

# 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*

# April 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 April. 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 will be increasing the number of people who are allowed to worship as Holy Week approaches, so that everyone who wants to attend in person will be able to. We will still only be able to accommodate 85 people plus the workers in the church at one time and still have social distancing. 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. 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 be holding Paraklesis on Wednesday, April 14 and Wednesday, April 21 at 10:00 a.m. We will also pray for all of our parishioners at the Salutations Service on April 2 and 9, so that not a week goes by where our parishioners are not all prayed for by name. We will resume the weekly Wednesday evening Paraklesis after Pascha.

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. Great Compline will average under 10. The Friday morning Pre-Sanctified Liturgy will also probably draw a small crowd. 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.

Continued...

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.

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 **Renew. Return. Rejoice.**

**O**n Forgiveness Sunday, we passed out a journal to everyone who was in church. Those who were not in church should have received one in the mail. If you did not get a journal and would like one, please contact the church office and we'll be happy to mail one to you until we run out.

The theme for our Lent this year is **Renew Return Rejoice**. Why these three words? The word for the year for 2021 for our church is **Renew**. This word has many meanings and applications. One of the reasons we go on vacation is to get renewed. Because life is stressful, taking a break helps us feel refreshed and rested and then to go back to work with renewed energy and focus. Lent and specifically Holy Week are supposed to renew us spiritually. Holy Week, when done right, is like a spiritual vacation. We are supposed to put aside as much of life as we can and focus on the services of Holy Week and their rich meaning. The week after Pascha is called Bright Week or Renewal Week, because after the rewarding journey of Lent and Holy Week, we are supposed to feel renewed in our faith and in our purpose.

Only a few of us got to experience Holy Week in person last year. When I think back on Holy Week 2020, my mind is filled with memories, both good and terrible. I remember how awful it felt on Palm Sunday to celebrate Liturgy with only four other people in the church. The chalice was so heavy, not because it was full, but because it was empty. I remember how hard it was to “celebrate” services in an empty church. It was like preparing for a large party, inviting hundreds of guests and only a handful came. It was very deflating. I remember being determined to open the front doors of the church at midnight and sing Christos Anesti facing our city of Tampa, and seeing a couple of parishioners sitting in front of the church, and I couldn't invite them in or even light their candles.

The good memories of Holy Week include the profound silence on Holy Thursday evening, as if a black cloud descended into the church. It felt like the first Good Friday, Jesus on the cross,

and only a few faithful followers. On Good Friday night, when we carried the Epitaphios around the inside of a dark and empty church, it was again very much like when Jesus was buried—quiet, dark, no one around. I remember how determined Charlie was to make sure we had the all-night Vigil at the Cross, even though it was virtual. And had people join us from not only our community but from other countries. And I remember seeing videos of how people had Holy Week in their homes, seeing families make the Tomb of Christ in their kitchens, and dads carrying it around the house on Good Friday night, the church of the home, with the dad as the spiritual leader, the way it is supposed to be.

It's been TWO YEARS since we've celebrated Holy Week together. And it's time to **Return** so we can celebrate it again. Yes, there will be some of us that will have to worship in the hall. And yes, we are thinking already how we can conduct the services a little differently as a result. It's been two years since we've knelt in person before the cross of Christ, or walked under His tomb, or received the Light of Christ at the Resurrection. It's time to **Return**. It's been two years since we sang the Lamentations together. We did sing “Christ is Risen” one Sunday in 2020 because there was no way we were going to go through the whole year without singing that together. I have tears in my eyes as I'm typing out this last sentence. Because we sang it in September. And now we will sing it on Pascha together. It's time to **Return**. Children didn't run around the church last year on Holy Saturday collecting leaves and filling their mother's purses with them. I remember throwing leaves outside the front door of the church, to leave some evidence for passersby that their indeed had been a celebration of the Resurrection. It's time to **Return**.

As for the third word, **Rejoice**, this word is in Psalm 118:24, where we read, “This is the day that Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.” I remember on Holy Saturday morning last year, breaking down in the middle of the service, talking to the empty church and the camera about how we were somehow

Renew Return Rejoice

still supposed to rejoice, even in the midst of the pandemic, how God was still great even though everything around us was chaotic. I meant it. It's true. There hasn't been one day in this past year that I haven't rejoiced because I woke up. There hasn't been a day in this past year that I didn't find something positive to be thankful for and to rejoice over. Pascha is a time to **Rejoice** and it's not just because of the services or even for the dinner with family many of us will enjoy on Pascha as we break the Fast. We **Rejoice** because Christ is Risen and that matters. Christ is Risen, and there is hope. Christ is Risen and there is purpose to life. Because without the Resurrection, life is a countdown to nothing. However, because of the Resurrection, life is a countdown to an ever greater life.

I recently had the opportunity to speak with a friend of mine who is very ill with cancer. His medical prognosis is not good. His spiritual outlook, however, is excellent. He shared with me that he "coded" a couple of months ago. He stopped breathing. For all intents and purposes, he died. And he was resuscitated. He described for me what it was like to be slipping away from life and he described it as pleasant, that he felt good, that he felt at peace. Hearing this gives me a reason to **Rejoice**. Why? Because a friend is dying from cancer. No, because a friend is dying from cancer and is looking forward to where he is going. He knows he is going to a good place, the place of light, repose and refreshment that we pray for. Even a serious illness and likely imminent death are a cause to **Rejoice**.

### **Core Values—Love, Worship, Community, Learning, Service**

**Renew Return Rejoice** is the theme of our Lenten journey. The journal and corresponding sermon series bring forth the five core values of our parish. Many organizations come up with core values used to define and guide their organization. Many churches do the same. Several years ago, a group of people worked for several months to define five core values to shape our community. These values not only guide our parish collectively, but they should also guide us individually. Each week of Lent, one of these five core values will be the subject of the sermon and will be the theme for the journal.

**Love**—The greatest of all gifts is love. It is the greatest gift we can give. It is the greatest gift we can receive. It is what motivated God to create the world, to create us and to redeem us when the world fell away from God. It's God's love that provides mercy and forgiveness. Christ identified the two greatest commandments as loving God and loving our neighbor. Christ said that by love people would know that we are His disciples. The Bible has often been referred to as God's love letter to us. It's God's love that will allow us one day to inherit eternal life. Love is also the foundation for our close relationships in life. As far as core values go, everything begins and ends with love.

**Worship**—The central activity that happens in a church is worship. And the month of April will have more opportunities to worship and receive Holy Communion than any other month in 2021. In receiving Holy Communion, we share a physical intimacy with Christ. In our relationships and friendships, we embrace one another. We hug one another. We don't just tell people we like them, we embrace them. Holy Communion is like an embrace with Christ. We've missed out on a lot of embracing this past year, with one another and with Christ. Also in worship, we praise God, and we do so in the context of community. We also learn about God. Most of our hymns actually teach us, more than praising God and asking Him for things. In



this Lenten period and particularly during Holy Week, there is an opportunity for us to again learn more deeply the things we believe.

**Community**—Christianity is practiced in community. Because the community provides support and encouragement, as well as validation and help. When we are falling down in faith, the community is supposed to build us up and encourage us. When we are feeling strong in faith, we are supposed to build up and encourage one another. One cannot love himself or herself. So love takes place only in the context of community. One cannot love a neighbor if there is no neighbor to love. The church community worships together, celebrates together, serves together, laughs together, and is supposed to aid its members to prepare for eternal life together.

**Learning**—The purpose of learning is to be able to do something better. We learn in school so that we can go out and do something to earn a living and help others. Once we have a job, we continue to learn and to perfect what we know and what we do, so that we can do it better. The same ideas apply to our faith. In our faith, we are supposed to be continually learning and continually deepening our relationship with Christ and our commitment to Him and to loving others. Ideally, we should be learning at all times. Every day we should pick up the Bible and read Scripture, to learn a little bit more. Just like every day in life, we should try to learn something new. There are times in life when we are more intentional about learning. Maybe we take a class, or read a how-to book. There are also times in our Christian life when we are supposed to be more intentional about learning. Great Lent and especially Holy Week provide an unique opportunity to learn each year. Going through the Holy Week Book each year provides us an opportunity to relearn all of our theology. Because that 500-page book not only includes Scripture and prayer, it includes everything we believe as Christians. Our parish offers ample opportunities for learning with Bible studies, book reviews, the Prayer Team, Sunday School, GOYA and so many other things. Holy Week provides the most concentrated opportunity to learn each year.

**Service**—Christ taught us that the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love others. Love of others is manifested most basically in service. In every church community, there has to be an element of service. We not only are called to serve within the community, such as singing in the choir, or serving in the altar, or teaching Sunday school, or being an usher. We are called to serve outside of our community as well. We are called to be charitable and generous to others. We are called to support charitable causes. We are called to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, support the lonely, etc. Over the years, we have increased the amount of our charitable giving each year. We support a food pantry. We have clothing drives. We send money for disaster relief. And we provide manpower for Community Outreach, which feeds the hungry in inner city Tampa.

## One Word for Each Day of Holy Week

Each day of Holy Week this year will also focus on one word. The sermon for each day and the journal and verse of each day will focus on the words Transform, Engage, Entrust, Repent, Heal, Abide, Hope, Remember and finally, Rejoice.

*You are encouraged to spend time with the journal every day of Lent and Holy Week.*

*You are encouraged to BRING THE JOURNAL WITH YOU TO CHURCH DURING HOLY WEEK.* Because as we sit through the many hours of services, as we hear the hymns and Scripture readings, if we come with an open mind, then our minds will be filled with thoughts and ideas. Just as no two people see the same thing the same way, no two people will experience Holy Week in the same way. When we ask God to bring thoughts to our minds and hearts, He brings thoughts that are unique to each person. That's why when we read the Scriptures and experience Holy Week, the God-centered thoughts that come to our minds are God's way of speaking to us. The best book we can read is the one God writes in our minds and hearts. So bring the journal so you can capture the thoughts that God will put in your mind and heart as we once again mark His Passion and Resurrection.

Those who are subscribed to our St. John APP will receive a notification of our verse of the day each day with a few thoughts from Fr. Stavros as well, as a way to remind us to check in with the daily verse and to reflect on it on our own each day.

## Who Do We Want to Please?

I want to share a short passage from the book we are using for Women's Bible Study this year:

Who do you want to please? The choice is simple, yet hard. We can please God or someone else (including ourselves). We were created for God's pleasure and glory, but we will sink into petty selfish behavior if we don't humbly bow before God. We can choose friendship with God or friendship with the world (including ourselves). As James (the author of the Book of James that we are studying) shows us in the passage, we can troubleshoot almost any

problem we get into by asking, "Who am I trying to please?" (from Max Lucado, "Book of James Life Lessons Bible Study", page 79)

In a recent discussion at Bible study, we discussed pressure points, pleasure points and pleasing points. We all have our pressure points, the things that bring us stress. These can include our jobs, sometimes even our families, and things going on in the world, like the pandemic. Pleasure points are the things that bring us joy. Some of these might be worthwhile, like going to the beach, enjoying a movie, doing a hobby, etc. And some of these might be destructive—overindulging in food or alcohol, looking at inappropriate material online, etc. Pleasing points are evaluating who we are attempting to please with what we are doing. Is our primary effort to please others, to please God or to please ourselves? Only a complete narcissist can only please himself or herself. Most of us please others at least some of the time. Do we think about pleasing God at all? What is the balance of pleasing others verses pleasing ourselves? Of course, there are some people who please others so much that they never please themselves, they never rest, they never "turn it off." This is not good either. We are supposed to rest and recharge. **Renewing** goes hand in hand with **Rejoicing**.

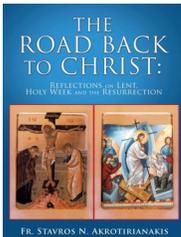
**What motivates us?** This is also a fair question for us to consider. Some of us are driven primarily by material gain. We wake up each day thinking how much we will earn based on how much we will do. Some work to get by. For some that is a choice, they choose to work the minimum in order to just get by. For many, they work hard and at the end of the day, find themselves just getting by. Do we think about the Kingdom of Heaven at all? Is that part of our daily thought pattern? Monthly? Yearly? At all? We are motivated by many things. Hopefully a motivation for God, for faith and for heaven are part of our motivation.

As you thumb through the pages of this month's *Messenger*, there are many ideas for ways to mark the rest of Lent and Holy Week, so that we can **Renew Return Rejoice**. I look forward to making this year's Holy Week journey in person for the first time in two years. I look forward to the opportunity to **Renew** my own personal faith and to assist you in renewing yours. I look forward to a **Return** to how we celebrate Holy Week, with people. I certainly hope that by Pascha 2022 we will have a packed church, as we are used to. This year, we will have many people in church, and many who will worship on line, which is better than the exclusive on line worship we had to do last year. And I look forward to the opportunity to **Rejoice** on Pascha, as we do each year, and to exchange the Paschal greeting in person with many of you. As we continue our journey through Lent and enjoy the beautiful and meaningful days of Holy Week, I pray that we will all **Renew Return Rejoice**.

I wish you a blessed Holy Week and Kali Anastasi!

With love in the Crucified and Risen 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 started on February 21) through All Saints Day (this year that is June 27). Pick up your copy today so you can read it from now until All Saints Day. This book costs \$18.99 and all monies taken in at the bookstore go to the church.

# The Theology of the Diaper Change

by Alex Limberatos

*The following short article I wrote about a year ago as a weekly reflection during my time as a hospital chaplain. I wrote this a couple of weeks after our daughter Anastasia was born, just as I was learning the first steps to fatherhood.*

**A**s my wife takes on the more endearing yet laborious task of feeding our new child, I've taken upon myself the duty of diaper changes.

It's a thankless job. Nearly every time I change her, Anastasia bursts into tears. Perhaps it's the sudden change of temperature she experiences, perhaps it's change itself she abhors. Regardless, I receive our daughter and I am met with lamentation, but when I pass her off to my wife there is bonding, comfort, and peace.

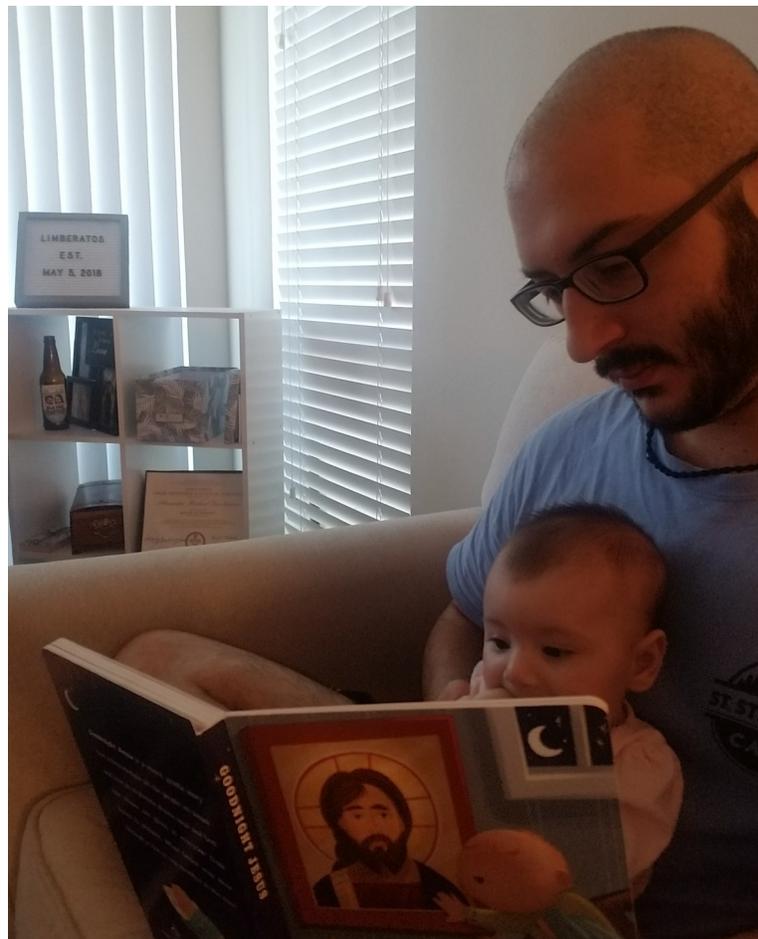
But this got me thinking: doesn't God receive the same thankless response for the work He does in changing us?

Perhaps the changing of the diaper is like the repentance of the human soul: it's a necessary change, lest the whole self is compromised in filth. Babies cry out in discomfort as they wallow in their own filth, and so too we adults lash out when we lay in the filth of our own iniquities.

Forgiveness comes from the Lord, and He is willing to help us with this change, this repentance—μετανοια—this changing of the mind/soul, this changing of our "spiritual diaper." But this is not a happy task.

The child is stripped of his or her old securities, plunged into a vulnerable coldness, cleansed with a cold wipe, left in a vulnerable state of nakedness, and sometimes even wrestled in order to get the old diaper off and for the new diaper to be put on. Ana is not so easily comforted after this loving act, and continues to wail well after she is clean and clothed. There is no respite in this task until she is off the changing pad and in the arms of the one who nourishes and nurses her.

This made me ponder...does God feel just as unappreciated and heart-wrenched, hearing our screams, our lamentations, and our fury for this act of repentance? And yet, God participates in this forgiveness, this change and cleansing, and loves us nonethe-



less...no matter how long and hard we cry.

So the next time we might feel such discomforts, such pangs, such vulnerability, let's give thanks to our Lord for whatever spiritual diaper of ours He is wrestling to change us out of. Let's consider these "big feeling moments" as an opportunity of change, giving space for the Lord to do His work for our betterment. And after all that we have gone through, perhaps then can we expect consolation.

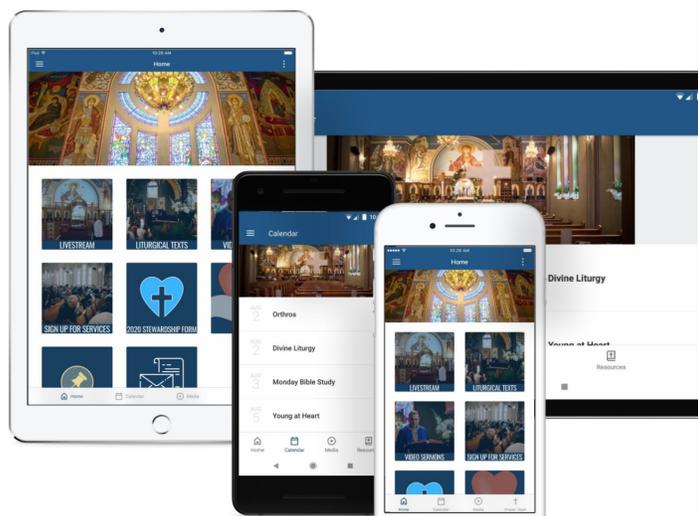
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# Liturgical Schedule for April 2021

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.
<b>Saturday, April 3</b>	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
Monday, April 5	Great Compline 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 7	9th Hour 5:30 p.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.</b>
Friday, April 9	9th Hour 9:30 a.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</b> Salutations to the Virgin Mary—4th Stanza 6:30 p.m.
<b>Saturday, April 10</b>	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
<b>Sunday, April 11</b>	<b>Fourth Sunday of Lent—St. John of the Ladder</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.
Monday, April 12	Great Compline 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 14	Paraklesis 10:00 a.m. 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.</b>
Friday, April 16	9th Hour 9:30 a.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</b> Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m.
<b>Saturday, April 17</b>	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
<b>Sunday, April 18</b>	<b>Fifth Sunday of Lent—St. Mary of Egypt</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.
Monday, April 19	Great Compline 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 21	Paraklesis 10:00 a.m. 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.</b>
Friday, April 23	9th Hour 9:30 a.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</b>

**Saturday, April 24 - Sunday, May 2**

**Holy Week 2021**

**See Special Schedule**

<b>Monday, May 3</b>	<b>St. George</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
<b>Wednesday, May 5</b>	<b>St. Irene</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.
<b>Friday, May 7</b>	<b>Life-Giving Fountain of Virgin Mary (Zodochos Peghe)</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
<b>Saturday, May 8</b>	<b>St. John the Theologian</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

## HOLY WEEK AND PASCHA SCHEDULE FOR 2021

April 24 **Saturday of Lazarus**

*Commemoration of the raising of Lazarus from the dead*

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

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

April 25 **Palm Sunday - The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

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

**Vespers 5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.**

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

Procession of the Icon of the Nymphios

*Theme: Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church; watchfulness*

April 26 **Holy Monday**

**9<sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.**

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

*Theme: The Parable of the Talents*

April 27 **Holy Tuesday**

**9<sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.**

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

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

April 28 **Holy Wednesday**

**9<sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.**

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

**Service of the Bridegroom 5:15 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.**

**Holy Unction for Adults 7:00 -8:30 p.m.**

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

April 29 **Holy Thursday**

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

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

Reading of the 12 Gospels, Procession of the Crucified Christ

*Themes: The Betrayal, Trial and Death of Christ, the Passion*  
**All-Night Vigil will follow the service**

April 30 **Good Friday**

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

*Standing vigil at the Cross of Christ*

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

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

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

*Singing of the Funeral Lamentations and*

*Procession with the Epitaphios*

May 1 **Holy Saturday**

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

*Reading of Prophecies foretelling the Resurrection of Christ*

**Great Canon 11:00 p.m.**

**Resurrection Service 11:45 p.m.**

May 2 **PASCHA**

**The Service of the Resurrection of Christ - Midnight**

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

**AGAPE Vespers 11:00 a.m.- Noon**

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

## ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΟΣ 2021

Σάββατο, 24 Απριλίου

**Σάββατο του Λαζάρου**

Όρθρος 8:30 - 9:30 π.μ.

Ακολουθία της Θείας Προσκομιδής 9:30 π.μ. - 10:00 π.μ.

Θεία Λειτουργία 10:00 - 11:30 π.μ.

Κυριακή, 25 Απριλίου

**Κυριακή των Βαΐων**

Όρθρος 8:30 π.μ. Θεία Λειτουργία 9:45 π.μ. - 12:00 μ.μ.

Κατανυκτικό εσπερινό 5:00 μ.μ. - 6:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία του Νυμφίου 6:30 - 8:00 μ.μ.

Δευτέρα, 26 Απριλίου

**Μεγάλη Δευτέρα**

Ενάτη Ώρα 9:00 - 9:30 π.μ.

Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία 9:30 - 11:00 π.μ.

Ακολουθία του Νυμφίου 6:30 - 8:00 μ.μ.

Τρίτη, 27 Απριλίου

**Μεγάλη Τρίτη**

Ενάτη Ώρα 9:00 - 9:30 π.μ.

Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία 9:30 - 11:00 π.μ.

Ακολουθία του Νυμφίου 6:30 - 8:30 μ.μ.

Τέταρτη, 28 Απριλίου

**Μεγάλη Τετάρτη**

Ενάτη Ώρα 9:00 - 9:30 π.μ.

Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία 9:30 - 11:00 π.μ.

Ακολουθία του Ευχέλαιου τα παιδιά 3:00 - 4:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία του Νυμφίου 5:15 - 7:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία του Ευχέλαιου 7:00 - 8:30 μ.μ.

Πέμπτη, 29 Απριλίου

**Μεγάλη Πέμπτη**

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

Ακολουθία της Σταυρώσεως 6:30 - 10:00 μ.μ.

Παρασκευή, 30 Απριλίου

**Μεγάλη Παρασκευή**

Βασιλικές Ώρες 9:00 - 11:00 π.μ.

Αποκαθήλωσης 3:00 - 4:15 μ.μ.

Επιτάφιος Θρήνος 7:00 - 10:30 μ.μ.

Σάββατο, 1 Μαΐου

**Μεγάλο Σάββατο**

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

Μέγας Κανών 11:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθία της Αναστάσεως 11:45 μ.μ.

Θεία Λειτουργία της Αναστάσεως 12:30 - 2:00 π.μ.

Κυριακή, 2 Μαΐου

**Άγιον Πάσχα**

Μέγας Εσπερινός της Αγάπης. 11:00 π.μ. - 12:00 μ.μ.



# Guidelines for Great Lent

## 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 - 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 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

## 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, 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 April 2, April 9 and April 16. Service Books for this service will be available.

**Paraklesis Services in April** - Paraklesis services will be held as follows during the month of April: Wednesday, April 14 at 10:00 a.m.; Wednesday, April 21 at 10:00 a.m. 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. We will resume Paraklesis on Wednesday evenings on Wednesday, May 5. Because the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy is held each Wednesday evening during Great Lent, we will move Paraklesis to the morning.

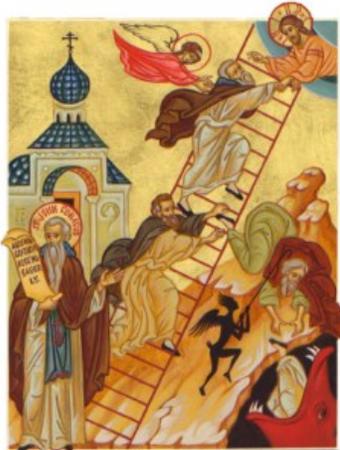
**Divine Liturgy every Saturday in April** - We will continue to celebrate Divine Liturgy every Saturday until the end of the pandemic and when people feel it is safe to congregate all together on Sundays. Divine Liturgy will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Saturdays April 3, 10 and 17. Saturday, April 24 is the Saturday of Lazarus and the regular Liturgy celebrated on that day will also be at 10:00 a.m.

## 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.



## Sunday, April 11 - Fourth Sunday of Lent - St. John Climacus



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

## Sunday, April 18 - Fifth Sunday of Lent - St. Mary of Egypt

St. Mary of Egypt was anything but a Saint throughout the first part of her life. From a very young age, she was a prostitute. Being from Egypt, she decided that she wanted to see the Holy Land and the Tomb of Christ (also known as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre). As she went to enter the Church, a force kept her from entering. She was unable to enter, while so many others did. She realized that God had done this to have her stop her sinning. She promised to God that



day she would stop. She repented with a pure heart, and she was allowed to enter. She went for Confession, received Holy Communion, and then went to the desert to live for years in repentance. Years later, she was visited by a Priest-monk, Zosimos (later a Saint in our Church). He gave her Holy Communion, and they discussed her trials and tribulations. Although she suffered much, she was so happy to be with Christ. Later that same day, she fell asleep in the Lord. Her example of repentance is SO great, we commemorate her life many centuries later.

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

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

## 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. Both Fr. John Stefero and Fr. Stavros are available to hear confessions. You can contact them directly to make appointments.



**Tampa Bay Area Open Confession Schedule**—Later on in this issue of *The Messenger*, you'll find a schedule of all the priests of Tampa Bay area, who are offering the sacrament of confession with an open schedule, meaning you don't need an appointment, just show up at that church during those hours and the priest will be able to hear your confession. Why are we doing this? A) to encourage people to go to confession; B) some people don't feel comfortable going to their parish priest, not because he is a bad confessor but because they are embarrassed, so we are taking away this barrier by encouraging those who don't feel comfortable going to their parish priest to go to another parish, and no appointment is even needed. If you plan to go to confession with Fr. Stavros or Fr. John this Lent, please contact them and make an appointment. The "open hours" are intended for those outside of our parish who may want to stop in.

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

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**\*\*You only need to list the first name of the person you wish to be commemorated. You may list names of people who are Orthodox or non-Orthodox. Please mail to the office or bring to church by April 26.**

# Holy Week 2021 Guidelines

As we are writing this issues of *The Messenger* in mid-March, there are a few things with Holy Week that are currently uncertain. There are certain things regarding Holy Week that are likely to change. We will be sending a mini-*Messenger* out via mail the week before Holy Week with the latest guidelines we have at that moment, so please stay tuned and be patient with us.

**Palm Sunday and Paschal Greetings**—One of the highlights of last year's Holy Week was having our children offer Palm Sunday greetings and our families offer Paschal greetings. Please stay tuned for instructions on how and when this is going to be done.

**Add a Service, or do them all either in person or virtually**—One positive comment that we heard after Holy Week 2020, when everyone had to stay home and no one could attend in person, was that people actually participated in MORE SERVICES in 2020 than they had in years past. Why? Because they didn't have to take time to commute. Many people virtually "attended" at least one servant they hadn't come to before. Many people virtually "attended" ALL of the services. Here are a few ideas for adding to your Holy Week experience:

1. Consider adding one service, either in person or virtually that you haven't attended before.
2. On the nights that you are not going to attend in person, consider worshipping virtually. If you are unable to commute each night, you can still participate virtually. Virtual worship will never replace in person worship. Our worship experience is meant to be experienced in person. However, for example, if you attend Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights in person, but don't come Sunday, Monday and Tuesday nights because it's a work night or a school night, consider attending these virtually.

**Saturday of Lazarus**—April 25—Father Stavros will do the Proskomide (service of preparation of the Holy Gifts) on the solea at 9:30 a.m. This is an excellent opportunity for those who have never seen this service, especially our children, to learn how the Holy Gifts are prepared before each Liturgy. Father Stavros will offer the service and narrate while he is doing it.

**Making Palm Crosses** will not be done this year. We will order them pre-made and will distribute them at the end of the Liturgy on Palm Sunday. We hope in 2022 to resume the tradition of a breakfast after liturgy on Saturday of Lazarus and making Palm Crosses as a community.

**Palm Sunday afternoon—The Vespers of Holy Monday**—There is a short vespers service of Holy Monday that is generally suppressed in parish usage. For the first time, we did this service in 2020 and will leave it as part of our Holy Week journey. The Bridegroom Service is done Palm Sunday night. The Vespers of Holy Monday is the transition from the joy of Palm Sunday to the sorrow of Holy Week. The service begins with bright colors, green for Palm Sunday, and in the middle of the service, the colors change to the dark purple of Holy Week. The service will be from 5:00-5:45 p.m., with the Bridegroom Service beginning at 6:30 p.m. A text of this service will be posted on the website and made available to the community via email.

**Why are the services at night during Holy Week called Matins Services, even though they are taking place during the evening hours?** Traditionally, the Matins or Orthros is done in the early

morning hours, ending with the sunrise, when the Great Doxology is sung or read. The Orthros or Matins Services of Holy Week are VERY long, lasting almost three and a half hours. During the Middle Ages, the services were transposed ahead several hours, from the early morning hours to the evening of the preceding night. Thus, the Orthros of Good Friday was moved to Holy Thursday evening, the 12 Gospels and the Procession of the Crucified Christ. The Lamentations, which is the Orthros of Holy Saturday was moved from Saturday morning to Friday night. The Vespers services, was moved from Holy Thursday evening to Holy Thursday morning. Our services commemorate events about 12 hours before they happened in real time, with the Last Supper Holy Thursday morning, the Crucifixion Holy Thursday evening, etc. The Descent from the Cross on Friday afternoon remains at its proper time, as a Vespers service, but the interval between the Vespers of Friday afternoon and the Orthros of Holy Saturday does not. The Resurrection Service takes place at the proper time. The schedule of transposing services begins Palm Sunday when we celebrate Orthros and Liturgy in the morning and then in the evening, we celebrate Vespers (appropriately in the evening) and immediately after the Orthros (Bridegroom service). From then on, we are approximately 12 hours ahead in what would have been happening during Holy Week. The Vespers of Good Friday afternoon are at the appropriate time. Then the Lamentations (Orthros of Holy Saturday) is celebrated a couple of hours later. We finally catch up with Pascha, celebrated in the middle of the night, the same hour as the Resurrection happened.

**Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, and Holy Wednesday mornings.** These three Pre-Sanctified Liturgies include important Scripture readings—from Exodus, from Job and from the Gospels. The Gospel readings are the last teachings of Jesus to His disciples on Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday. The Gospel of Holy Wednesday morning is the first act of the Passion, the betrayal by Judas. The Scripture readings of these services are an important part of the Holy Week narrative.

**Holy Unction** - The Mystery of Holy Unction is established upon the words and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ and is a sacrament of the church. This is a sacrament of healing and transformation from a bruised and hurt world to the deliverance from sin and corruption. All sacraments of the church are administered by the priests of the church. In fact, the primary role and identity of the priests of the church is to be the celebrant of the sacraments. Because of this, **Holy Unction may not be taken home**. If you wish to have this sacrament offered, Father Stavros is happy to offer it at the church, on a day and time of your choosing. For those unable to come to church, Father will be happy to bring it to shut-ins who are unable to come to church. *For those who are not Orthodox and cannot receive Holy Unction, as it is a sacrament, Fr. Stavros also has oil from the tomb of St. Nektarios, which can be administered to anyone. The oil will be administered also on Holy Wednesday for those who are not Orthodox, so that they can still receive prayer and anointing.*

**Bridegroom Service for the Last Supper** - There is actually a Bridegroom Service which is traditionally celebrated on Holy Wednesday evening. However, this service has been suppressed in most parishes because of the Sacrament of Holy Unction. This service is important because it contains the Gospel lesson of the Last Supper. Last year, when we did only one Holy Unction Service, we celebrated this service, in it's entirety, and will do so again this year, beginning at 5:15 p.m. The

evening Holy Unction service will begin at 7:00 p.m.

### **Holy Thursday Evening - The Service of the Passion**

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

### **An All-Night/All Day Vigil at the Cross of Christ**

For the past seven years, we have done an All-Night Vigil at the Cross of Christ. Those who participated found it VERY inspiring. The vigil will begin following the service of the 12 Gospels and will continue until the service of the Lamentations on Good Friday Evening. Thus, beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Holy Thursday, there will be 28 continuous hours of prayer in our church. ***This way, even those who can't come out in the middle of the night can participate by taking a shift during the day*** The schedule will be as follows:

#### **Holy Thursday Evening**

6:30 - 10:00 p.m. Service of the 12 Gospels

10:00 p.m. - 9:00 a.m. (Fri.) Vigil of Psalm Reading at the Cross

#### **Good Friday**

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

11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Vigil of Psalm Reading at the Cross

3:00 - 4:30 p.m. The Service of the Un-nailing

4:30 - 7:00 p.m. Vigil of Psalm Reading at the Cross

7:00 - 10:30 p.m. Service of the Lamentations

We will have a SignUpGenius for people to sign up for an hour or two to stand at the Cross and read from the book of Psalms. Charlie Hambos will again be coordinating this for us. If you are interested in participating at the All-Night/Add-Day Vigil on Holy Thursday, please contact Charlie Hambos. ***There will be a virtual option to participate in the all-night vigil for those who cannot be here in person.***

We know that at the Crucifixion, all but one of the Disciples fled. Only John stayed at the foot of the cross. In our world today, many people are abandoning Christ, Christianity, and any sense of Godliness. If Christ gave His life on the cross and did not abandon us, this is one chance, on this special day, to say thank you to Christ and remember what He did by not abandoning Him.

#### **Good Friday**

**Decoration of the Kouvouklion**—*At press time, we are not sure how we are going to handle the Kouvouklion this year, whether we will use the large one and decorate it, or whether we will use the smaller one as we did last year, which is already decorated. We will let everyone know the plans for this as we get closer to Holy Week.*

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

**The Lamentations and the Epitaphios Procession** - The Lamentations are short, poetic verses lamenting the Passion, Death and Burial of Christ. Interspersed with the Lamentations are Psalm verses from Psalm 119, the same verses we sing at a funeral service, which is appropriate, as the Lamentations are the funeral service for the Lord. The service starts with the Canon, and after the Canon is complete, the priest opens the Royal Doors, the lights are turned up, and the Lamentations begin. Everyone is invited to sing together. Books will be provided for your use. *An outdoor procession is also something we haven't come to a decision on yet. Last year, there were only a couple of people in church for the Lamentations Service and the procession was made around the inside of the church. It was dark, and quiet and really moving for the few who were there. Depending on how things progress between now and Good Friday, we may do an indoor procession in both the hall and the church, or we may do our traditional outdoor procession. Everyone will have the opportunity to pass under the Epitaphios this year, symbolizing how one day we will all pass from death to life, however we do the Procession.*

#### **Holy Saturday**

**Anastasis Service** The service of the Anastasis will begin at 11:00 p.m. on Holy Saturday evening, with the chanting of the Canon. Shortly before midnight, the light of the Resurrected Christ will be given to all the faithful. *How we will conduct this service is still being decided. We expect there will be a large number of people who will want to attend and we will be deciding what is the best, safest and most efficient way to conduct this service.*

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

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

**Holy Communion to be given only during Divine Liturgy** - There are eight opportunities to receive Holy Communion during Holy Week - Saturday of Lazarus, Palm Sunday, Holy Monday morning, Holy Tuesday morning, Holy Wednesday morning, Holy Thursday morning, Holy Saturday morning, and of course, at the Paschal Divine Liturgy. There will be three

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

**A Note on Kneeling and Sitting** - It is the tradition of the church that we kneel or stand for the majority of the services. However, by dispensation, we now have pews in the church and the faithful are allowed to sit at certain points in the services. Because of the long lines for Communion and because the length of the services, **PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO SIT** as you need to during Holy Week, especially during Holy Communion. Also, for those with bad knees, just sit with your head bowed during times we are kneeling, do not attempt to kneel. Our church never seeks our physical hurt in worship, nor do we want people passing out or becoming sick, which will only make us nervous and anxious.

**Holy Week Books are available for sale in the church bookstore.** The Holy Week Book contains the words and hymns of all the Holy Week services, aiding in our worship and serving as a theological textbook of the Orthodox theology.

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

**No Kneeling until Pentecost** It is actually the Tradition in the Orthodox Church that we not kneel on Sundays in honor of the Resurrection of Christ. Because we do not worship on a daily basis in our church communities, priests have encouraged

people to kneel on Sundays, the thought being that if we do not kneel on Sundays, that we'll never kneel in church. It is a Tradition, that for 50 days after Pascha, we do not kneel in honor of the Resurrection. The next time we will kneel after May 1 is on the Feast of Pentecost (June 20) at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says "Again and again on bended knees let us pray to the Lord."

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

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

## Five Services during Bright Week

**Feast of St. George to be celebrated Monday, May 3** - St. George the "Trophy Bearer" is one of the most famous saints of our church. He lived in the third century. He was a soldier, famously memorialized in icons as slaying a dragon. Symbolically, he "slayed" the "dragons" that opposed Christianity and was martyred for his faith. His relics were placed in the altar of our church when it was consecrated in 1986. St. George's feast day is celebrated on the Monday after Pascha when Pascha falls on April 23 or later (when Pascha falls earlier than April 23, we celebrate his feastday on April 23). Thus, this year, we will celebrate his feastday on the Monday after Pascha, May 3.

**Wednesday, May 5** - St. Irene - St. Irene was a martyr of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Many miracles have been attributed to her. She is the patron saint of law enforcement officers.

We will resume our weekly Paraklesis on **Wednesday, May 5** at 6:00 p.m.

**Friday, May 7 - Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain - Friday after Pascha** Commemorates the consecration of a Chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which was built over a spring in Constantinople, that emits water with healing powers. Hundreds of miracles and healings have occurred at this spring. This feast day of "Zoödochos Peghe - Ζωοδόχος Πηγή" the Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain, is always celebrated on the Friday of Bright (Renewal) week, the week after Pascha, April 24, this year.

**Saturday, May 8 - Feast of St. John the Theologian and St. Arsenios** - On May 8, we celebrate the feast days of St. John the Theologian, author of the fourth Gospel, as well as the Epistles of St. John and the book of Revelation, and also celebrate the feast of St. Arsenios, a month of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

# Holy Friday Sunday School Retreat

**Friday, April 30 1:00 p.m.- 3:00 p.m.**

The retreat will conclude in time to attend the Apokathelosis Service - The Unnailing/Burial of Christ at 3:00 p.m.

All parents are encouraged to attend!

We are excited to offer a smaller scale retreat this year for Sunday school students who would like to attend. We will also post the lessons we prepared last year for those that would like to participate from home.

**1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.** Small Sessions Journey through Holy Week including a craft

Individual Snacks and Waters will be provided



We Hope you can join us!

Please call or email Zackie Ameres to RSVP at  
813-245-3813 or [zackiec@yahoo.com](mailto:zackiec@yahoo.com)

## Here are some helpful suggestions for how to worship in your home this year:

1. Make a plan for which services you will attend. The schedule in *The Messenger* has the start and end time listed.
2. Please give the services your full attention. Don't "channel flip" or check the phone during the service. Treat it as if you were in church.
3. Come on time. If you are worshipping virtually, there is no commute, no traffic to fight. Come on time, and try to stay for the entirety.
4. Do not eat during the service. Again, treat this as if you were in church.
5. Do not watch TV after the evening services. With services most evenings beginning at 6:30 p.m., have dinner, get your kids ready for bed and at 6:30 p.m. gather around the computer. When the service is over, discuss it with your family and then go to bed early. You'll be well rested for the lengthier services at the end of the week. Plus, it's hard to imagine going from watching a service to two minutes later flipping the channel to a comedy or action movie.
6. Worship—Stand and sit as appropriate. Please make sure to always stand during the reading of the Gospels. Make your cross as appropriate, kneel during the processions. Sing along when you know the hymns and especially with the responses.
7. Use your Holy Week book and any other materials that are posted online.
8. Create some sacredness to your space at home. Perhaps put an icon next to the computer or TV, wherever you watch the service. Create an atmosphere by turning down the lights, or lighting candles.
9. Create some special moments in your home. For instance, before the Resurrection service, completely darken the house except for the live-stream feed of the service. At midnight, as the Light is brought from the altar, light a few candles in your house.
10. Print out icons of the different days of Holy Week. A quick google search of "icon of Saturday of Lazarus," or "icon of Crucifixion" will yield instant results. Display the icon of the day on your kitchen table and put it near the computer when you attend the service.
11. Get off screens (besides virtual worship) as much as possible. That should happen anyway during Holy Week. We should put aside as much as possible to focus on the services.
12. Clean the area around your computer where you will worship. Don't have the church services going on top of a bunch of junk.
13. Clean your house on Holy Saturday. If all things are supposed to begin anew in the Light of the Resurrected Christ, a clean feel to the house is in line with this.
14. Let your children go to more services or more of them. Because you can get them ready for bed before the service starts, let them try to stay up for part of Holy Thursday night or Good Friday night or even try the Anastasi if you can.

# St. John the Baptist Community News

## Parish Registry

**Double Baptism** - Rory Joseph Murphy, son of Luke and Stephanie Murphy; and Chase Matthew Wernke, son of Matthew and Kasey Wernke, were baptized on Sunday, February 21. Mathew and Kasey Wernke were the Godparents of Rory and Dean and Whitney Gaier were the Godparents of Chase. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism** - Aris Sean Mulholland, son of Colten Mulholland and Konstantina Kolilias, was baptized on Saturday, February 27. Anna Maria Kolilias was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

**Wedding** - Philip Owen Hartsfield and Vanessa Tritsarolis were married on Sunday, March 7. Ioannis Seraskeris was the sponsor. Congratulations!

**Funeral** - Eleftharios Fotopoulos passed away on February 20. His funeral was on Thursday, February 25. May his memory be eternal!

**Baptism** - Wyatt Alexander Rindone, son of Ryan and Megan Rindone, was baptized on Saturday, March 13. Perry and Betty Katherine Katsamakias were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

**Condolences** - To Deborah Doucas, on the passing of her mother, Sophia, on March 15. May her memory be eternal!

## Ministry News & Updates

**Donations needed of AA Batteries.** With many services and many microphones being used, we are looking for donations of AA batteries. If you wish to donate AA batteries, Duracell and Energizer are the preferred brands.

**Men's Group** - Our men's group meeting for April will be Sunday, April 11 at the church at 5:00 p.m. We will meet at the church, walk to a nearby restaurant, eat dinner, then return to the church for discussion, concluding at 7:30 p.m. This month we will talk about how to get more out of Holy Week.

**GOYA** - Our GOYA meeting for April will be Sunday, April 18 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. Dinner will be served, as always.

**Women's Bible Study will meet in April as follows:** Tuesday, April 6; Tuesday, April 13; Tuesday, April 20. 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, April 5, 12 and 19, 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@stjohntpa.org](mailto:chambos@stjohntpa.org) and he will add you.

**Thanks for your generosity, we sent \$1,730 to IOCC for disaster relief in Texas.** Your stewardship helps support our charitable giving each time there is a disaster. This, combined with individual donations helped to send a lot of relief to a place that has really been hit hard by disaster.

**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 44 "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, April 8 and Thursday, April 22.

**Our Annual Church St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival will be on April 4** All students from grades 7 - 12 are encouraged to participate. For more information, please contact Peggy Bradshaw at (727) 244-1374. The actual competition will be held inside the church sanctuary, on Sunday, April 4, following the Divine Liturgy and anyone is welcome to attend.

**Photo Ministry Looking for more Photographers** Karina Findlay is the new head of the ministry, which documents the activities of our parish. We are looking for new photographers, especially to help in documenting the upcoming Holy Week Services. If you are interested in participating, please contact Karina at 813-476-9632.

# **SCHEDULE FOR THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY CONFESSION IN THE TAMPA BAY AREA CHURCHES WITHOUT APPOINTMENT DURING GREAT LENT: MARCH 15—APRIL 24, 2021**

In an effort to encourage people to go to confession, eliminating the barriers of making an appointment, the Greek Orthodox clergy of the Tampa Bay area are going to make themselves available for confession to all Orthodox Christians. Anyone can go to any of the parishes, without an appointment for the Sacrament of Confession at the times listed; otherwise an appointment is required. For our St. John Parishioners, if you would like to go to confession, Fr. Stavros and Fr. John are available to hear confessions by appointment.

**“I have sinned, Lord; forgive me. God have mercy on me the sinner.”**

**Christ the Savior Greek Orthodox Church**, 10401 Spring Hill Drive, Spring Hill 34608 352-796-8482  
Fr. John Lazarek is available on Wednesdays from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

**St. George Greek Orthodox Church**, 9420 Little Road, New Port Richey 334654 727-868-5911  
Fr. Andrew Pavlakos available on every Monday during Lent from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

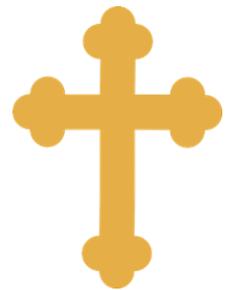
**St. Nicholas Cathedral**, 36 Pinellas Avenue, Tarpon Springs 34689 727-937-3540  
Fr. Athanasios Haros is available every Friday during Lent from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**Sts. Raphael, Nicholas and Irene**, 1100 Riviere Road, Palm Harbor 34663 727-789-5905  
Fr. James Rousakis is available every Wednesday during the Great Lent from 10 a.m. to noon

**St. Stefanos Greek Orthodox Church**, 3600 76<sup>th</sup> Street N, St. Petersburg 33710 727-345-8235  
Fr. Sampson Kasapakis is available every Wednesday during Lent from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**St. John Greek Orthodox Church**, 2418 Swann, Avenue, Tampa 33609 813-876-8830  
Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis is available every Monday during Lent from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.  
Fr. John Stefero is available every Friday during Lent from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

**St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church**, 7671 N. Lockwood Ridge Road, Sarasota 34243 941-355-2616  
Fr. John Bociu will be available every Friday during Lent from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.



## **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 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.***





# 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 April. 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.

## April 4 - 10

*Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. I Corinthians 13:4-7*

I Corinthians 13 is often referred to as St. Paul's "Treatise on love." Because in a few words, he defines what love is. He never says that love is easy or fun. His first word to describe love is that it is patient. Patience is when we wait for others to catch up, or we wait for something to happen. Even in the most loving of relationships, there will be times of frustration. This is why patience is the leading characteristic of love. Kindness is next. Kindness is related to mercy, where we overlook someone's shortcomings and choose to be compassionate to them. Love leads with humility, rather than pride. Love seeks contentment, rather than always looking at what one doesn't have. Love is polite. Love does not force things. If someone is trying to force you to do something, there is no love there. Love is optimistic. Love sees the glass half-full rather than half-empty. Love rejoices when something goes right. In these short verses, try putting the word "God" in place of the word love. God is love, and God is all the things that love is. Try putting your own name in these verses. Do you pass the test for personifying what love is? Finally, it is important to note that love is a choice. It can't be forced on someone. We can choose to love, even those who do not love us. We can choose to love even someone has wronged us.

## April 11 - 17

*Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and*

*lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

*Matthew 11:29*

A yoke is a harness that goes over two animals, which forces them to walk side by side. It is something that is generally heavy and uncomfortable and is meant for control. In this verse from Matthew 11:29, Jesus tells us that His yoke is different. If we put His yoke on us, it is not heavy or burdensome, but will provide rest for us, because we will know we are walking in the right path. If we look at ourselves as yoked to Christ, in that He walks next to us, we will never get too far afield from what we are supposed to be doing in our lives. We are supposed to yoke ourselves to Him, to walk with Him, and to be assured that the yoke will provide us rest and fulfillment, not a heavy burden. Christianity sometimes feels like a heavy burden. It shouldn't. When we make it all about "do's" and "don'ts" it becomes a heavy burden. When we focus on salvation, love, forgiveness, prayer, service, and the things of God, then it becomes a joy.

## April 18 - 24

*As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. I Peter 4:10*

Each of us has been given a means to contribute positively to the world. Some have a gift to heal, others to plan, others to design, others to write, to teach, to parent, etc. There are millions of gifts, each person having at least one that God chose for them. As each has received a gift from God (and that's where the gifts come from, they come from God, we may cultivate them through our education, but the genesis of all gifts is from God), we are supposed to use our gifts not only for material and personal gain, but for service to others. If all we do is work for ourselves and we never help others, we have not been good stewards of God's grace towards us. The good steward uses his or her gifts not only for sufficiency for themselves, but to serve others. Let's remember to use our gifts to serve others. We all have at least one gift that can be used to help others. Let's remember to ask ourselves not only "how can I earn more?" but also "How can I serve more?"

## April 25 - May 1

*Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise." And they remembered His words. Luke 24:6-8*

We are in the midst of Holy Week this week. This week is a week to remember what Christ did for us. It is a week to remember why it is important. The whole thrust of our Christian lives revolves around the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. Christianity is not only about moral living. It is not only about service. It is about salvation. It is about dying and being Resurrected with Christ, ascending to heaven and sitting at the right hand of God. Christianity is both journey and destination. The destination is heaven. The journey is our preparation, through faith, love and service. This world is so busy that we often forget both the destination and the journey. Or we think of one and not the other. This is a week to think both of the destination—heaven—and the journey—faith. As we hear the Scriptures and hymns of Holy Week, they provide us ample opportunity to think about both.

# 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.

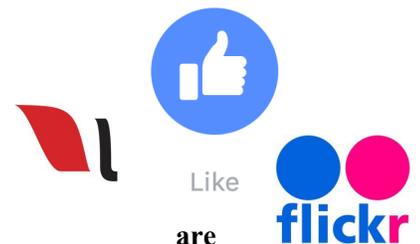
### Live Streaming

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)



# APRIL 2021 STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE

*You are the Light of the World! Matthew 5:14*

*On behalf of the Stewardship Committee we wish everyone a blessed Lenten Journey*

**Our heartfelt thanks to the loyal Stewards of St. John for your gifts to our beloved parish.** Our 2021 Stewardship campaign is underway and many answered this calling by completing a 2021 Pledge Form. We are grateful for your sacrificial giving. Stewardship connects us to Christ and your ongoing gifts allow our parish to grow and also provides us with a much-needed sanctuary and safe place to celebrate the Divine Liturgy and connect with one another.

Our Stewardship Committee has been reaching out to our parishioners to just say thanks and encouraging others to renew pledges for this new year. We remain with 134 Stewards from last year that have not completed a pledge form. Please fill out a pledge form which can easily be done online and on our Church App.

**YES – A pledge form is required every year per our current Bylaws to be considered a ‘member in good standing’ at St. John.** (If you are over age 18 and are not a student, you should fill out a pledge form. If you are married, you only need to fill out one stewardship form for your family). We will publish a list of our Stewards in the May & October Messenger of this year. We make things easy with the option of our online pledge form. Stewardship Payments and General Donations are also easy and secure online.

**Please feel free to share your thoughts to the office email - [office@stjohntpa.org](mailto:office@stjohntpa.org) or speak directly with Fr. Stavros or a member of our Stewardship Committee. We are here for YOU!**

~Year to Year Comparison ~	2021	2020*
Pledged Year to Date	\$418,053	\$454,470
Received Year to Date	\$167,801	\$176,710
Average Pledge	\$1,678	\$1,532
Median Pledge	\$700	\$700
#Individuals/Families		
Pledged/Giving	274	323
*YTD as of 3/17/21 & 3/10/20		

## The Parish Council Welcomes Fr. Stratton, Presbytera Denise, Fr. John & Presbytera Denise



On Sunday, March 7, the members of the Parish Council as well as Fr. Stavros and Presbytera Lisa, welcomed Fr. Stratton Dorozenski & Presbytera Denise Dorozenski and Fr. John Stefero & Presbytera Denise Stefero, to our community with a nice lunch after the Divine Liturgy. Since we are not offering coffee hour and other larger community gatherings, it was a nice way for the Parish Council Members to meet the new clergy and their wives in person. We are so grateful to have Fr. Stratton and Fr. John and their immediate and extended families with us.

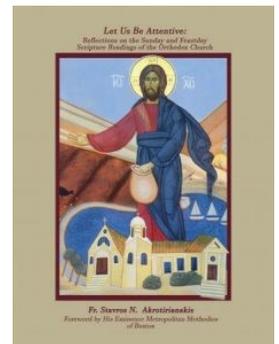
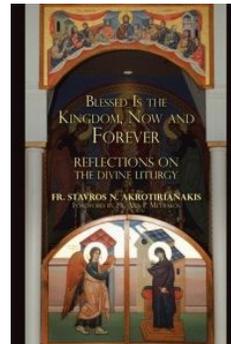
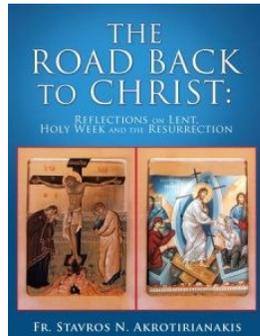
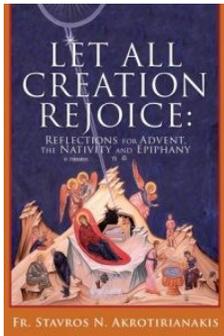
Father Stavros has authored four books that are available both in the bookstore and on-line. They are entitled:

*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*

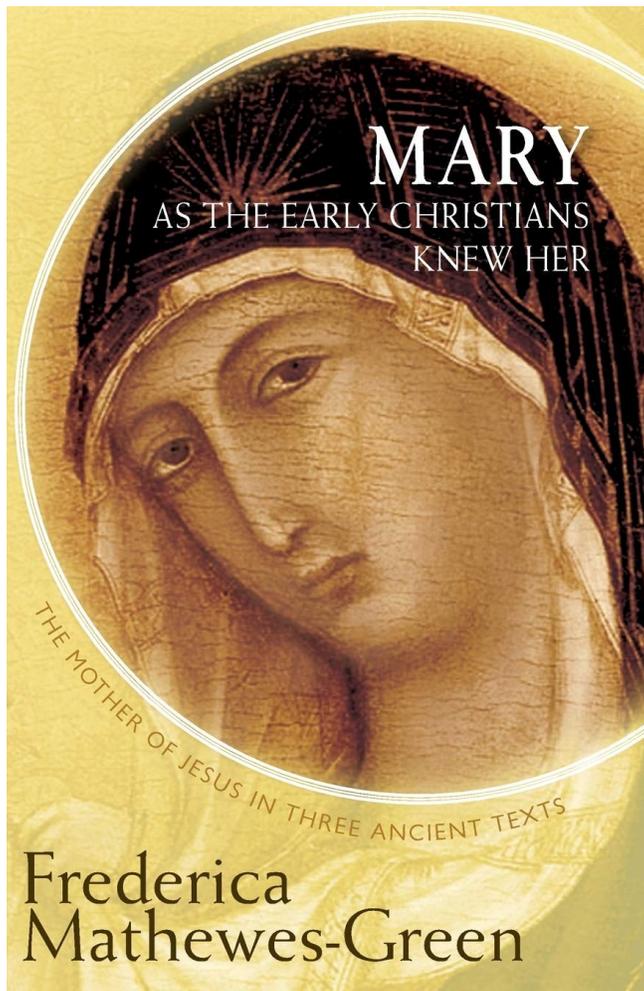
*Let us Be Attentive: Reflections on the Sunday and Feastday Scripture Readings of the Orthodox Church*



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

## “Mary As the Early Christians Knew Her”

by Frederica Mathewes-Green



Come to know the Mother of Jesus as the Early Christians did. Mary is the flower of femininity to some, a woman of power to others. She has been seen as a paragon of obedience as well as an instrument of liberation. Some have piled her status so high that it rivals that of her Son. Others do their best to ignore her entirely. Behind all of these images there is still a girl who grew up to become the mother of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

How did the first Christians view Mary? What were the commonly understood facts about Mary's early life—before the Annunciation? From three ancient texts, author Frederica Mathewes-Green opens up Mary's life before the Nativity, offering a window into her centrality to the Christian faith in new and sometimes startling ways.

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

Brett and Ana Mourer

**The Book Store can be opened at any time. Please call the office during the week or ask Charlie or Alex to open it up on Saturdays or Sundays. If there is a special request, we would love to order it for you or show you where an order can be placed for yourselves.**

# April 2021 Sunday School Update



**O**n behalf of our Sunday School we pray that you have a blessed Lent, Holy Week, and a spiritually uplifting Pascha experience.

It is a joy to see our students in Pre-K through 6th grade, back in Sunday School. We will continue to offer a VIRTUAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON every week for those families who are not ready to attend church in person. Prayfully we will all be together soon. Thank you Jenivieve Elly for creating these virtual lessons every Sunday.

Our Sunday School Topics in March were The Last Judgement, Confession, Forgiveness, and Holy Unction. March 21 was the first Sunday of Lent and our topic was Icons/Sunday of Orthodoxy. March 28 topic was Being a Good Friend. (Second Sunday of Lent—The Paralytic).

Speaking of Lent and Holy Week, our Altar Boys, Myrrh Bearers, and Maiden for the Bridegroom Services are preparing and excited for their roles during this important time in our church. Everyone is also looking forward to our Sunday School Good Friday Retreat on April 30.

## 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, April 4

3rd Sunday of Lent - The Holy Cross

### Sunday, April 11

4th Sunday of Lent - St. John the Ladder

### Sunday, April 18

5th Sunday of Lent - St. Mary of Egypt

### Sunday, April 25

Palm Sunday

## Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

**Over 3000 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@stjohntpa.org](mailto:alex@stjohntpa.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!**

# Community Outreach

## Saturday, April 17

### We Want You to Serve with Us!

Hello and WELCOME! My name is Greg Melton and on behalf of our Community Outreach Ministry I want to thank you for your interest in participating with our group. **On the third Saturday of each month**, we volunteer our time to provide for 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.

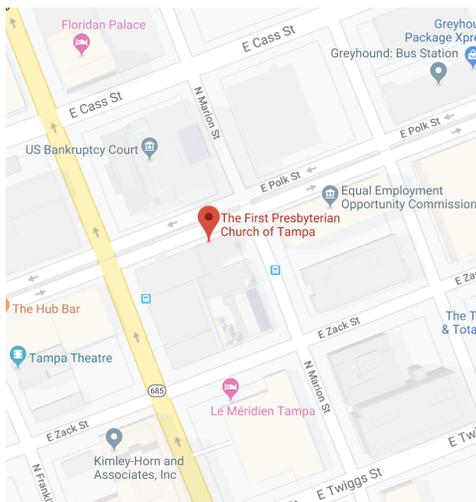
#### Volunteer Check-In Process:

- 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, April 3. 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.

## 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 want to thank our YAH members for attending our Saturday IN-PERSON Church Liturgy and YAH meetings**
  - We had 14 people in attendance on March 6.
  - It was a pleasure finally seeing Christine Scourtes in-person and seeing Denise Badran, Vangie Xeroteris and Mike Trimis again on zoom.
  - We follow Hillsborough County's socially distance and mask wearing directives.
- **"Churches That Touched Our Lives"**
  - We want to especially thank Fr. John last month for his presentation of the Churches that Touched his and Presbyteria Denise's lives. He helped us understand that Churches are not just their patron saints, the icons and the beautiful buildings but it is also the people we met and that made an impact in us.
  - We encourage people who have not presented their list of "Churches That Touched their Lives" to do so in the coming months.
- **We continue to reach out to those who are homebound during the pandemic as part of our Church's Core Values: LOVE, COMMUNITY & SERVICE**
  - Dora Morgan reported the number of people:

-Phoned	15
-Left Messages	8
-Visited In-Person	1
-Sent Cards	2
-Left Text Messages	3
- **This month's Birthdays wishes went to:**
  - Andrew Bouzinekis
  - Bobbi Perry
  - Pete Nenos
  - Pam Nolan
- **Thank you to Mary Nenos and her helpers for arranging the coffee and snacks.**

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

## OUR COMING EVENTS

- We will having our next YAH meetings to on **Saturday, April 3** at 11:30 a.m.
- 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 as well as lunch and shopping Tarpon Springs.

## PASSED ACTIVITIES

- March 6, 2021 - We held a socially distant IN PERSON and Zoom meeting in the Kourmolis Center.
- 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

# April is Oral Cancer Awareness Month

Oral cancer can be very serious but regular visits to the dentist can improve your chances when caught early

**O**ral cancer, also known as mouth cancer, is cancer of the lining of the lips, mouth, or upper throat. In the mouth, it most commonly starts as a painless white patch, that thickens, develops red patches, an ulcer, and continues to grow. When on the lips, it commonly looks like a persistent crusting ulcer that does not heal, and slowly grows.

The most common type of oral cancer is squamous cell carcinoma which is known to metastasize quickly and cause death. Oral cancer can be **very serious** but regular visits to your dentist can improve the chances that any suspicious changes in your oral health will be caught early, at a time when cancer can be treated more easily.

The exact cause of oral cancer is not known but it is predicted that some of the cause may be:

1. HPV virus

HPV is the leading cause of oropharyngeal cancers; primarily the tonsils, tonsillar crypt, the base of the tongue. The only way to know if you have an HPV infection is if your health care provider tests you for the virus.

There is no cure for the virus. Most of the time, HPV goes away by itself within two years and does not cause health problems. It is only when HPV stays in the body for many years, usually decades, that it might cause these oral cancers.

Two vaccines known as Gardasil and Cervarix protect against the strains of HPV.

HPV vaccination for girls and boys ages 11 and 12, as well as individuals ages 13 to 26 if they haven't received



the vaccine already. Gardasil vaccine has also been approved for use in boys and men, ages 9 through 26 years old. For adults the age range has been extended from 27 to 45 years old.

2. Cigarettes, cigar or pipe smoking
3. Users of smokeless tobacco such as dip, snuff, or tobacco chewing
4. Alcohol consumption that is excessive
5. History of cancer in the family
6. Exposure to excessive sun or certain human papilloma-virus strains are at a risk

## Prevention

Avoid staying in direct sunlight.

Avoid smoking, drinking alcohol and tobacco products.

Have a balanced diet and eat well.

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## Five Undeniable Facts

1. Do not educate your children to be rich. Educate them to be happy. - So when they grow up they will know the value of things, not the price.
2. Eat your food as medicine, otherwise you will need to eat your medicine as food.
3. Whoever loves you will never leave you, even if he has 100 reasons to give up. He will always find one reason to hold on.
4. There is a big difference between being human and human being.
5. If you want to go fast - go alone! But if you want to go far - go together!"

## Six Best Doctors in the World

And in conclusion, The six best doctors in the world.

1. Sunlight
2. Rest
3. Exercise
4. Diet
5. Self-confidence
6. Friends

Keep them in all stages of life and enjoy a healthy life.

"Love the people God sent you, one day he'll need them back."

# 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

## **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!

Julie Konstas – April 2  
Teresa Miller – April 2  
Samuel Rodriguez - April 2  
Nedi Ferekides - April 3  
Petra Silber - April 3  
Angelika Labatos – April 4  
Anthony Koudouna – April 5  
George Hambos - April 5  
Zachary Carter – April 6  
Nicholas Kataras – April 6  
Maria N. Miaoulis - April 9  
Robert Reace – April 9  
Joshua Preston – April 10  
Nicholas Kalojiannis – April 11  
Harris Robinson - April 11  
Brett Sandborn - April 11  
Alexis Scarfoglio - April 11  
Sadie Schad - April 11  
Anna Thomas April 11  
Brett Mourer April 12  
George Cantonis - April 15  
Gabriele Molina - April 15  
Liam Boomgarden - April 16  
Liam Boomgarden - April 16  
Grayson Borgeas-Beach - April 16  
James Kavouklis - April 16  
Alexandra Patrascoiu - April 16

William Comminos - April 17  
Samuel Thomas - April 17  
Natalie Henderson - April 19  
Vasilios Panos - April 19  
Zachary George - April 20  
Maverick Horack - April 20  
Sue Krinos - April 20  
Nicholas Tsiabasis - April 21  
Donna Hambos - April 22  
Daniel Vukmer - April 24  
Doukissa Moshos - April 25  
Anna Roussos - April 25  
Liam Elly - April 26  
Efstratios Stamas - April 26  
Razvan Stingulescu - April 26  
Deborah Doucas - April 27  
Michael Giallourakis - April 27  
John G. Malacos - April 27  
Nicholas Malatin - April 28  
Korey Mulberry - April 28  
Sebastien Provenzano - April 28  
Katherin Voisey - April 28  
Frances Spirides - April 29  
Stella Geis – April 30  
Joanne Westmoreland - April 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 Touliatos 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 weekends  
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/southatmpasugarmama/>

**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 Chryssakis - 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.**

# S.O.S.

**A**n Airbus 380 is on its way across the Atlantic. It flies consistently at 800 km/h in 30,000 feet, when suddenly a Eurofighter with Tempo Mach 2 appears.

The pilot of the fighter jet slows down, flies alongside the Airbus and greets the pilot of the passenger plane by radio: "Airbus flight, boring flight isn't it? Take care and have a look here!"

He rolls his jet on its back, accelerates, breaks through the sound barrier, rises rapidly to a dizzying height, only to swoop down almost to sea level in a breathtaking dive. He loops back next to the Airbus and asks, "Well, how was that?"

The Airbus pilot answers: "Very impressive, but now have a look here!"

The jet pilot watches the Airbus, but nothing happens. It continues to fly stubbornly straight, with the same speed. After five minutes, the Airbus pilot radioed, "Well, what are you saying now?"

The jet pilot asks confused: "What did you do?" The other laughs and says, "I got up, stretched my legs, went to the back of the flight to the bathroom, got a cup of coffee and a cinnamon cake.

The moral of the story is:

When you are young, speed and adrenaline seems to be great. But as you get older and wiser, comfort and peace are not to be despised either.

This is called S.O.S.: Slower, Older, Smarter.

## Who Wants to Be a Billionaire?

**M**an dies a billionaire, with a fortune of \$7 billion, at the age of 56 from pancreatic cancer, and here are some of his last words:

"In other eyes, my life is the essence of success, but aside from work, I have a little joy, and in the end wealth is just a fact of life to which I am accustomed.

At this moment, lying on the bed, sick and remembering all my life, I realize that all my recognition and wealth that I have is meaningless in the face of imminent death.

You can hire someone to drive a car for you, make money for you - but you can not rent someone to carry the disease for you. One can find material things, but there is one thing that can not be found when it is lost - "life".

Treat yourself well, and cherish others. As we get older we are smarter, and we slowly realize that the watch is worth \$ 30 or \$ 300 - both of which show the same time.

Whether we carry a purse worth \$ 30 or \$ 300 - the amount of money in the wallets are the same. Whether we drive a car worth \$ 150,000, or a car worth \$ 30,000 - the road and distance are the same, we reach the same destination.

If we drink a bottle worth \$300 or wine worth \$ 10 - the "stroller" will be the same.

If the house we live in is 300 square meters, or 3,000 square meters - the loneliness is the same.

Your true inner happiness does not come from the material things of this world. Whether you're flying first class, or economy class - if the plane crashes, you crash with it.

So, I hope you understand that when you have friends or someone to talk to - this is true happiness!

## Χρόνια Πολλά! Happy Nameday!

April 2  
TITOS

April 3  
ILLYRIOS

April 5  
PANAGIOTIS

April 6  
EFTIHIOS

April 9  
EFPSYHIOS, JOSEF

April 10  
ANAKSIMENIS, DIMOKLIS, DIMOSTHENES,  
DIONISIS, EPAMINONDAS, ETEOKLIS,  
FOKION, HERCULES, HOMER, IFESTION,  
ISOCRATES, MAXIMOS, MILTIADIS,  
PARMENION, PELOPIDAS, PERICLES,  
PHILOPIMIN, PINDAROS, POLYVIOS,  
PROMITHEAS, SOCRATES, SOFOCLES,  
THEMISTOKLIS, THEOFRASTOS, THISEAS,  
TIMOTHY, XENOFON, ZINON

April 11  
ANTIPAS

April 12  
AKAKIOS

April 13  
GERONTIOS

April 14  
ARISTARHOS, THOMAS

April 15  
LEONIDAS

April 16  
GALINI, GALINOS, HIONIA, CALIS, NIKI

April 20  
ZAKHAIOS

April 21  
ALEXANDRA, FAISTOS, IANOS,  
JANUARY

April 22  
NATHANAEL, NEARHOS

April 24  
ACHILLES, DOUKAS, ELIZABETH,  
LAZAROS, THAVMASTOS

April 25  
DAFNIS, DAPHNE, NIKI, VAIOS,  
GLAFYRA

April 28  
MAGNOS

April 29  
ALITHEA, JASON, KERKYRA,  
SOSIPATROS

April 30  
ARGYRO, ASIMAKIS

# My One Word for 2021: Trust

*Every month, we ask someone to submit a reflection on their "Word for 2021." If you'd like to share your word and how it's shaping your year, please email Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com. This month's testimonial is from Angela Johnston.*

The word I chose for this year is Trust. On the surface, it may seem rather mundane and unoriginal. But, I'm not referring to the type of trust that I have with other humans- namely, that they will do as I request, whether it be my son, a patient at work or someone I hire to mow the lawn. Those people I mostly trust to follow my directions and I trust in an outcome I desire- and there is a consequence if that doesn't happen, such as withholding pay from someone I've hired or an earlier curfew for my son.

The Trust I refer to is my Trust in God, and it's a deep level of trust that took me decades to develop- I can't say 100% achieve yet. To quote Rick Warren, "Trust is to allow God to do something without fearing the outcome! Trust is a relational, heart issue, not a mind issue". In other words, I can pray and request something but NOT expect that God will just accommodate me; instead, I TRUST that He will have His hand in the situa-

tion and I TRUST that the situation will work out according to His Will- which, maybe quite opposite My wish -and often IS! And, as difficult as it may be, I will accept that outcome, because I Trust that He knows what is ultimately best for my/ our soul(s). I feel that is truly a level of trust that is as deep as we humans can attain.

Incredibly, when I pray for this and trust to that level ("Please, Lord, help guide this situation, however You see fit..."), then I feel as if the weight of the world is off my shoulders. There's no trying to control the situation, no worrying, no sleepless nights; I simply pray and let the chips fall where they may- knowing He is in charge and I will have the strength to handle whatever outcome arises. Those who know me well, are aware that life has given me ample opportunities to learn to trust the Lord in this way and I can assure you, it is very freeing and brings that elusive "peace that surpasses all understanding". (Philippians 4:7)

*Angela Johnston is a clinical hospital pharmacist at the James A Haley VA in Tampa. Her son Joey is graduating from Alonzo High School this spring.*

# My One Word for 2021: Gratitude

*Every month, we ask someone to submit a reflection on their "Word for 2021." If you'd like to share your word and how it's shaping your year, please email Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com. March's testimonial was from Oliver (Elias) Filutowski but we had the wrong word in the title so we are running the reflection again in April.*

**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.

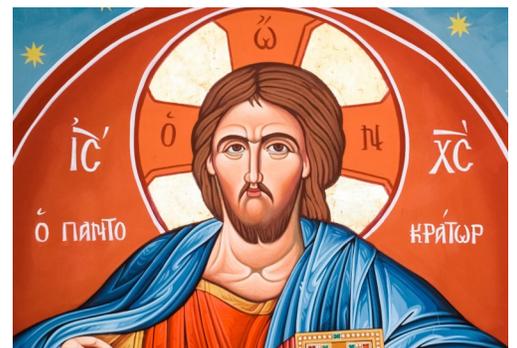
So let us rejoice, my brothers and sisters, in both the greeting, "Christ is in our midst!" and in the response, "He is and ever shall be!" By allowing the reality of God's intimate presence in our lives to settle within our hearts, we are transfigured by gratitude, and thus, every sorrow, trial or temptation 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.*

# How we should see Christ

By St. Porphyrios Kafsokalyvites

"This is the way we should see Christ. He is our friend, our brother; He is whatever is good and beautiful. He is everything. Yet, He is still a friend and He shouts it out, 'You're my friends, don't you understand that? We're brothers. I don't hold hell in my hands. I am not threatening you. I love you. I want you to enjoy life together with me.' Christ is Everything. He is joy, He is life, He is light. He is the true light who makes man joyful, makes him soar with happiness; makes him see everything, everybody; makes him feel for everyone, to want everyone with him, everyone with Christ. Love Christ and put nothing before His Love. Christ is Everything. He is the source of life, the ultimate desire, He is everything. Everything beautiful is in Christ. Somebody who is Christ's must love Christ, and when he loves Christ he is delivered from the Devil, from hell and from death."



# Dating Pascha in the Orthodox Church

By Dr. Lewis J. Patsavos

The long-awaited common celebration of Pascha on April 15, 2001 by all Christians has come and gone. It was in 1990 when this coincidence last occurred and will be in 2004 when it occurs again. In anticipation of this common observance by all Christians, much was said and written. What was stressed was the need to keep alive the momentum of the occasion. Unless we all understand the significance of this event, it will remain nothing more than a peculiarity of the calculations related to the date of Pascha. In one sense, that is what it is. But in another sense, it is the convergence of all that we as Christians in the East and West profess regarding the centrality of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of our faith.

Nothing challenges the credibility of this fact to non-believers more than the scandal of our division on this point of celebration. In the ardent desire to address this problematic and troubling reality, the following contribution is offered....

Almost from the very beginning of the existence of the Christian Church, the issue regarding the date of our Lord's death and resurrection presented variations. Although the New Testament relates these events to the Jewish Passover, the details of this relationship are not clear. On the one hand, the tradition of the synoptic gospels identifies the Lord's last supper with His disciples as a passover meal. This would place the death of our Lord on the day after Passover. On the other hand, the tradition of the gospel of St. John situates the death of our Lord at the very hour the paschal lambs were sacrificed on the day of Passover itself. This variation in the interpretation of the scriptures led to two different practices. The one observed Pascha on the day of Passover, regardless of the day of the week. The other observed it on the Sunday following Passover. By the 4th century, the latter practice prevailed throughout the Church universally; nevertheless, differences continued to exist.

In response to this ongoing problem, the First Ecumenical Council convened at Nicaea in 325 took up the issue. It determined that Pascha should be celebrated on the Sunday which follows the first full moon after the vernal equinox—the actual beginning of spring. If the full moon happens to fall on a Sunday, Pascha is observed the following Sunday. The day taken to be the invariable date of the vernal equinox is March 21. Hence, the determination of the date of Pascha is governed by a process dependent on the vernal equinox and the phase of the moon.

Another factor which figures prominently in determining the date of Pascha is the date of Passover. Originally, Passover was celebrated on the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Christians, therefore, celebrated Pascha according to the same calculation—that is, on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox. The correlation between the date of Pascha and the date of Passover is clear. Our Lord's death and resurrection coincided with Passover, thereby assuring a secure point of reference in time. This assurance lasted, however, only for a short time.

Events in Jewish history contributing to the dispersion of the Jews had as a consequence a departure from the way Passover was reckoned at the time of our Lord's death and resurrection. This caused the Passover to precede the vernal equinox in some



years. It was, in fact, this anomaly which led to the condemnation reflected in Canon 1 of Antioch (ca. 330) and Canon 7 of the Holy Apostles (late 4th century) of those who celebrate Pascha "with the Jews." The purpose of this condemnation was to prevent Christians from taking into account the calculation of Passover in determining the date of Pascha.

Most Christians eventually ceased to regulate the observance of Pascha by the Jewish Passover. Their purpose, of course, was to preserve the original practice of celebrating Pascha following the vernal equinox. Thus, the Council of Nicaea sought to link the principles for determining the date of Pascha to the norms for calculating Passover during our Lord's lifetime.

Despite the intervention of Nicaea, certain differences in the technicalities of regulating the date of Pascha remained even thereafter. This resulted occasionally in local variations until, by the 6th century, a more secure mode of calculation based on astronomical data was universally accepted. This was an alternative to calculating Pascha by the Passover and consisted in the creation of so-called "paschal cycles." Each paschal cycle corresponded to a certain number of years. Depending upon the number of years in the cycle, the full moon occurred on the same day of the year as at the beginning of the cycle with some exceptions. The more accurate the cycle, the less frequent were the exceptions. In the East, a 19-year cycle was eventually adopted, whereas in the West an 84-year cycle. The use of two different paschal cycles inevitably gave way to differences between the Eastern and Western Churches regarding the observance of Pascha.

A further cause for these differences was the adoption by the Western Church of the Gregorian Calendar in the 16th century. This took place in order to adjust the discrepancy by then observed between the paschal cycle approach to calculating Pascha and the available astronomical data. The Orthodox Church continues to base its calculations for the date of Pascha

on the Julian Calendar, which was in use at the time of the First Ecumenical Council. As such, it does not take into account the number of days, which have since then accrued due to the progressive loss of time in this calendar.

Practically speaking, this means that Pascha may not be celebrated before April 3, which was March 21, the date of the vernal equinox, at the time of the First Ecumenical Council. In other words, a difference of 13 days exists between the accepted date for the vernal equinox then and now. Consequently, it is the combination of these variables which accounts for the different dates of Pascha observed by the Orthodox Church and other Christian Churches.

Specifically with regard to this year's date of Pascha, the following observations are made. The invariable date of the vernal equinox is taken to be April 3 (March 21 on the Julian Calendar). Pascha must therefore be observed on the Sunday following the full moon which comes after that date. According to the 19-year Paschal cycle, the first full moon which comes after April 3 this year is on May 1 (April 18 on the Julian Calendar) - the day assigned to the Jewish Passover as calculated originally. In reality, this full moon falls on April 27, a discrepancy left

uncorrected in the paschal cycle. As already stated, the provision of the First Ecumenical Council calls for Pascha to be observed on the Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Since May 1, for the reasons stated above, is taken to be the date of that full moon, the following Sunday, May 5, is the day on which Pascha is observed this year.

If anything, this review of the complexities surrounding the issue of the date of Pascha underscores the compelling need to revisit it with patience and openness. This was the spirit which predominated at the most recent consultation on the matter held in Aleppo, Syria in 1997. One of its conclusions was that the present differences in the calendars and lunar tables (paschal cycles) employed rather than to differences in fundamental theological outlook. In view of the fact that both the Julian and Gregorian modes of calculation diverge from the astronomical data, it behooves us to return to the norms determined by the Council of Nicaea. Although the council did not itself undertake a detailed regulation of the paschal calculation, it did in fact respect available contemporary science regarding the vernal equinox and the phase of the moon. We can do no less today.

## Cancel Culture

By Fr. John Ketchum

"We have a horrible trend going on in our modern society of "cancel culture", has anyone heard of this? This is totally antithetical to the Orthodox Christian mindset. We have someone posting something on social media and someone swoops down is "offended" and decides to cause a viral attack on that person getting many others to go along with them. The ultimate goal of this is destroying that person's livelihood, not only making sure they are publicly disgraced and/or fired for their jobs, but to the greatest extent to try to make sure that they are never able to find any kind of work again. This is what cancel culture is all about. And it is celebrated and fueled by the media. And who are the sinless special people that get to decide someone's fate, who comb social media for their next victim? Who else can we cancel out and destroy? Without any regard to the de-

struction in their wake we see this going on over and over and it generally looked upon as a "good thing" much the Pharisees from today's lesson. Someone might say, well this only happens to celebrities and people in public forums, but recently a college student was canceled by her university for a three second video that was posted when she was in middle school, and she would not be able to get accepted anywhere. It can happen to anyone at any time over anything deemed offensive by someone. What will be next? Is it possible in the future one could be canceled merely for following Christian beliefs if those are unpopular?"

*Fr. John Ketchum is the Proistamenos of Koimisis Greek Orthodox Church in Racine, Wisconsin.*

### St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

Bazaar, Greek Food and Bake Sale  
1030 Bradbury Road  
Winter Haven, FL 33880

Saturday, April 10, 2021  
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

For pre-orders of food and pastries, please call Tina Thomas (863) 224-4307 or Viki Sheidy (863) 651-9519.

This is an outdoor event. Delicious Greek food and pastries to-go. Please wear a mask and practice social distancing.

## Philoptochos Bake Sale

April 24 & 25 after the Divine Liturgy

Spanakopita, Tyropita,  
Tsourekia & Baklava

Contact Lisa Alsina with any questions, 813-728-1094.

# On the Lighter Side

Did you know? Chocolate comes from cocoa, which is a tree. That makes it a plant. So chocolate is a salad.

Teacher: Give me a sentence which includes the word defence, defeat, detail.

Student: When a horse jumps over defence, defeat go first and then detail.

You never realize how long a minute is until you are exercising.

My mind is like someone emptied the kitchen junk drawer onto a trampoline.

I've finally reached "The wonder years."

Wonder where I parked my car?

Wonder where I left my phone?

Wonder where my glasses are?

Wonder what day it is?

Parenting is buying four bananas and watching them all get eaten in one day. Then buying eight bananas and watching them rot on your counter because "no one likes bananas."

# On the serious side

The world is like Pharaoh, he fears plagues but not God!

This is not a God forsaken world, it is a world that has forsaken God.

Grace is when God gives us good things that we don't deserve. Mercy is when He spares us from bad things we deserve. Blessings are when He is generous with both. Truly we can never run out of reasons to thank Him. God is good all the time!

To miss your kingdom assignment because you have become too caught up in your personal kingdom itself is the greatest tragedy you could ever face. ~Tony Evans

Simple truths to repeat when you're in a spiritual battle:

God's got this

The Lord fights for me

Jesus love me

Not today Satan

I am a child of God

He is able

It is finished

His grace is sufficient

Joy comes in the morning

I am not alone

I am fearfully and wonderfully made

Fear has no grip on me

Christ is enough for me

He has overcome the world

I am a new creation in Christ

Jesus conquered the grave

Sin doesn't define me, Christ does

Be still and know

God is good

Don't be impressed by : Money, titles, appearances, social media, achievements, degrees

Be impressed by: kindness, empathy, generosity, humility, integrity, honesty

Wednesday thoughts:

Make sure your courage is stronger than your fear.

Never miss time with your parents.

Character is much easier kept than recovered.

Smiles are free.

Find where you belong then don't let anything get in your way.

Have a great day!



## Need a Mask? We have many!

Through the generous donation of a few parishioners, we have reusable cloth masks available. We are thankful especially to Paula (Sakellaris) Weinburg, who made and mailed many of them from Virginia. If you need a mask, please contact the church office and we can arrange to get you one.

Thank you also to the many parishioners who have made and donated masks to us.

# Why Should I Fast?

## 7 Examples of Fasting in the Bible

by Kristen Feola, from *Spiritually Strong*

Although the Bible doesn't give a direct command on this issue, examples of fasting appear in both the Old and the New Testaments. One of the most telling passages in which fasting is mentioned is [Matthew 6:16](#), where Jesus is teaching His disciples basic principles of godly living. When speaking on fasting, He begins with, "When you fast," not "If you fast."

Jesus' words imply that fasting will be a regular practice in His followers' lives.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, said, "Jesus takes it for granted that His disciples will observe the pious custom of fasting. Strict exercise of self-control is an essential feature of the Christian life. Such customs have only one purpose — to make the disciples more ready and cheerful to accomplish those things which God would have done."

**"Fasting prepares you for the works God has ordained for you to do."**

Wesley Duewel, a twentieth-century writer, said, "You and I have no more right to omit fasting because we feel no special emotional prompting than we have a right to omit prayer, Bible reading, or assembling with God's children for lack of some special emotional prompting. Fasting is just as biblical and normal a part of a spiritual walk of obedience with God as are these others."

People fast for a number of reasons. Following are seven circumstances in the Bible in which believers sought God through this discipline.

**1. To prepare for ministry.** Jesus spent forty days and nights in the wilderness fasting and praying before He began God's work on this earth. He needed time alone to prepare for what His Father had called Him to do ([Matthew 4:1-17](#); [Mark 1:12-13](#); [Luke 4:1-14](#)).

**2. To seek God's wisdom.** Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted for the elders of the churches before committing them to the Lord for His service ([Acts 14:23](#)).

**3. To show grief.** Nehemiah mourned, fasted, and prayed when he learned Jerusalem's walls had been broken down, leaving the Israelites vulnerable and disgraced ([Nehemiah 1:1-4](#)).

**4. To seek deliverance or protection.** Ezra declared a corporate fast and prayed for a safe journey for the Israelites as they made the nine-hundred-mile trek to Jerusalem from Babylon ([Ezra 8:21-23](#)).

**5. To repent.** After Jonah pronounced judgment against the city of Nineveh, the king covered himself with sackcloth and sat in the dust. He then ordered the people to fast and pray. [Jonah 3:10](#) says, "When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He relented and did not bring on them the destruction He had threatened."

**6. To gain victory.** After losing forty thousand men in battle in two days, the Israelites cried out to God for help. [Judges](#)



[20:26](#) says all the people went up to Bethel and "sat weeping before the Lord." They also "fasted that day until evening." The next day the Lord gave them victory over the Benjamites.

**7. To worship God.** Luke 2 tells the story of an eighty-four-year-old prophetess named Anna. Verse 37 says, "She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying." Anna was devoted to God, and fasting was one expression of her love for Him.

Despite biblical examples throughout Scripture, many Christians are slow to fast. I believe there are three main factors that cause believers to be hesitant — fear, ignorance, or rebellion.

**Fear.** They're afraid. Afraid of the unknown. Afraid of feeling hunger pangs. Afraid of starting and not finishing. Afraid of fasting alone. The Enemy has them convinced they could never do it. Instead of looking to the Lord's strength for help, they become consumed with their own weaknesses and paralyzed by fear.

**Ignorance.** Many Christians simply have not been taught about the importance of seeking God in this way. Churches often do not encourage fasting, and in many cases never even mention it from the pulpit. For example, I grew up in a Bible-believing church, but I don't recall hearing a message on fasting until I was an adult.

**Rebellion.** A large segment of the Christian population is aware of the benefits of fasting, yet they're unwilling to do it. Their hearts are hardened when it comes to the idea of fasting. When God invites them to draw near, they dig their heels into the ground and refuse to obey.

Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, was a firm believer in the power of prayer and fasting. In his guide *Why You Should Fast*, he listed the following reasons for seeking God through self-denial.

- Fasting was an expected discipline in both the Old and New Testament eras.
- Fasting and prayer can restore the loss of the “first love” for your Lord and result in a more intimate relationship with Christ.
- Fasting is a biblical way to truly humble yourself in the sight of God.
- Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance, and a transformed life.
- Fasting will encourage the Holy Spirit to quicken the Word of God in your heart and His truth will become more meaningful to you.
- Fasting can transform your prayer life into a richer and more personal experience.
- Fasting can result in a dynamic personal revival in your own life and make you a channel of revival to others.

Many times we don’t fast because we’ve lost our spiritual appetite. John Piper says, “The absence of fasting is the measure of our contentment with the absence of Christ.” Piper adds, “If we don’t feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because we have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because we have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Our soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.”

Fasting is a much-needed discipline in the life of a believer. It truly is the “path of pleasant pain,” as John Piper calls it. As you empty yourself physically and spiritually, you open the door for God to step in and do the miraculous. Your relationship with the Lord is taken to a whole new level. You also become more sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit, which enables you to hear God’s voice more clearly.

Anyone who has done a fast — whether absolute, liquid, or partial — would agree fasting is difficult. Physically, you may



suffer from unpleasant side effects, such as headaches, fatigue, and intestinal discomfort, as your body attempts to adjust to the reduced caloric intake. Spiritually, attacks from the Enemy increase in frequency and intensity, resulting in a barrage of frustrations that can seem overwhelming. However, the same people who would be honest about the challenges of fasting would also concur that the sacrifices are well worth the rewards. So don’t resist the suffering that accompanies fasting. Rejoice in it! Fasting is a spiritual exercise which God honors. He promises to heap blessings on people who are hungry for Him (Matthew 5:6).

*Note: As always, consult your doctor before considering any change in your diet.*

Excerpted with permission from *Spiritually Strong: The Ultimate 6-Week Guide To Building Your Body And Soul* by Kristen Feola, copyright Zondervan.

# Results of an “I-Centered” Life

By Rick Warren

***“Wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.”***  
James 3:16 (NLT)

When “I” am at the center of everything in my life, that’s sin.

We all have an “I” problem: I want it my way; I will do my thing; I have to take care of myself first; I don’t have time for others; I am the most important thing.

Growing up, my dad taught me the danger of I-focused living by pointing out that the middle letter of “sin” is “I.” At the root of sin is self-centeredness, and the middle letter of “pride” just also happens to be “I.” Where else does this apply? All “crime” is self-centered. A lot of social problems in the world today are caused by three groups with “I” at the center: racists, sexists, and chauvinists. All of these work off the philosophy that “I am

better than you.”

What other I-centered sins happen when you start living a self-focused life? You start to “whine” and “criticize.” You turn “envious,” “deceitful,” “defiant,” and “merciless”—because you want grace for yourself but not for others.

What are the results of living a self-focused life? Guilt, fatigue, pessimism, hostility, and emptiness—all with “I” at the center.

What is the only antidote to an I-focused life? You have to change your focus.

You were made by God and for God. And you will only find peace and purpose when you focus your life on him. *“You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you”* (Isaiah 26:3 NLT).

# 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 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 possession talents or achievements of others? Have I desired the downfall or loss of others out of evil intent that I might benefit? Have I grieved that God has bestowed greater blessings on others than on me?

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

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

~ April 2021 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				<b>1</b> Griefshare 6:30 p.m.	<b>2 **</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>3</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m. Young at Heart 11:30 a.m.
<b>4</b> <b>Cross</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 9:45 a.m.  <b>Local Oratorical Festival Western Easter</b>	<b>5</b>  Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:45 p.m.	<b>6</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	<b>7 **</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 5:30 p.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> 6:00 p.m.	<b>8</b> Griefshare 6:30 p.m.	<b>9 **</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>10</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m.
<b>11</b> <b>Sunday of St. John Climacus</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 9:45 a.m.  Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	<b>12</b>  Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:45 p.m.	<b>13</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	<b>14 **</b> Paraklesis 10:00 a.m. 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 5:30 p.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> 6:00 p.m.	<b>15</b> Griefshare 6:30 p.m.	<b>16 **</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 9:30am. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m. Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m.	<b>17</b> Community Outreach Orthros 9:00 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m.  Regional Oratorical Festival NPR
<b>18</b> <b>Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 9:45 a.m.  GOYA 5:00 p.m.	<b>19</b>  Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:45 p.m.	<b>20</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	<b>21 **</b> Paraklesis 10:00 a.m. 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 5:30 p.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> 6:00 p.m.	<b>22</b> Griefshare 6:30 p.m.	<b>23 **</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 9:30 a.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m.	<b>24**</b> <b>Saturday of Lazarus</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Proskomide 9:15 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 10:00 a.m.
<b>25 **</b> <b>Palm Sunday</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. <b>Liturgy</b> 9:45 a.m. Vespers 5:00 p.m. Bridegroom Service 6:30 p.m.	<b>26 **</b> <b>Holy Monday</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> 9:30 a.m. Bridegroom Service 6:30 p.m.	<b>27 **</b> <b>Holy Tuesday</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> 9:30 a.m. Bridegroom Service 6:30 p.m.	<b>28 **</b> <b>Holy Wednesday</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 9:00 a.m. <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> 9:30 a.m. Unction 3:00 p.m. Bridegroom Service 5:15p.m. Unction 7:00 p.m.	<b>29**</b> <b>Holy Thursday</b> <b>Vesperal Liturgy</b> 9:15 a.m. Passion of Christ Service 6:30 p.m. All-Night Vigil	<b>30 **</b> <b>Good Friday</b> Royal Hours 9:00 a.m. Sunday School Retreat 1:00 p.m. Apokathelosis 3:00 p.m. Lamentations 7:00 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)  
frstav@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) 678-637-4425 (Cell)

**Pastoral Assistant** Charlie Hambos  
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**Pastoral Assistant** Alex Limberatos  
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#### **Parish Council**

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Euripides Panos, Vice President 813-352-3972  
John Zelatis, Secretary 813-727-2271  
Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898  
Demosthenes Mekras 786-417-7256  
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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**

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#### **Adult Greek School**

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#### **AHEPA**

Thomas Sakaris, President 201-819-2319

#### **Altar Angels**

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

#### **Bible Study**

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### **Bookstore**

Brett Mourer 813-376-9315

#### **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**

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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.