

# THE MESSENGER

## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

# March 2021

### 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

## Pastoral Guidelines related to COVID-19

*The Messenger* goes to the printer on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month for the following month. The calendar of events may or may not be reflective of what we will do in the month of March. As we have been doing each month, we lead off *The Messenger* with some pastoral guidelines related to COVID-19. Should regulations be made more or less strict, we will adjust accordingly.

We are now allowing up to 140 people to worship each Sunday, the first 85 who arrive will be seated in the church and the remainder in the hall. We still will ask that everyone sign up on SignUpGenius to attend services. It is safe for 85 worshippers plus 10 workers to be in the church at one time and still be social distancing. We will continue to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on Saturdays and Sundays, until it is safe for us to all return on Sundays, and until people feel comfortable all coming back together.

We will celebrate Paraklesis most weeks, so that we can pray for the names of all parishioners each week in church, until we can all return. Because of Great Lent, we will not be holding Paraklesis each Wednesday night. In March we will hold Paraklesis as follows—Wednesday, March 3 at 6:00 p.m.; Wednesday, March 10 at 6:00 p.m. and Wednesday, March 24 at 6:00 p.m.

Until the pandemic is over and we hear otherwise, we will continue to utilize SignUpGenius in order to attend the Divine Liturgy and other services. We will continue to check temperatures and seat people according to social distancing guidelines. We will continue to ask that people not congregate after services. Our Parish leadership meets on a regular basis to discuss taking the next steps, and proceeding cautiously as we open up "a little more" each month.

You may sign up for any Sunday or any other service where you wish to worship. Also, if you are able to worship not on a Sunday, please do so, so that we can reserve Sunday for those who can only worship on Sundays. If you sign up and can't make a service, please take your name off the list as soon as you know you can't attend, so make room for others to come. We want all services to have as many people as possible. **Also, the crew who helps outside at the check-in table will leave the outside table to worship at 10:15 a.m. We ask that if you are attending the Divine Liturgy, that you please be courteous and arrive on time. If you arrive after 10:15 a.m., please knock on the side door and someone will come outside to assist you. However, no one will be admitted to the church during the Gospel and the sermon as this is disruptive. This is approximately 10:20 -10:30 a.m. Thank you for your cooperation on this.**

*For those who are nervous about being around too many people, our Saturday Divine Liturgies have been drawing an average of 30-40 people. Paraklesis averages under ten. So there are many services that are not well attended. If you are wanting to come to church and not be around a lot of people, there are plenty of opportunities to do so.*

For those who are not able to worship in person, we will continue to live-stream all services. We will also continue to provide Sunday School materials for our children, our teens and our adults on-line until this pandemic is over, for those who are not worshipping in person. We will be offering in person Sunday School on Sundays.

The latest information will be available on our website, our church app and through Constant Contact. Both our Metropolis and parish protocols for coming back to church safely are on our website. Thank you for your patience in filtering through all of our constant contacts. It is really the most effective way to communicate news and comments during this time. **Continued...**

Finally, a big thank you for the small crew of volunteers who assist in order to make sure we are safe at every service—the nursing ministry, the welcome ministry, the ushers, the altar servers, and the guest chanters. Everyone has done a great job coming together to make sure we can offer regular worship, as well as these extra services in a way that is safe.

## Father Stavros' Message

# How Will You Mark Lent This Year?

### A One-Year Anniversary

This month marks the one-year anniversary of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. March 8, 2020 was the Sunday of Orthodoxy. We had a full church, a full choir, and a large group of children who carried icons in the procession around the inside of the church. March 11 was the second Wednesday of Lent. We had our Lenten dinner. As a precaution, as we were starting to hear about the pandemic coming closer to Florida, we had people serving the Lenten dinner, instead of having people serve themselves. Sunday, March 15 saw the church half-filled and the choir absent. On Wednesday, March 18, it was clear that we were on the verge of closing the church to the public. It would be our last public service for 2.5 months. There were no people in the pews for the Salutations Service on Friday, March 20. And on the Sunday of the Holy Cross, it was me, two chanters, two altar boys and that's all. We didn't see people in the pews until May 31. Our Lenten plans were significantly altered. Holy Week was held behind closed doors. In the months that followed, there has been a lot of chaos, anger, sadness and uncertainty. There have also been lost opportunities, like summer camp, summer vacation, the Greek Festival, seeing family members, visiting the sick in hospitals and many more.

As I type this message, those are some traumatic memories for sure. However, I see (and I choose to see) that there are a lot of positive things that happened in the past year, especially in our church. We've had more services than ever. We've been more charitable than ever. We raised more in stewardship than ever. I had participated in exactly one zoom meeting before a year ago, and while many of us are tired of zoom meetings, there has been some benefit to them. Bible studies are drawing more people because people don't have to commute. People from outside our parish are participating in our parish programs because they can do so via Zoom. And Parish Council meetings are more efficient because we can screen share and make changes to things in real time. It hasn't been all bad.

### Great Lent Starts March 15

We are about to start our Lenten journey in 2021. Clean Monday, the first day of Great Lent, is Monday, March 15. Palm Sunday is April 25. Pascha this year is May 2 (a month behind everyone else). Each of us is now faced with the choice for how we will spend this period of Great Lent. The purpose of the Lenten journey is three-fold. First, it is to remember the events of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, to again relearn the foundation of Christianity. Second, it is to recommit ourselves to living the Christian life. This is done through the services, which again explain for us the definition, the purpose and the ultimate goal of Christianity—salvation. This is also done through disciplines like fasting, and increased prayer and



worship, which are intended to sharpen our focus on God. It is also done through the sacrament of confession. And third, Lent is a time to look inwardly at ourselves, at our joys and our sorrows, our good habits and our bad ones, and repent, in other words, to correct our course so that we are oriented towards God. For some, this “course correction” is mild. And for others, it needs to be more significant. Any course correction, any amount of sharpening of focus is a good thing and will make for a successful and rewarding Lenten journey.

As we approach Lent this year, more than any year I can recall, there is a great need for repentance, for course correction. This pandemic has really gotten us off course. It has kept us away from church. It has kept us away from friends. It has frustrated and angered us. Combine the pandemic with politics and we see people who are no longer friends, people who have stopped watching the news, people who are losing hope, and people on all sides who are angry.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of both the pandemic and politics is that it has turned our focus outward, rather than inward. And while an outward focus is a necessary ingredient to the Christian life—i.e. we can't love our neighbor if we have no outward focus—it is harder to love our neighbor if we do not love God and if we do not have love within ourselves.

### Your Lenten Plan

What is your plan for Lent? Some people will answer this question by saying that they have no plan. They plan to stay away from the church, not pray, not read the Bible, not look inward, not do much of anything. As the saying goes, if we fail to plan, we plan to fail. If there is no Lenten plan, then the Lenten journey will be a failure. Time will pass and nothing will happen.

Assuming that you wish to make a Lenten plan, let me offer a few suggestions. Because there really isn't a one size fits all Lenten plan. Yes, we are all supposed to fast, and the church tells us how to fast. Yet, many of us do not fast, or haven't fasted, so presenting a strict fast plan is probably not going to work. There are going to be MANY services offered during Lent, and no one is probably going to attend all of them. Thus, we need to look at the schedule and map out which services we will attend—either in person or virtually.

Some of us are really wounded inside. We are sad, lost, confused, angry. Is there a plan to deal with any of that this Lent? Confession is a great way to deal with sin and guilt and shame. Setting aside time each day for prayer and reflection will also bring healing and clarity.

Some of us are totally or greatly disconnected from the faith and from this church. Some of you haven't been to church in a year. Some of you haven't received Holy Communion in a year. With last year's Lent being almost completely wiped out by the pandemic, very few people went to confession in 2020. For most of us, it has been two years at least and for some even longer. Some of us have stopped praying. Some of us have probably never started. Some of us do not read the Bible with any kind of regularity.

March 15, the beginning of Great Lent, is a great starting over point for our spiritual journeys. I encourage you, as you receive this issue of *The Messenger* around March 1, to spend the next week making a Lenten plan for yourself. Figure out how you can carve out more time for your Christianity during Lent. Make a commitment to add something small to your Christian walk, spend seven weeks solidifying that new habit and then once Lent is over, make that new habit part of your life on a permanent basis. Most of us had our Lenten journeys significantly curtailed in 2020. We weren't able to spend 40 days developing new habits. Thus it is critical this Lent that we make this journey and dig deep within ourselves to see how we can improve in our relationship with Christ and with one another.

It is also obvious that this Lenten journey is going to occur under the cloud of the coronavirus. We are not likely to be open fully before Pascha. We are not going to have the annual Wednesday night Lenten dinners and presentations as we are used to. We are already working with the Parish Leadership to see how Holy Week is going to work under the current restrictions.



## It is Vital to Stay Connected

I write these messages each month, not as business appeals, but in a way to try to personally connect me with you. It is really important, vital actually, to your Christian life, to be connected to a church community.

Why? Because Christians exist in community. There is no such thing as a solitary Christian. Even monastics who live alone come back to their community for worship and fellowship. A Christian on a deserted island will not be a Christian for long. Because there is no neighbor to love. And there is no neighbor from whom to receive encouragement when there is doubt. We can't exist as Christians apart from a community.

Faith in Jesus Christ is what defines us as Christians. In the Orthodox Church, Holy Communion is the central practice of the Christian faith. Because Holy Communion is what unites us physically, spiritually and most intimately with Christ. And it's not just the walking into to church, opening our mouths and having Communion deposited in them.

It's all the things that surround Holy Communion. There is the preparation, the more careful guarding of our thoughts, words and actions as we prepare to receive Christ. There is the worship in church with others like us, the opportunity to confess the faith as we recite the Creed, the opportunity to pray collectively as we sing the responses of the service. And there is what hopefully happens after we receive—joy, gratitude, renewed focus.

For the first time in the history of our parish, we will follow the ancient Tradition of the Orthodox Church and offer Holy Communion FOUR times per week this Lent—On Wednesdays, in remembrance of the betrayal of Christ; on Fridays, in remembrance of His Crucifixion; on Saturdays, in remembrance of the day He laid in the tomb; and on Sunday, in honor of the Resurrection. Between the beginning of Lent and Pascha, Holy Communion will be offered in our church 30 times.

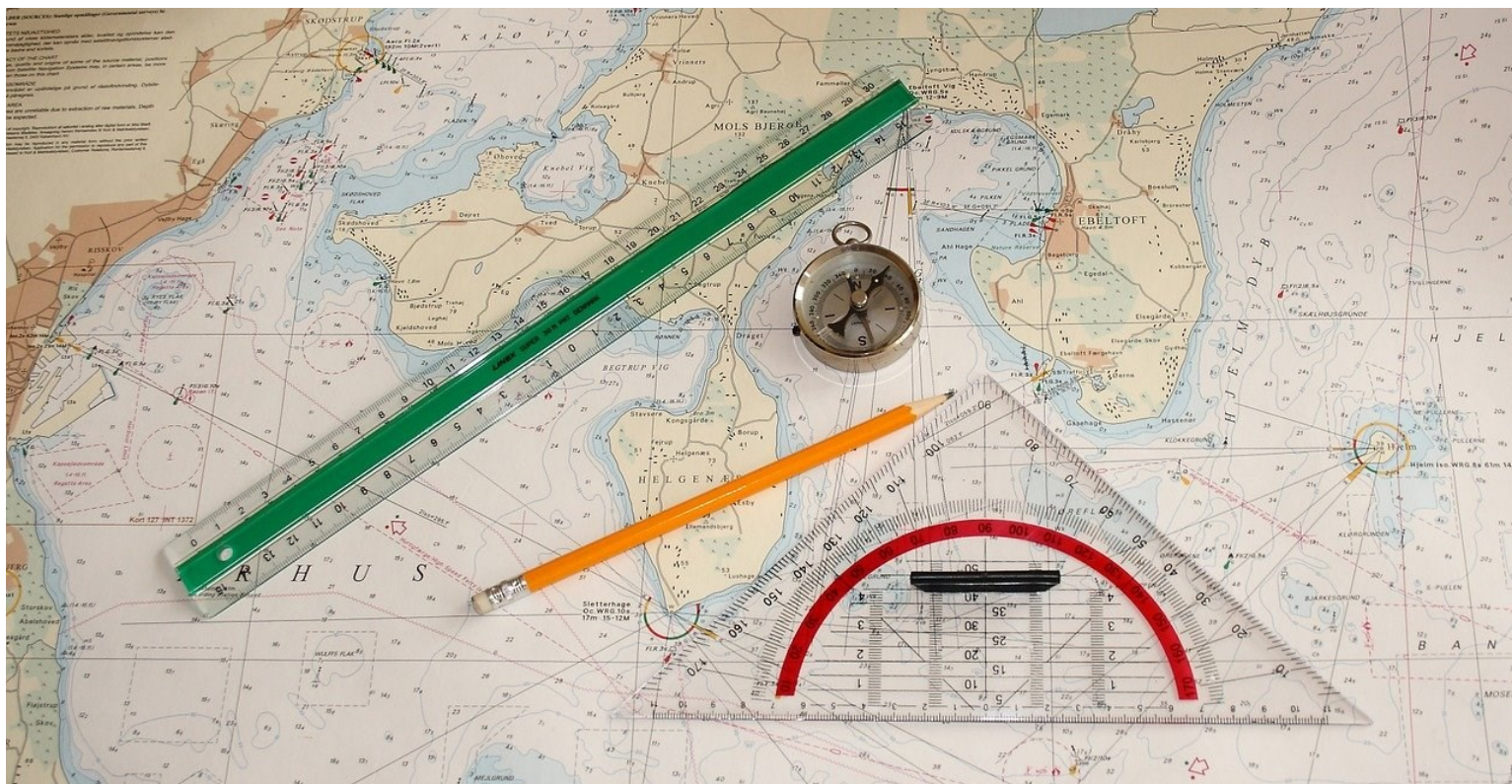
**It is my fervent hope that every member of our church will receive Holy Communion at least once, (and hopefully many more times) in the context of worship, during Great Lent.**

The Friday morning services (see below) will be the least attended Liturgies of the week, because they are new. You can find on our website the number of people who are attending every service, and you'll see the days when there are very few people coming. If you are frustrated that we have to wear masks in church, you are not alone. This frustrates me too. However, I believe this is temporary. It is done out of concern "for the other." Which is what love is, love is about "the other."

So if you are frustrated with wearing a mask to church, please don't let that keep you from receiving Christ at least once during Lent.

And as I have offered every month, if you are not comfortable attending church with ANY amount of people present, please contact me and we will make a time for you to receive Holy Communion privately. With multiple clergy now serving in our community, there will be ample manpower available to meet these requests.





## There will be many roads to the Resurrection

In most places we travel in life, there are multiple ways to get there. Some may be more direct, others more round about. Some may be more efficient and others more scenic. Some are for those who need to travel quickly and others are for those who have more time. The Lenten journey, particularly this year, will offer many roads to the Resurrection. I encourage you to choose one or more so that you can come to the Resurrection with joy, purpose, recommitment and renewal. Here are some of the things to consider on your Lenten journey.

1. Make a plan to attend Lenten services, either in person or virtually. There is a detailed explanation of the services included later in *The Messenger*. While we won't have the Lenten Dinners on Wednesday evenings, I want to encourage each of our ministries to attend at least one Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on a Wednesday evening as a group, either in person or virtually. I will make a 5-10-minute presentation at the end of each Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, in order to greet that group and others in attendance. Please plan to attend as follows:

### Wednesday, March 17

Choir, Nursing Ministry, Welcome Ministry, Ushers

### Wednesday, March 31

Men's Group, Parish Council, Young Adults

### Wednesday, April 7

AHEPA, Daughters of Penelope, Young at Heart

### Wednesday, April 14

Sunday School, Bible Studies, GOYA, HOPE/JOY, Book Club

### Wednesday, April 21

Philoptochos, Community Outreach

2. Use the journal. We put out a journal during the Nativity Fast that had a theme for each week and a verse or two for each day in it. There were places to write each day your

thoughts on the verse of the day, as well as places to set goals, make prayer lists, etc. We are creating a Lenten journal which will be distributed the weekend of March 6-7, and March 13-14, as well as mailed to those who cannot attend. To request extra copies, please pick them up at church or we can mail them to you. I want to encourage you to **BRING THE JOURNAL** with you to church, feel free to write in it during services or sermons. The journal will consist of Lenten prayers, the weekly theme, the verse of the day, and during Holy Week, there will be a theme for every day as well as a verse for every day. The verse of the day will be sent out as a daily notification on our church app with a short commentary by Fr. Stavros. Be sure to download our app today!

3. Join the Prayer Team. The Prayer Team is the daily reflection I have been writing for over six years. On weekends, the messages are about the Sunday Scripture readings. On weekdays, the topic is "Unto the Healing of Soul and Body: Restoration and Reconciliation for a Broken World." You can visit [www.prayerteam365.com](http://www.prayerteam365.com) and sign up there.
4. Read the Bible—Read the Four Gospels during Lent. There are about 90 chapters in the total of the four Gospels. Read two chapters a day beginning on March 15 and you'll finish all four by Holy Week.
5. Make a plan to spend private time in prayer and devotion. Prayer and devotion take place when we make a specific time to do them.
6. Use the Lenten Family Calendar—A family calendar is included in this issue of *The Messenger*. It contains things to do as a family, particularly with your children, throughout the Lenten period. These are edifying, fun and easy but will add some meaning and structure to the Lenten journey.
7. Do the Lenten Covenant Program. We will again offer the Lenten Covenant in this issue of *The Messenger*. The Len-



ten Covenant is a private covenant we make between ourselves and the Lord to engage in certain practices and behaviors for the period of Great Lent. You can read about it below. There are certain things to commit to each week and throughout the entirety of Great Lent.

8. Read the *Road Back to Christ*. This book contains a reflection for every day from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee (February 21) through All Saints Day (June 27). The reflections for the period of Great Lent focus on the Scriptures of Holy Week, which tell the story of the Passion of Christ. Reading this book during Lent will help you prepare for Holy Week, and will also give you something Scriptural to think about each day.
9. Forgive someone who has wronged you. (See article on forgiveness later in *The Messenger*). I recently watched the movie "I Can Only Imagine" again. The main character in the movie, who had been abused for years by his father, wrote in his diary, "I choose to forgive." And ultimately he chose to forgive his dad. The person you choose to forgive doesn't even necessarily need to know that you have forgiven them. They might be someone who is not going to accept forgiveness. They might be someone who wronged you that is no longer in the area, or even no longer alive. Choosing to forgive lightens your load, lightens your heart.

Any combination of this can work, but plan to do something!

## Getting Back to the Basics—Prayer, Worship, Fasting, Almsgiving

The basic things a Christian should do during Lent (as well as outside of Lent) are prayer, worship, fasting and almsgiving. Almsgiving is generous giving to those who are in need. This is traditionally in the form of financial charity. But there are plenty of ways to give and plenty of things people need that we can give. Yes, we can and should give to charity. We will be talking about that during Lent in our parish. We can also give time to others, a patient ear, sound advice, and help. Make prayer (personal prayer), worship (communal prayer), fasting (see below) and almsgiving (acts of charity and kindness) the four pillars of Lent and you are going to have a successful and meaningful journey. Because of the pandemic, and maybe this is a blessing in disguise, we won't be able to focus on much more in our parish this year. The pandemic has forced us to focus on the basics. And as we come out of the pandemic eventually, and we try to gather those who have fallen away as well as renew ourselves, there will be a lot of emphasis on the basics. What better time to get back to them than Lent!

Here are a few guidelines for fasting, taken from the Lenten Covenant. If you've never fasted before, don't try level nine. Try a level that is challenging but not impossible. Once you've mastered that level, move up a level.

Level One Fast from meat on Wednesday and Fridays and during Holy Week

Level Two Fast from meat and fish on Wednesdays and Friday and during Holy Week

Level Three Fast from meat the entirety of Lent and Holy Week

Level Four Fast from meat and fish the entirety of Lent and Holy Week

Level Five Level Four and eliminate dairy products during Holy Week.

Level Six Level Four and eliminate dairy products on Wednesdays and Fridays and during Holy Week

Level Seven Level Four plus eliminate dairy products during all of Lent and Holy Week

Level Eight Level Seven plus eliminate oil and wine during Holy Week

Level Nine The Strict Fast—no meat, fish, dairy products, wine or oil during the entirety of Lent

Another option: I can't fast from food for health reasons. I will give up the following: (Write answer here)

**\*\*Note**—alcohol should be consumed at a very minimum during Lent, and abstained from totally if possible. Also, activities should be curtailed, socializing a little more sedate, no dancing and loud music. During Holy Week, all unnecessary activities aside from work and children should be curtailed, so that we can focus on the Holy Days of the Passion of Christ.

## Conclusion

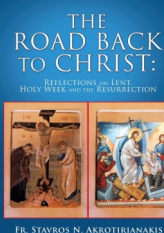
We only get out of something what we put into it. Investing some time will make for a more meaningful and enriching Lenten journey. A meaningful and enriching Lenten journey will make for a more joyful Pascha. And a meaningful and enriching Lenten journey can be life-changing. In this time of great uncertainty, we can all use some greater confidence in our faith, which will translate into greater confidence in our life, regardless of how uncertain the world is.

I hope by March 2022, the pandemic is a distant memory. However, even if it is, there will always be a need for Christ, a need for growth and a need for renewal. Even when the coronavirus pandemic ends, there will still be a pandemic of chaos and sin. These are part of a fallen world. These can only be cured by Christ. Which is why Lent is always something from which we can benefit. Throw in the additional chaos and uncertainty surrounding this year's pandemic, and it's never been a better time to grow in Christ.

I wish each of you a meaningful and spiritually rewarding period of the Great Lent. Kali Sarakosti!

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros



**The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection** is now on sale! It is a series of daily reflections to be read from the beginning of Triodion (this year that is February 21) through All Saints Day (this year that is June 27). Pick up your copy today so you can begin reading it on February 21. This book costs \$18.99 and all monies taken in at the bookstore go to the church.

# Pastoral Notes from Fr. Stavros

**How to do Confession**—Many of us, myself included, will want to avail ourselves of confession this upcoming Lenten season. In order to do this efficiently, please keep in mind the following:

1. Both Fr. Stavros and Fr. John will hear confessions this Lent. You can call either directly to make an appointment. You can also make an appointment by signing up on a schedule that will be at the baptistery on many upcoming Sundays. Please sign up for one 30-minute time slot.
2. Review the “Ten Commandments in Preparation for Confession” (in this issue of *The Messenger*). Write down a list of the sins you wish to confess. Do NOT bring “The Ten Commandments” sheet with you, because many people either read from it or are thinking of their sins at the moment of confession. Please prepare BEFORE coming to Confession.
3. Be as specific as you need to be when making a confession. You don’t have to give a long back story about your sins. It is sufficient to say “I drink too much occasionally” rather than “let me tell you about the night I did. . .” If you haven’t been to confession in a while, or ever, start off with the sins you do habitually. Look back and remove the “big ticket” items that bring you the most guilt, shame and distraction. Then look at current things that pose spiritual problems. The confession itself, the actual confessing of sins should take no longer than a couple of minutes. The rest of the time is spent making a plan for repentance, how we can change bad habits and become more God-focused in our lives.

**No Baptism by Immersion**—What makes a baptism valid in the Orthodox Church is not full immersion in water. It is the invocation of the name of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Babies are baptized by being immersed in water up to their shoulders three times and water is splashed over their heads each time. Adults kneel in a pool we have and have water poured over them three times. People who join our church through Chrismation have been baptized in a variety of ways. So long as they were baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, they are baptized. And we’ve had emergency baptisms, when babies were baptized in the hospital with a few drops of water. There is even an extreme baptism where the name of the Holy Trinity is invoked by raising the baby in the air, with no water. This is also a valid baptism. There was recently some controversy in Romania, as a baby was baptized and later died because it had water in its lungs. While I have not been asked to baptize a baby putting it completely under water, save for a few times in my ministry, this is not something I am comfortable with, and will not be doing full immersion baptisms going forward.

**Saturday of the Souls and Kolyva**—Because of the Pandemic, we are not handing out kolyva after Memorial Services. For the upcoming Saturdays of the Souls, you may bring a bowl of kolyva if you wish (not required, you can bring just the names of your deceased loved ones), and then take the bowl home afterwards. We will not be distributing kolyva until further notice. Also, the annual Divine Liturgy at the cemetery will NOT be held this year, because the area we do it in is too small to allow for social distancing. We plan to resume that wonderful tradition next year.

**Make the Great Entrance Great Again**—Since the church re-opened last June, we’ve had the instruction from the Metropolitan to not go into the nave unless we are wearing a mask and to not go in the nave of the church (where the people sit) at all if possible. So, we have been censing from the solea instead of walking down the middle aisle of the church and we haven’t been going around for the Great Entrance. New guidelines were offered at the end of January, indicating that we should return to our normal practice of processions and censing. While we have gone back to censing down the center aisle, we have not as of yet resumed the path for the Great Entrance, choosing to wait a little longer to do so. With the onset of Great Lent, we will resume the Great Entrance around the church, as well as the traditional processions on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, Sunday of the Holy Cross and during Holy Week.

**PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE SATURDAY OF THE SOULS MEMORIAL SERVICES -  
March 6, March 13, March 20**

**In Memory of**

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

**\*\*You only need to write the first name of each person. Please mail to the church office by Friday, March 5.**

*You may also email the names to [office@stjohnntpa.org](mailto:office@stjohnntpa.org)*

# The Lenten Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian

By Fr. John Stefero

**O**n March 15 we begin the spiritual journey of Great Lent. Of all the hymns and prayers that will be sung and read during this period, there is one prayer that can be termed THE LENTEN PRAYER. It is attributed to a 4<sup>th</sup> century holy and devoted hermit, poet, and theologian who composed a vast variety of hymns and prayers to God – Saint Ephraim the Syrian. The prayer reads as follows:

*O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of  
sloth, despair,  
lust of power and idle talk.*

*But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience,  
and love to Thy servant.*

*Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own trans-  
gressions, and not to judge my brother,  
for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen.*

The reality of our scattered, busy, and often distracted lives is that we do not pray often enough nor with the proper attention. Therefore, I strongly suggest that everyone MEMORIZE this prayer and pray it daily, once in the morning and once in the evening, in a deliberate manner followed by one minute of silence. It will be a great aid in our Lenten journey.

The first part of the prayer deals with four vices. In contrast, the second portion addresses four virtues.

1. Sloth is nothing other than laziness, the inability to appreciate and control one's time, the absence of purpose and self-discipline. As Father Alexander Schmemmann states, "it always pushes us 'down' rather than 'up' which constantly convinces us that no change is possible and therefore desirable. It is a deeply rooted cynicism which responds to every spiritual challenge with the question "what for?" It poisons our spiritual energy.
2. Despair is "the paralysis of the soul and debilitation of the mind" according to Saint John of the Ladder. It is faint-heartedness and the state of despondency which all the Church Fathers considered *the greatest danger of the soul!* We can call despair or despondency the suicide of the soul because it is the reduction of everything to negativism and pessimism.
3. Lust of Power is striving to be in command of people and to exalt oneself over them. It is a type of pride which Saint John of the Ladder calls a "denial of God" and "the despising of others." If God is not the Lord and Master of my life, I become my own lord and master and begin to evaluate everything in terms of MY needs, MY desires, MY ideas. Power and control are illusions as we have little control over any-

thing and anyone. If despondency is spiritual suicide, then lust of power is spiritual murder.

4. Idle Talk includes empty words and chatter – talking just to talk. Gossip is an extreme form of idle talk. We should heed the words of Proverbs 10:19: "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise." The Church Fathers describe silence as the highest form of prayer. It is important for us to cultivate a sense of stillness and silence during our Lenten journey as we seek to discern the will of the Lord in our lives.
5. Chastity means whole-mindedness (sofrosini in Greek). A chaste person is no longer fragmented but is integrated with the living and personal God. This person has a fundamental purity, respect for the body, and a gathering up of life that gives it both peace and unity.
6. Humility or meekness according to Saint Isaac the Syrian is the "robe of divinity." It is the victory of truth in us, the elimination of all lies in which we usually live. Humility alone is capable of truth, of seeing and accepting things as they are and therefore of seeing God's majesty, goodness, and love in everything. This is why we are told that God gives grace to the humble and resists the proud (Proverbs 3:37).
7. Patience is long-suffering, endurance. Psalm 37:7 tells us to "be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him." Patience is a divine virtue. Too often we fall into the trap of telling God, "I want patience Lord and I want it now!" On the other hand, God is patient not because He is indulgent, but because He sees the depth and inner reality of all that exists. We will find that the closer we come to God, the more patient we grow and the more respect we will have for one another.
8. Love is the true caring and sacrificing for the good of the other – the crown and fruit of all virtues. As 1 Corinthians 13 reminds us, we can do many good things for others but if we have not love, it profits us nothing. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails!

The Prayer of Saint Ephraim concludes with the exhortation that we are to see our own sins and not judge our neighbor. In his homily *On Not Judging Our Neighbor*, Abba Dorotheus wrote, "There is nothing worse than condemnation. When the human mind begins to leave his sins without attention and begins to notice the sins of his neighbor, that person ultimately falls into the same sin for which he condemns the other."

A blessed Great Lent to all!



# Why is it Difficult to Pray For Those We Regard The Least?

By Alex Limberatos

**H**aving done some work in the hospital as a chaplain, it's interesting to me to hear from patients and from staff where prayers are directed. From my conversations, it seems the top three subjects that get lifted up by patients and by staff are family, friends, and some collective good entity—such as our country, the poor, those who hunger throughout the world. On more than a handful of occasions when I close a visit or conversations asking if the patient (or staff member) would like prayer, I would get dismissed that someone deserves prayer more than them.

This kind of thinking always opens up a new line of conversation that can add another half an hour to a visit. “Why do you think you don’t deserve prayer?” “Who deserves it more than you?” “Is prayer or grace a finite resource?” “Do you think God doesn’t pay you much mind?”

I received a whole slew of responses to some of these probing questions, and typically after asking some more questions the patient begins to see some of the holes in their line of thinking. To their credit, this line of thinking is perhaps altruistic and selfless, a kind of act of humility and gratitude that says, “compared to others, I think I’m actually doing ok—I may even be blessed!” Still, there’s a danger when we say explicitly or implicitly that we don’t need prayer, that we in fact have no need of our Spiritual Physician—Christ. Further, I often point to the example of instructions we receive before flying on a plane: we ought to put our mask on before assisting others in putting theirs on—meaning, we ought to pray for our own wisdom and blessing before we dare to pray for anyone else.

That being said, I think we all have had moments in our life when praying for ourselves comes natural. When we are in great pain or grievous illness, our prayer can be a plea for help or a lamentation of feeling alone. We can feel scared and ask for safety and deliverance, or we can feel despondent in our circumstances and ask for hope. These prayers come so naturally, and I believe the circumstances that bring them on afford us a grand opportunity to literally repent: to turn our minds, our thoughts, our heart to God. This act of repentance ought to happen every day, every morning, every hour wherein we consecrate our attention to God, and yet life throws us these curveballs that sometimes make it easier.

Conversely, sometimes we feel it is hypocritical for us to begin praying when there is only peril, and so sometimes we keep our mouths and hearts closed to God—I’ve also encountered this enough times in the hospital. There is only a half truth in this kind of thinking, and the half truth is that we ought to include God in ALL parts of our lives rather than simply when things go amuck. Still, to shut



ourselves off from any humility before God because we pragmatically believe we will forget Him afterwards is no better than returning to God each time and forgetting. We do not know what life-altering thing will happen when we kneel before God in peril. We ought to consider the possibility that our beginning to pray today might set us right in remembering Him at all times...and that is the goal: that God not stay separate from anything we do, but that our minds and hearts go to Him first and consistently go to Him.

So perhaps it isn’t so hard to pray for those we love, or to pray for those our heart goes out to, and maybe it’s even natural for us to pray for ourselves so long as we do not become too cynical about prayer. But there is one group of people that we have subtly touched on already that I think we forget to pray for, and it is those we regard the least.

Now, as mentioned above, sometimes we pay ourselves little mind so we can easily fit ourselves into this category if we are self-deprecating or self-loathing. But what I find is perhaps more common is ALL those we do not pray for willingly or even unwillingly.

First, let’s give some consideration to those we do not regard unwillingly...

These are the individuals we encounter almost every day, but whose stories and deep hurt we are not so privy to. It is the bank teller, it is the cashier, it is the maintenance guy, it is perhaps even our own clergy. We sometimes fall into a utilitarian view of seeing people in their professions without giving consideration to the truth that, “this person has a story and has some real struggles, like myself, like

my friends, like my family”. Even if they are not frowning or in tears, even if they are individuals of faith, it doesn’t mean that everything in their home or in their soul is perfectly right. All can benefit from prayer.

But here’s where things can become easy for us to pray for them: we are typically orderly and task-oriented beings. We typically don’t pass a grocery store and decide we need groceries. We know we need to go there. The same goes for scheduling a plumber or mechanic for something. When we set in our day, “I need to go/see [blank]”, this is an opportunity for us to not only consecrate that appointment for ourselves—to our betterment—but also for the sake of that stranger. I had the blessed fortune of being mindful of this need before going to the bank to set up an account for my daughter, and God granted us a really joyful interaction with the teller.

But now let’s consider those who we WILLFULLY DO NOT pray for, or perhaps those who are hearts and minds are against that praying for them doesn’t even seem to be in the realm of possibility. I’m talking about our enemies, the thorns in our sides, those who raise our blood pressure when we see their face or go so far as to think about them. Back to the hospital, I have seen how a high-stress environment can lead to tension among the staff, among people on the same team!

In my interaction with nurses who have confided and confessed their challenges with their patients and coworkers, I often ask them if they have prayed for these people. This response—when we might instead prefer validation or prayers being sent our own way—is perhaps jarring for a few reasons. Allow me to close this topic by spelling out some of these reasons.

*It’ll do no good...*

Personally, this is a difficult response to hear. Not only do I think this sentiment undermines the power and grace of God, but it also subscribes to a deterministic thinking that some people never change. Now, we all encounter irksome individuals who at the surface seem to have difficulty being receptive to any critique or accountability, but to assume there are some people who will never change is also self-condemning; what’s to say that we ourselves cannot change then, and if so what is the point of our repentance?

*I don’t think that person deserves [my] prayer...*

I don’t think anyone ever really says this out loud, but implicitly we might communicate this in other ways. Let’s all for a moment confess that sometimes there’s a dark side of us that feels giddy seeing our enemies humbled or put to shame, and by addressing that dark part of our psyche we should consider then why we might be hesitant to pray for our enemies. When we pray for others, we typically do so for their health, peace, or prosperity, and yet sometimes the answer to a prayer looks differently, such as wisdom, patience, or humility. When we consider someone as not deserving of prayer because of their disposition, perhaps then it is their disposition and character

that is most aching for prayer! Perhaps if that person had received some wisdom, some assistance, some love, some grace they might be someone we could even come to befriend and love.

*I don’t have time to pray for them...*

As touched on above, it’s interesting when we begin to think of prayer as a commodity in short supply. Perhaps there really are people who suffer more than our enemies and could appreciate God’s grace a bit more. That being said, any limitation we put on prayer—the time or energy or thought that goes into it—communicates that either prayer/grace is a precious resource that can run out, or that we can stand to speak to God for only a fixed amount of time. ANYTIME we remember to go to God for those we love, we must set aside the time AS WELL for those who we find ourselves challenged to find peace around.

*I forget to pray for them...*

I think this is a fairly legitimate struggle, though it’s something we can still work at. It’s easier for us to send our thoughts and prayers to our friends, our families, and their plights, because we know those plights intimately and care about them. That being said, to those who rob us of our peace perhaps are given so little thought and consideration BECAUSE the very thought of them riles us up. Again, when we go to God in prayer, we should ask not only for that which we need and ask for everyone else in need, but to spend some time considering those who have trouble forgiving and being patient with and asking for God to address their needs. I think a lot of our tension and hostility would be alleviated if we practiced this some more.

The last reason, I believe, we do not pray for those we give little regard to is because it speaks to the nature of our own relationship with God and with prayer. Unfortunately we sometimes get into a model of prayer that treats God as a kind of genie or vending machine. Sometimes we only go to Him for the most immediate good rather than a) remembering to ask God for even more important things such as wisdom, humility, and patience and b) remembering that our prayer is also meant to be a relationship with God that involves as well thanksgiving, honesty, and inclusion of Him into every facet of our lives. If we changed our focus to our actual needs and consulted God in every task/decision we then might find it easier to lift up in prayer those we regard the least, those who have perhaps one fewer person praying for them than what they need!

Let’s all give some consideration to those we don’t normally consider. Let’s become the intercessor to those who have no intercessor. Let’s reach the needs of those who might upset us by asking God to address the thorn in their side.

Let’s remember this task the next time our priest says, “Remember also, Lord, those whom each of us calls to mind and all Your people.”

# Liturgical Schedule for March 2021

Wednesday, March 3	Paraklesis Service of Supplication 6:00 p.m.
<b>Saturday, March 6</b>	<b>First Saturday of the Souls</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Memorial Service to be held at the end of the Divine Liturgy
<b>Sunday, March 7</b>	<b>Third Sunday of Triodion - Sunday of the Last Judgment</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, March 10	Paraklesis Service of Supplication 6:00 p.m.
<b>Saturday, March 13</b>	<b>Second Saturday of the Souls</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Memorial Service to be held at the end of the Divine Liturgy
<b>Sunday, March 14</b>	<b>Fourth Sunday of Triodion - Forgiveness Sunday</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Forgiveness Vespers 6:00 p.m.
<b>Monday, March 15</b>	<b>Clean Monday - Beginning of Great Lent</b> Canon of St. Andrew of Crete 10:00 a.m. Sacrament of Holy Unction 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday, March 17	9th Hour 5:30 p.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.</b>
Friday, March 19	9th Hour 9:30 a.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</b> Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 1st Stanza 6:30 p.m.
<b>Saturday, March 20</b>	<b>Third Saturday of the Souls - St. Theodore</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Memorial Service to be held at the end of the Divine Liturgy
<b>Sunday, March 21</b>	<b>First Sunday of Great Lent - Sunday of Orthodoxy</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Procession of Icons to be held at the end of the Divine Liturgy
Monday, March 22	Great Compline 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 24	Paraklesis Service of Supplication 6:00 p.m.
<b>Thursday, March 25</b>	<b>Annunciation to the Virgin Mary</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Friday, March 26	9th Hour 9:30 a.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</b> Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 2nd Stanza 6:30 p.m.
<b>Saturday, March 27</b>	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
<b>Sunday, March 28</b>	<b>Second Sunday of Lent - St. Gregory Palamas</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.
Monday, March 29	Great Compline 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 31	9th Hour 5:30 p.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.</b>
Friday, April 2	9th Hour 9:30 a.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</b> Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 3rd Stanza 6:30 p.m.
Saturday, April 3	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
<b>Sunday, April 4</b>	<b>Third Sunday of Lent - Veneration of the Holy Cross</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Procession of the Holy Cross at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy





# Liturgical Notes for March 2021

## Saturday of the Souls – Saturdays, March 6, 13 and 20

It is a Tradition in the Orthodox Church to offer prayers for the souls of all of our loved ones who have departed this life, in the hope of the Resurrection to Eternal Life. There are four Saturdays of the year that are dedicated specifically to this purpose. There are three Saturdays at the beginning of Lent and the Saturday before Pentecost. Everyone is encouraged to submit the names of their loved ones to be commemorated at the services (see enclosed form). Everyone is encouraged to attend one of these services (and bring Kolyva) if you are able, as a way of honoring the people in your family who have passed away, once a year.



## Sunday, March 7 – Judgment Sunday (Meatfare)

Judgment Sunday is also called - Meatfare Sunday because it is the last Sunday, according to the fasting canons, that the faithful eat meat before Easter. During the following week, we do not fast on Wednesday and Friday (except for meat, of course). On this Sunday, we call to mind something that has not even happened yet: the Second Coming of Christ. Our Lord has promised us that He will come again, “to judge the living and the dead, and His Kingdom will have no end” (from the Nicene Creed). We call to mind the “criteria” of our entrance into Paradise, as our Lord said in today’s Gospel: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”

## Sunday, March 14 - Forgiveness Sunday (Cheesefare)

Cheese-Fare Sunday is the last day in which dairy products are allowed. The Monday after Cheese-Fare Sunday is the official beginning of the Great Lent; this Monday is also called Clean Monday (Kathara Deftera). On Cheese-Fare Sunday the Church commemorates the sending away of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Paradise. Adam and Eve were in complete harmony with God, nature and themselves. They were tempted by the devil and they agreed to eat from the tree of knowledge, in order that they themselves might become gods. The result was fatal; they were cast out of Paradise and sin came into the world. The Holy Fathers selected this event to remind us of our obligations to God and about the laws of fasting and Christian behavior (Matthew 6:14-21).

## Sunday, March 14 - Forgiveness Vespers

Great and Holy Lent begins on Monday, March 15, a day called Clean Monday, or “Kathara Deftera” in Greek. Vespers is the service that ends one day and begins another, so we will celebrate the Vespers of Forgiveness and beginning of Great Lent on Sunday evening, March 14, at 6:00 p.m. This service lasts about an hour and marks the beginning of Great Lent, which is announced during one of the hymns mid-way through the service. During this hymn, the priest changes vestments from white to purple, the lights in the church are dimmed and the mood of the service becomes somber. In fact, it is the opposite of the Resurrection Service on Easter, where everything begins dark and goes to light. The service concludes with a prayer of forgiveness being read over the congregation and the exchange of mutual forgiveness among the members of the congregation. This service is an especially appropriate way to begin the Lenten season, and for those who attended last season, is one of the most moving services of the church year.



## Monday, March 15 - Canon of St. Andrew

The Penitential Canon of St. Andrew will be read from 10:00-11:00 a.m. on Monday, March 15 as we begin Great Lent. The Canon, in its entirety, takes hours to read. We will read and chant an abridged version of this Canon on Clean Monday. Service books for this service will be available in the narthex.

## Monday, March 15 - Holy Unction on Clean Monday

The Sacrament of Holy Unction is always offered during Holy Week on Holy Wednesday. But the sacrament can be done at any time of the year. The emphasis of this sacrament involves, spiritual healing, spiritual cleansing and repentance. What better way to begin Great Lent than the sacrament of Holy Unction. Please bring your Holy Week book to follow along. The service will be held on Monday, March 15, from 6:00-7:30 p.m.

## Divine Liturgy to begin at 9:45 a.m. on the Sundays of Great Lent

Since the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is offered on each Sunday of Lent, and this Divine Liturgy is slightly longer than the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the Divine Liturgy will begin at 9:45 a.m. from March 21-April 25. The Choir will begin the Doxology at 9:40 a.m.

## Mondays of Lent - Great Compline

The service of the Great Compline will be read on the following Mondays of Lent—March 22, March 29, April 5, April 12, and April 19. This service lasts about an hour and consists of Psalms and hymns of repentance. Service Books for this service will be available.

## Wednesdays of Lent – 9<sup>th</sup> Hour and Pre-Sanctified Liturgy

The Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts (also called Pre-Sanctified Liturgy) will be held on the Wednesdays during Great Lent. This service consists of Vespers with Holy Communion that was “Pre-Sanctified” the previous Sunday. It is an opportunity to receive Holy Communion frequently during the season of fasting. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy is preceded by the reading of the 9<sup>th</sup> Hour, a short service with penitential prayers as well as the recitation of the Creed, a pre-requisite for the reception of Holy Communion. Service books for this service will be available. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy will be celebrated on the following Wednesdays of Great Lent: Wednesday, March 17; Wednesday, March 31; Wednesday, April 7; Wednesday, April 14 and Wednesday, April 21. On Wednesday, March 24, we will have Paraklesis from 6:00-7:30 p.m., as the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy is not offered on March 24, the day preceding the feast of the Annunciation. Each ministry is encouraged to attend one Pre-Sanctified Liturgy either in person or virtually as follows:



**Wednesday, March 17** - Choir, Nursing Ministry, Welcome Ministry, Ushers

**Wednesday, March 31** - Men's Group, Parish Council, Young Adults

**Wednesday, April 7** - AHEPA, Daughters of Penelope, Young at Heart

**Wednesday, April 14** - Sunday School, Bible Studies, GOYA, HOPE/JOY, Book Club

**Wednesday, April 21** - Philotochos, Community Outreach

## Fridays of Lent - An Additional Pre-Sanctified Liturgy

The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy has Traditionally been celebrated on Wednesdays AND Fridays of Great Lent. In many churches, the practice of celebrating the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Fridays has been curtailed. Because we now have additional clergy available to serve our parish and because there is a greater need for less attended services, we are going to add the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy each Friday of Lent. The 9<sup>th</sup> Hour will begin at 9:30 a.m., with the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy from 10:00-11:15 a.m. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy will be held on the Fridays of Lent as follows: Friday, March 19; Friday, March 26; Friday, April 2; Friday, April 9; Friday, April 16; Friday, April 23.



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

This service also lasts about an hour and is a series of prayers and devotions that invoke the intercessions of the Virgin Mary for our salvation. It will be held on March 19, March 26, April 2, April 9 and April 16. Service Books for this service will be available.

**Paraklesis Services in March**—Paraklesis services will be held as follows during the month of March: Wednesday, March 3; Wednesday, March 10 and Wednesday, March 24. The purpose of the Paraklesis services is to pray for those who are in any kind of need, sorrow or distress. At these services, we pray for healing and strength for the pandemic, as well as praying for all of our parishioners by name. The Paraklesis services on these Wednesdays will be from 6:00-7:15 p.m.

**Divine Liturgy every Saturday in March**—The first three Saturdays of March (March 6, 13 and 20) are the Saturday of the Souls, and would have been marked with Divine Liturgy outside of the Pandemic. We will also celebrate Divine Liturgy on Saturday, March 27, and will continue to celebrate Divine Liturgy on all Saturdays until the end of the pandemic and when people feel it is safe to congregate all together on Sundays.

## Sunday, March 21 - Sunday of Orthodoxy

A grand procession with icons took place on March 11, 843 A.D., marking the permanent triumph of icons and their return to the churches after a 150-year absence. From this time, icons were defined as objects to be venerated and not worshipped. They are spiritual mirrors through which we see the heavenly saints. Their restoration in our churches is a rue victory for Orthodoxy. Thus, on the first Sunday of Lent each year, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Triumph of Orthodoxy with a procession of icons, together with the reading of a Synodal Statement, authored in 843, marking their return to the church. *If anyone has new icons that have not been blessed, please bring them to church on Sunday, March 21, the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and place them in the windows of the church. They will be blessed with Holy Water during the service.*





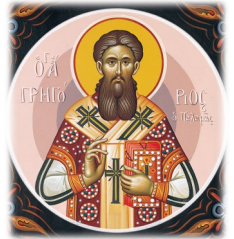
## Thursday, March 25 - Feast of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary



The Angel Gabriel came directly to the Virgin Mary and told her that she was going to have a child. Naturally, she was alarmed at first and asked many questions. “Do not be afraid,” said Archangel Gabriel, “the Lord is with you because God has chosen you among all the women in the world and in history.” The word “Evangelismos” means not only “Annunciation” but “Good News.” The Gospel is called in Greek, the “Evangelion,” and the authors of the Gospels are called “Evangelists,” meaning those who proclaim the Good News of Christ. The announcement of Christ’s birth is placed on March 25, 9 months before the feast of the Nativity. We, in turn are told to spread the Good News of Christ as well, imitating the faithful example of the Virgin Mary. Greek Orthodox Christians celebrate March 25 not only because it is the Feast of Annunciation, but also because of its political significance. On this day, March 25, 1821, Bishop Germanos of Patras, Greece, raised the cross of Jesus Christ and proclaimed the freedom of Greeks from the Turkish yoke. March 25, 1821 was declared the beginning of the Greek Revolution against the Turks. This year marks the 200-year anniversary of Greek Independence Day.

## Sunday, March 28 – Second Sunday of Lent - St. Gregory Palamas

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



## Sunday, April 4 - Third Sunday of Lent - Veneration of the Holy Cross

On the 3rd Sunday of Great Lent we celebrate the Veneration of the Cross; the Cross helps us to prepare for the Crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are not just witnessing from afar the passions of our Lord, but we participate in them. In the Synaxarion we read, “Through the forty-day fast, we too are in a way crucified, dying to the passions.” Our efforts to keep



up with the Fast, through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, might take a toll over our bodies; we need help and encouragement, and the help and encouragement comes from the power of the Cross. In the middle of Great Lent, the Church gives its faithful a sign of victory, one that can bring strength to them in this time of fasting. The Sunday of the Holy Cross is one that brings everything into perspective, especially with the Gospel reading (Mark 8:34-9:1), the Lord saying to all His disciples: *“If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?”* A special procession of the Holy Cross, on a tray covered with flowers, will be held at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

## Why does Liturgy seem longer on Sundays during Lent?

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



## Some other important opportunities...

### Lenten Covenant

As we have done in years past, we will offer the Lenten Covenant, a “covenant” made between you and God about your plan for spiritual growth this Lent. A copy is included in *The Messenger*. Please fill out one and put it in the special box in front of the church on March 13 or 14.

### Sacrament of Confession

Many people have already made appointments for their confessions to be heard, many for the first time in their lives. It is confidential. It helps you reconnect with God and unburden yourself of guilt. It helps you to make a new start in your spiritual journey and is an integral part of any successful Lenten journey. If you have questions about confession, please ask. There is no better way to prepare for Pascha than to receive this sacrament. Confessions will be heard up to April 23, and then again after Pascha. Please make your appointment as soon as possible, because our priests like to give people whatever time they need. As it gets closer to Holy Week and more and more people are coming, they must go quicker, and it is very important not to be rushed in this Sacrament.



# St. John the Baptist Community News

## Parish Registry

**Baptism** - Perseus Stavros Papadopoulos was baptized on Sunday, December 27. Simela Townsend was the Godparent!  
Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism** - Alexios Stamas, son of Nicholas and Taylor Stamas, was baptized on Sunday, January 31.  
Carol Vondas was the Godmother. Na Sas Zisi!

**Funeral** - Sophia Karas passed away on February 5. Her funeral was held on Wednesday, February 10.  
May her memory be eternal!

**Funeral** - Nickolas Rogers passed away on February 10. His funeral was held on Friday, February 19.  
May his memory be eternal!

**Condolences** to Mary Nenos, on the passing of her sister, Vasiliki, on January 29.  
May her memory be eternal!

**Condolences** to Angela Johnston, whose mother, Helen, passed away on January 29. May her memory be eternal!

## Ministry News & Updates

**GOYA Lenten Retreat** - We will have our 16th annual GOYA Lenten Retreat on Saturday, March 27. This will be a ONE DAY retreat, held from 10:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. All of our GOYAns are encouraged to participate. We will be joined by GOYAns from some of our neighboring parishes as well. The day will begin with Divine Liturgy. There will be sessions in the afternoon, and a bonfire at night.

**Altar Boys** - Until the end of the pandemic, we will not be having altar boy groups. We will reconstitute all the groups at the end of the pandemic. However, we will be reaching out to our older altar boys to serve at some of the Lenten and Holy Week services. If you child hasn't served in a while and would like to serve at some of the upcoming Lenten and Holy Week services, please contact Fr. Stavros

**Looking for Ushers** - We are looking for more ushers to help at the Divine Services of our church. If you are interested, please email Fr. Stavros at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com).

**Men's Group Prepares 440 meals for the hungry**—On Sunday, January 17, our men's group sponsored a service project and prepared 440 meals for the hungry. The meals were distributed at the Presbyterian Church of Bloomingdale on January 21 for their Seeds of Hope program. John Zelatis let the effort for this project. In true Greek fashion, we prepared Lentils. What is very impressive is the list of ingredients and the amount we used:

154 pounds of lentil  
97 pounds of diced carrots (which were cut by hand)  
116 pounds of diced onions (which we diced by hand)  
10 pounds of minced garlic (which were cut by hand)  
5 gallons of olive oil  
6.5 cups of salt  
3.25 cups of Greek gold  
2 cups black pepper  
13.5 pounds of tomato paste  
6.5 TBS oregano  
6.5 TBS cracked rosemary  
616 bay leaves

We paid for these ingredients with money from our discretionary charity fund which is part of our budget, so in essence, every steward was a part of this project. Again, this is why stewardship is important.

**Men's Group** - The Men's Group will meet on Sunday, March 21 at the church at 5:00 p.m. We will walk to a nearby restaurant, eat dinner, then return to the church for discussion, concluding by 7:30 p.m.

**Women's Bible Study will meet in March as follows:** Tuesday, March 2; Tuesday, March 9; Tuesday, March 23; and Tuesday, March 30. We are studying the Epistle of St. James. We meet via ZOOM. Fr. Stavros leads this group. If you would like to join our women's Bible study group, please contact Fr. Stavros at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com) and he will add you to the Zoom link. At some point, we will be resuming in person, however when we do, there will continue to be a zoom option.

**Monday Night Bible Study** with Charlie will be held on Mondays, March 1, 8, 22 and 29, from 6:45 p.m. - 8:15 p.m. Bible study is held via Zoom. If you are not currently part of the Monday Night Bible study and would like to join in, please contact Charlie at [chambos@stjohnntpa.org](mailto:chambos@stjohnntpa.org) and he will add you.

**12 Disciples Program** - In August, we started a program called "The 12 Disciples." There are twelve pages of names that comprise all the members of our parish. Father Stavros prays for all twelve pages of names each week at Paraklesis. The idea for this program is for each "disciple" to take one page of names and pray for that group of people every day. For every twelve "disciples" who sign up, every page of people will be prayed for. We currently have 46 "disciples" meaning that each person in this community is being prayed for by at least five people every day. If you'd like to join this program and receive a page of people to pray for, please contact either Charlie or Alex.

**Fr. Stavros to be on Let's Talk Program on Orthodox Christian Network (OCN)** - Fr. Stavros will be on the OCN program "Let's Talk" several times in the upcoming months. Links will be sent out to the community for those who wish to join in. In March, he will be on on Thursday, March 11 and Thursday, March 25.

## Souper Bowl of Caring - Thank You!

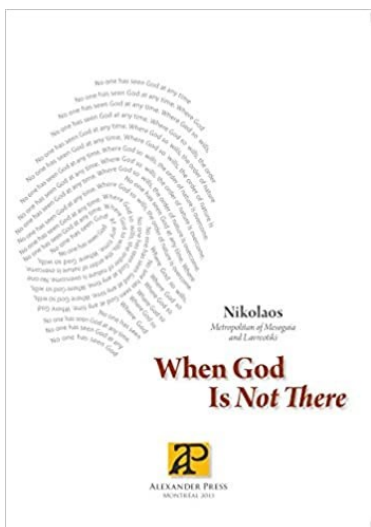
On Super Bowl Sunday, February 7, The Buccaneers were not the only big winners Super Bowl Sunday. Thanks to your generous donations we predicted the big Buccaneers win with an overflowing donation pot vs. the KC Chief's pot. We collected 2 boxes of food items and over \$600 to benefit Hope Children's Home, a local foster home.



**GriefShare meets every Thursday In-Person and via Zoom at 6:30 p.m.** It may be hard for you to feel optimistic about the future right now. If you've lost a spouse, child, family member, or friends you've probably found there are not many people who understand the deep hurt you feel. This can be a confusing time when you feel isolated and have many questions. "Going to GriefShare feels like having warm arms wrapped around you when you're shivering." GriefShare groups meet weekly to help you face these challenges and move toward rebuilding your life. Each GriefShare session has three distinct elements: Video seminar with experts, support group discussion with focus and personal study and reflection. We will meet from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the Administration Building Meeting Room on Thursdays, starting January 21, for 13 weeks, ending on Thursday, April 22. For January, GriefShare will meet March 4, 11 and 25. For more information please contact Donna Hambos at 813-843-8412 or [dhambos@msn.com](mailto:dhambos@msn.com). Books for the program will be provided. Donation for the book suggested but not required. Open to all family and friends. *Griefshare remains open enrollment with support towards healing and hope. You can begin at any time.*

## When God Is Not There, a Book Study on Suffering

March 2, 9 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom, Hosted by Alex Limberatos



"The world we live in has been called a 'vale of tears', a 'place of weeping' -- perhaps with good reason. This book records simple events and conversations, all the while grappling with difficult questions. Its aim is to convey the sense of the discreet yet persuasive presence of the true God precisely in situations where He is not visible: in pain, in disability, in the tragedies of life, in inexorable death, as this comes across in true events and is reflected in the lives of real people".

Alex Limberatos will be hosting a Zoom Book Study on Tuesday Nights at (6:30 p.m.) on March 2, 9

**If you are interested in joining, please e-mail Alex at [alex@stjohntpa.org](mailto:alex@stjohntpa.org) or call the office at 813-876-8830**

The church has copies of the book, free of charge. You can also buy an electronic copy of the book for \$10 on the Google Playstore, Amazon Kindle, or the Barnes and Noble App, or buy a copy on Amazon.

Our word for our parish for 2021 is “**Renew.**” Here are the words that our parishioners chose to mark their year.

**Verses of the Year—Psalm 50/51:10-12**

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.*





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

By Fr. Stavros

Most of us don't spend enough time in the Bible. Sadly, some of us don't spend any time. Each week since January 2019, we provide in *The Messenger* and then repeated weekly in the bulletin, a verse or two. I choose verses that are meaningful to me, or well known or ones that have meaning in contemporary times. You are welcome to submit verses via email to me as well, as many of you have. 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, read it, memorize it and contemplate the verse each week. 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 March. 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. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you through your reflection on Scripture.

## March 7 - 13

*I was hungry and you gave me food. Matthew 25:35*

There are many parts of the Bible that are hard to understand. Sometimes the words are difficult or the concepts seem foreign. In Matthew 25, Jesus gives very clear instructions about the works we are supposed to do to help one another. Feed those who are hungry. Everyone can do that. Everyone can buy an extra can of food and give it to a food bank or to our church's food pantry. More than food, there are many people who are hungry for attention, encouragement, affirmation. Giving someone your time, paying someone a compliment, building up someone's confidence, that are additional ways we can "feed" people. Jesus tells us that we need to give drink to the one who is thirsty. We are to welcome strangers. We are to cloth the naked. Again, this one is easy, give away the clothes you aren't using anyway. We are to visit the sick. We are also to visit those in prison. This one may be the hardest. We are not likely to visit a prison with bars and guards in our lives. But there are people who are in "prisons" when it comes to poverty, being handicap, having a learning disability, etc. There are plenty of people we can visit who are in one of these kinds of "prisons." Christ tells us that at the last judgment, we will be judged on how we did these specific things. And those who have done them generously, to the least of our brothers, will be judged worthy of eternal life.

## March 14 - 20

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

Great Lent begins this week. Our word for the year for 2021 in our parish is "renew." Great Lent provides an awesome opportunity to renew our faith—our prayer life, our reading of scrip-

ture, our time spent in worship, our connection with our community, and so many other aspects of our faith. We call the beginning of Lent "Clean Monday." On this day, the focus is not on shame for sins, but on the cleaning of our hearts. This is why we offer Holy Unction on Clean Monday, as a way to cleanse ourselves spiritually for the journey that is ahead. If your heart doesn't feel cleaned or your spirit is bogged down with sadness or shame, don't despair. The beginning of Great Lent provides a great opportunity to start over, for God to create clean hearts in us and renew our spirits.

## March 21 - 27

*Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe. Hebrews 12:28*

The theme of the second week of Lent is worship, a core value of our church. Each of the following five weeks, we will focus on one of these values. Worship is the thing we do most often in our church. The central activity of the Orthodox Church is worship, specifically the Eucharist. We can't be a Christian apart from the Eucharist. Because the most important thing we do is receive Christ. The Eucharist is received in the context of worship. Even when the Eucharist is offered in the hospital to someone who is sick, the priest still conducts a short worship service, even for him and the patient. While the kingdom outside the church leaves a lot to be desired, our world is very much imperfect, the kingdom of God, even as it is presented on earth, offers us a glimpse into perfection. For God takes our gifts of bread and wine and perfects them into the Body and Blood of Christ. This celebration of the Eucharist cannot be shaken. Even in the time of the pandemic, our church never stopped celebrating the Eucharist. Even when we could not all attend, the church continued to call the Holy Spirit down "upon us and upon these gifts here presented." Let us offer to God acceptable worship, meaning let us all attend worship so that we can come together and receive Christ together, with reverence and awe.

## March 28 - April 3

*For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them. Matthew 18:20*

The theme for the third week of Lent is community, another core value of our church. There is a saying "One Christian is no Christian." Christians live out their Christianity in the context of community. Why? Because Christ said that the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love our neighbor, and in order to love our neighbor, we have to have a neighbor and this is community. The Eucharist, as we have noted, is always received in the context of community. There is no private Eucharist, meaning, the priest cannot celebrate the Liturgy with no one present. Even when the Eucharist is taken to the hospital, there is a community of a patient and the priest. In the moment we receive Holy Communion, we personify this verse, two people standing together and Christ in the midst of them. Every time we gather in His name, whether it is with a full church, or a person coming to confession, or two friends who gather together for wholesome conversation, there Christ stands in the midst of us. It doesn't take that many to experience Christ. Even as we are social distancing and having small gatherings of people, He can still stand in the midst of us. We can still stand in His presence.

# Kolyva during the Time of the Pandemic

The Philoptochos will resume making Kolyva for those who wish to have Kolyva at memorial services. Here are the new guidelines:

1. The Kolyva will be made on a small tray that will be given to the family at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. The Kolyva will not be mixed or handed out in the hall until further notice.
2. Kolyva will be made as requested for 40 day memorials and 1 year memorials only.
3. The cost of the Kolyva will be \$50, with checks made payable to Philoptochos.
4. Kolyva is not necessary for a memorial to be done.
5. Once the pandemic is over, we will again resume making the larger Kolyva for distribution to the community at a cost of \$100.
6. If you wish to have Kolyva offered, please contact the office at least TWO weeks prior to the Memorial service you wish to request.



**Using Amazon Smile to Donate to St. John** - If you use Amazon Smiles, make sure to choose our church so a donation will be given to our parish every time a purchase is made. So far, since August 2017, we have made **\$864.59**. Every bit helps!

**Prayer List:** Lord Jesus Christ, Physician of our Souls and Bodies, visit and heal your servants: Dora Kallas, Gilda Parascandola, Kathy & Andrew Bouzinekis; Anastasia; Amanda, Andrew, Colton, Miranda, Charlotte Elizabeth, Nuha, Nabeel, Michael, Amal, John, Elaine, Olga, Virginia Georgiou, Ron Myer, Toulia Tsaros, Fr. Pat Legato, Nellie Pringle, Yolanda Webb, Angela Bougas, Tony Ekonomou, Ron, Jason Vickers, Rex Garrison, Tina Chakonas, Ann Demas, Alex Martinez, Adriana Martinez, Aaron Martinez, Christina Noel Kouzes Houck, Evangeline Xeroteris, Nichole Ross, Daniel Ross, Daniella Ross, Ashley Henderson, Natalie Henderson, Chris, Debbie, James, Avery, Lily, Jacob, Jesse, Ann, Rosario, Antonia Caffentzis, Alissa, John, Angela, Joey, Christine Scourtes, Steven, Matthew & Family, Phyllis, John Zelatis, Reagan, Peter Zaharis, Alexandra Ferrarolis, Leon & Despina Botham, Cindy Xenick, Mary Ellen Evdemon, Marie Sofia Panagopoulos, Maria Hursey, Chris Vamvakias, John Myer, Mike Trimis, Robert and Alice Stoccardo, John Alexander, Michael Romero, George Hambos, Dean Kondilis and Family, Bill and Nancy Manikas, Patricia Costello, Anastasia Smyrnakis, Ekaterina & Anna Shushaalykova, Dora Koudouna, Ana Mourer, Debbie Phelps, Mary Voykin, David Voykin, Anne Sakellaris, Denise Badrane, Sia Blankenship, Don Payne, Zhana Temelkova, Stanislava Terzieva, James, Jude and all victims of war, terrorism, crime, natural disaster, and all of whom we are unaware.

## 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.

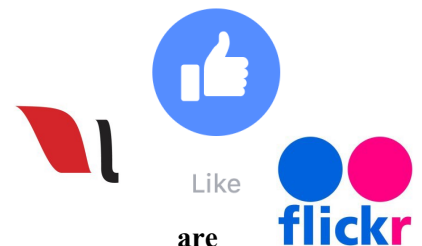
### Live Streaming

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: [stjohntpa.org](http://stjohntpa.org),
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 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)



# A Prayer in Honor of St. Patrick's Day - St. Patrick's Breastplate

I arise today  
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,  
Through belief in the Threeness,  
Through confession of the Oneness  
of the Creator of creation.

I arise today  
Through the strength of Christ's birth with His baptism,  
Through the strength of His crucifixion with His burial,  
Through the strength of His resurrection with His ascension,  
Through the strength of His descent for the judgment of doom.

I arise today  
Through the strength of the love of cherubim,  
In the obedience of angels,  
In the service of archangels,  
In the hope of resurrection to meet with reward,  
In the prayers of patriarchs,  
In the predictions of prophets,  
In the preaching of apostles,  
In the faith of confessors,  
In the innocence of holy virgins,  
In the deeds of righteous men.

I arise today, through  
The strength of heaven,  
The light of the sun,  
The radiance of the moon,  
The splendor of fire,  
The speed of lightning,  
The swiftness of wind,  
The depth of the sea,  
The stability of the earth,  
The firmness of rock.  
I arise today, through  
God's strength to pilot me,  
God's might to uphold me,  
God's wisdom to guide me,  
God's eye to look before me,  
God's ear to hear me,

God's word to speak for me,  
God's hand to guard me,  
God's shield to protect me,  
God's host to save me  
From snares of devils,  
From temptation of vices,  
From everyone who shall wish me ill,  
afar and near.  
I summon today  
All these powers between me and those evils,  
Against every cruel and merciless power  
that may oppose my body and soul,  
Against incantations of false prophets,  
Against black laws of pagandom,  
Against false laws of heretics,  
Against craft of idolatry,  
Against spells of witches and smiths and wizards,  
Against every knowledge that corrupts man's body and soul;  
Christ to shield me today  
Against poison, against burning,  
Against drowning, against wounding,  
So that there may come to me an abundance of reward.  
Christ with me,  
Christ before me,  
Christ behind me,  
Christ in me,  
Christ beneath me,  
Christ above me,  
Christ on my right,  
Christ on my left,  
Christ when I lie down,  
Christ when I sit down,  
Christ when I arise,  
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.

## Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 2973 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 6 years! 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 Alex at [alex@stjohnnpta.org](mailto:alex@stjohnnpta.org) and ask him to add you. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email Charlie or follow the link at the bottom of the daily emails to do so. If you want to forward to a friend, please use the "forward to a friend" option. Also, make sure [prayerteam365@gmail.com](mailto:prayerteam365@gmail.com) has been added to your contacts so that these emails stay in your Inbox rather than going to the Junk or Spam folders.

**The Prayer Team has a new dedicated website: [PrayerTeam365.com](http://PrayerTeam365.com)  
Check it out! Search by topic and grow in your faith today!**



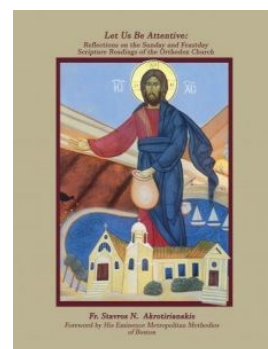
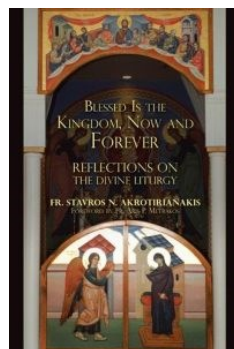
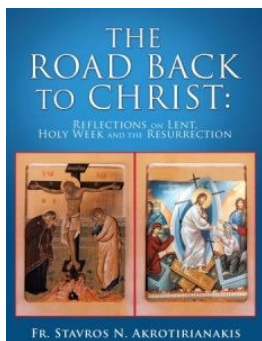
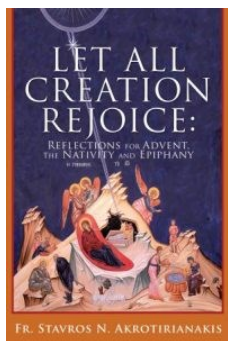
**Father Stavros has authored four books that are available both in the bookstore and on-line. They are entitled:**

*Let All Creation Rejoice: Reflections on Advent, the Nativity and Epiphany*

*The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection*

*Blessed is the Kingdom, Now and Forever: Reflections on the Divine Liturgy*

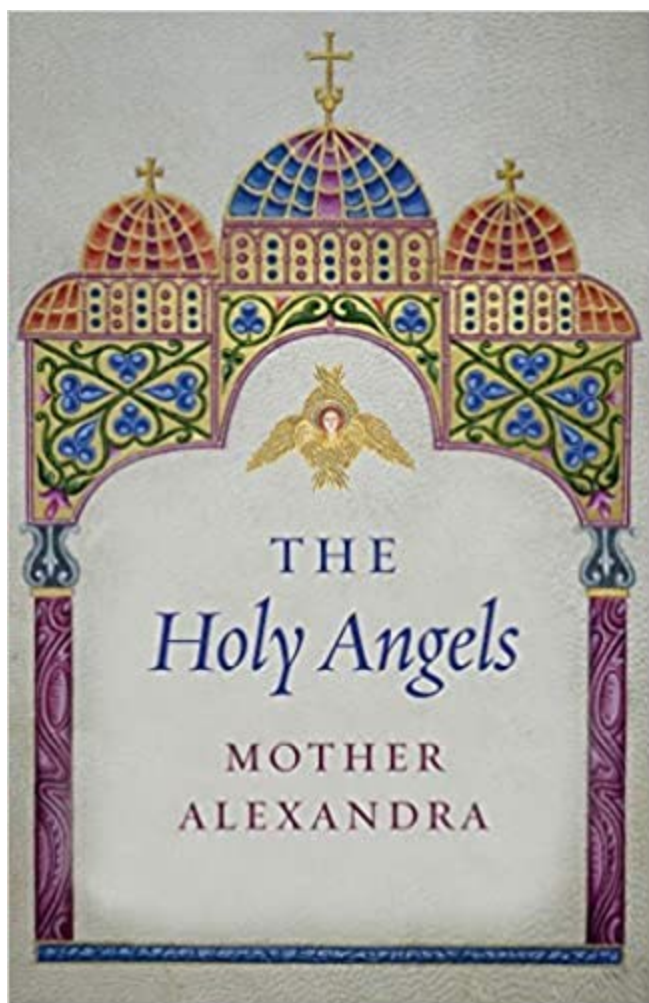
*Let us Be Attentive: Reflections on the Sunday and Feastday Scripture Readings of the Orthodox Church*



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

## **“The Holy Angels”**

by Mother Alexandra (Princess Ileana of Romania)



**M**other Alexandra, before she passed away, wrote a fascinating book about Angels. She writes about the Angels in the Old Testament (e.g., in Genesis, the Prophets, etc.); the Angels in the New Testament (e.g., Archangel Gabriel at the Annunciation, the Angels at Bethlehem and the Temptation, and the Angels in the young church, the epistles and the Book of Revelation); as well as the Angels in the Christian Church (i.e., the early Christian Fathers, the Age of Orthodox Theology, in the Holy Liturgies and Prayers, and in Christian Art).

Mother Alexandra (Princess Ileana of Romania) survived both World Wars, married and had six children, escaped Communism and settled in Massachusetts before she fulfilled her great desire to devote her life entirely to God and become a nun. She founded the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania. She served as abbess and is buried there after a long life dedicated to God (1909-1991).

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

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

# March 2021 Sunday School Update



On behalf of our Sunday School we pray that you will have a meaningful Lenten journey, starting March 15. The Sunday School will start off right by having a Pre-Lenten Retreat on March 14.

**IN PERSON SUNDAY SCHOOL IS BACK!!** It is truly a joy to see our students again and get back into a routine. Our teachers pray that you will come back to Sunday School soon. You will need to sign up for The Sunday Liturgy/Sunday School online. Students and teachers will wear masks at all times. We will continue to offer a **VIRTUAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON** every week for those families who are not ready to attend church in person. Thank you Jenivieve Elly for creating these virtual lessons every Sunday.

February has been a busy month for our Sunday School students. Our topics for February were: The Sacramental Life of the Orthodox Church, The Hymns of the Orthodox, The 10 Commandments - The 2 Greatest Commandments, The Publican and Pharisee, and The Prodigal Son.

Our Hope and Joy sponsored **SOUPER BOWL of CARING** was a huge success on Feb. 6 and 7. Thank you to Zackie Ameres and our students who helped with this fundraiser for Hope's Children's home. More than \$600 was collected. The BUC'S Won the Super Bowl and this fundraiser.

## Sunday School Calendar

We will continue to offer our programs online.

**IMPORTANT UPDATE:** We will offer **IN PERSON SESSIONS ON SUNDAYS** with the hopes, based on participation, that we will offer more and more opportunities for in-person lessons. Lessons will be on the solea in the church right after the Divine Liturgy which starts at 10 a.m. every Sunday. As the group gets larger we will split the groups with one class in the church and another in the hall with the hopes we can meet with all groups weekly once again. Please contact us with any questions or concerns.

**Sunday, March 7**

Last Judgment - Confession

**Sunday, March 14**

Forgiveness Sunday - Pre-Lenten Retreat

**Sunday, March 21**

Sunday of Orthodoxy/Icons

**Sunday, March 28**

Being a Good Friend - Sunday of Paralytic



# Community Outreach

## Saturday, March 20

### We Want You to Serve with Us!

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

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

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

**Time:** 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

**Volunteer Check-In Process:**

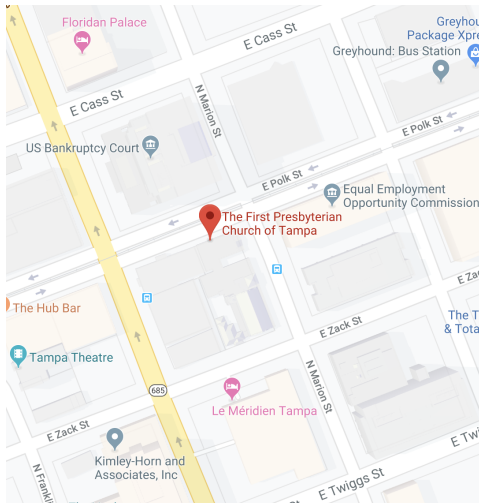
- 1) Sign in and choose the job you want on the Duty Sheet
- 2) Prepare and wear your name tag
- 3) Don't be shy...if not sure where to go or what to do to get started, ask someone who looks like they know what they're doing.
- 4) Set up and Preparation 8-9 a.m., Serving 9-10:15 a.m., Cleanup 10:15-10:30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

**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.



Scan with your  
Smartphone to

Sign-Up Today



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>

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).



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

MEETING DATE AND TIME: We will meet on Saturday, March 6. We encourage everyone to attend the Divine Liturgy from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and then we will have our meeting afterwards.

We will also meet on Saturday, April 3.

## Please look for an announcement.

LOCATION: St John Greek Church in the **Kourmolis Hall** and we will also be on a **ZOOM Video Conference for those whom cannot attend.**

## **Everyone is welcome.**

We welcome people of all ages to join our email list as a member or a friend of YAH.

We welcomed Fr. John and Presbyteria Denise to our church and as members of the Young-At-Heart.

**CHURCHES THAT TOUCHED OUR LIVES Program.** List the Churches where we: 1) Grew up, 2) Married in, 3) Raised Children, 4) Moved to, 5) Vacationed and 6) visited. In addition, we asked people to share any blessing or miracles that had occurred. It has been indeed a moving experience.

Totals include:

- 45 Churches in Florida
- 60 Churches in the USA
- 23 Churches in Greece & Cyprus
- 19 Churches around the World

--

- 147 Total Churches

For more information,  
contact Michael Trimis, President,  
813-784-4872 (vm/t)  
TrimisM@gmail.com

Mary Nenos, Vice President  
813-508-5553  
MaryNenos@gmail.com

- We encourage people who have not, to present their list in the coming months.
- We continue to reach out to those who are homebound during the pandemic.
- We will continue with the theme how the "CHURCHES THAT TOUCHED OUR LIVES"
- We continue to learn more about our Church Family from the Churches and we attended during our lives.

## **OUR COMING EVENTS**

- We will having our next YAH meetings to on **Saturday, March 6 & April 3** at 11:30 AM
- We will have our socially distant **IN PERSON** YAH meeting **with masks** in the Church Hall and continue to use **Zoom** for those who cannot attend our meeting.
- For those whom had not spoken, we encourage you to bring your thoughts and blessing on how "CHURCHES TOUCHED YOUR LIVES."
- We are also planning on visiting our neighboring new Greek Churches in Clearwater and Palm Harbor.

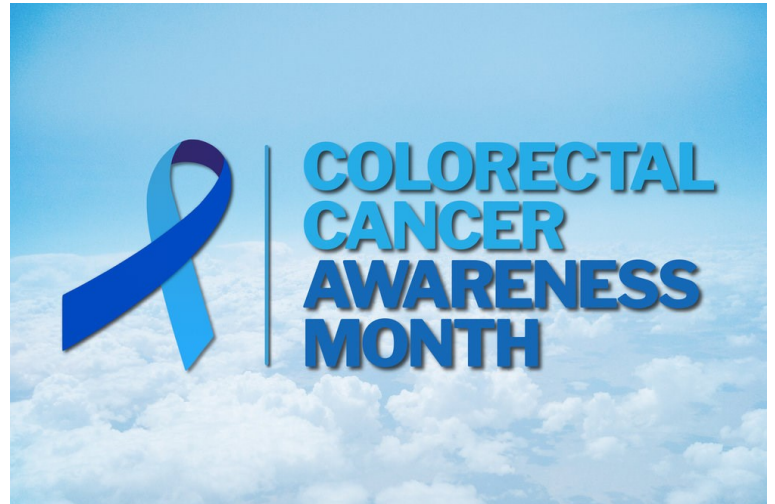
## **PASSED ACTIVITIES**

- February 6, 2021 - We welcomed Fr. John & Pres. Denise with the CHURCHES THAT TOUCHED THEIR LIVES
- January 9, 2021 - We held a socially distant IN PERSON and Zoom meeting in the Kourmolis Center.
- December 5, 2020 - We held a socially distant IN PERSON and Zoom meeting in the Kourmolis Center
- November 7, 2020 - We held a socially distant IN PERSON and Zoom meeting in the Kourmolis Center.
- Aug. 5, Sept. 3 & Oct. 1, 2020 Our discussions were on the CHURCHES THAT TOUCHED OUR LIVES.
- July 2, 2020 - Revisited 60 years ago in the years 1960 to 1969
- March 5, 2020 - Visited St Michael Greek Orthodox Shrine in Tarpon Springs
- January 2, 2020 - Lunch at the new Psomi Bakery and Restaurant
- December 7, 2019 - Trip to the Show Palace Dinner Theatre featuring Elf the Musical
- October 5, 2019 - Ybor City Museum State Park and lunch at the Soup Stone Grill

# March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

In 1999, the Prevent Cancer Foundation® led the charge to designate March as National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. The focus of Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month is to educate the screening options available to prevent or detect cancer early and share ways you can reduce your colorectal cancer risk, like exercising regularly, avoiding tobacco products and eating a healthy diet. A diet packed with fruits and vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains is crucial for your colon's health. While more research is being done to determine how certain foods may lower your risk for colorectal cancer, these tips can put you on the path to prevention.

- **Eat foods high in omega-3 fatty acids.** Fresh fish (like tuna and salmon), nuts, flax seeds, spinach and vegetable oils contain healthy fats, which reduce inflammation and may lower your risk for cancer
- **Fill your plate with fruits, vegetables and whole grains.** Focus your diet on these foods and limit your intake of red and processed meats (like bacon and hot dogs), which can increase your risk of colorectal cancer. Obesity is linked to an increase in risk for colorectal cancer, but a diet filled with fruits, vegetables and whole grains can help you maintain a healthy weight.
- **Eat lots of fiber.** A diet high in fiber may reduce your risk of colorectal cancer. You should get at least 30 grams of fiber every day from about five servings of fruits and vegetables and three small servings of whole grains. Barley, oatmeal, lentils, raspberries and broccoli are just some of the foods that contain healthy doses of fiber.
- **Get your recommended daily intake of calcium and vitamin D.** Some studies show that calcium and vitamin D may lower your risk of colorectal cancer. Low-fat dairy products, such as milk, yogurt and cheese, or



vegetables like kale and broccoli, are great sources of calcium. Vitamin D is not found naturally in many foods, but fish, such as salmon and tuna, do provide some. Foods fortified with vitamin D include milk, certain breakfast cereals and orange juice.

In addition to following a healthy diet, American Cancer Society recently released new recommendations for colorectal cancer screening, saying people of average risk of colorectal cancer should begin regular screening at age 45 (previous recommendations said to begin at age 50). Colorectal screening can detect pre-cancerous polyps or cancer in an early stage, when treatment is most successful. Talk to your health care professional about your options. As is the case with many other diseases, avoiding tobacco, exercising and limiting your alcohol intake can decrease your risk. For more information, <https://www.preventcancer.org/tag/national-colorectal-cancer-awareness-month>.

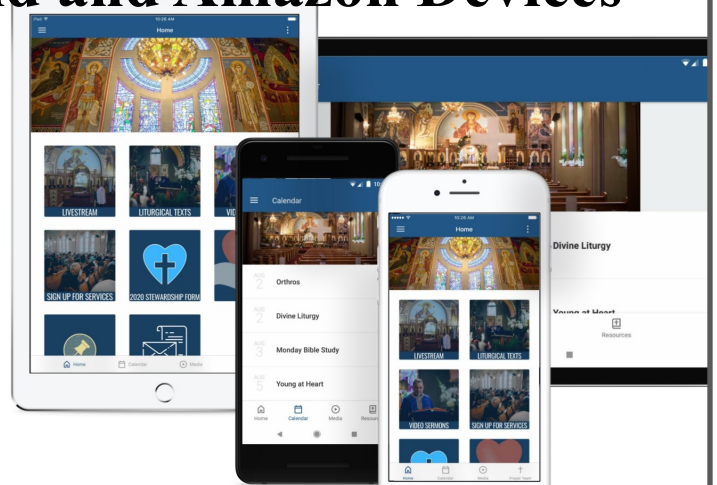
## Download Our Church App Today

### Available on Apple, Android and Amazon Devices



St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

DOWNLOAD NOW



# Philoptochos 2021 Membership Drive

## We are on the MOVE for a Great New Year!

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

Membership Drive: January thru April, Suggested Stewardship is \$35.00. However, we accept whatever you have in your heart to give.

Your donation makes you a member of the National, The Metropolis and our Local Chapters of Philoptochos. **Members 80 years of age or older are honorary members - NO DUES NECESSARY.**

**THANK YOU SO MUCH AND HAVE A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR 2021**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell \_\_\_\_\_

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

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

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

**To aid the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the aged, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widowed, the handicapped, the victims of disasters, to undertake the burial of impoverished persons and to offer assistance to anyone who may need the help of the Church through fund raising efforts; and**

**To promote the charitable, benevolent, and philanthropic purposes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, through instructional programs, presentations, lectures, seminars and other educational resources;**

**To preserve and perpetuate Orthodox Christian concepts and the Orthodox Christian Family, and through them, to promote the Greek Orthodox Faith and traditions, in accordance with its doctrines, canons, discipline, divine worship, usages and customs;**

**To promote participation in the activities of the Greek Orthodox community, with the cooperation of the Parish Priest and the Parish Council.**

Please return from to: Katherine Sakkis, C/O Philoptochos 2418 W. Swann Ave Tampa, FL



# Prayers of Protection from the Coronavirus

[www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org)

## **A Prayer To Be Offered in the Morning**

Lord our God, You who are rich in mercy, and with careful wisdom direct our lives, listen to our prayer, receive our repentance for our sins, bring an end to this new infectious disease, this new epidemic, just as you averted the punishment of your people in the time of David the King. You who are the Physician of our souls and bodies, grant restored health to those who have been seized by this illness, raising them from their bed of suffering, so that they might glorify You, O merciful Savior, and preserve in health those who have not been infected. By your grace, Lord, bless, strengthen, and preserve, all those who out of love and sacrifice care for the sick, either in their homes or in the hospitals. Remove all sickness and suffering from your people, and teach us to value life and health as gifts from You. Give us Your peace, O God, and fill our hearts with unflinching faith in Your protection, hope in Your help, and love for You and our neighbor. For Yours it is to have mercy on us and save us, O our God, and to You we ascribe glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever, to the ages of ages. Amen.

## **A Prayer To Be Offered in the Evening**

Lord Jesus Christ our God, You traveled through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” At Your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of this virus, that we may experience Your healing love. Heal those O Lord who are suffering with this pandemic's illness. May they regain their strength and health through medical care. Heal us from our fears, which prevent nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another. Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders. Lord Jesus Christ, healer of all and physician of our souls and bodies, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow. Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with You in Your eternal peace. Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know Your peace. Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know Your protection and peace. Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to choose long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks. May they know Your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth. Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Lord Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us your peace. For You are the Physician of our souls and bodies Christ our God and to You do we offer glory, thanksgiving and worship together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

## **Another Prayer, To Be Offered At Any Time**

O Holy Father, God of unknown, uncreated depth, You are beyond all description and expectation. You are the Creator of all worlds, physical and metaphysical. As You are only love, in love You created everything that truly is. Through Your Son, everything has form and purpose, and through Your Spirit, everything lives and moves back toward You. O Father, we are troubled by this scourge that is infecting Your people around the world. From the ancient Fall away from You, there are many consequences that we cannot begin to understand. As traces of this pestilence are being studied in labs, we shiver at its demonic malevolence for destruction, especially of the frail and the elderly. Our hearts are open to You, loving Father; we come to You as children, meek and lowly. We beg You to help the doctors who work to find a cure. We beg You to help our leaders to put away childish things, to forget political advantage, and to be good stewards of their people. We beg You to help us to be wise ourselves and to care for human life in the least of those around us. We cry out to You as One Who did not send this plague. We cry out to You as One Who only heals and redeems. You did not send this, but we know You can destroy it. So Father, cease this plague, and turn it back to the abyss from which it came. Heal Your people, the humanity of this earth, cleanse us and strengthen us toward You. We are weak, but You are strong, and in our weakness Your strength is revealed. Help us, we beg You, in the Name of Your Son, the Great Physician, Who, together with You and our Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Are due all glory and honor, to the ages of ages. Amen.

## Beware of Emails or Text Messages Asking for Gift Cards

This is a common and very scary thing that is happening. People who are impersonating as Fr. Stavros have been emailing people and asking them to buy gift cards, scratch off the back to reveal the code, take pictures of the code and email them the pictures. Fr. Stavros would never under any circumstances ask for a gift card via email. If you receive an email like this, please call Fr. Stavros, Charlie, or Alex immediately. Many people these days are falling victim to scams like these. Please double check and even triple check any emails or phone calls that ask for money even if it looks real. Any questions? Please contact the office.

**Opt-in on *The Messenger*** - In an effort to be more environmentally conscious, we will be mailing *The Messenger* **ONLY** to those who ask. If you wish to receive *The Messenger* by mail, you certainly may. We just ask that you indicate on your stewardship form, or let the office know, that you wish to receive *The Messenger* by mail. We will no longer be mailing *The Messenger* unless you ask us to.

**Have questions?**

**Just need to talk?**

**Worried? Sad? Happy?**

**We are here for you.**

**Fr. Stavros**

**813-394-1038**

**Fr. John**

**678-637-4425**

**Charlie**

**813-843-8471**

**Alex**

**262-370-0586**

# Happy Birthday!

Santino Bavaro - March 1  
Suzanne Pileggi - March 1  
Julia Blankenbaker - March 2  
Dean Makris - March 2  
Euripides Panos - March 2  
Juliana Stingulescu - March 3  
Lydia Berar - March 4  
Gary Speegle - March 5  
Genie Carter - March 6  
Makis Crassas - March 6  
Mark Hartung - March 6  
Isabella Lappas - March 6  
Katerina Sotiropoulos - March 6  
Maria Apockotos - March 8  
Jonathan Brannan - March 8  
Timothy Clements - March 10  
Helen Bennett Reader - March 10  
Theodore Edquid - March 12  
Anthony Fotopoulos - March 12  
Aristotle Kyrus - March 12  
Katerina Soteriou - March 13  
Evangeline Carreon - March 14  
Aspasia Panos - March 14  
Marcelle Triantafilou - March 14

John Mekras - March 15  
Stacie Milonas - March 16  
Christos Nicolaou - March 16  
Christina Diniaco - March 17  
Alex Peckham - March 19  
Amelia Hampton - March 21  
Lucia Anderson - March 22  
Steven Skijus - March 22  
Olivia Pliego - March 23  
Xander Halikoytakias - March 24  
Mary Ann Konstas - March 24  
Alexandria Stilian - March 24  
Pauline Hunter - March 25  
Arianna Isabella Quinn - March 25  
Lorelei Elly - March 26  
Maria Palios - March 26  
Theodore Kafantaris - March 27  
Matthew Robinson - March 27  
Nikolas DeJesus - March 30

If we missed someone or if we need to know about a birthday, please call or email the office to let us know at [office@stjohntpa.org](mailto:office@stjohntpa.org).

**Please do your best to support local businesses in general, and of our parishioners in particular.**

***Below, please find a list of small business owned and/or operated by our parishioners.***

**ABC PIZZA**

(Owned by Anthony and Carole Fotopoulos)  
1242 WEST HILLSBOROUGH AVE. TAMPA  
(813) 237-3324 Take Out Only

**Accustar Accounting Inc.**

Fran Prokos, Founder and CEO  
Tax Preparation, Business and Personal  
Accounting, CFO services, Business Consulting, Business Start Ups.  
Working from Home Office during Covid 19  
Direct: 727-510-7378  
Office: 813-886-4644  
Fax: 813-888-8097  
AccustarTax@gmail.com/AccustarTax@aol.com

**AlexRoyEvents Music Entertainment.**

Email alexroyevents@gmail.com  
Ph. 813-455-2461 Website:www.djalexroy.com  
Facebook: Alexandros Roy  
Instagram : @djalexroy  
Live Streams on Facebook and Instagram daily.

**Bavaros**

514 N Franklin St Downtown Tampa  
813-868-4440 Bavarospizza.com  
Tues-Sat 11-9pm  
We offer Uber and Bitesquad for delivery and curbside pickup with call ahead ordering/payment.

**Bradenton Flower Shop**

(Owned by Maria Geis)  
5262 East St Rd 64  
Bradenton FL, 34208  
941-727-4111 www.bradentonflowershop.com  
bradentonflowers@gmail.com  
We are taking online and phone orders for curb side pickup and no contact delivery.

**Peggy Bradshaw**

<https://peggybradshaw.floify.com/>  
(727) 244-1374  
Branch Manager of Van Dyk Mortgage South Tampa  
3502 Henderson Blvd. Tampa, FL

**George S. Chagaris, CPA, P.A.**

2901 W. Busch Blvd., Ste. 405  
Tampa, FL 33618-4582  
(p): (813) 282-1990 e-mail: GChagarisCPA@aol.com

**Homeschool Educational Resources & Usborne Books Consultant**

Jenivieve Elly Jenivieve@homeschooleducationalresources.com  
<https://www.homeschooleducationalresources.com/>  
<https://n10680.myubam.com/1753738>  
My homeschool advocacy website provides encouragement, materials, free lessons plans, and research to empower current and potential homeschooling families.

**John Demas - Classical Guitarist - Greek Bouzouki**

813.240.5199  
<https://sites.google.com/site/livemusicintampa/>  
Instagram:<https://www.instagram.com/john.demas.music/>  
<https://sites.google.com/site/johndemastheomegaproject/>

**EVOS South Tampa**

For other locations near you visit evos.com  
Open 7 days for lunch and dinner  
Order Delivery: UberEats-EVOS or evos.com  
Order Takeout: EVOS/Toast app or evos.com  
Text/email an EVOS gift card: EVOS eGift Cards  
EVOS is locally owned and operated by the Crassas family.

**Alexandra Fitos**

Weichert Yates and Associates  
Cell phone 813-943-6464  
I am a realtor specializing in residential and commercial sales in Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco counties. I am currently working remotely Via virtual consulting and appointments.

**JoAnn Hartung**

Realtor with Fazzini Group at REMAX Realtec  
Residential agent specializing in Pinellas County  
727-432-0228

**Markissia Toulitos Portraits and Other Fine Art**

www.markissia.com  
markissiat@gmail.com  
727-560-8161

I am a freelance artist working from home in my own studio. I specialize in corporate and private original oil painted portraits. I do art restoration as well. I work from photographs that can be emailed to me.

**Katherine Phillips**

Licensed Insurance Agent, Health Markets Insurance Agency  
Health, Life, Medicare, Employer, Dental/Vision Insurance  
208-870-4732  
kphillips@healthmarkets.com  
Healthmarkets.com/kphillips

**Qvita Health and Wellness**

Primary Care and Cosmetic Services  
Peggy Demetriou, FNP, APRN-BC  
2734 Windguard Circle, suite 101  
Wesley Chapel, FL 33544  
813-501-4130 www.qvitahealthandwellness.com

**Retina Vitreous Associates of Florida**

(Dr. Karina Findlay)  
multiple offices throughout Tampa Bay  
retinavitreous.com  
(813) 987-2000  
Open 8:00-5:00 M-F with on call physicians nights and week-ends Retinal care and urgent ocular needs

**Robinson Essentials -Young Living Essential Oils**

text: 813-278-7450  
www.TanyaRobinsonEssentials.com  
Products for immune support, emotional support, and various other things

**The Sakkis Group / KW Tampa Properties**

Full service real estate with over 30 years experience  
813-309-1073 ksakkis@sakkisgroup.com sakkisgroup.kw.com/

**South Tampa Sugar Mama**

Home baking business owned by Maria Xenick.  
Custom homemade, hand-decorated cookies for holidays and special events. I operate under the Cottage Food Law of Florida, and during this time, I am also offering free delivery for contactless transactions.  
maria@southatmpasugarmama.com  
<https://www.facebook.com/southtampasugarmama/>

**True Life Wealth Management (Owned by Alex Skijus)**

www.TrueLifeWealthManagement.com  
We are a financial services business that specializes in reducing unnecessary taxes for individuals and business owners for their retirement.

**Zomesa, LLC**

John P. Zelatis  
Accounting, Bookkeeping, Payroll, Taxes Back Office Support  
15459 Martinmeadow Drive. Lithia, FL 33547  
P: (813) 654-5144 F: (813) 433-2516 C:(813) 727-2271  
jzelatis@zomesa.com www.zomesa.com



# Take Advantage of the Parish Assistance Program

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is excited to share that, beginning May 1st, we will be offering a Parish Assistance Program, PAP, with BayCare Behavioral Health. The PAP program will provide our parishioners access to free and confidential counseling services - offering additional support when life's challenges become overwhelming. The PAP utilizes a network of faith-based providers and are sensitive to the values and beliefs of those they serve and provide compassionate care to children, adults, parents, and seniors.

Parishioners can contact BayCare to request up to three free and confidential counseling sessions from a licensed mental health professional. The BayCare helpline, 800-878-5470, is answered 24/7 by mental health professionals. Many BayCare therapists are also offering telephonic and virtual counseling sessions to help parishioners maintain their emotional wellbeing during these trying times.

Through BayCare Behavioral Health, parishes enrolled in this program allow access to services for their parishioners who are suffering from emotional turmoil that results from the challenges of everyday life which span a lifetime. The BayCare network of providers understand the importance of compassionate care and are sensitive to the values and beliefs of those they serve.

You can get more information on the BayCare Behavioral Health Community Services Program on their website at: <https://baycare.org/services/behavioral-health/our-specialties/community-health-services>

## **Help is available for life issues including:**

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Family discord
- Marital problems
- Substance abuse issues
- Behavioral issues



**BayCare**  
**Behavioral Health**

# 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

Bessie Bliziotis - Palm Cost, FL

Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL

Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL

William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL

Lillan Thomas - Highland, IN

Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL

Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD

Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA

Nicholas & Vaso Anton - Dunedin, FL

Kay Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA

Katherine Beasley - Vero Beach, FL

Artemis & Eric Mellen - Longwood, FL

Charles Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA

Pete & Carol Caldwell - Ringgold, GA

Judith Jogerst

Ms. Nadine Raheb

Victor & Cynthia Cucuz - Tampa, FL

Nicholas & Doris Andreadakis - Lititz, PA

Christopher & Georgette Tsavoussis - Dunedin, FL

Ron & Maria Gregory

John & Deanna Palmer - Greenville, SC

Emmanuel Chrysakis - Palm Harbor, FL

Tommy Koulouris - Tampa, FL

Rev. Fr. Michael Massouh - Seminole, FL

John & Deanna Palmer - Greenville, SC

Luke & Arianna Quinn - Arlington, MA

Sharon Kust - Tallahassee, FL

Demet Anagnostidis - Bethesda, MD

Evangelos & Helen Liras - Tampa, FL

Gaby & Alicia Atik - Treasure Island, FL

Michael Ibrahim - E. Brunswick, NJ

Rev. Fr. Stratton & Pres. Denise Dorzenski

Nicholas Chronis - Mt. Pleasant, SC

**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.**



# Community Life

Although we don't seem to be as together as we are used to, our community continues to share time with one another and give to others. Our Men's Group came together to make over 400 16 oz. containers of fresh lentil soup. See a full list of ingredients a few pages ago. Our GOYA for a part of our monthly meeting went outside for some time around a fire and made some s'mores.





# Inspirational Sayings

Those who leave everything in God's hand eventually see God's hand in everything.

Relationships don't last because of the good times. They last because the hard times were handled with love and care. ~Anmol Andore

The giant in front of you is never bigger than the God inside of you.

The greatest test of faith is when you don't get what you want, but still you are able to say, "Thank You, Lord."

Satan tries to limit your praying because he knows that your praying will limit him.

I have never seen anyone corrected through anger, but always through love. ~Elder Joseph the Hesychast

God can save the sinner you are, but not the saint you pretend to be. ~Anthony Bloom

Man's laws cannot make moral what God has declared immoral. Even if a sin is legalized, it's still a sin in the eyes of God. ~Anonymous

Food is not evil, but gluttony is. Childbearing is not evil, but fornication is. Money is not evil, but avarice is. Glory is not evil, but vainglory is. Indeed, there is no evil in existing things, but only in their misuse. ~St. Maximus the Confessor

Practice what you preach or change your speech.

We are very good lawyers for our own mistake, but very good judges for the mistakes of others.

In a society that has you counting money, pounds, calories and steps, be a rebel and count your blessings.

Making time for someone is a big compliment. It's one of the best ways to show you want them.

Caregivers go through more than they will ever tell you. They give up a lot and rarely have a social life. They can get sick and emotionally worn out. It's a lot for one person and you will never know until you have walked the road of a caregiver.

If you go to the southwest desert and catch 100 red fire ants as well as 100 large black ants and put them in a jar, at first, nothing will happen. However, if you violently shake the jar and dump them back on the ground the ants will fight until they eventually kill each other. The thing is, the red ants think the black ants are the enemy and vice versa, when in reality, the real enemy is the person who shook the jar. This is what's happening in our society today: Liberal versus conservative, Black versus White, pro mask versus anti mask. The real question we need to be asking ourselves is who's shaking the jar and why?

## On the Lighter Side

### Ma, I'm going out

In English "See you!"

In French "Au Revoir!"

In Spanish "Adios!"

In England "Bye!"

In Greek "out? Where? With who? Why Who'll drop you? When will you come? Every day out. . Is this a house or a hotel?

How much money will you spend? No time for parents, only going out. When I die, then you'll know.

### His and Hers Diaries

Her diary: Tonight I thought my husband was acting weird. We had made plans to meet a nice restaurant for dinner. I was shopping with my girlfriends all day long, so I thought he was upset with me for coming home a bit late, but he made no comment. With zero conversation flowing, I suggested that we go someplace quiet so we could talk. He agreed, but didn't say much. On the drive out I asked him what was wrong. He said "nothing." I asked him if it was my fault that he was upset. He said he wasn't upset, it had nothing to do with me, and not to worry about it. On the drive home I told him that I loved him. He just smiled slightly and just kept on driving. I can't explain his behavior and don't know why he didn't just say "I love you too." When we got home, I felt as if I had lost him completely, as if he just wanted nothing to do with me anymore. For the next hour, he just sat silently on the couch and stared at the TV. Finally, with silence all around, I decided to go to bed. About 15 minutes later he came to bed, but I still thought he was distracted and his thoughts were somewhere else. He quickly fell asleep—I cried. I don't know what to do. My life is a mess.

His diary: Boat won't start. . .can't figure out why.

So much of being an adult is not clicking the "send" button.

Me: "I'm still tired from all the crossfit this morning."

My co-worker: "It's pronounced 'Croissant' and you ate four of them."

People ask me: "Do I need the Holy Spirit to go to heaven?" Bruh, you need the Holy Spirit to go to Wal-Mart.

# Forgiveness

by Max Lucado (taken from *Just Like Jesus* by Max Lucado)

Our Savior kneels down and gazes upon the darkest acts of our lives. But rather than recoil in horror, He reaches out in kindness and says, "I can clean that if you want." And from the basin of His grace, He scoops a palm full of mercy and washes away our sin.

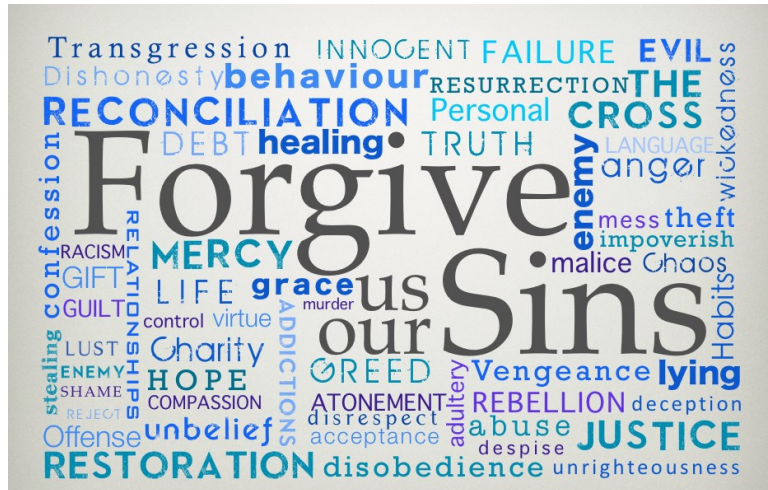
But that's not all He does. Because He lives in us, you and I can do the same. Because He has forgiven us, we can forgive others. Because He has a forgiving heart, we can have a forgiving heart. We can have a heart like His.

"If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash each other's feet. I did this as an example so that you should do as I have done for you." (John 13: 14-15 NCV)

Jesus washes our feet for two reasons. The first is to give us mercy; the second is to give us a message, and that message is simply this: Jesus offers unconditional grace; we are to offer unconditional grace. The mercy of Christ preceded our mistakes; our mercy must precede the mistakes of others. Those in the circle of Christ had no doubt of His love; those in our circles should have no doubts about ours.

What does it mean to have a heart like His? It means to kneel as Jesus knelt, touching the grimy parts of the people we are stuck with and washing away their unkindness with kindness. Or as Paul wrote, "Be kind and loving to each other, and forgive each other just as God forgave you in Christ." (Ephesians 4:32 NCV)

But, Max, "You are saying, 'I've done nothing wrong. I'm not the one who cheated. I'm not the one who lied. I'm not the guilty party here.'" Perhaps you aren't. But neither was Jesus.



Of all the men in that room, only one was worthy of having His feet washed. And He was the one who washed the feet. The one worthy of being served, served others. The genius of Jesus' example is that the burden of bridge-building falls on the strong one, not the weak one. The one who is innocent is the one who makes the gesture.

And you know what happens? More often than not, if the one in the right volunteers to wash the feet of the one in the wrong, both parties get on their knees. Don't we all think we are right? Hence we wash each other's feet.

Please understand. *Relationships don't thrive because the guilty are punished but because the innocent are merciful.*

## Χρόνια Πολλά! Happy Nameday!

**March 1**  
EVDOKIA, HARISIOS, PARASHOS,  
PARASKEVAS

**March 2**  
EFTHALIA, TROADIOS

**March 3**  
KLEONIKOS

**March 4**  
GERASIMOS

**March 5**  
ARHELAOS, EVLOGIOS, KONON

**March 6**  
ISYHIOS

**March 7**  
EVGENIOS

**March 8**  
HERMES, THEOFYLAKTOS

**March 9**  
AETIOS, ELIANA, FILOKTIMON, ILIANA,  
LYSIMAHOS, SARANTOS, SEVIRIANOS,  
SMARAGDA, SMARAGDOS, VIVIANOS,  
XANTHOS

**March 11**  
SAVINA, SOFRONIOS, THALIS, THEODORA

**March 12**  
FANI, THEOFANIS

**March 13**  
LEANDROS, MARIOS

**March 14**  
BENEDICT, EFRASIOS, MATHILDE

**March 15**  
AGAPIOS

**March 16**  
CHRISTODOULOS, IOULIANOS

**March 17**  
ALEXIOS, GERTRUDE, LAZARUS, PATRICK

**March 18**  
EDWARD

**March 19**  
CHRYSANTHIS, DAREIA, HRYSANTHOS,  
CLAUDIA

**March 20**  
RODI, RODIANOS

**March 21**  
AXIA, LOXANTRA, ORTHODOXIA,  
ROXANNE

**March 22**  
DROSOS, DROSOULA

**March 23**  
Lydia

**March 25**  
ETHNEGERSIA, EVAGGELOS

**March 26**  
POULIOS, SYLAS

**March 27**  
FILITAS, LEEDA, LIDIA, MATRONA, G  
REGORY, SOSTHENES

**March 28**  
GREGORY

**March 30**  
SOSTHENES, JOHN

**March 31**  
YPATIS

# My One Word for 2021: Gratitude

*Every month, we ask someone to submit a reflection on their "Word for 2020." 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 Oliver (Elias) Filutowski.*

**G**ratitude is the security of blessings given and the seed for blessings to come. This is why it is so necessary in these tumultuous and trying times **and so important for it to characterize this entire year.** To allow the source of our gratitude to be determined by the transient things of this life (health, wealth, employment, etc) is to condemn it to the same fleeting fate: here one moment and gone the next. This is also a sobering reminder of our own short time in this present life and the necessary preparation for the Life to come. But when we allow the source of our gratitude to be rooted in the eternal truth that "God so loved the world that

He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," so too will our joy and thanksgiving never end.

So let us rejoice, my brothers and sisters, in both the greeting, "Christ is in our midst!" and in the response, "He is and ever shall be!" By allowing the reality of God's intimate presence in our lives to settle within our hearts, we are transfigured by gratitude, and thus, every sorrow, trial or temptation we may encounter becomes an occasion for joy and ultimately a means for our salvation. **Through God's grace and our participation in the blessings He offers us within His Holy Church, may unceasing gratitude become a reality in each of our lives this year and always.**

*Oliver is a USF ophthalmology resident, and helps out in the altar at many of our services.*

## Salutations Services to the Virgin Mary

**E**very Friday at 6:30 p.m. during Lent we will conduct the beautiful salutations services to the Virgin Mary. The service is a sublime piece of poetry and hymnology sometimes referred to as the Akathistos Hymn. It is composed of twenty four stanzas each beginning with the letter of the Greek Alphabet. The composer of this hymn is believed to be Romanos the Melodist who wrote this service in honor of the Annunciation taken from the Gospel of Luke 1:26-56; St. Matthew 1:18-25, 2:1-23.

Among other things, we call the Virgin Mary the "bridge" between earth and heaven. Imagine that you want to cross a river from one side to another. You are on the one side, Paradise is on the other side. In order to get from one side to the other, you need to use a bridge. In order for God to become incarnate as a human being, He needed a mother by which to come into the world. That is the Virgin Mary. She is not our Savior. She is also not going to make the journey to salvation for us, or on behalf. She helped provide the means for Christ to save us. The gateway is now open to Paradise. It is our choice to journey to Paradise.



The Virgin Mary is our intercessor, our cheerleader, in front of the Lord. She is our mother and advocate. Thus we continually ask for her prayers, both to intercede to Christ for us, but also that she may pray for us, to be strengthened in our journey to salvation.

*(Taken from the website of St. Paul Greek Orthodox Church-Irvine, California)*

## The Meaning of Kyrie Eleison

By Fr. Anthony Coniaris (1926-2020)

"The word mercy in English is the translation of the Greek word 'eleos.' This word has the same ultimate root as the old Greek word for oil, or more precisely, olive oil; a substance which was used extensively as a soothing agent for bruises and minor wounds. The oil was poured onto the wound and gently massaged in, thus soothing, comforting and making whole the injured part. The Hebrew word which is also translated as eleos and mercy is hesed, and means steadfast love. The Greek words for 'Lord, have mercy,' are 'Kyrie, eleison' - that is to say, 'Lord, soothe me, comfort me, take away my pain, show me your steadfast love.' Thus mercy does not refer so much to justice or acquittal - a very Western interpretation - but to the infinite loving-kindness of God, and his compassion for his suffering children! It is in this sense that we pray 'Lord, have mercy,' with great frequency throughout the Divine Liturgy."



# 15 Superhuman Benefits of Fasting

By Benjamin Hardy

**Y**ou know the drug in the movie *Limitless*? Fasting is the natural, healthy, and sustainable version of that.

## 1. SUPERHUMAN WILLPOWER

Fasting, by its very nature, is the putting-off of the physical in order to tap into higher realms of meaning.

Destructive addictions and other sabotaging behaviors are the opposite of willpower. And they slowly but surely ruin your life.

Every decision you make is important. If you justify poor decisions from time-to-time, you're stunting the development of quality habits. More accurately, consistent poor behavior is in actuality the reflection of bad habits.

And bad habits are a fast-track to a crappy life — the root of which is a lack of self-control.

If you can't control even yourself, what can you control?

But while you're fasting, you are consciously choosing not to eat — even if you feel hungry — for something else. And there's nothing more fundamental to survival than food. Consequently, when you learn to control your own eating, you develop the ability to control less fundamental and often destructive addictions.

Fasting is by far the most sophisticated willpower workout available. If you get good at fasting, you can learn to control every other aspect of your life. If you get good at fasting, you can overcome any addiction, not matter how deeply imbedded. Medically, fasting has been found to rapidly dissipate the craving for nicotine, alcohol, caffeine and other drugs.

## 2. SUPERHUMAN CONFIDENCE

Neuro-chemically, fasting increases levels of catecholamines — such as dopamine — which elevates your happiness and confidence while reducing your anxiety.

But it's simpler than that.

Without self-control, you can't have confidence. Indeed, confidence reflects your view of your own capability. And if you constantly self-sabotage, rather than confidence you'll experience internal-conflict.

Internal-conflict corrodes your willpower. It's exhausting and leaves you constantly on the defensive — both to other people and yourself.

But when you see yourself act in ways you intended on acted, your confidence in yourself increases. You develop greater trust in your own capabilities, and this prompts you to take on bigger goals, risks, and challenges in the future. Eventually, you develop the self-efficacy that allows you to control your destiny and future. Complete power and confidence.

## 3. SUPERHUMAN BRAIN FUNCTIONING

Fasting actually increases your number of brain cells. Here is a short list of some of the scientifically backed cognitive benefits of fasting:

- Short-term fasting induces profound neuronal autophagy (e.g., "self-eating"), which is how cells recycle waste material,

downregulate wasteful processes, and repair themselves. Brain health is dependent on neuronal autophagy. Another study shows that interference of neuronal autophagy prompts neuro-degeneration. Simply put, without the process of autophagy, brains neither develop properly nor function optimally.

- Fasting increases levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein that interacts with neurons in the hippocampus, cortex, and basal forebrain (the parts of the brain that regulate memory, learning, and higher cognitive function — uniquely human stuff). BDNF helps existing neurons survive while stimulating the growth of new neurons and the development of neuro-synaptic connectivity. Low levels of BDNF are linked to Alzheimer's, memory loss, and cognitive impairment.

- Evidence suggests that low BDNF is related to depression. Indeed, antidepressants increase BDNF levels. Thus, many doctors believe fasting can reduce depression.

- Fasting reduces the likelihood of having a stroke.

- Fasting reduces the oxidative stress, mitochondrial dysfunction, and cognitive decline that normally results from brain trauma. Research has found that a 24 hour (but not a 48 hour) fast was neuro-protective against trauma to the brain like a concussion.

- Fasting reduces cognitive stressors that bring about aging, cognitive decline, and chronic diseases.

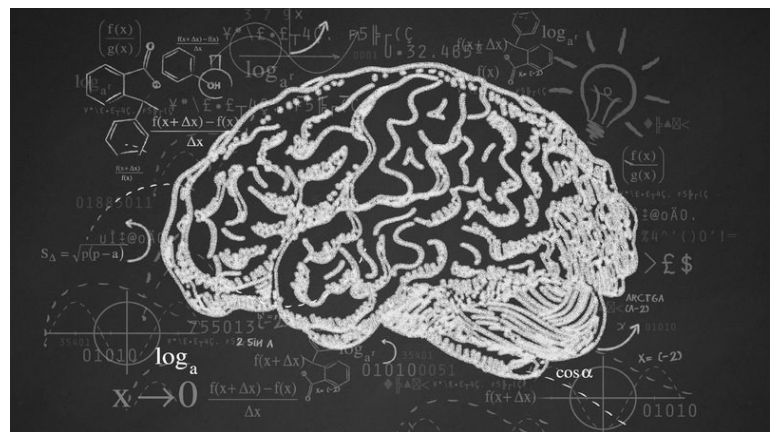
- Fasting reduces your risk of cancer.

- Fasting increases your longevity and lifespan.

- Fasting enhances learning and memory.

- Fasting elevates your ability to focus and concentrate.

If you've fasted before, you can attest to the radical mental benefits of fasting. If you haven't, please start a regular practice of fasting. Over a period of time, you'll be startled by the cognitive results.



## 4. SUPERHUMAN CLARITY & DIRECTION

With the increased clarity and cognitive functioning brought on by fasting, it is easier to analyze your poor habits and make critical decisions about the direction of your life.

When you remove yourself from the noise of addiction — even food addiction temporarily — you clear space for the subtle signal of your guiding truth.

While fasting, you will quickly become aware of the incongruencies in your life. Your poor habits, lack of organization and intention, and misdirected path get put under a cognitive and spiritual microscope.

With increased perspective and willpower, you can use fasting as a vehicle to “let go” of addictions, behaviors, relationships, the past — whatever you want — restart, and move forward. Physically, cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually, fasting is quite literally a reset. It allows your body to catch up on needed digestive functions it generally delays due to our constant eating. But it also helps you reset in other ways.

Fasting can become your trigger to keeping proper perspective on what matters most in your life, and it helps ensure you remain on the path you desire to be on.

## 5. SUPERHUMAN HEALTH



As a society, our brains have been miss-trained about the true nature of hunger, chemically tricking us into feeling hungry every 2–4 hours. But this is actually ludicrous. Naturally, our bodies shouldn't experience hunger for 12–24 hours after eating.

Research has shown that obese individuals do not receive correct signals letting them know they are full due to excessive eating patterns. Their neuro-chemicals and hormones are all out of whack due to improper eating.

As you fast, your body regulates the release the correct hormones, so that you can experience what real hunger is. Further, with the proper flow of hormones, you get full quicker.

Other scientifically backed health benefits of fasting including:

- Fasting can reverse binge eating disorders, and help those who find it difficult to establish a correct eating pattern due to work and other priorities.
- Fasting can clear your skin from acne, allowing you to have a healthy vibrant glow.
- Fasting “reboots” your immune system from free radical damage, regulating inflammatory conditions in the body and killing off cancer cell formation.

· Fasting improves blood pressure levels.

· Fasting improves cholesterol levels.

· Type 2 diabetes has become commonplace in our unhealthy culture. Fasting has been shown to strongly support insulin resistance and lead to an impressive reduction in blood sugar levels.

· Similarly, blood levels of insulin drop significantly, which facilitates fat burning.

· The blood levels of growth hormone may increase as much as 5X. Higher levels of growth hormone assist fat burning and muscle gain, and have numerous other benefits.

Not only will your body functioning improve as you fast, but your decision-making regarding your health and fitness will improve.

## 6. SUPERHUMAN MOTOR SKILLS & PRECISION

Research has found that age-related declines in cognitive and motor abilities (such as physical balance) can be reduced by fasting.

My 93 year old grandfather, Rex, is an incredible example of this. As a Mormon, he has had the regular practice of doing a 24 hour fast, monthly, his entire life. He attributes his longevity and healthy brain and motor functioning in large part to his regular practice of fasting.

It's fun to watch him. In the past five years, he's written three books. He lives with his son (my father) and takes responsibility over mowing the lawn weekly and making sure the yard work is done. He has an amazing daily routine of going to bed at 8 P.M. and waking up at 4:30 A.M. every day. He spends the first 2.5 hours of his day reading or listening to instructional/inspiring content. He eats a bowl of oatmeal at 7 o'clock sharp, then he works until about 2 P.M. every day. He even sets timers every hour to allow him a 10 minute Solitaire break (which is also timed). The second the timer goes off, he gets back to work.

Clockwork.

All those incredible habits and he attributes fasting to be a crucial needle, threading them all together and making them all possible.

## 7. SUPERHUMAN SLEEP

If you travel a lot or have a lackluster sleeping cycle, research has found that a 16-hour fast can reset your sleep cycle. Other research has found that fasting can improve the overall quality of your sleep.

## 8. SUPERHUMAN PRODUCTIVITY

“If you want to get more done in life, eat less food.” — Robin Sharma, best-selling author

Human beings are holistic. When your body is over-full, particularly on processed foods, your energy levels are low and your mind becomes dull. Conversely, research at Yale has found that being on an empty stomach helps you think and focus better.

While you're fasting, if you want to take it to a higher level, chew gum. Research has found that chewing gum can increase your concentration and mental accuracy. It also stops you from eating out of boredom — which is the primary reason for most eating.



In a fasted state, your mind can narrow in on your work. I believe this is because the cognitive and sensual amplification of fasting forces you into the moment. In other words, fasting helps you live in the present. It's powerful and beautiful. High focus and psychological flow are commonplace for me while I fast.

## 9. SUPERHUMAN EMOTIONS

Fasting stabilizes your emotions. This happens by detaching from the emotional dependence on food, in addition to removing over-stimulating foods like caffeine, processed sugars, recreational drugs, tobacco and trans-fatty acids — all of which negatively effect our emotions.

Fasting can also reset your negative emotional patterns. We all get locked-up in weird emotional cycles, and fasting can break us free of them — allowing us to experience the world in a healthier way. It's also important to note that our emotions are heavily influenced by our environments — and fasting allows us to perceive the incongruencies of our life more clearly — thus challenging us to reshape our environments.

## 10. SUPERHUMAN ENERGY

Fasting gives you a feeling a physical “lightness,” which provides a boost of energy. Another reason for this energy-surge is because, in a normal diet, our body generally converts foods through carbs and sugars. But fasting retrains our body to convert energy from fats, thus boosting our natural energy levels.

## 11. SUPERHUMAN WEIGHT LOSS

Fasting has facilitate weight-loss of 3–8 percent of total body mass in just 3–24 weeks! During that same time-frame, you could lose 4–7 percent of your waist circumference (e.g., harmful belly fat that causes disease).

Fasting decreases insulin levels, while boosting growth hormone levels and increased quantities of norepinephrine (noradrenaline) — a hormonal cocktail that breaks down body fat and enables its use for energy.

Consequently, fasting actually increases your metabolic rate by 4–14 percent, helping you burn more calories.

## 12. SUPERHUMAN INSPIRATION

Fasting taps into higher realms than merely increased consciousness. My experience with fasting is physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual. And I leverage fasting for all it's worth. I openly pray while fasting for miracles and blessings to come into my life and the into the lives of people I care for.

And I genuinely believe it works.

Regardless of the source of my inspiration, I keep my journal and pen constantly at my side while I'm fasting. The majority of my ideas for writing come while I'm fasting. It's like drinking from a firehose. “My cup runneth over.”

If you're looking for mental and spiritual breakthroughs — or simply an increased free-flow of intelligence — regular fasting will aid you in this.

## 13. SUPERHUMAN APPEARANCE

Fasting clears the skin and whitens the eyes. It is common to see acne clear while fasting; and the whites of the eyes never look so piercingly clear and bright as they do after fasting.

The reason for this is the release of human growth hormone, which has been found to make your skin look younger and more vibrant.

But it's even simpler than that. When you're living a life of self-control, your health and confidence shine through. You smile more, laugh more, and are more perceptive and discerning of others. Human beings are holistic. When we're out of alignment, it's actually quite apparent to others. When we are in alignment, it couldn't be more obvious. You will simply look more attractive by resonating on a higher physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual plane.

## 14. SUPERHUMAN LEARNING

Research confirms that being in a fasted state improves focus, memory, and ability to comprehend information. Put most simply, fasting improves brain efficiency and effectiveness.

## 15. SUPERHUMAN SENSES



It's easy to get addicted to sugary foods. When we do, we stop craving healthy, earthy, and wholesome foods. But fasting restores our appreciation for these delicious flavors. Your taste-buds become electric after fasting, and eating healthy foods never tasted so good.

Beyond taste, fasting increases the acuity of all your other senses as well, including hearing and smell, and sometimes even vision.

Actually, it can be a startling experience when your brain functioning radically elevates during a fast. Your listening skills sharpen, and you focus in on every word the other person is saying. Your thinking is honed and your ability to quickly and accurately respond is dynamite.

You can hear the slightest sounds in your natural environment which you are usually unaware of.

Time slows down.

Everything is heightened. The colors you see, the sounds you hear, the thoughts bouncing around in your head, your connection to your physical body and external environment.



# Rebuilding Year

By Kelly Barbrey (Proverbs 31 Ministries)

*“He replied, ‘Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.’” Matthew 17:20 (NIV)*

**I**t was raining and chilly on Sunday morning. The windows were open, and I rolled over and pulled the covers back up to my chin. We could have opted for in-person church worship, as the website indicated there were spots available. But we had gotten into the practice of watching online — coffee in hand — in our pajamas. And sadly, watching online had become a gateway to not watching at all.

As I went to make the coffee, I noticed the unmailed, new year pledge card for our church contribution sitting on the counter. I was late sending it in and honestly wasn't feeling much like a cheerful giver anyway.

The year 2020 had worn me out. And during a time when I should have been hitting my knees and opening my Bible more consistently, I began closing up, pulling away and shutting down. It wasn't sudden, but gradual. It wasn't deliberate but more of an unintentional shift. I wasn't angry with God; I was just lackluster about the rituals surrounding the practical applications of faith.

In Matthew 17:20, as Jesus is explaining to the disciples the reason they are unable to heal the epileptic boy, “He replied, ‘Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.’”

But in 2020, everything felt impossible. It was like I had allowed my faith to wallow in the year 2020 along with the rest of me.

Well, what better time to pull myself out of a rut than the start

of a brand-new year? I decided if the mustard seed was still in there somewhere, I could begin to bloom in my faith again. It would be like a “rebuilding year” for a sports team that had lost most of its best players and was starting over with fledgling talents rather than superstars. It might not happen overnight, but I would begin laying the solid foundation for improvement.

I began to make a to-do list for the upcoming year:

**1. Read and Pray Dutifully.** This year, I want to really dig into the Word. Perhaps I'll find a new Bible study to do. Or a new plan for reading through certain books of the Bible. Or find a new time of day that works better for my dedicated prayer time.

**2. Worship Intentionally.** 2021 seems like the perfect time to make a plan to get back on track with regular worship. Even if it's worshipping online, setting the alarm clock and holding myself and my family accountable to be in the “pew” — otherwise known as the couch — will help establish a routine and schedule.

**3. Love Unconditionally.** I could use some extra grace right now, and I'm sure that goes for everyone else too. Being more understanding and gracious sounds like a good place to start, beginning with my immediate family members and extending out to strangers.

**4. Give Joyfully.** When time and money are stretched, this one feels especially challenging, but if I learned anything from the end of last year, it's that not giving felt especially yucky. We are blessed so we can be a blessing to others.

Like I would with any list of goals or resolutions, I need to have realistic expectations. None of this will happen overnight. But with a little faith and big prayers, in 2021 I can inch toward becoming the person God created me to be.

## Lenten Covenant for Children

Keep at home

Things I promise to do this Lent (Check all that you wish to do):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pray every day                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Be nicer to my parents        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say prayers every morning                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Be nicer to my brother/sister |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say prayers every evening                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Try harder in school          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say prayers at meals                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Share more                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Come to church each Sunday                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Be more helpful at home       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Receive Communion each Sunday                | <input type="checkbox"/> Not say any bad words         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to confession during Lent                 |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read a short passage from the Bible each day |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do my chores without being told              |  |

*PRAYER: Lord help me to be successful in keeping the promises I have made. Help me to grow in my faith and love You more this Lent. Help me to be a nicer person and a better Christian. Amen.*

Sign your name

# Announcement of AHEPA Educational Programs and Scholarships



## 1. AHEPA Family Local Tampa Scholarships

- The AHEPA, Daughters of Penelope, Maids of Athena & Sons of Pericles Scholarships are intended to promote, encourage, and advance education at the high school, college, university and graduate school level.
- The COVID pandemic has caused a delay in awarding of last year's 2020 scholarships. An announcement will be made soon.

## 2. AHEPA Florida, Puerto Rico & The Bahamas District 2 Scholarship Foundation

- As a tax-exempt foundation, the foundation's goal is to be able to provide a scholarship for qualified students.
- **DEADLINE April 1, 2021**  
[http://www.ahepad2.org/district-forms/d2-scholarship-form/AHEPA National](http://www.ahepad2.org/district-forms/d2-scholarship-form/AHEPA%20National)

**3. The National AHEPA Educational Foundation (AEF)** offers scholarship programs which are open from January 2nd to March 31st and were established to promote, encourage, induce and advance education at the College, University and Graduate school level. Scholarship awards may range up to a max of \$2,000.00, except where stipulated of a different amount and are payable to the student.

Questions about our scholarship? Call: (202) 232-6300 or Email: [admin@ahempa.org](mailto:admin@ahempa.org)

**The Deadline is March 31**

<https://ahempa.org/education/>













## 4. National AHEPA Educational Programs

- Washington Mentorship  
**AHEPA Academy** - 2021 Professional development program that educates, mentors, and networks exceptional Greek-American high school students as they progress through their high academic and professional careers. [http://ahepacademy.com/ahepacademy\\_faq.html](http://ahepacademy.com/ahepacademy_faq.html)
- Summer Excursion  
**The 16th Annual Journey to Greece 2021 Summer Program - July 6 – July 31, 2021** Study at a fully accredited US University in Greece; learn about modern and ancient Greece. Leave your myth in Greece! See and experience the beauty of the country and its people and earn transferable University credits! This is an immersive summer program that takes young students on excursions throughout Greece in order to learn about, appreciate, and celebrate Greek society and culture.  
<https://ahempa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ahempaJTG2021july-1.pdf>
- Study Abroad  
**Odyssey In Athens** Students choose to spend either a semester or full year studying abroad in Athens Greece. The school and apartments are located in the Plaka area at the base of the Acropolis.  
<https://webster.edu.gr/studyabroad/index.php>
- Master's Program  
**MBA Program**  
The Walker MBA is a competency based, 36 credit hour degree program that includes a 12 credit hour foundation, a 15 credit hour core, 6 credit hours of experiential learning, and 3 credit hours of electives.  
[https://ahempa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Webster-MBA\\_AHEPA-2020\\_FS.pdf](https://ahempa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Webster-MBA_AHEPA-2020_FS.pdf)
- **Constantine and Patricia Mavroyiannis (CPM) Scholarship**  
The CPM scholarships are open to graduate students who are either Greek or of Greek heritage and are enrolled in a **PhD** program in either theoretical physics or physical chemistry in the Faculty of Science at a North American university.  
<https://ahempa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/mavroyiannis-scholarship.pdf>



# OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2021

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS	THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week <b>FEBRUARY 21st</b>	 <i>TRIODION WEEKS</i> <b>Publican and the Pharisee</b> Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week <b>FEBRUARY 28th</b>	 <b>The Prodigal Son Returns!</b> Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare <b>MARCH 7th</b> FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY	 <b>The Last Judgement</b> Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare <b>MARCH 14th</b> FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY	 <b>Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise!</b> <i>FORGIVENESS SUNDAY</i> Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent <b>MARCH 21st</b>	 <i>GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS</i> <b>SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY</b> Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent <b>MARCH 28th</b>	 <b>ST GREGORY PALAMAS</b> Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent <b>APRIL 4th</b>	 <b>VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS</b> <i>HALF WAY TO PASCHA!</i> Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent <b>APRIL 11th</b>	 <b>ST JOHN of the LADDER</b> Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent <b>APRIL 18th</b>	 <b>ST MARY of EGYPT</b> Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! <b>APRIL 25th</b> GREAT WEEK BEGINS	 <i>GREAT AND HOLY WEEK</i> <b>ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM</b> Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY <b>APRIL 30th</b>	 <b>GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY</b> <i>JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS</i> CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! <b>MAY 2nd</b> NO FASTING!	 <i>BRIGHT WEEK</i> <b>HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!)</b> Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!



# The Lenten Covenant

This year will be the 15th year we offer the program of the Lenten Covenant at St. John. Each year, those who participate say that they get a lot out of this program. A “covenant” is a promise. God has made covenants with us. In the Old Testament, He makes the first Covenant with Abraham, to be the God of Abraham’s descendants. The sign of this Covenant is circumcision. In the New Testament, God replaces the Old Covenant with a New Covenant, which is baptism and Holy Communion. If you are baptized and have received Holy Communion, then you have a Covenant relationship with God—you are part of the Covenant between God and His people. The Lenten Covenant is a promise between us and God—it is a promise to do certain things during Lent so that one can grow spiritually during Lent, with a promise to change one thing after Lent has ended so that spiritual growth continues during the year. ***The Lenten Covenant will help us in keeping the lifelong Covenant relationship we have with God by giving us a short-term covenant by which to evaluate our standing in the lifelong Covenant.***

## How does the Lenten Covenant Work?

Below there is a form that lists a menu of plans to help in a Lenten Goal of growing closer to God this year. The menu includes fasting, prayer, worship, reading the Bible, reading a theology book, going to confession, changing one bad habit, and the one that is most important, a goal for once Pascha is over. The menu offer several levels of commitment for each area. Each area is important—it is important that you fast, pray, worship, read scriptures, go to confession, and change a bad habit if you are going to get something out of this Lent. But if you’ve never fasted before, the covenant offers different levels of difficulty. So if you’ve never fasted, perhaps you should check the easiest level. If you’ve mastered the first level, perhaps this year you challenge yourself with the second level. If you’ve never read the Bible, don’t commit to reading the whole Bible during Lent—that is a huge commitment. Commit rather to something smaller like reading a chapter a day, or perhaps reading the Gospels, something that is challenging but attainable. If you’ve never worshipped in church on a day that isn’t Sunday, don’t commit to every service during Lent, but commit to one service per week, or even commit to one of each of the Lenten services, which would be three extra services over the six weeks of Lent. Regarding confession, how many hours of your life have you spent alone with an Orthodox priest to talk about your salvation? If you are over age 20 and the answer is zero, perhaps you need to think about changing that this Lent. If you are over age 60 and the answer is zero, you’ve got even more incentive. Think about how many hours a year you spend watching television, or listening to music, going to movies, doing yardwork, gossiping on the phone—it adds up to hundreds of hours each year, thousands of hours over a lifetime. And then think about how many hours you’ve spent in your whole life talking about your salvation, about repentance, with an Orthodox priest. Sadly, for many people, the answer is zero. This could be the year you change that.

## So, if you decide to do the Lenten Covenant, do the following:

1. Fill out the survey which follows.
2. Make two copies of it for each person in your household that is going to participate.
3. Put one copy in a place at home where you can see it, on the refrigerator, by your bedside, in your Bible.
4. Take the other copy of the covenant and place it in an envelope.
5. Seal the envelope and write your name and address on the envelope.
6. Bring the envelope to church on Sunday, March 14, and place it in a box that will be in front of the icon of the Virgin Mary on the solea of the church.
7. The box will be kept locked, the only person with the key will be Fr. Stavros
8. FATHER STAVROS WILL NOT OPEN THE ENVELOPES OR READ THEIR CONTENTS—these will remain private. Father Stavros will merely jot down the names on the envelopes to pray for these people throughout Lent, to pray that they will make good on their covenants. This is my commitment to you.
9. The box will remain in the church until the Resurrection Service on Easter as a reminder to you each time you come to church that you have a covenant or promise to God.
10. After Easter, your envelope will be mailed to you in your self-addressed envelope, as proof that the envelope was never opened, and as a way for you to see how you did.

# The Lenten Covenant

Check as many as apply under each topic. You should (but need not) answer every topic. This is a matter of your own conscience and areas where you want to grow spiritually.

1. Concerning my prayer life, each day I will commit to:  
\_\_\_\_\_ One 5- minute period of un-interrupted prayer  
\_\_\_\_\_ One five minute period every morning of un-interrupted prayer  
\_\_\_\_\_ One five minute period every evening of un-interrupted prayer  
\_\_\_\_\_ One five minute period each morning AND evening of un-interrupted prayer  
Other: Write in here

2. Concerning Worship  
\_\_\_\_\_ I'll commit to attending Divine Liturgy each Sunday  
\_\_\_\_\_ I'll commit to attending ONE additional service each week during each week of Lent  
\_\_\_\_\_ I'll commit to attending AT LEAST 1 Compline, 1 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and 1 Salutations Service  
\_\_\_\_\_ I'll commit to attending AT LEAST ONE Saturday of the Souls  
\_\_\_\_\_ I'll commit to attending the Forgiveness Vespers March 14  
\_\_\_\_\_ I'll commit to preparing and receiving Holy Communion at least once a week during Lent.

Concerning Holy Week, I'll commit to:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Every Service  
\_\_\_\_\_ Every Evening Service  
\_\_\_\_\_ One service each Day  
\_\_\_\_\_ Specifically Holy Thursday—the Passion of Christ  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other (write in here)

3. Concerning Fasting, I'll commit to:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Level One Fast from meat on Wednesday and Fridays and during Holy Week  
\_\_\_\_\_ Level Two Fast from meat and fish on Wednesdays and Friday and during Holy Week  
\_\_\_\_\_ Level Three Fast from meat the entirety of Lent and Holy Week  
\_\_\_\_\_ Level Four Fast from meat and fish the entirety of Lent and Holy Week  
\_\_\_\_\_ Level Five Level Four and eliminate dairy products during Holy Week.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Level Six Level Four and eliminate dairy products on Wednesdays and Fridays and during Holy Week  
\_\_\_\_\_ Level Seven Level Four plus eliminate dairy products during all of Lent and Holy Week  
\_\_\_\_\_ Level Eight Level Seven plus eliminate oil and wine during Holy Week  
\_\_\_\_\_ Level Nine The Strict Fast-no meat, fish, dairy products, wine or oil during the entirety of Lent  
\_\_\_\_\_ I can't fast from food for health reasons. I will give up the following: (Write answer here)

**\*\*Note-**alcohol should be consumed at a very minimum during Lent, and abstained from totally if possible. Also, activities should be curtailed, socializing a little more sedate, no dancing and loud music. During Holy Week, all unnecessary activities aside from work and children should be curtailed, so that we can focus on the Holy Days of the Passion of Christ.

4. Concerning reading the Bible, I'll commit to:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Reading one chapter a day from some book  
\_\_\_\_\_ Reading the four Gospels  
\_\_\_\_\_ Reading the Psalms  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Write in)

5. Concerning confession,  
\_\_\_\_\_ I'll commit to going once during this Lenten period either to Fr. Stavros or another Priest  
\_\_\_\_\_ I've been recently to confession and don't feel the need to go at this time.  
\_\_\_\_\_ I don't believe in going to confession  
\_\_\_\_\_ I'll get more information on this sacrament and then make a decision.

6. Concerning Holy Communion, I will try to be prepared to receive  
\_\_\_\_\_ Every Sunday  
\_\_\_\_\_ Every Sunday and at Wednesday Pre-Sanctified  
\_\_\_\_\_ At least every other Sunday

7. Concerning bad habits, here are one or two or a few bad habits I'll watch and change this Lent  
\_\_\_\_\_ Gossip  
\_\_\_\_\_ Self-aggrandizement  
\_\_\_\_\_ impatience  
\_\_\_\_\_ Greed  
\_\_\_\_\_ Lust  
\_\_\_\_\_ Disobedience  
\_\_\_\_\_ Wasting time  
\_\_\_\_\_ Self-pitying  
\_\_\_\_\_ Not giving good effort at work/school/marriage/children  
Others: Write in here

9. One spiritual goal I want to commit to once Pascha has passed is:

**Prayer:** Lord help me to be successful in this task I am about to undertake. May it be for the growth of my soul and the improvement of my spiritual life. Help me to keep all the commitments I have made. Amen.

\_\_\_\_\_ Sign your name

*Make a copy for yourself, place your covenant in a sealed envelope, write your name and address on front of envelope. Bring covenant to church and place it in locked box on the solea*

# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

## IN PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION

### **I am the Lord your God, and you shall have no other gods before me.**

Has God been the source, center and hope of my life? Have I put myself, others or things before God? Have I failed to trust in God's existence, love and mercy? Have I failed to pray to God, to worship Him and to thank Him for His blessings? Have I tried to serve God and keep His commandments faithfully? Have I murmured or complained against God in adversity? Have I praised and glorified God through my words and deeds?

### **You shall not make for yourself a graven image in order to worship it.**

Have I valued anyone or anything above God? Have I given to anyone or anything the love, honor and worship that belongs to God alone? Have I made an idol of any person, idea, occupation, or thing?

### **You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.**

Have I blasphemed God's holy name in any way? Have I sworn a false oath? Have I broken any solemn vow or promise? Have I entered into an agreement, promise or contract against God's law? Have I cursed or used foul language? Do I speak of God to other people? Have I spoken negatively about the church or the clergy with others?

### **Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.**

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

### **Honor your father and mother**

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

### **Thou shall not kill.**

Have I caused the harm, injury or death of anyone? Have I wished my own or anyone's harm or death? Have I been cruel to animals or destroyed any life unnecessarily? Have I spoke badly about other people or harmed the self-esteem of others? Have I done things that are harmful to my own body such as excessive eating, drinking, smoking, drug abuse? Have I tried to prematurely end my life? Have I had an abortion?

### **You shall not commit adultery.**

Have I committed any immoral acts alone or with others? Have I caused others to commit immoral acts? Have I committed immoral acts in my heart? Have I honored my spouse? Have I been faithful to my spouse? Have I read or viewed inappropriate materials?

### **You shall not steal.**

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

### **You shall not bear false witness.**

Have I given false testimony against anyone? Have I spoken evil, told lies or spread rumors about anyone? Have I disclosed to anyone the sins and faults of another? Have I made careless statements or done anything else to harm the name and reputation of another? Have I engaged in idle gossip?

### **You shall not covet.**

Have I looked with envy jealousy or hatred toward the possessions talents or achievements of others? Have I desired the downfall or loss of others out of evil intent that I might benefit? Have I grieved that God has bestowed greater blessings on others than on me?

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



# Important Lenten Prayers

## TRISAGION PRAYERS

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Glory to You our God Glory to You.

Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, present in all places and filling all things, Treasury of blessings and Giver of Life, come and abide in us, cleanse us of every stain, and save our souls Gracious Lord.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us. Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us. Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen. All Holy Trinity have mercy on us. Lord forgive our sins. Master pardon our iniquities. Holy one visit and heal our infirmities for the glory of Your name.

Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

## PSALM 50 (51)—A Psalm of Repentance

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your great mercy, and according to the multitude of your compassions, blot out my offense. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I am aware of my iniquity, and my sin is continually before me. Against you only have I sinned and done evil before you, that you might be justified in your words, and emerge victorious when you are judged. For behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother carry and bear me. For behold, you have loved the truth; you revealed to me the hidden and secret parts of your wisdom. You shall sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be cleansed; you shall wash me and I will be whiter than snow. You shall make me hear joy and gladness; the afflicted bones shall rejoice. Turn away your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit, in the depths of me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take away your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and strengthen me with a guiding spirit. I will teach transgressors your ways, and the ungodly shall return to you. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; and my tongue will joyfully sing your justice. O Lord, you shall open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise. For if you desired sacrifice, I would have offered it; you will not be pleased with whole; burnt offerings. Sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit; a contrite and humbled heart God will not despise. Do good, Lord, to Zion in your good pleasure, that the walls of Jerusalem may be built. Then you will be pleased with a sacrifice of justice, offering and whole-burnt sacrifices. Then shall they offer calves upon your altar.

## Prayer of Manasseh, King of Judah (from the Great Compline Service)

O Lord, Almighty, the God of our Fathers, of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and of their righteous seed; who created the heaven and the earth with all their adornment; who bound the sea by the word of your command; who shut up the abyss and sealed it with your awesome and glorious name; whom all things dread and before whose power they tremble, because the majesty of your glory is unbearable and the threat of your anger against the sinners unendurable; yet the mercy of your promise is both, immeasurable and unfathomable, for you are the Lord most high, compassionate, long-suffering and all merciful, and relent on the wickedness of man. You, Lord, in the multitude of your goodness promised repentance and forgiveness to those who have sinned against you, and in your infinite compassion appointed repentance for sinners that they may be saved. Therefore, Lord, the God of the powers, you have not appointed repentance for the righteous, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who have not sinned against you, but you appointed repentance for me the sinner, for I have committed more sins than the grains of the sand of the sea. My transgressions have multiplied, Lord; my transgressions have multiplied, and I am not worthy to look up and see the height of the sky from the multitude of my iniquities, being weighted down by many iron chains, so that I cannot raise my head; there is no respite left for me because I provoked your anger and committed evil before you not having done your will and not having kept your commandments. And now I bend the knee of my heart, beseeching your goodness. I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned and I acknowledge my transgressions; but I beg and ask of you: Forgive me, Lord, forgive me and do not destroy me with my transgressions; do not be angry with me forever and keep my evils in me, and do not condemn me to the depths of the earth; for you are God, the God of those who repent, and in me you shall show all your goodness; for even though I am unworthy, you shall save me according to the multitude of your mercy, and I shall praise you without ceasing all the days of my life. For every heavenly power sings your praises, and yours is the glory unto the ages of ages. Amen.

## Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim

O Lord and Master of my life, do not permit the spirit of laziness and meddling, the lust for power and idle talk to come into me. Instead, grant me, your servant, the spirit of prudence, humility, patience and love. Yes, Lord and King, give me the power to see my own faults and not to judge my brother. For you are blessed unto the ages of ages. Amen.

## LORD OF THE POWERS—Lenten Hymn

Lord of the Powers, be with us. For in times of distress, we have no other help but You. Lord of the Powers, have mercy on us.

# Donations Needed for Great Lent and Holy Week

Great Lent begins March 15. We have many special celebrations during these weeks. We know that many of you would like to contribute to the decorating of our church and icons during this period.

For your convenience, below is a list of items needed for the celebration of the Sacred Services of Lent and Holy Week. Please contact the church office to reserve your desired offering for the health of your loved ones or in memory of a deceased loved one.

*Payment may be sent to the church office. Checks should be made payable to "St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church" with "Lenten Flower Donation" on the memo line. Online donations are also accepted, be sure to specify.*


<b>Lent</b>	Wireless Microphones in the Church	Duracell or Energizer AA Batteries	Many
<b>March 19</b>	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 1st Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$100
<b>March 26</b>	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 2nd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$100
<b>April 2</b>	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 3rd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$100
<b>April 4</b>	Veneration of the Holy Cross	Flowers for Tray for Procession	\$400
<b>April 9</b>	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 4th Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$100
<b>April 16</b>	Akathist Hymn	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$100
<b>April 25</b>	<b>Palm Sunday</b>	Flowers for Icon of Palm Sunday	\$100
		Palms Strips & Branches	\$250 total
<b>Holy Week</b>		Pillar Candles for Windows (20)	\$15 each
<b>April 25</b>	<b>Palm Sunday</b>	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex	\$100
	Bridegroom Service	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom on Solea (2)	\$100 each
<b>April 28</b>	<b>Holy Wednesday</b>	Flowers for Icon of Last Supper	\$100
	Holy Unction	Olive Oil, Flour, Prosphora (2)	See Fr. Stavros
<b>April 29</b>	<b>Holy Thursday</b>	Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion	\$100
		Wreaths for Bottom of Cross (2)	\$150 each
		Wreath for Top of Cross	\$250
		Scattered flowers at base of cross	\$50
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)	\$15 each
<b>April 30</b>	<b>Good Friday</b>	8 Bags of Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers	\$50
		Flowers for Epitaphios	Several
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Apokathelosis	\$15 each
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Lamentations	\$15 each
		Icon of Extreme Humility	\$100
<b>May 2</b>	<b>Pascha</b>	Flowers for Icon of Resurrection	\$100
		Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb	\$100
		Silk Flower for Royal Doors	\$100
		Easter Lilies	\$25 per Lily

# Family Calendar for Great Lent 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>March 14</b> Psalm 51:10 <b>Sunday of Forgiveness</b> Divine Liturgy <b>Forgiveness Vespers</b> <i>Ask forgiveness of your family members</i> <b>RENEW</b>	<b>15</b> 2 Corinthians 4:16 <b>Clean Monday</b> – Great Lent begins Canon of St. Andrew <b>Holy Unction Service</b> <i>No screens today</i>	<b>16</b> Ephesians 4:23  <i>Call your Godparents to wish them a Blessed Lent</i>	<b>17</b> Isaiah 41:1 <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b>  <i>Pray for sick children</i>	<b>18</b> Romans 12:2  <i>Send a card to a friend who lives in another state</i>	<b>19</b> Colossians 3:10 <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> Salutations to the Virgin Mary  <i>Make a list of five things you are thankful for</i>	<b>20</b> Isaiah 40:31 <b>Saturday of the Souls</b> St. Theodore Divine Liturgy  <i>Pray for a loved one who has passed away</i>
<b>21</b> Hebrews 12:28 <b>Sunday of Orthodoxy</b> Divine Liturgy <i>Bring an icon from home to have blessed</i> <b>WORSHIP</b>	<b>22</b> Psalm 95:6 <b>Great Compline</b>  <i>Sing a church hymn together as a family</i>	<b>23</b> 1 Chronicles 16:29  <i>Write a poem of praise to God</i>	<b>24</b> Romans 12:1 <b>Paraklesis</b>  <i>Pray for your priests</i>	<b>25</b> Luke 1:35 <b>Annunciation to the Virgin Mary</b> Divine Liturgy Thank God for something in nature He created	<b>26</b> Psalm 63:3-4 <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> Salutations to the Virgin Mary  <i>Make a prosphora bread to offer at church</i>	<b>27</b> Psalm 150:6 <b>Divine Liturgy</b>  <i>Pray for five silent minutes about how much God loves you</i>
<b>28</b> Matthew 18:20 <b>St. Gregory Palamas</b> Divine Liturgy <i>Give your Sunday School teacher a hand made card</i> <b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>29</b> Psalm 133:1 <b>Great Compline</b>  <i>Collect some clothing to donate</i>	<b>30</b> Romans 12:4-5  <i>Secretly put a plant on a neighbor's porch</i>	<b>31</b> Proverbs 27:17 <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b>  <i>Pray for world leaders</i>	<b>April 1</b> Galatians 6:2  <i>Do an intentional act of kindness for someone at school</i>	<b>2</b> 1 Corinthians 1:10 <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> Salutations to the Virgin Mary  <i>Smile at everyone you walk by today</i>	<b>3</b> Hebrews 10:24-25 <b>Divine Liturgy</b>  <i>Make a donation to a charity you love</i>
<b>4</b> 1 Corinthians 13:3-7 <b>Veneration of Holy Cross</b> Divine Liturgy  <i>Bring a flower home from the cross</i> <b>LOVE</b>	<b>5</b> John 13:34-35 <b>Great Compline</b>  <i>Make and send a get-well card to someone who is sick</i>	<b>6</b> John 3:16  <i>Draw a picture of the Cross with the word "love" on it</i>	<b>7</b> Luke 10:27 <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b>  <i>Pray for people who are alone</i>	<b>8</b> 1 Peter 4:8  <i>Choose a Bible verse on love and put it on your refrigerator</i>	<b>9</b> 1 John 4:18-19 <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> Salutations to the Virgin Mary  <i>Make a list of three things you love about each person in your family</i>	<b>10</b> 1 Corinthians 16:14 <b>Divine Liturgy</b>  <i>Forgive someone who hurt you</i>
<b>11</b> Matthew 11:29 <b>St. John of the Ladder</b> Divine Liturgy <i>Draw a ladder and put a Lenten goal on each step</i> <b>LEARNING</b>	<b>12</b> Proverbs 3:5-6 <b>Great Compline</b>  <i>Learn the words to a new prayer</i>	<b>13</b> Isaiah 1:17  <i>Read about the life of your patron saint</i>	<b>14</b> Psalm 119:73 <b>Paraklesis</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b>  <i>Pray for your teachers</i>	<b>15</b> Titus 3:14  <i>Memorize a short bible verse</i>	<b>16</b> 2 Peter 3:18 <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> Akathist Hymn  <i>Read a favorite Bible story with your family</i>	<b>17</b> Philippians 4:9 <b>Divine Liturgy</b>  <i>Watch a religious themed movie with your family</i>
<b>18</b> 1 Peter 4:10 <b>St. Mary of Egypt</b> Divine Liturgy <i>Sing "Agios o Theos" in Church today</i> <b>SERVICE</b>	<b>19</b> Ephesians 2:10 <b>Great Compline</b>  <i>Clean your room without being asked</i>	<b>20</b> 2 Corinthians 9:11-12  <i>Do a chore in your yard</i>	<b>21</b> 3 John 1:16 <b>Paraklesis</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b>  <i>Pray for healthcare workers</i>	<b>22</b> Matthew 5:16  <i>Find a charity where your family can volunteer</i>	<b>23</b> Psalm 100:2 <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b>  <i>Visit someone (in person or over zoom) who lives alone</i>	<b>24</b> John 11:27 <b>Saturday of Lazarus</b> Service of Proskomide Divine Liturgy  <i>Make and serve someone a Lenten meal today</i>
<b>25</b> John 12:18 <b>Palm Sunday</b> Divine Liturgy Vespers <b>Service of the Bridegroom</b> <i>Replace your old palm cross</i>	<b>26</b> Matthew 25:14-15 <b>Holy Monday</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <b>Service of the Bridegroom</b> <i>Read the story about Joseph from the Old Testament</i>	<b>27</b> Luke 17:3-4 <b>Holy Tuesday</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <b>Service of the Bridegroom</b> <i>Read the story of Kassiane the hymnographer</i>	<b>28</b> Luke 9:11 <b>Holy Wednesday</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> Holy Unction Service of the Bridegroom Holy Unction <i>Receive Holy Unction</i>	<b>29</b> John 15:4-5 <b>Holy Thursday</b> Liturgy of St. Basil 12 Gospels service Color eggs red for Pascha	<b>30</b> 1 Corinthians 11:24 <b>Holy Friday</b> Royal Hours Unnailing from the Cross Lamentations <i>Pray about Jesus on the cross</i>	<b>May 1</b> Romans 15:13 <b>Holy Saturday</b> Liturgy of St. Basil <b>Resurrection Service</b> <i>Come see the leaves scattered at the morning liturgy</i>
<b>2</b> Psalm 118:24 <b>PASCHA</b> Agape Vespers <b>Christ is Risen!</b> <b>Truly He is Risen!</b> <b>REJOICE</b>	<b>3</b> Psalm 32:11 <b>Bright Monday</b> St. George Divine Liturgy  <i>Joyfully sing Christ is risen!</i>	<b>4</b> John 16:22  <i>Crack your red eggs while saying "Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!"</i>	<b>5</b> Romans 12:12 <b>St. Irene</b> Divine Liturgy <b>Paraklesis</b>  <i>Find a picture with the verse John 3:16 and print it out</i>	<b>6</b> 1 Peter 4:13  <i>Play with someone who feels left out</i>	<b>7</b> Luke 1:46-47 <b>Life-Giving Fountain</b> Divine Liturgy  <i>Say a prayer for the gift of clean water</i>	<b>8</b> Philippians 4:4 <b>St. John the Theologian</b> Divine Liturgy  <i>Make resurrection rolls</i>



# ~ March 2021 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>1</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m.  Orthodoxy 101 6:30 pm	<b>2</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.  Suffering Book Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>3**</b>   Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	<b>4</b>   Griefshare 6:30 p.m.	<b>5 **</b>		<b>6</b> 1st Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m.  Young at Heart 11:30am
<b>7</b> Spring Forward  Judgment Sunday Orthros 8:30 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m.	<b>8</b> Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>9</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.  Suffering Book Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>10 **</b>   Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	<b>11</b>   Griefshare 6:30 p.m.	<b>12 **</b>	<b>13</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m.
<b>14</b> Forgiveness Sunday Orthros 8:30 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m.  Forgiveness Vespers 6:00 p.m.	<b>15</b> Clean Monday  Canon of St. Andrew 10:00 a.m.  Holy Uction 6:00 p.m.	<b>16</b>	<b>17 **</b>  9th Hour 5:30 p.m.  <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> 6:00 p.m.	<b>18</b>	<b>19 **</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 9:30 a.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m.  Salutations 6:30 p.m.	<b>20</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m.  Community Outreach
<b>21</b> Sunday of Orthodoxy Orthros 8:30 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 9:45 a.m.  Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	<b>22</b> Great Compline 5:30 p.m.  Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>23</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	<b>24 **</b>   Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	<b>25</b> Annunciation Orthros 9:00 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m.  Griefshare 6:30 p.m.	<b>26 **</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 9:30 a.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m.  Salutations 6:30 p.m.	<b>27</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m.  GOYA Lenten Retreat
<b>28</b> Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas Orthros 8:30 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 9:45 a.m.	<b>29</b> Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>30</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	<b>31 **</b> 9th Hour 5:30 p.m.  <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> 6:00 p.m.			

## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

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## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

### Timetable of Services

**Saturdays:** Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Sundays:** Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Weekdays:** Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

**Parish Priest** Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis  
813-876-8830 (Office) 813-394-1038 (Cell)  
firstav@gmail.com

**Retired Priest in Residence** Rev. Fr. Stratton Dorozenski  
813-876-8830 (Office)

**Retired Priest in Residence** Rev. Fr. John Stefero  
813-876-8830 (Office)

**Pastoral Assistant** Charlie Hambos  
813-876-8830 (Office) 813-843-8471 (Cell)  
chambos@stjohntpa.org

**Pastoral Assistant** Alex Limberatos  
813-876-8830 (Office) 262-370-0586 (Cell)  
alex@stjohntpa.org

**Parish Council**  
Jim Armstrong, President 954-295-6665  
Euripides Panos, Vice President 813-352-3972  
John Zelatis, Secretary 813-727-2271  
Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898  
Demosthenes Mekras 786-417-7256  
George Chagaris 727-420-1920  
Amin Hanhan 813-846-2957  
Nick Katzaras 863-581-2430  
Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352  
Marilyn Sandborn 813-855-8678  
Mike Xenick 813-340-8737

**Office Staff**  
Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper  
debbie@stjohntpa.org fax: 813-443-4899

**Adult Greek School**  
Magda Myer 813-909-2327

**AHEPA**  
Thomas Sakaris, President 201-819-2319

**Altar Angels**  
Engie Halkias 813-932-5859  
Sia Blankenship 813-968-8855

**Basketball**  
Perry Katsmakis 516-403-3118  
Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352

**Bible Study**  
Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

**Bookstore**  
Brett Mourer 813-376-9315

**Suffering Book Study**  
Alex Limberatos 262-370-0586

**Buildings & Grounds**  
Euripides Panos 813-352-3972

**Chanter**  
Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471  
Alex Limberatos 262-370-0586

**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  
Marina Choundas 813-877-6136  
IIAPEA, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668  
IIANHITYPI,

**Daughters of Penelope**  
Nicole Leontsinis, President 703-585-7490

**Finance Committee**  
Gary Ward 813-846-3898

**Food Pantry**  
Anetta Alexander 813-758-2689

**GriefShare**  
Donna Hambos 813-843-8412

**Gasparilla Parking**  
John Kokkas 727-992-4165

**GOYA**  
Michael & Bessie Palios 813-523-0346  
goya@stjohntpa.org

**Hope/Joy**  
George & Zackie Ameres 813-245-3813

**Junior Olympics**  
Dwight Forde 727-685-9028

**Men's Fellowship**  
Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038

**Parish Nursing Ministry**  
Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026

**Orthodox Christian Fellowship**  
Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471  
**Oratorical Festival**  
Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

**Photography Ministry**  
Karina Findlay 813-476-9632

**Philoptochos**  
Jeanie Nenos 813-451-9116

**Stewardship**  
Chris Kyrus 757-672-1920  
George Mitseas 813-748-1220

**Sunday School**  
Vickie Peckham 813-758-3102

**12 Disciples**  
Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

**Usher**  
Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

**Welcoming Ministry**  
Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

**Women's Bible Study**  
Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038

**Young Adult**  
Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

**Young at Heart**  
Mike Trimis, President 813-784-4872  
Mary Nenos, Vice President 813-935-2096

**Youth Protection**  
Catherine Mitseas 813-571-0658

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"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.