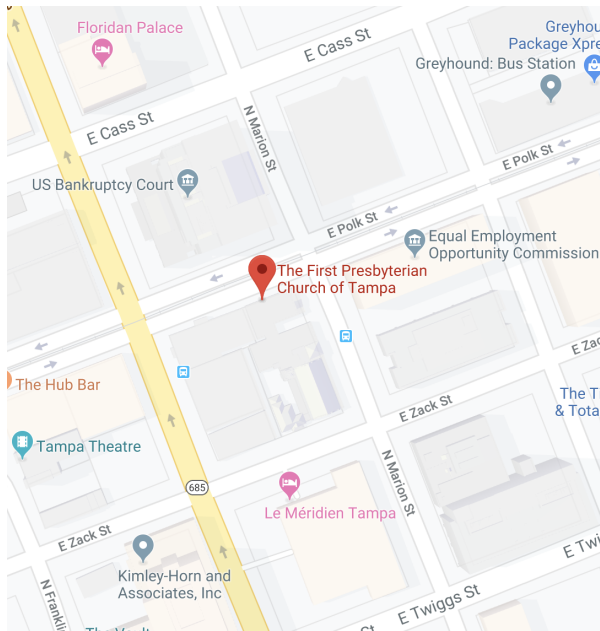
## Saturday, August 17

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



# My One Word For 2019 - Compassionate

by Genie Carter

*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](mailto:frstav@gmail.com). This month's testimonial is from Genie Carter*

Definition of compassionate- (adjective)

1 : feeling or showing sympathy and concern for others  
// a compassionate friend  
// a compassionate smile

2 : granted because of unusual distressing circumstances, affecting an individual  
// the soldier was granted compassionate leave following the death of his father.

I chose compassion for my 2019 word because showing compassion is important in life and in different relationships we share. I feel I am a compassionate person, but I get caught up in my daily routine with my family that I don't have time to go out of my way for others. I am working on prioritizing my day better so I can have that time. I also chose this word because I am trying to implement the importance of compassion while raising my sons as well.

We are all called to be compassionate in our Christian journey. Everyday we see people who are in need and it is essential to show others we care. A bible verse that reminds us to be compassionate in our thoughts and actions is...

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32)

The best way I have learned to be compassionate toward others is to first be compassionate with myself. We all tend to be too hard on ourselves, but I finally realized in my forties, to give myself a break. I have learned to focus on my strengths instead of my weaknesses. Praise my successes and forgive myself for my mistakes. I apply that to my loved ones as well, I try to focus on their positive qualities and not dwell on what is missing.

Another way to be compassionate is to encourage others by simply listening and being there for them. This one is tough for me. Not because I don't want to listen to someone who

needs me, but "only" listening is what I have a hard time with. I am a fixer and when someone I care about is going through something, I want to do everything I can to help fix the problem. But I have realized that most people don't want you to solve their problems, they just want you to be there for them and listen. I will continue to work on this.

As I try to teach compassion to my boys, I tell them to be mindful of others. To think before they speak and to consider their words. Words can make someone's day or ruin someone's day, so it's best to keep that in mind before saying something that is not necessary. I also like to volunteer with my boys when we get the opportunity. Volunteering connects us to others and spending time helping people is good for all.

We are not just the ones to be compassionate. God is the ultimate example of compassion and mercy. He has shown us the greatest compassion and He is the example we should follow. "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Almost two years ago, my family suffered a devastating tragedy, the loss of my sweet nephew and Godson, Nicholas. As difficult as the last couple of years have been, we were able to find peace in God. If it wasn't for our strong faith, my family would not have made it through that difficult time.

Also, the tremendous compassion that was shown to my family from Father Stavros, Charlie and our community was incredible and we are so grateful.

At its heart, compassion is about paying attention to the present, being good to yourself, showing that you care, and connecting with others with a loving attitude. Being compassionate with my family and friends has never disappointed me. It's always made me feel happy. So my future goal is to find more ways for my boys and I to show compassion to others outside our reach, in our community.

*Genie Carter is the wife of John Carter and mother of two children, Nicholas and Zachary Carter.*

## 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.**

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

# Some practical Thoughts on Faith

By Fr. Stavros

**F**aith is believing in something you can't fully see or fully comprehend. As an example, it doesn't take faith to sit in a chair, because one knows that the chair will support a certain amount of weight.

It doesn't take faith to drive a car—it takes skill. If you have skill, you can drive. If you don't have skill and try to drive, you are probably going to fail. Should you succeed, that would be luck, not faith.

It takes faith to get married, because you are entering into a relationship and you don't know how it's going to end, but you enter it anyway, that is faith.

IT takes faith to believe in a God you can't see, and to believe in a destination (heaven) that you've never been to. Yet this is what Christians believe. They believe that an unseen God created everything, and that His Son Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead to redeem the sins of the fallen world.

Christians do not, however, have a blind faith.

There are three things we must believe in order to have faith, and they are each supported by our own experience.

1. Someone greater than us made us (Genesis 1)—God made us—this is a matter of faith, but it is supported by our experience in nature. Look at the stars, clouds, wind, waves—there is no way a human being could make these things. There is no way that a human being sustains these things. The first thing one needs to have faith is that God made us. The Jews and Muslims believe in this—so it is

not uniquely Christian.

2. The world fell through sin (Genesis 3)—it takes no faith to believe this. We live in a fallen world. People aren't perfect, nature is not perfect. Everyone believes this, even atheists believe the world is not perfect.
3. Jesus Christ came to redeem the world. (John 3:16) It is a fact that a man named Jesus walked the earth two thousand years ago. HE was a preacher, teacher and worked miracles. No one disputes this. He was crucified by the Romans. No one disputes this. What is a matter of faith is that He rose from the dead. Now, either this is fact or a lie. If it is a lie, then millions of people have lived and died for a lie. If it is truth, then this calls us to action. Even though we don't know, we believe. We have faith.

So, faith is believing in what you don't fully know or fully comprehend. But we know some and we comprehend some and we see some. Faith is believing in the part we don't know and that we can't see.

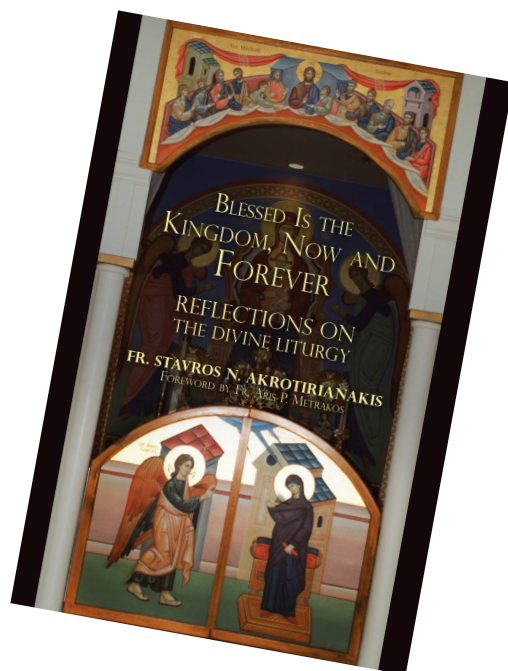
I have never touched the sun. I can't bear to look at it. But I believe there is a massive fireball in the skies that provides warmth because I can feel the warmth of the sun. I believe that God is like the sun—we can't look at Him, we can't comprehend Him, but we can feel His energies, His warmth, like we can feel the warmth of the sun.

## “Blessed is the Kingdom, Now and Forever” On Sale Now in the Bookstore

“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”.

From the Prayer Team, has come a third book, called “Blessed is the Kingdom, NOW and Forever: Reflections on the Divine Liturgy.” It is now on sale in the bookstore. 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.

*“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.*



# A Prayer from Parents for their Children as they begin a new school year

Dear Lord,

Thank you for the gift of a new school year. Thank you for our school community and the great education our kids enjoy. With gratitude I pray for the following:

**CONFIDENCE.** Help my children see themselves through your eyes and draw strength from their confidence in you. *“God is within her, she will not fall.” Psalm 46:5*

**KINDNESS.** Enable my children to be a blessing and a light to those they encounter. *“So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.” 1 Thessalonians 5:11*

**WISDOM.** Open my children’s hearts and minds to your ways, and enlighten them with insight into your will. *“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” James 1:5*

**SELF-CONTROL.** Give my children the discipline to work hard, control negative impulses, and grow in the virtues that draw them to you. *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:11*

**STRONG RELATIONSHIPS.** Surround my children with positive influences and godly friends who help them grow in your image and become the best version of themselves. *“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals.’” 1 Corinthians 15:33*

**COURAGE.** Instill in my children the courage to be true to themselves and faithful to you, even if it means standing alone. *“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” Deuteronomy 31:8*

**FAITH.** Fix my children’s eyes on the big picture and keep their minds in awe of your ability to create, control, and sustain the universe. *“The men were amazed and asked, ‘What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him.’” Matthew 8:27*

**PEACE.** Calm my children’s hearts when they feel stressed, worried, or lost. Remind them you are the God of peace, not confusion. Make your presence known as you carry them through trials and challenges. *“I am leaving you with a gift; peace of mind and of heart. And the peace I give you is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.” John 14:27*

**CLARITY.** Help my children hear your voice and see you at work in their lives. Make it clear what you want them to do. *“For God speaks again and again, though people do not recognize it.” Job 33:14*

**FORTITUDE.** Give my children strength and grit when they get tested, and help them recognize any escapes that you provide. *“And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13*

**PROTECTION.** Armor my children physically, mentally, and spiritually. Surround them with angels to guard them and guide them. Cultivate sharp instincts in each of them that allow them to be gentle yet smart. *“Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves.” Matthew 10:16*

**HOPE.** Equip my children to bounce back quickly from daily disappointments. Keep them anchored in the hope of heaven, the joy of Jesus, and the security of your promises. *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11*

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

# It's About Time

By Fr. Angelo Artemas

In today's corporate world, the issue of punctuality is being approached with increasing seriousness. The norm for U.S. business culture tends to allow a five-minute window for showing up for appointments, but in many other countries being on time is late.

Jim Schleckser, founder of the Inc. CEO Project, who works closely with CEOs, observes the following: I'd like to zero in on people who are habitually late and what message that behavior sends to the rest of us. In short, it tells us that our time is less valuable than theirs. If being late is one of your bad habits, you need to break it now or risk insulting friends and business associates. Show you value someone else's time as much as you value your own. Tackle your tardiness. Punctuality shows respect.

Greek Orthodox faithful are notorious for being late to church. The same is not the case for faithful from other Orthodox jurisdictions, and certainly not the case for faithful from other Christian denominations. Why are we so late for church when we can make it to court, the doctor office, the theater, stadiums, arenas, the airport, school and work on time? Our ancestors were diligent to wake up early and make sure they opened their business as early as 5am or 6am, and would not have dared open up late. What message are we sending other people about how much we value church, and what message are we sending our children? Do we need any other data to understand why younger generations are not remaining in the church? Why should anyone take our worship seriously when people can just parade in any time they want?

The Divine Liturgy is not like some kind of open exhibit in a gallery - it has a specific beginning, an edifying and vivifying body, and a compelling dismissal. In order to fully participate and experience its richness, faithful should arrive before it begins. The Word of God (Epistle, Gospel AND Sermon) must be heard before the Word of God (the Eucharist/Holy Communion)

is received. Receiving without hearing is like marching in graduation ceremonies without ever receiving course instruction. Those who receive without hearing are walking away as staged Christians; those who receive after hearing walk into the world to change it. Jesus taught the multitudes before He fed them, He taught His disciple before He celebrated the Last Supper, and He opened their minds to understanding the Scriptures before he broke bread. His disciples changed the world.

Stewardship has often been described as Time, Treasure and Talent. Average financial contributions to their churches among the Greek Orthodox faithful is far below other denominations. Is there a correlation between how we approach time and treasure?

Consistently one of the biggest pet peeves of brides and wedding planners is guests who arrive late for the ceremony. Those guests disrespect the bride on her special day. Another issue altogether is skipping the service and attending only the reception - how is this not obnoxious? No bride should be disrespected on her day, and the Bride of God/His Church should not be disrespected on the Day of the Lord.

Enough about Greek Time! It is neither cute nor quirky, it is disrespectful. Enough about excuses and difficulties and traffic (especially that horrendous Sunday morning traffic); being on time is a choice. It is time to serve the Lord. God help us if we think our time is more valuable than His.

*This article original appeared in the Orthodox Observer Nov/Dec. 2019 issue. Fr. Angelo Artemas is the Dean of St. John the Theologian Cathedral in Tenaflly, New Jersey.*

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

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

### Live Streaming

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

To access this page

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

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

### Pictures

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



Like





# *Want to Learn Modern Greek?*

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Adult Greek School

- Speak Greek
- Read Greek
- Write Greek



- Basic Grammar & More.
- Some Greek History
- Book Included in Price!!

Teacher born, raised, and educated in Greece with over 22 years of experience teaching the Greek language. Adult classes for beginners taught @ St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church 2418 W. Swann Ave, Tampa, FL 33609. Classes are held at 6:00 - 8:30 p.m. on Thursday evenings, starting on October 3, 2019. This will be the first of three sessions, with each session lasting three months.

Price per session is \$100 for church members and \$125 for non-members.

Contact Ms. Magdalini Myer: at (813) 909-2327, [aspis69@aol.com](mailto:aspis69@aol.com) or the church office at (813) 876-8830.

## **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 Bliziotis - Palm Cost, FL  
Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL  
Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL  
William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL  
Lillian Thomas - Highland, IN  
Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL  
Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD  
Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA  
Nicholas & Vaso Anton - Dunedin, FL  
Kay Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA  
Katherine Beasley - Vero Beach, FL

**Friends of St. John the Baptist** - Some of you who receive *The Messenger* do not live in the Tampa Bay area or are members of other Greek Orthodox parishes. We would like to ask for your support of our parish by being a "Friend of St. John the Baptist." Your contribution as a "Friend" will help offset the cost of mailing *The Messenger*, among other things. Being a "friend" does not make one a steward of St. John the Baptist or afford membership rights and responsibilities, but gives one who is a member elsewhere, an opportunity to make a gesture of financial support to our parish.

### **Thank you for your consideration of our parish.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Reflecting on a Great Summer @ St. Stephen's Camp



## **Nicholas Akrotirianakis - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**

My first year at St. Stephen's Camp was a fantastic learning experience. The ropes course was one of my favorite activities because it involved teamwork and trust. The partner beam thing is my favorite obstacle because it involved trusting your partner. Water time was awesome because I got to do crazy jumps and try paddle boarding for the first time! Arts and Crafts were terrific because I got to go color crazy with tie dye and with gluing match sticks for the match stick cross project. I also got to make bracelets. Even in our Biblical learning classes Orthodox Life and Hang Time, we did some icebreakers. After an extremely fantastic first year at St. Stephen's Camp, I thank the staff and counselors for making this event possible.

## **Alex Findley - 9<sup>th</sup> Grade**

I went to camp week 2 this year. Same as last year. I was in St. Mark this year with only one year in St. Nicholas. This was my second year and I, personally, found this year a whole different experience than I remembered it to be from last year. I got the chance to room with two people I never met before. I met people who go to my church but I have never have to courage to talk to. I also meet new people, from other churches, every day. Although things like Swim, Crafts, Ropes, etc. are always fun things to look forward to every year, I am always in an in-the-moment kind of attitude every year I go and I always try to meet new people every year while keeping the friendships I made in past events and years but most importantly, every year I go to camp, I look forward to getting closer to God.

## **Niko Gonatos - 11<sup>th</sup> Grade**

This summer, I attended the St. Stephens Summer Camp at the Diakonia Retreat Center in Salem, SC. This year was my 3rd year at the camp. At first, I was very sad to leave my Mom and Dad; they went all the way back home to Florida. But after the first day, the fun activities and worship made the sadness I felt fade away. At camp, we did various activities, such as tackling a ropes course, swimming in the lake, making cool crafts, and expressing our faith through music. From a spiritual perspective, I enjoyed attending the daily church services, learning

about our religion in the Orthodox Life and Hangtime sessions, and receiving Holy Communion during Friday's Divine Liturgy. The best parts of camp were meeting new people, socializing during the activities/dance, and conducting a "bird calling choir" for the talent show (that was pretty interesting). To elaborate, all my cabin mates showcased their exceptional abilities to make various bird calls. We said that we would do a prayer service, but little did the crowd know what we had in store for them! We were a hit, and I heard that Carnegie Hall wants us to perform there for the Holidays. I have made so many new Orthodox friends that share the same beliefs as I do. I was very sad to leave the camp on Saturday, but at the same time, I was very happy to see my parents again. This camp has enabled my faith to blossom more and more each year. I hope and pray that God grants me another week at this wonderful camp next year.

## **Mia Findlay - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

I had so much fun at my first week of camp. I made many new friends and I learned a lot about my religion. I also think that camp did a really great job at balancing learning with fun. I hope I will have the opportunity to do it again next year!

## **PJ Zelatis-8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

At St. Stephens we had a blast, and picked up trash. I climbed the wall, and I tried not to fall. We swam in the lake, and ate lots of cake. With mama Maria we made lots of wonderful art, and I never ate a pop tart. Soccer mom Mike, kept a close eye on all the tykes. We had daily sessions with father Stav, where we sat and talked about God. We spent lots of time praying, and that's all I'm saying. Next year i'm going back, and that's a fact.

### **Kaitlin Zelatis - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

This year was my first year at St. Stephen's and I loved it. I made so many new friends that I know I can trust and always talk to. I also learned a lot about my faith while I was there. I learned that spending 10 minutes alone with God can make a huge difference. I also learned about friendship and what good friends and fake friends do. Good friends are always there for you when you need them, and fake friends use you to get what they want. While at camp I also learned about being a disciple. Being a disciple of God means that you follow the word of God and teach it to others. Overall camp was an amazing experience and I learned trust, kindness, and respect through all of the fun activities we did and I can't wait to go next year.

### **Elena Gonatos - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

My experience at St Stephens this year was just as amazing as the last. I had so much fun! I met so many new people, saw old friends, and did so many wonderful activities. This year at camp was super exciting and I made so many new memories with everyone. I had the best cabin, best counselors, and the best experience overall. My favorite parts of camp were the dance and camp wide swim. I want to thank my friends, counselors, and Father Stavros for making this an amazing experience. Overall, this week at camp has been one of the best memories in my life. I made lifelong friends, amazing memories, and I had the time of my life! I cannot wait to go next year and see all of my best friends again.

### **Mia Lenardos—12<sup>th</sup> Grade**

I FEEL FULL

This picture perfectly represents my time at my heaven on earth. I am the most real here than I am anywhere else. Thank you St. Stephen's for the no make up days, the judgement free zone, the laughs and cries, and beyond grateful for the smile I can't wipe off my face.

This week especially I've worked on my faith more than I have in a while. Thank you to my sisters who surrounded me with big hugs and encouragement. I've never imagined having so many literally walking by my side with the most encouraging words. Now that I feel "good enough", I encourage all that I know to feel the same. Christ has made all of us "good enough" and with the encouragement of others we can find that within ourselves. So the restart starts now. Start being that encouraging voice to someone and that's what changes the world.

This was the hardest week of my life not only because of all I had to learn but because it was the end of being a camper of my favorite place on earth. This is not a goodbye it's only a see you later. I will be back in two years trying to change the world. I want to return to St. Stephen's as a counselor to hopefully be an encouraging voice to young girls like myself right now. I promise I will return to my heaven on earth as the same person, striving to be full.

Thank you St. Stephen's for being like no other.

I AM FULL

### **Karter Lenardos - Counselor - Weeks Two and Three**

This year at St. Stephens I was a councilor for the middle boys cabin of St. Mark for weeks 2 and 3. I had a blast! During week 2 I had many boys I had served in alter and attended GOYA with. It was so rewarding to have gone to St. Stephens

as a camper for four years and now to return as a councilor. I got to experience camp through a different lens this time. I saw all the behind the scenes that I never thought of before. I also saw all the hard work that father Stavros put in for all these kids. In May, a tornado struck our camp grounds. It destroyed the whole ropes course. The only thing standing was the famous trust fall. It was so hard to see this part of camp this way. This was the part of camp where my best friends and I learned how to work together, through tough opticals, and now it was all gone. Only the memories remained. But somehow through the grace of God, father managed to get a lot of it rebuilt. It was amazing seeing the kids faces light up when they were told we had a new and improved ropes course. But my favorite part was having two out of my three siblings there. Mia just finished her last year of camp and Leo his first. Definitely the most memorable moment was during camp wide swim my siblings and I took out a canoe and paddled far out and "accidentally" flipped it in the middle of the lake. Being a councilor at camp was definitely a rewarding experience and I look forward to doing it in the years to come.

### **Calliope Kafantaris - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**

My first year at camp was, by far, the best week of my life. When I arrived at St. Stephens's Camp and walked into St. Helen's cabin, it was like walking into my own house. I was warmly welcomed by the counselors and everyone else. It really inspired me that my cabin "clicked" with each other on the very first day. At St. Stephen's, your cabin is like your family. No matter what you're going through, they will always be there for you.

My favorite memory is the trust fall on the ropes course. Going into camp, there was no part of me that wanted to do the trust fall. When I got on to the platform from which you fall, I was shaking so badly that I could barely talk. When I turned around to look at the people who would be catching me, I saw faces that told me, "We're going to catch you." At that moment, I stopped shaking and just fell. It taught me that friends are always there to catch each other in challenging times....you just have to be open to it. I had such a fantastic week and I look forward to next year and many more years to come.

### **Michael Palios, Counselor Week Two**

This was my third year as camp counselor, and second co-counseling with George Hambos. We were with the youngest boys cabin, St. Nicholas. Being with the youngest group presents a different set of challenges...many first-year campers are unsure what camp is all about and we had many first-year campers. They see the oldest boys, loud and rowdy, and many can get intimidated. However, after a day or so, that hesitation wears off. They become much more open, talkative, and active. We had a great group of kids that, for the most part, listened all the time, went to bed on time (or early!!!), and was very well behaved. I hope they had the opportunity to grow in their faith, and will continue to return, continue to grow.

The most impressive aspect of camp is seeing so many young people who are so outstanding. From some of the campers themselves to the staff. Being one of the older people at St. Stephen's, it's great to see so many rising stars; future leaders of communities, companies, and families.

Lastly, I am in awe of how much many of the staff give to the kids...Fr. Stavros, Charlie, Maria, George, Dr. Phillip...so many



give so much and work so hard to make the experience unforgettable. And they succeed. I do hope I get asked to serve again.....I'll be first in line!

### **Toula Trakas - 8<sup>th</sup> grade**

This was my 2nd year at St. Stephen's Camp and I had a really fun week. My favorite parts were Alone with God because it was really peaceful and the ropes course because it was a fun way to build trust with the girls in my cabin. I also loved all the times that we just sat in the cabin and talked because we had a lot of inside jokes. Something that made this year really awesome was that the girls in my cabin were really close. We clicked really fast and by the end of the first night it was like we'd known each other for years. Thank you Father Stavros and Charlie for everything you do to make camp so amazing. I had a really great week and I can't wait to go back next year!

### **John Palios - 9<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Hi my name is John Palios this was my third year at St. Stephen's. I liked meeting new people and bonding with them very quickly. My favorite thing at camp this year, was during Orthodox Life, the boys in my cabin we're very tired/sleepy so Charlie attempted to wake us up, by banging on his chair and making noise!! At this point all the boys started to bang on the walls and on the trash cans and started getting very loud!! It was so much fun! This is something I will not forget! I also want to thank Father and Charlie for all their hard work, and all the counselors that made my camp experience a great one! I'm looking forward to camp next year!

### **Maria Xenick—Arts and Crafts/Teacher, Week Two**

I am so privileged to once again be a part of this incredible ministry of St. Stephen's Summer Camp. The goal of the camp is to create an atmosphere for spiritual renewal and growth, both in a personal relationship with Christ and with others. I again worked this year with arts and crafts, music, and teaching. The campers participate fully in worship, deep and meaningful discussions, wholesome fun, and challenging activities. I especially enjoy my time teaching the oldest boys' cabin, St. Luke, where these young men share their faith and their struggles so honestly. I am thankful to my children who allow me to be with them, and also for allowing me to be the "camp mama" for many other kids as well. I am so grateful to Mike for encouraging me to serve, even if it meant being away from him for a week. Thank you to Charlie for his inspiring non-stop work and dedication he offers so selflessly. Lastly, thank you to Father Stavros for giving me the opportunity to serve and for all of your hard work and dedication you give to this program.

### **Elizabeth Xenick - 10<sup>th</sup> Grade**

My name is Elizabeth Xenick and this is my fourth year at St. Stephens. My favorite part of camp this year was hang time with Charlie because while we had fun we also had a lot of really good conversations. This year I was so blessed to get closer to 14 beautiful and amazing girls and we shared so many great and emotional moments together. Thanks to the whole staff and Father Stavros specifically for another awesome year at St. Stephen's. There really is no other place that allows all of us to truly be our authentic selves.



### **Artemis Xenick - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade**

My name is Artemis Xenick and this was my sixth and final year as a camper at St. Stephen's camp. Over the past six years, St. Stephen's has given me another home and is one of the only places I feel completely whole. I feel no need to put up walls or veil my authentic self at camp because everyone there has the same goals and morals as I do. This year at camp was especially uplifting due to the many emotional experiences I had. From meaningful conversations to encouragement activities with the amazing girls in my cabin, I left camp feeling more emotionally and spiritually full than I have ever felt. There were also many fun moments like the sing along, dance parties in the cabin, and the ropes course, that made me feel like I was overflowing with joy. God is so evident in every experience at St. Stephen's and words cannot express my gratitude to Father Stavros for cultivating an environment that has allowed for six incredible years of peace, laughter, sleep deprivation, friends who feel like family, and an intimate relationship with Jesus.

### **Maria Palios - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**

I'm Maria and this was my first year at St. Stephens. My favorite parts were getting to know all of the girls in my cabin. We all clicked so fast and I'm so thankful that I got to meet all of them and be friends with them forever. I also really enjoyed when my dad (Big Mike) and Fr. Stavros broke water balloons on my head. Thank you to Father Stavros and Charlie and all of the counselors who put up with us all week but also made this experience truly amazing. I can't wait to go back next year!

### **George Xenick - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**

My name is George Xenick and this was my first year at St. Stephen's. I had a great experience. I made a lot of friends from a lot of different places. I also had a "big sister" who was very sweet. I was in St. Nicholas cabin and we all got along great. My favorite part was junkyard wards, especially because we won! Our counselors, Big Mike and George, were awesome. I also had my two sisters, three cousins, my uncle, and my mom (Mama Maria) there to help me. Overall, it was one of the best times I have ever had. I also want to say thank you to Charlie and Father Stavros and the whole staff for making this whole thing work.

# **Thank you Campers, Clergy & Staff of St. Stephen's!!!**

# **August 2019 SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS**

## **First Day of Sunday school will be August 18** **All Youth Registration - August 4, 11 and 18**

The Sunday School Staff is looking forward to serving the children of St. John's for the 2019-2020 school year. Our first day of Sunday School is August 18th. Please make sure to register your children on August 4, August 11, or August 18, which is the first day of school. We need this information for our records and for communication.

**WE ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE OUR OUTSTANDING STAFF FOR THE 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR. THEY ARE:**

**Director of Sunday School: Vickie Peckham**

**Music/Special Programs: Maria Xenick**

**Music Assistant: Pam Irwin**

**Toddler 2's Program: 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: Jenivieve 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 - Teacher and Ana Mourer - Assistant**

**Grade 6: Stephanie Moran**

**Grade 7 and 8: Marina Choundas / Heidi Borgeas Teachers and Vivian Samuel - Assistant**

**High School: Isidoros Passalaris**

**Oratorical Festival: Peggy Bradshaw**

**Prosphoro and Vasilopita Coordinator: Melissa Krinos**

The teachers will meet with Father Stavros and Charlie Hambos for a Sunday School Teachers' Retreat on Aug. 17. This is a wonderful way to start the new Sunday School year. The teachers feel blessed to have Father Stavros guiding us as teachers. He is such an inspirational teacher and has provided each of us with a collection of lesson plans. We are looking forward to Charlie's continued involvement with the Sunday School. He will provide a children's sermon on Youth Sundays and also visit each of our classrooms twice throughout the year. We are so thankful that he is able to have such a personal connection to our students and we appreciate all the work he does behind the scenes for our Sunday School.

More information will be provided about the first day of Sunday School in the bulletin and through our weekly e-mails to parents. Parents, if you don't get these weekly e-mails please let us know. Feel free to contact Vickie Peckham at [vickiepeckham@gmail.com](mailto:vickiepeckham@gmail.com) or 813-758-3102 with any questions, suggestions, or comments regarding St. John's Sunday School Program.



## AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – AUGUST 2019

### NEW AHEPA FAMILY CHAPTER OFFICERS ELECTED FOR 2019-2020

Chapter Officers elected include:

#### AHEPA

President Thomas Sakaris  
Vice President Jim Armstrong  
Vice President Ron Myer  
Treasurer Tom Georgas  
Secretary Peter Theophanou  
Warden John Sakkis  
Marshal Bill Manikas  
Chairman Gus Paras

#### DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE

President Nicole Leontsinis  
Vice President Katherine Sakkis  
Treasurer Kalliope Chagaris  
Sec. Rec. Debbie Ferekides  
Sec. Corres. Cindy Kladakis  
Marshal Wendy Koutouzi  
Priestess Magda Myer  
Warden Ourania Stephanides  
Maids Advisor Debbie Ferekides  
Chairman Maria Zabetakis

#### SONS OF PERICLES

President Karter F. Lenardos  
Vice President Anthony Koutroumanis  
Secretary Mathew Robinson  
Treasurer Athan Owens

### AHEPA FAMILY HOLDS KICK OFF AND INSTALLATION DINNER

On July 26 a Kick-Off and Installation dinner was held at the Floridan Palace Hotel. A large group of Ahepans, Daughters, Sons, Maids, friends and family gathered to view the Installation Ceremonies and to celebrate and congratulate the newly elected members, as well as District Scholarship winners. After a delightful dinner each of the chapters' officers were installed.

The new Ahepa officers of Lycurgus Chapter 12, were sworn-in and installed in their offices by newly elected District Governor of Ahepa Citrus District 2 Lodge, Mike Trimis.

The newly elected Daughters of Penelope officers of Alcmaeon Chapter 167 were sworn in and installed by Patty Didik, newly elected Governor of the Daughters of Penelope Citrus District 2 Lodge.

The newly elected officers of the Sons of Pericles were installed by the past Lt. Governor of the District Lodge Harry Koutroumanis

### CONVENTION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND AWARDS

**Michael Trimis was elected to Ahepa Citrus District 2 Lodge as Governor.**

Michael who has served the local Ahepa Lycurgus Chapter 12 in many capacities including President for several terms, has been honored for his exemplary service to Ahepa and the local Tampa Ahepa Chapter. He was also elected Ahepan of the year. Congratulations Mike!

**Daughters of Penelope win National Award**

The Daughters of Penelope Citrus District 2 was acknowledged nationally at the National Convention in Chicago, Illinois as the District with the most new members of any District in the entire United States. Congratulations to Ourania Stephanides District Governor of Citrus District 2 and the ladies of District 2.

**Sons of Pericles win District Award**

The Sons of Pericles were named as the outstanding Sons of Pericles Chapter statewide. Congratulations to Karter Lenardos, Chapter President and all of the members

### MEMBERS RECEIVE DISTRICT SCHOLARSHIPS

Members of the Sons of Pericles and the Maids of Athena were honored by being selected as District Scholarship winners at the Citrus District 2 Convention. The recipients were the following individuals from our Ahepa Tampa Family:

#### Sons of Pericles

Harry Koutroumanis, John Sibley, Karter Lenardos, (who is also a member of Ahepa chapter 12)

#### Maids of Athena

Sophia Krinos

Congratulations to all of these deserving students. Kai is another!

**Join today – Become a member of Ahepa or the Daughters of Penelope  
Or if you are 14 - 18 years old become a member of the  
Sons of Pericles or the Maids of Athena**



~ August 2019 ~					
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
				<b>1 **</b> Beginning of Dormition Fast Young at Heart 11:30 a.m.	<b>2 **</b> Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.
<b>4 **</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m.	<b>5 **</b> Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.  Bible Study 7:15 - 8:30 p.m.	<b>6 **</b> Transfiguration Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>7 **</b> Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.  Parish Council Meeting 7:00 p.m.	<b>8 **</b>	<b>9 **</b> Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.
<b>11 **</b> Orthros 8:45a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m. Prayer for Students Calendar Meeting for Ministry Heads	<b>12 **</b> Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. Bible Study 7:15 - 8:30 p.m.	<b>13 **</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>14 **</b> Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	<b>15</b> Dormition Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>16 **</b>
<b>18</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m. College Student Artoklasia <b>Parish Assembly</b> GOYA Kick-Off 5:00 p.m.	<b>19</b> <b>Meeting of Ministry Heads 6:30-8:30 p.m.</b> No Bible Study	<b>20</b> Monday Night Bible Study 6:30 p.m.  Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>21 **</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23 **</b>
<b>25</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m. Fanourpita Sunday Altar Boy Meeting	<b>26</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>27</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>28 **</b>	<b>29 **</b> Beheading of St. John Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>30 **</b>
					<b>31</b>
					<b>3 **</b>
					<b>Sat</b>

## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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

officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com

www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

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## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

### Timetable of Services

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Pastoral Assistant** John Kokenis

813-876-8830 (Office) 630-306-7716 (Cell)  
johnkokenis@gmail.com

#### **Parish Council**

Alkis Crassas, President	813-690-3867
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
Eddie Kavouklis	813-758-0305
Jimmy Konstas	813-220-7352

#### **Office Staff**

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

#### **Adult Greek School**

Magda Myer 813-909-2327

#### **AHEPA**

Gus Paras, President 813-254-6980

#### **Altar Angels**

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

#### **Basketball**

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

#### **Bible Study**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### **Bookstore**

Brett Mourer 813-376-9315

#### **Chanter**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### **Choir**

Pauline Spencer, Director 813-390-1782  
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 MAE,	Alexandra De Maio	813-340-9668
	Bessie Palios,	813-523-0347
	Maraquet Edquid	813-422-8963
Parea,	Marina Choundas	813-877-6136
	Anna Maria Bavaro	732-239-9085
Panigyri,	Alexandra De Maio	813-340-9668

#### **Daughters of Penelope**

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**

Michael & Bessie Palios 813-831-1294

#### **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, TBD

#### **Strategic Planning**

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**

Mike Trimis 813-784-4872  
Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

#### **Youth Protection**

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 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. You may send announcements to the church office through email.*

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