

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*

May 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 15th 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 May. 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 made some significant changes in our parish during the month of April in regards to COVID-19. The church is open to full capacity, meaning that every pew can be used. We are again using the front doors to enter the church, light candles and venerate icons. There are a few things to still keep in mind:

1. On Sundays, you may sit in any pew that you wish.
2. We will fill but not pack the pews.
3. Please do not congregate in the Narthex.
4. There will be no standing in the aisles. When the pews are full, everyone else will be directed to worship in the hall.
5. There will be social distancing in the hall.
6. We will continue to offer Divine Liturgy on Saturdays for the month of May (and then we will go from there as long as needed). These Liturgies will have social distancing in the church.
7. We will offer Antithoron after Holy Communion if we have enough help. Altar boys will hand out antithoron using tongs when there is a sufficient number of them to serve.
8. MASKS ARE STILL REQUIRED IN CHURCH AND ON THE PROPERTY. They may be removed momentarily in order to receive Holy Communion.
9. Please continue to utilize SignUpGenius. The purpose of this is so we know how many people to plan for at a given service.
10. We have held a Paraklesis weekly for over a year, to pray for everyone by name once a week until such time as we can all come back together as one. Since that time has come, when the church can again be filled, we will cut back the Paraklesis Service to once a month. In May it will be held on Wednesday, May 5 at 6:00 p.m.
11. We will be resuming some semblance of a coffee hour sometime in May. Stay tuned for more information.

For those who are not able to worship in person, we will continue to live-stream all services. The latest information will always be available on our website and through constant contact. Both our Metropolis and parish protocols for coming back to church safely are on our website. Thank you for your patience in filtering through all of our constant contacts. It is really the most effective way to communicate news and comments during this time.

Finally, a big thank you for the small crew of volunteers who have assisted us so faithfully 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.

How Would You React To The Good News?

The ending chapters in the four Gospels and the first chapter in the book of Acts contain the accounts of Jesus post-Resurrection appearances. It is interesting in studying these scripture passages, to note the reaction of the various figures to the Resurrection of Christ. Here is a sample:

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary—There are differing accounts of the reaction of the “myrrh-bearing women.” We know that they were courageous in journeying out in the darkness to go to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. In Matthew, they are instructed by the angel to go and tell the disciples that Jesus is risen from the dead. In Matthew 28:8, we read that “they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell His disciples.” Continuing in Matthew 28:9, “behold Jesus met them and said, ‘Hail!’ and they came up and took hold of His feet and worshipped Him.”

In the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 16, we read that three women—Mary Magdalene, Mary the Mother of James and Salome bought spices in order to anoint the body of Jesus. They went to the tomb early in the morning on the first day of the week before the sun had risen. They saw that the stone had been rolled away from the door of the tomb and they were amazed. After being told of the Resurrection, they were trembling and astonished and we are told in verse 8 that they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid. However, we are told immediately afterwards in verse 10, that Mary Magdalene began to tell the disciples about the Resurrection.

The Gospel of Luke confirms the journey of the women to the tomb in the pre-dawn darkness, and how they were perplexed about their discovery of the empty tomb. Upon their encounter with the angels, they go back to the disciples and tell them the good news.

In the Gospel of John, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb, and while there is joined by two other disciples who do not remain long, but return home. Mary then encounters Jesus, whom she initially thinks is a gardener. But He reveals Himself to her and she goes out to tell the disciples.

The soldiers guarding the tomb—The soldiers guarding the tomb and told the chief priests about a great earthquake and the angel sitting on the stone, (Matthew 28:11) and how (in Matthew 28:3) they trembled and became like dead men. They then accepted a bribe from the chief priests and elders to tell a false story that “His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.” (Matthew 28:13)

The Chief Priests and Elders of the Jewish Leadership—The Jewish leadership heard the account of the soldiers described above and offered a bribe to the soldiers in exchange for their cooperation in spreading a false account, that the disciples came by night and stole the body. Matthew 28:15 says that “the soldiers took the money and did as they were directed, and this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.”

The Disciples—The Gospels make various accounts of the reactions of the Disciples. In Matthew 28:17, we are told that when the disciples saw Jesus, “they worshipped Him, but some doubted.” However, He commissions them to “spread the Gospel to all nations” which is exactly what they do.

In Mark 16, we are told that the disciples were skeptical of the account of Mary Magdalene, that Jesus had risen from the dead. We also read that Jesus appeared “in another form” to two of the disciples as they were walking in the country (this is confirmed also in Luke’s Gospel) and that these two went back and told the rest of the disciples, who did not believe them. Afterward Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples and upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart. In Mark also there is a commissioning of the disciples and we are told in Mark 16:20, that “they went forth and preached everywhere.”

In Luke’s account (Luke 24), as in Mark’s, the women bring the good news to the disciples who do not believe the women. Then there is a lengthy account of Jesus’ encounter with two of the disciples who are going to Emmaus, a village near Jerusalem. St. Mark briefly references this account but St. Luke has a more drawn out account of this. These two disciples, whom history tells us are Luke and Cleopas (one of the 70 disciples), were discussing “the things that have happened (in Jerusalem) in these days.” (Luke 24:18) They are confused about what they had just witnessed, despite the fact that they walked with Jesus for three years and that He foretold to them everything that was going to happen to Him. Then Jesus revealed Himself to them. At the end of Luke’s Gospel, the disciples are also commissioned and “returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.” (Luke 24: 52-53)

The Gospel of John contains the most extensive account of Jesus’ post-Resurrection appearances to the disciples. In the Gospel of John, Peter and another disciple arrive at the tomb while Mary Magdalene is still there. These disciples return to their homes, it appears, without any further comment. The disciples



we are told in John 20:19, are gathered together behind doors that are shut for fear of the Jews. Thomas, for some reason, is not with them. Jesus appears to them and the disciples are glad because they have seen the Lord. When the disciples tell Thomas that they have seen the Lord, he is skeptical, and says that he won't believe unless he sees the print of the nails and places his hand in the side of Jesus that was pierced. Eight days later, the disciples are again gathered together, and Thomas is with them this time. Jesus appears to the disciples and tells Thomas not to be faithless but believing. Then Thomas, in the most powerful of confessions of faith, says to Christ "My Lord and My God!" (John 20:28) In John 21, Jesus appears to the disciples yet again, this time by the Sea of Tiberias. He encourages the disciples, who are fishing unsuccessfully, to case the net "on the right side of the boat," and after hauling in the fish, the disciples recognize that it is Jesus who is responsible for their large catch. They go to shore and have breakfast with Him. After breakfast, Jesus restores Peter with the three-fold questioning of "Do you love me?", foretelling that indeed Peter would give his life as a martyr for Christ.

Finally in the book of Acts, Jesus has another encounter with the disciples, at which He tells them to stay in Jerusalem and to "wait for the promise of the Father" (Pentecost, and the receiving of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter). The disciples then asked Jesus "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6) The disciples again have misunderstood the ministry of Christ, thinking now that with the Resurrection, there will come political freedom and restoration. The answer Jesus gives must be like a punch in the gut to the disciples, as He says "It is not for you to know the times or season which the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:7-8)

As you can see, the reactions to the Resurrection are a truly mixed. There is the expected anger of the chief priests and the greediness of the guards. There is fear by the women who went to the tomb early in the morning. And among the disciples there is doubt, skepticism and total misunderstanding. And this from people who walked and talked with Jesus on a daily basis for three years.

Each of us has a reaction to the Resurrection. Even a lack of reaction is a reaction—it is called indifference. For a few people in the church, and most people outside of a church (any church), Easter (Pascha as we call it) is just another day on the calendar. Stores and advertisers are trying to make Easter like another Christmas, encouraging us to not only buy candy but to buy Easter gifts. Their reaction to the Resurrection is that it is a money-making opportunity.

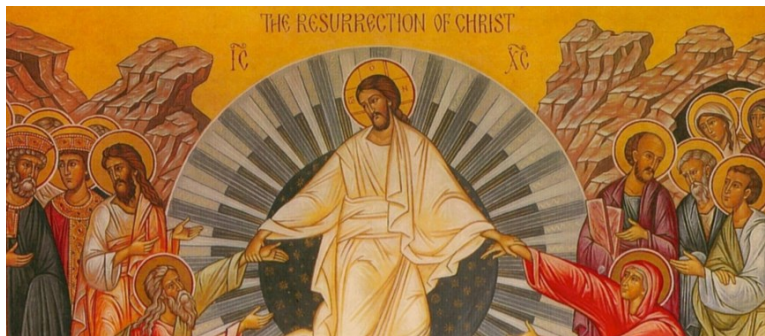
Let's focus on ourselves at St. John. I actually take a lot of comfort from the reaction of the Disciples and the women in the Gospel passages. They are a mixture of fear and doubt but eventually come around, get their "stuff" together and go out and proclaim the Christian faith to all nations, transforming the world. I take great comfort in knowing that one does not need a PhD, an advanced degree or much education at all to become a herald of the Gospel. Many of the disciples were illiterate fishermen, and not even very good fishermen at that. How many times are we told in the Gospel that they caught nothing?! Even the Resurrection didn't change their ability to catch fish. But we also know that these simple men (AND women),



God endowed them with the ability to transform the whole world through their faith. For the first three hundred years after the Resurrection of Christ and the establishment of the Christian Church, there were no billboards, no ads in newspapers, and no webpages about Christianity. (well these things didn't come about until recent times) But for the first three centuries, the Christian church was underground and persecuted. The only time the church was visible publicly was when a Christian was being martyred for their faith. And these very public and very painful executions INSPIRED people to join the Christian church. These spectacles of humiliation and pain did not shrink or eliminate the church. They actually GREW the church, at a rate of 40% per decade. The foundation of the faith is rooted in these early centuries of martyrdom.

While our reaction to the Resurrection might include some doubt and skepticism, (remember, that's okay, even the disciples doubted and were skeptical), we need to step forward with conviction about our faith. May 5 shouldn't be just another day on the calendar. And most certainly it shouldn't mark the end of a journey. It should be a point of demarcation, a new beginning, a renewed start, a renewed commitment to LIVE out this thing we call our Orthodox faith. The Church, in her wisdom, takes us back to the "beginning" immediately after the Resurrection. Not even an hour after singing Christos Anesti for the first time, we are hearing the Gospel of John, Chapter One, "In the beginning. . ." The Church recognizes Pascha as a new beginning and not an ending. The issue of doubt is dealt with right on Pascha, at the Gospel reading of the Agape Vespers, John 20:19-25, which talks about the doubting of Thomas. Not even 12 hours removed from the Resurrection Service, we are reading about Doubting Thomas. This is a reminder to us that doubt is part of faith.

Faith means trust in something you don't fully see or fully comprehend. Many things we do in our lives are acts of faith—getting married, having children, moving, changing jobs/careers. We don't have a crystal ball to see the end consequences of these decisions. We jump into them as an act of faith. And, if we are all honest, those of us who are married, or



THE CHOSEN—Review

By Fr. Stavros

During the month of April, I became aware of a series called “The Chosen.” It is about the life of Jesus. Many of us have seen movies about the life of Jesus. The longest movie ever made about Jesus is probably “Jesus of Nazareth” which is 8 hours long. This series on “The Chosen” is going to have 7 seasons. It will be 56 episodes long. That is 56 hours on the life of Jesus. As of this writing, all of season one is done and three episodes of season two have aired. I personally have seen 7 episodes of season one. And will continue until I am caught up to what has been released. My first impressions of this series are as follows:

The series shows the humanity of Jesus.

There is ample time for character development—we see characters like Mary Magdalene, Matthew, Peter, Andrew, and Thomas (so far) and begin to understand the back story. One episode focused mainly on the wedding of Cana. Another focuses on the healing of a paralytic. The series will be long, so there is ample time to develop the characters.

Before there were videos, prior to 75 years ago, people had to imagine everything. So imagining what Biblical figures looked like was something people did. With videos everywhere, in many ways we’ve lost our imagination. So people have become disinterested in reading the Bible because it is hard to imagine how these stories looked and happened. This series helps fill in the blanks for how the life of Jesus likely played out. There are lots of culturally accurate nuances that make His life and ministry understandable.

Watching this series has caused me to open the Bible more, which is the intention of the producers. I think it will do the same for you.

We all spend time and money giving ratings to action movies and R-rated movies. We should spend time and give ratings to a series on the life of Jesus.

I haven’t watched everything and will write on this series again. I highly encourage you to watch it, as well as interviews and other things associated with it. It is available on YouTube and also on “The Chosen” app. This movie will not take the place of worship or reading the Bible or praying. However, it will fill in some very big blanks many of us have and will only help to bolster our faith in Christ. I highly recommend it!



who have children, or who have moved or who have changed jobs, there are probably (definitely for most of us) moments where we wonder “did I do the right thing,” or even “what was I thinking?” But we persevere, with faith in ourselves, with faith in those around us, and with faith in God. The thing is that in these life’s circumstances, we don’t give up, we persevere. And it is the same thing with our faith in God and our Christian journey. We may have moments of doubt, but the successful and committed Christian perseveres.

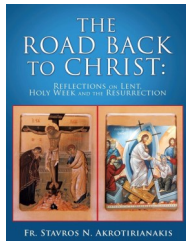
Again, the Church in her wisdom, provides us lessons on faith throughout the Paschal season—the courage of the myrrh-bearing women, the faith of the paralytic, the curiosity of the Samaritan Woman and the faith of the Blind Man. The Paschal season concludes with the Great Commission of Christ at the Ascension, the giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and All Saints Day. These days remind us that we are all called to be Apostles, we are called to go out and preach the Good News to all nations. We are also blessed with the spiritual endowment of the Holy Spirit. And we are all called to be saints—we are all capable of becoming like saints. All it takes is faith, and faith takes trust, and trust takes perseverance, and perseverance requires work—it requires us “getting our stuff together” and working and living for God.

I remember a professor at the seminary who joked (sort of) that the reaction of many Orthodox Christians to the Resurrection closely mirrored Simon Peter in John 21:3, when Simon Peter announced to the other disciples “I am going fishing” and they said to him “We will go with you.” I guess he was lamenting the sudden drop in attendance after Holy Week and Pascha. I guess the reaction of some Orthodox Christians is that “Christos Anesti” translates to “see you in September.”

Christ is Risen and THAT MATTERS!!! If you are still trying to figure out why, the answer is found in coming more, not in coming less. And if you are still trying to figure out why this is important, join the club—many of us are still trying to figure it out. The joy is the destination where we are headed. But we can’t reach the destination without the journey. So there is joy in the journey also. The journey of Lent has come to end, but the journey to eternal life has just begun again anew.

Christos Anesti! Alithos Anesti!
Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

With love in the 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.

New Book Study: If There Is Life I Want To Live

"I began to write it all down when I was on Mount Athos, during a period of complete solitude, while staying at the kathisma or monastic dwelling of St John the Theologian, near the small harbour of Simonopetra Monastery. I completed it later when I was staying on the island of the same St John, on Patmos, in Kouvari. Both, places of quietude and spiritual seclusion. Places of prayer. In all I only needed a few days. My sole companion was the noble disciple of love, St John. The one who truly loved and was indeed loved by Christ. The text would only be the fruit of love and quietude; it is a fruit of the desert. I would say the fruit of prayer, but I fear that this might be considered an exaggeration.

The questions – I chose one hundred to make a round number – and the dialogues are all authentic. The people are also real, although of course the names have been changed. On the other hand I have not recorded the whole discussion, but I have selected certain questions. All this is not so important. What really matters is for human nature and the person of the true God to be revealed clearly and truly through the whole discussion. Nothing else in this life matters more."

-Metropolitan of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki Nikolaos

Alex Limberatos' Virtual Book Discussion on Metropolitan Nikolaos' reflections will pick up again May 25 on Tuesday Nights from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

We will be covering a chapter a day for 11 weeks. Each meeting will focus on questions, curiosities, and impacts after doing the reading on our own instead of reading line-by-line on Zoom.

If you are interested in getting a copy or have questions or interest in the Book Discussion, be sure to reach out to Alex Limberatos via phone (262-370-0586) or e-mail (alex@stjohntpa.org).

Does God exist? Why are we baptised when we are babies? What would you say about the theory of evolution? Why can the existence of God not be proved? What do you mean by trust in the way of the Church? Why is it so difficult for us to understand all this? What do we mean by sanctity? Is there any hope? What is the true faith? How is it possible for a dead person to be resurrected? What is the "mystery of God"? How can I give life to my life? What is meant by the acquisition of the Holy Spirit? Why so much pain? Why is it so difficult for us to understand all this? Does God exist?

*If There is Life
I Want to Live*

Nikolaos
Metropolitan of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki

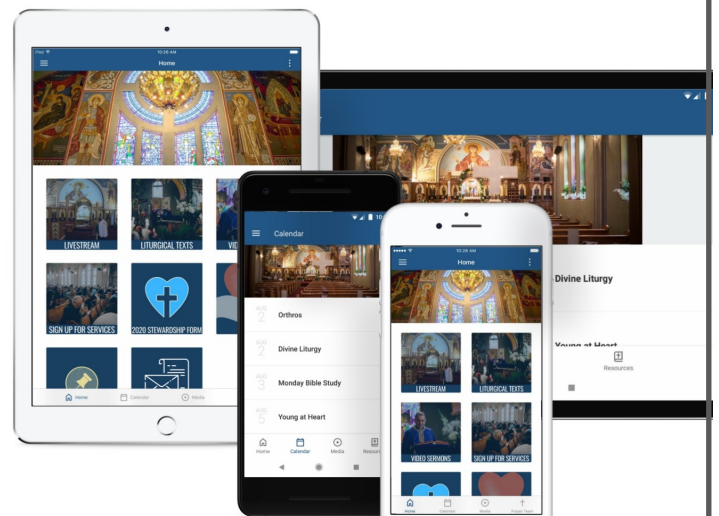
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St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

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Liturgical Schedule for May 2021

Saturday, May 1	Holy Saturday Vespers Liturgy 8:30-11:00 a.m. Great Canon 11:00 p.m. Resurrection Service 11:45 p.m. Paschal Divine Liturgy 12:30-2:00 a.m.
Sunday, May 2	PASCHA Agape Vespers 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
Monday, May 3	St. George Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, May 5	St. Irene Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.
Friday, May 7	Life-Giving Fountain of Virgin Mary (Zodochos Peghe) Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, May 8	St. John the Theologian Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, May 9	Thomas Sunday Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, May 15	St. Pachomios (Fr. Stavros Anniversary of Ordination) Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, May 16	Myrrh-Bearing Women Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Friday, May 21	Sts. Constantine and Helen Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, May 22	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, May 23	Sunday of the Paralytic Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, May 26	Mid-Pentecost Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, May 29	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, May 30	Sunday of the Samaritan Woman Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, June 5	Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, June 6	Sunday of the Blind Man Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Tuesday, June 8	Leave-Taking of Pascha (Apodosis)—Evening Liturgy Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday, June 9	Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.
Thursday, June 10	Ascension Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Liturgical Notes for May

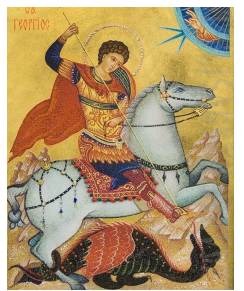
The Pentecostarion - The 50 Days After Pascha — The period of 50 days between Pascha & Pentecost is referred to as the “Pentecostarion.” The period of forty days between Pascha Sunday and the day of the Ascension is known as the period of Pascha (or Easter). It is a period set aside by the Church for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

No Kneeling until Pentecost — It is actually the Tradition in the Orthodox Church that we not kneel on Sundays in honor of the Resurrection of Christ. Because we do not worship on a daily basis in our church communities, priests have encouraged people to kneel on Sundays, the thought being that if we do not kneel on Sundays, that we’ll never kneel in church. It is a Tradition, that for 50 days after Pascha, we do not kneel in honor of the Resurrection. The next time we will kneel after April 18 is on the Feast of Pentecost (June 7) 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.

Feast of St. George to be celebrated on Bright 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 day after Pascha, Monday, May 3.



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

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 “Zoōdochos Peghe - Ζωοδόχος Πηγή” the Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain, is always celebrated on the Friday of Bright (Renewal) week, the week after Pascha, which this year is May 3.



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, the 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 monk of the 5th Century.

Sunday, May 9 - Sunday of St. Thomas — The Church brings to our mind the unbelief of Thomas followed by his belief after seeing the scars of Christ.

Saturday, May 15 - Feast of St. Pachomios—Fr. Stavros' Anniversary of Ordination - Fr. Stavros was ordained to the Holy Priesthood of the Greek Orthodox Church on May 15, 1998. This will mark his 22nd anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. Every year, Fr. Stavros marks this anniversary by celebrating Divine Liturgy in thanksgiving for the gift of priestly ministry.



Sunday, May 16—Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women They came to anoint Jesus' body, but found an EMPTY tomb. We also commemorate Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

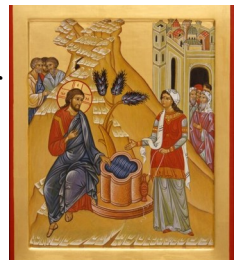
Friday, May 21 - Sts. Constantine and Helen — May 21 commemorates the feast of Sts. Constantine and Helen. St. Constantine was the emperor of the Roman Empire who decided to make Christianity the official religion of the empire. For the first time in history, the Christian church would not fall under persecution. St. Constantine also moved the capital of the Empire from Rome to Constantinople (present day Istanbul, Turkey), where he inaugurated the Byzantine Empire which flourished from 325 until 1453. He also convened the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in the year 325, which inaugurated what is known as the “golden age of Orthodoxy,” and resulted in the writing of the Nicene Creed (edited to its current version in the year 381). St. Helen, the mother of St. Constantine, is recognized as being the person who found the true cross of Christ in Jerusalem. She went on a pilgrimage to the Holy City and searched diligently for the Cross, finding it under a patch of Basil (Vasiliko) on the Mountain of Golgotha. Sts. Constantine and Helen have the title Isapostolou, “Equal to the Apostles” because of the tremendous contributions they made to the Orthodox Christian Church.



Sunday, May 23 - Sunday of the Paralytic — The healing of the paralytic who was afflicted for many years. This event bears witness to Christ's authority over the human body: He who can overcome death in His own body has power over all human flesh.

Wednesday, May 26 - Feast of Mid-Pentecost — The icon depicts Christ the teacher, foreshadows the teaching to the Samaritan Woman, celebrated the following Sunday, and it is the feast day of teachers. About the middle of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus went up again to the Temple and taught. The Jews, marveling at the wisdom of His words, said, “How does this man know letters having never learned?” But Christ first reproached their unbelief and lawlessness, then proved to them by the Law that they sought to slay Him unjustly, supposedly as a despiser of the Law, since He had healed the paralytic on the Sabbath. This feast is held mid-way between Pascha and Pentecost.

Sunday, May 30 - Sunday of the Samaritan Woman Christ talks about the water of eternal life which will never make us thirst again. The woman here is St. Photini.



St. John the Baptist Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism-Emma (Anna) Nicolaou, daughter of Christopher and Kristin Nicolaou, was baptized on Saturday, March 20. Sherry Mulberry was the Godmother. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Oliver Phoenix (Elias) Heilman, son of Anthony and Theresa Heilman, was baptized on Sunday, March 28. Angelina and Josef Fenton were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Stella Rose (Styliani) Malatin, daughter of Michael Malatin and Gabrielle George, was baptized on Sunday, March 28. Neil Molloy and Despina Kiriakes were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Chrismation-Marianne (Nikola) Paras was Chrismated Orthodox on Saturday, March 27, by Fr. Stavros and Fr. John Mamangakis. Steve and Maria Mamangakis were the sponsors. Congratulations!

Ministry News & Updates

GOYA-The May GOYA meeting will be Sunday, May 16 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

Men's Group - Our men's group meeting for April will be Sunday, May 23 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.

Women's Bible Study will meet in May as follows: Tuesday, May 4; Tuesday, May 11; Tuesday, May 18; and MONDAY, May 24. 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 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, May 10, 17 and 24, 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@stjohnnpta.org and he will add you.

12 Disciples Program - In August, we started a program called "The 12 Disciples." There are twelve pages of names that comprise all the members of our parish. Father Stavros prays for all twelve pages of names each week at Paraklesis. The idea for this program is for each "disciple" to take one page of names and pray for that group of people every day. For every twelve "disciples" who sign up, every page of people will be prayed for. We currently have 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" on Thursday, May 13. A link will be sent out to the community for those who wish to join in.

GriefShare to resume in August—Thank you to Donna Hambos for finishing our fourth semester of GriefShare, our small group ministry dedicated to people who have lost loved ones. This group will resume either in later August or early September with another 13-week program. We know that there have been several people this spring who have lost loved ones. Please keep this very beneficial program in mind over the summer so that you can participate in the fall.

Meeting of Ministry Heads—Tuesday, May 11—we will be having a meeting of our Ministry Heads via zoom on Tuesday, May 11 at 6:00 p.m. Each ministry head is requested to participate, and if you are unable to participate, please make sure that someone from your ministry is representing your ministry.

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

Verses of the Year—Psalm 50/51:10-12

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



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

By Fr. Stavros

Most of us don't spend enough time in the Bible. Sadly, some of us don't spend any time. Each week since January 2019, we provide in *The Messenger* and then repeated weekly in the bulletin, a verse or two. I choose verses that are meaningful to me, or well known or ones that have meaning in contemporary times. You are welcome to submit verses via email to me as well, as many of you have. If you want a challenge, do the following:

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

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

Below are verses for the month of 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.

May 2-8

This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118:24

Find a reason to rejoice every day. This is important. Psalm 118:24 tells us that this is the DAY that the Lord has made, not the week, the year or the lifetime, just the DAY. The fact that we are alive today is cause for joy, even if we are in pain or sick. Because every day we are here, no matter what our circumstances are, there is an opportunity to pray, to grow, to repent and to witness for God. On most days in life, we certainly have much more to rejoice over. Rejoicing and gladness go hand in hand with gratitude. There is a saying "Change your latitude with an attitude of gratitude." Finding a reason to rejoice each day will make us more grateful. Being more grateful will help us find a reason to rejoice. There are many people who seem to naturally incline to the negative. Christ does not want that for us. He wants us to be filled with gladness and find reasons to rejoice and be glad on a daily basis. That doesn't mean we won't have challenges, setbacks and disappointments. However, it does mean that in the midst of all of these things, we need to find reason to rejoice and be glad.

May 9-15

Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand and place it in My side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!" John 20:27-28

The Apostle Thomas tends to get a bad rap. We even call him "Doubting Thomas". In the end though, Thomas makes the "highest confession" of Christ when he calls Him "My Lord

and my God." An interesting question for each of us is how we would fill in the blanks of this statement "Jesus is my _____ and my _____." What words go on these lines for you? My insurance policy, my crutch, my frustration, my joy, my beginning and my end, my goal, my rock. Many of us understandably are like Thomas. We want more tangible proof of Christ and whether there is a heaven for those who believe. This is where faith comes in. Faith is ultimately a choice to believe without seeing fully. How we will in these blanks affects greatly where Christ fits in our lives. Whether we fit Him around them, or whether we fit them around Him.

May 16-22

Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the Council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate, and asked for the Body of Jesus.

Mark 15:43

Joseph of Arimathea is another example of a very real figure in the Bible. He was respected. He was a member of the Council. There would have been some serious consequences had people known he might be a follower of Christ, or even interested in learning more about Him. However, Joseph was looking for the Kingdom of God. This is important. He had a longing for some deeper meaning, purpose and focus. Even under the best of circumstances, it takes courage to come to Christ. It takes humility. It also takes courage, as we wonder what people will think or say about our faith. That's why Joseph is so important, because he took courage and went to Pilate to ask for the Body of Jesus, something that was potentially very dangerous. Yet, his faith and courage were rewarded. Today he is a saint of the church.

May 23-29

When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be healed? The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me." John 5:6-7

These verses come from this week's Gospel about the healing of a paralytic. This man had been lying next to a pool for 38 years. That's a LONG time. An angel of the Lord would come down periodically and stir the water in the pool and whoever stepped in first was cured. Jesus asked the man if he wanted to be healed. After 38 years, perhaps the man gave up on being healed. Who knows how many times this man was asked this question. He still had hope though. His honest complaint was that there was no one to put him in the pool and when he was trying to go down to the pool, someone else always stepped in first. "I have no one." Sadly, this is a statement that is all too true for many people in the world. It is sad that no one recognized that the man had been there for so long, no one thought he was worthy of being helped and healed. We need to each work hard and be attentive to those around us so that no one is saying "I have no one to help me". This help includes not only helping others to heal, but also to feel included, and to help one another towards salvation.

Continued...

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

May 30-June 5

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." John 4:10

These verses come from the Gospel account of an encounter between Jesus and a Samaritan woman. Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies. So, it was culturally a little odd when Jesus encountered the woman and asked for a drink from a well of water. Of course this request confirms and reinforces the humanity of Jesus, who was tired and thirsty and wanted water. The woman questioned why Jesus, a Jew, would make a request of a woman of Samaria. Jesus told her "If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman engaged in a dialogue with Jesus about material needs, like water, and drawing it out. Eventually, Jesus revealed Himself to her as the Messiah and she was the first person to go and testify that Jesus is the Christ. Where this applies on a practical level is Holy Communion. If we knew truly the gift we receive when we receive Holy Communion, we would approach with more faith, with more awe, with more love and we'd approach more frequently. Looking at things from a spiritual perspective and not only a material one, we will see that Christ is the living water, and when we partake of Him, we will not be thirsting for anything, that receiving Him quenches any thirst we might have, even a thirst for health. Holy Communion and the joy it should bring us should supersede any joy as well as any sorrow. This is why it is so important to keep learning and deepening our understanding of the faith, so we can appreciate the living water that is Jesus Christ and not be thirsting for the things of this world but thirsting for Him.

COFFEE HOURS TO RESUME

We will be resuming some semblance of coffee hours sometime in May. We'll be talking to ministry heads about how best and safest to do this. We'd love to see some of our ministries host coffee hours, as well as groups of families, as we did prior to the pandemic. These will be scaled down in terms of what is offered. New guidelines will be made for how things are served and cleaned up. More information is forthcoming, but we look forward to resuming our coffee hour fellowship in late May.



Congratulations to our Graduates!

If you have a student who is graduating, please email all information to the church office by Friday, May 14 so we can include graduates in the June/July issue of *The Messenger*! ***Please provide:*** Name and Picture of the graduate, the institution graduating from, any degree, in the case of a college graduate, and what college the person plans to attend, in the case of the high school graduate.

We are looking for a donor for the following:

1. **Bishop's Staff**—It is customary for a church to have a Bishop's Staff to offer to any Hierarch when a Hierarch visits our parish. Cost is approximately \$1,200
2. **Icon Stand**—For the past year, we've had our icon stand on the solea, so that people would see the icon of the day displayed. Now that the narthex is open again, the icon stand is back in the Narthex. There are many occasions when we need an icon stand on the solea. So that we can have an icon stand in both places, we'd like to order a second wood-carved icon stand. The cost is approximately \$2,500.

If interested in donating either of these items, please contact Fr. Stavros.

~Thank You for your gifts of Stewardship ~

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Matthew 6:21

We appreciate the gifts of our loyal parishioners and wish to acknowledge each and every one! Our pledges for the 2021 Stewardship year are \$444,853 with \$225,212.83 collected from 277 loyal stewards of St. John. We are very grateful for your gifts.

We pray you have found moments of peace and reflection that bring you closer to God amidst the chaos. Prayer is our foundation during these difficult days. I think we can all agree the world needs our prayers & gifts more than ever right now. We all have something to share and it's the sharing that can make a difference. Big and small gestures every day! To quote a much-overused phrase '*We are all in this together*' to celebrate that every gift truly comes from God. We remain humbled by your giving to our beloved church, it is needed and appreciated!

We lovingly remind you to recommit to our church if your name is missing from this list. We understand circumstances may have changed and will be happy to make any adjustments, as needed, to your Stewardship Gifts. Contact our church office or a member of the Stewardship committee with any questions on your commitment or renewal. Pledge forms are also available on line at <http://stjohntpa.org/2021-stewardship/>

* Indicates receipt of a Stewardship Check without a completed pledge form. Our office will be happy to forward a pledge package and the form can also be completed on-line. Keep in mind pledges in writing help us adequately plan financially for our church and also bring voting privileges, which are critical to support the mission of our church.

It is our hope that EVERYONE on our mailing list provides gifts of stewardship OR becomes a Friend of St. John the Baptist, for those who do not live in Tampa.

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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: Lillian Thomas; Scotty; Desi Serreira; Ashley Kladakis; Dora Kallas, Kathy & Andrew Bouzinekis; Anastasia; Amanda, Andrew, Colton, Miranda, Charlotte Elizabeth, Nuha, Nabeel, Michael, Amal, John, Elaine, Olga, Virginia Georgiou, Ron Myer, Toula 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.

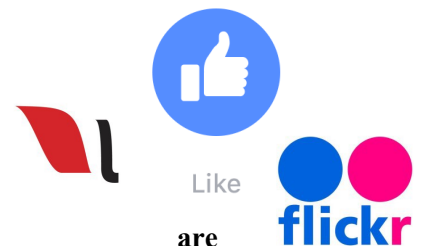
Live Streaming

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,
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



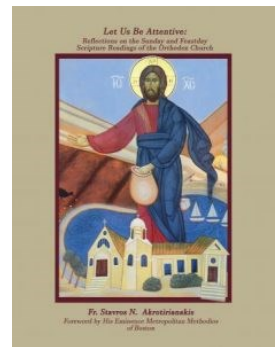
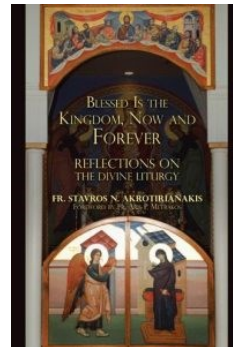
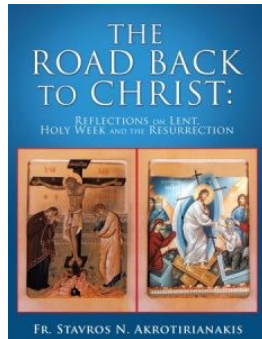
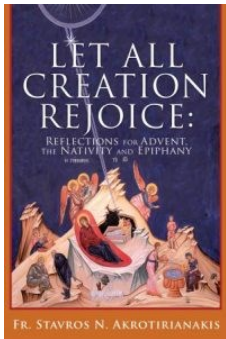
Father Stavros has authored four books that are available both in the bookstore and on-line. They are entitled:

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



Looking for Photos from Holy Week

IF you have any photos you took during Holy Week, we'd love to see them and add them to our app, our website, and the next issue of *The Messenger*. Please send any photos to Father Stavros at frstav@gmail.com or to the office at office@stjohntpa.org.



St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival

Congratulations to Jason Owens and Kaitlin Zelatis, who represented our parish at the District Level of the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival which was held at St. George Greek Orthodox Church in New Port Richey on Saturday, April 17. Kaitlin won the junior competition and will be part of the Metropolis of Atlanta Oratorical Festival on Saturday, May 15. Their speeches will appear in the June issue of the Messenger. Thank you to Peggy Bradshaw who organizes this event in our parish every year.



Thank You For Joining Us Palm Sunday!

It was so good to see our church and fall filled, gathered together in worship. Let's aim to do this every Sunday!

Opa! A Celebration of Greek Independence

In honor of the bicentennial of the 1821 Greek Revolution, the Tampa Museum of Art presents *Opa! A Celebration of Greek Independence*. With support from members of the Tampa Bay area Greek community, the presentation also features a dance performance, poetry reading, and messages that unite Tarpon Springs, the City of Tampa, and Tampa's sister city Heraklion, Crete, Greece.

Opa! A Celebration of Greek Independence is sponsored in part by Peter Ketchum and Elena Paras Ketchum, and Gus and Marina Paras.

You can watch the video celebration of Greek culture at: <https://youtu.be/4UBq6553ZaE>



May 2021 Sunday School Update



On behalf of our Sunday School we pray that you had a blessed Lent, Holy Week, and a spiritually uplifting Pascha experience. At the time of this writing Holy Week and Pascha have not occur. In our Sunday School article for June, we will acknowledge all the events and the children participating in Holy Week.

It is a joy to see our students in Pre-K through 6th grade, back in Sunday School. Our Sunday School Topics in April were The Holy Cross, St. John Climacus of the Ladder, St. Mary of Egypt, Palm Sunday, and Holy Week. Thank you to the teachers who are teaching in person every week and to Jenivieve Elly for creating our virtual lessons. A special thank you to the Metropolitan of Atlanta for providing Sunday School Virtual lessons during this Lenten period.

On April 4th our students participated in our local St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. CONGRATULATIONS to Kaitlyn Zelatis (Junior Division) and Jason Owen (Senior Division) for moving on to the District Competition. Their speeches were eloquently delivered, thought provoking, and very inspirational.

Our last day of Sunday School is on May 18th. With great excitement, we are already starting to plan for a "NORMAL" Sunday School next year. Sunday School will start in AUGUST to compliment the public school calendar. We will let you know when these dates are finalized and when registration will take place. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO TEACH OR ASSIST IN OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM and/or if you have any suggestions on how we can improve our Sunday School Program, please e-mail Vickie Peckham at vickiepeckham@gmail.com or call her at 813-758-3102.

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, May 2

Great and Holy Pascha - No Sunday School

Sunday, May 9

Topic: St. Thomas

Sunday, May 16

Saints of the Orthodox Church

Sunday, May 23

Last Day of Sunday School

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 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 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
Check it out! Search by topic and grow in your faith today!**

Community Outreach

Saturday, May 15

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:

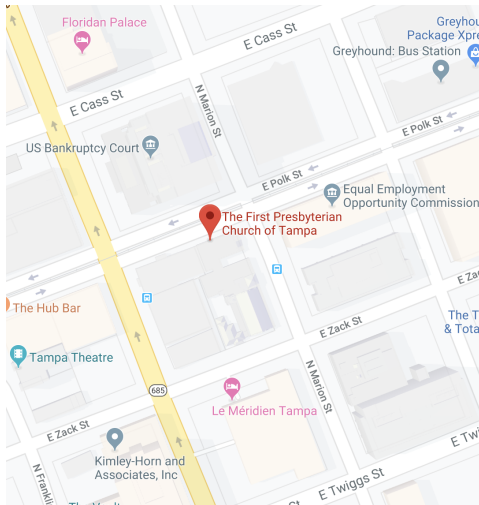
- 1) Sign in and choose the job you want on the Duty Sheet
- 2) Prepare and wear your name tag
- 3) Don't be shy...if not sure where to go or what to do to get started, ask someone who looks like they know what they're doing.
- 4) Set up and Preparation 8-9 a.m., Serving 9-10:15 a.m., Cleanup 10:15-10:30 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. More information is forthcoming as we find a volunteer for this great ministry. In the mean time, please contact the office for any questions.

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

MEETING DATE AND TIME: Our meeting will be IN-PERSON on Saturday May 8th at 11:30 AM instead of the 1st Thursday of the month. We are encouraging everyone to first attend the Saturday special pandemic liturgy from 10 to 11:30. Our next meeting is expected to be Saturday May 8th. Everyone is welcome.

Please look for meeting announcements

We welcome people of all ages to join us 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 over 17 people in attendance on April 3rd.

We follow Hillsborough County's socially distance and mask wearing directives.

Michael Trimis shared his **Lenten Journal** entries for **Goals** and **Inspiration** for **Community Week** from Matthew 18:20 and his thoughts on **RENEW, RETURN, & REJOICE** for Hebrews 10:24-25

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 total number of people contacted:

	Mar	April
Phoned	15	27
Left Messages	8	5
Visited In-Person	1	4
Sent Cards	2	1
Left Text Messages	3	3

This month's Birthdays wishes went to:

Dora Morgan

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

OUR COMING EVENTS

The YAH is planning an Easter shopping trip to Tarpon Springs for Easter on April 22nd

Our next meeting will be **Saturday, May 8th**

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.

Pre-Lent and Pre-Easter specialty Food shopping in Tarpon Springs trips every year.

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

PASSED ACTIVITIES

We attended **Pre-Sanctified Liturgy** on April 7th as a group.

We visited Tarpon Springs for our **Easter Specialty Food Shopping** at Greek Boys on April 22.

We held **socially distant IN PERSON and Zoom** meeting in the Kourmolis Center
April 3rd, Mar. 6th, Feb 6th, Jan. 9th, Dec. 5th, Nov. 7th

Our discussions were on the **CHURCHES THAT TOUCHED OUR LIVES** were on.
Feb 6th, Jan. 9th, Aug. 5th, Sept. 3rd & Oct 1st.

July 2nd, 2020 – Revisited 60 years ago in the years 1960 to 1969

March 5th, 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

May is Θαλασσαιμία/Cooley's Anemia Month

ST JOHN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH and AHEPA's Tampa Chapter #12

Cooley's anemia or **Θαλασσαιμία/Thalassemia** is an inherited blood disorder in which the body makes an abnormal form of hemoglobin. Hemoglobin is the protein molecule in red blood cells that carries oxygen. The disorder results in excessive destruction of red blood cells, which leads to anemia.

It mostly **affects people of Mediterranean descent**. People with severe thalassemia depend on blood transfusions to give them working red blood cells. A type of bone marrow transplant has been used to try to cure thalassemia, but it's hard to find compatible donors. And even if a donor can be found, there's still a risk that the patient's body will reject the transplant.

In 1990, after the son of one of our AHEPA chapter members was in need of this surgery, it quickly became obvious that an even greater need existed, thus the AHEPA Bone Marrow Donor Registry was incorporated.

Today, there have been incredible breakthroughs in gene editing that may allow for children to live Thalassemia-free!

AHEPA Bone Marrow Registry

The mission of the Ahepa Marrow Donor Registry is to add persons of Mediterranean descent into our database of prospective donors. The best chance for a leukemia patient is from a family member, Secondly, from relatives, and then from their ethnic group. The chances of finding an unrelated (allogeneic) match are **20,000 to 1**. We must add to our database so that any **Greek** patient has a realistic chance of finding a match. Some **35,000 children and adults** with life-threatening diseases could have benefited from a **marrow, blood stem cell or cord blood transplant**. Some found a donor within their families, but **70 percent** were put in the unthinkable position of desperately searching among strangers for a match.

Continued

How can you help?

Get tested

- 1) **Educate others.** Understand the need that exists to provide financial support for research and to enhance the number of prospective marrow donors of Greek descent.
- 2) **Register** with the AHEPA Bone Marrow Registry to be a possible donor
 - A) **AHEPA Marrow Donor Registry** – There was more than \$180,000 a year in expenses to test prospective marrow donors around the country. Each person is tested at a cost of \$50 to the AHEPA Marrow Donor Registry.
 - B) **Get tested.** It's not enough to spread the word. We also must test ourselves as potential marrow donors. Anyone of us might hold the cure for cancer—not in the form of a vaccine or pill, but in the blood-forming cells inside our bodies. A simple mouth swab is all it takes to find out

3) Make Donations

- A) Please make checks payable to **AHEPA Cooley's Anemia Foundation** with **"Cooley's Anemia"** in the "Note" section of the check.
- B) Send your check or Credit Card Information to Tom Georgas
506 Lantern Circle, Tampa, FL 33617 or call 0 (813) 985-0236
- C) May 2021 is Cooley's Anemia Month.

(Donations are Tax Exempt under IRA Section 170 (c) (4))

Since April 2006, AHEPA has added **3,000 donors** to the Registry. And we're already doing good things. More than **4,000 patients** around the world have searched our database since then, and three of our donors have been asked to "be at the ready" for a donation (cancer patients have to be "healthy" enough to receive the transplant).

AHEPA has partnered with Team Be The Match as a way to more easily raise funds for specific children in need of bone marrow matches. <http://www.ahepamarrow.org/>
<https://ahepa.org/programs/publichealth/>

May is Stroke Awareness Month

A stroke is a medical emergency, and prompt treatment is crucial. Early action can reduce brain damage and other complications.

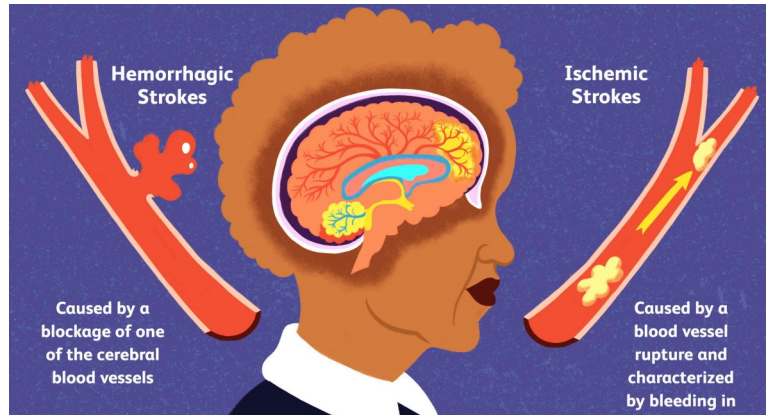
Is it a Stroke?

A stroke is an attack on the brain, it happens when blood supply to part of the brain is cut off, causing death of that part of the brain, the effects of the stroke vary depending on which part of the brain is affected and how severe the stroke is. Strokes can also cause bleeding on the brain. The effects of stroke can be permanent although some people make a very good recovery, and a sufferer is vulnerable to further strokes. Often care and treatment is needed, and in serious cases, hospitalisation is needed, and a stroke can cause immediate death or death through subsequent secondary strokes.

Warning Signs

Sometimes a stroke happens gradually, but you're likely to have one or more sudden symptoms like these:

- Numbness or weakness in your face, arm, or leg, especially on one side
- Confusion or trouble understanding other people
- Difficulty speaking
- Trouble seeing with one or both eyes
- Problems walking or staying balanced or coordinated
- Dizziness
- Severe headache that comes on for no reason



Acting **F.A.S.T.** Is Key for Stroke

Face: Smile and see if one side of the face droops.

Arms: Raise both arms. Does one arm drop down?

Speech: Say a short phrase and check for slurred or strange speech.

Time: If the answer to any of these is yes, **call 911** right away and write down the time when symptoms started.

Minutes matter in treating stroke. Calling a doctor or driving to the hospital yourself wastes time. Ambulance workers can judge your situation sooner, and that boosts your chance of getting the treatment you need as soon as possible.

From your Nursing Ministry



FACE

ONE SIDE OF THE
FACE IS DROOPING



ARMS

ARM
WEAKNESS



SPEECH

SPEECH
DIFFICULTY



TIME

TIME TO CALL
FOR AMBULANCE

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!

George Ciampolilo – May 2
Stefan Katzaras – May 2
Ethel Athena Chakonas – May 4
Diana Mamero – May 4
Fabio Cara – May 5
Basileios Roussos – May 5
Abigail Mueller – May 6
Ashley Henderson – May 7
Athena Katzaras – May 7
Corinna Robinson – May 7
Peter Zeban – May 7
Alexis Yohai – May 9
Isadora Panopoulos – May 10
Christos Nenos – May 11
Debbra Passavanti – May 13
Carlee Calamunci – May 14
Caroline Corcoran – May 14
Alexander Findlay – May 15
McAyden Krajacic – May 15
Elizabeth Mueller – May 15
David Voykin – May 15
Kaliop Skourellos – May 16
Jennifer Alastanos – May 17
Nathan Moran – May 17
Edith Mitchell – May 18
Dimitri Tsetsekas – May 18
Christian Corcoran – May 19
Athanasios Halkias – May 19
Antonio Bavaro – May 20

Alexander Demetriou – May 20
Ellie Langas – May 20
Kara Katzaras – May 21
John Kladis – May 21
Ty James Parker – May 21
Lydia Pierrousakos – May 21
Ariana Choundas Thatcher – May 22
Jacqueline Freeman – May 22
Evan Kremydas – May 22
Alexandra Laliotis – May 22
Alexis Mulberry – May 23
Cheryl Apostolos – May 24
Markos Mangarides – May 24
Oliver Calamunci – May 25
Hannah Passalaris – May 26
Nomiki Patellis – May 26
Michael Sandborn – May 26
Daniel LeMay – May 27
Aris Kolilias – May 28
Daphne Setzer-Torres – May 28
Olivia Axelrod – May 29
Franco Capitano – May 29
Maria Nicklow – May 29
Elisa Mitseas – May 30
Paul Jacobsen – May 31
Maria Pavlidis Levine – May 31

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.

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
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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.

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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!

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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: _____

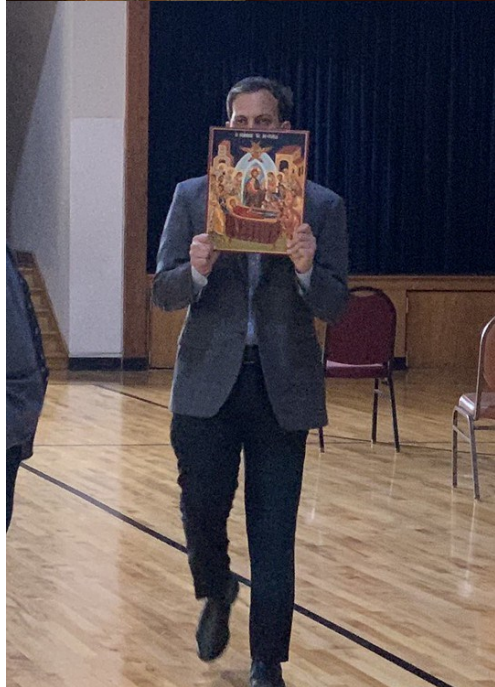
I wish to become a Friend of St. John the Baptist. I am enclosing a contribution in the amount of:

_____ \$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.**

Returning To Normal - Lent 2021

Sunday of Orthodoxy & Holy Cross



Please continue to pray for Dwight & Ewana and all those recovering from surgery in our community!

Burnt Toast

By Anonymous

One evening my mother made dinner after a hard day's work. She put a plate of eggs, salad and burnt toast in front of my father...

I immediately noticed, the burnt toast And, I was waiting to see if he was going to complain about it, but my father started to eat them, smiling and asked me how I spent my day at school...

My mom apologized to my dad for the burnt toast. I will never forget his response to her: "Honey, I love burnt toast!"

Later when I went to bed and my dad came over to kiss me goodnight, I asked him if he really liked the burnt toast?

He hugged me and said, "Your mother has had a difficult day and she is really tired. She went out of her way to prepare this meal for us, why blame her and hurt her.

Burnt toast never hurt anyone; but words can be very painful! "

We have to know how to appreciate what others do for us, even if it's not perfect, because it's the intention to do well that counts, and no one is perfect ...

A professor gave a balloon to every student, who had to inflate it, write their name on it and throw it in the hallway. The professor then mixed all the balloons. The students were then given 5 minutes to find their own balloon. Despite a hectic search, no one found their balloon.

At that point, the professor told the students to take the first balloon that they found and hand it to the person whose name was written on it. Within 5 minutes, everyone had their own balloon.

The professor said to the students: "These balloons are like happiness. We will never find it if everyone is looking for their own. But if we care about other people's happiness, we'll find ours too."



Five Things To Quit

1. Trying to please everyone
2. Fearing change
3. Living in the past
4. Putting yourself down
5. Overthinking

20 Simple Ways to Practice Humility

By Fr. Stefanos Anagnostopoulos

“Were you wronged? Forget it.
Did they despise you? Be happy.
Are they accusing you? Do not argue.
Are they teasing you? Do not answer.
Are they cursing you? Silence and prayer.
Do they take away your speech (cut you short)? Are they interrupting you? Do not be sad.
Do they malign you? Do not fight.
Do your children pass on responsibilities to you? Your relatives, your own people? Do not protest.
Are they angry with you? Stay calm.
Are they obviously stealing from you? Act blind.
Are they making fun of you? Be long-suffering.

Do (they) not listen to your advice? Do your children not listen to your advice? Fall on your knees and pray.
Irritability in your relationship? It is your fault. And (again) your fault. Not the other's.
Is it your fault? Apologise.
Is it not your fault? Apologise again.
Are you healthy? Praise God.
Do you have any illnesses? Do you have cancer, do you suffer, do you hurt? Praise God.
(Is there) Moaning, unemployment, poverty in the house? Fast. Hold vigil. Pray.
(Do) Prayer for everyone and everything. Lots of prayer. Lots of prayer. Fasting and prayer because “(fighting) these kind of passions and demons can only be achieved through fasting and prayer”.

My One Word For 2021: Rebound

By Thomas Phillips

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 Thomas Phillips.

I chose the word rebound as a response to the challenging and uncertain times we are living in. Based on my personal life experiences, the ability to rebound from difficulties and disappointments has allowed me to focus on the future and not dwell on the past.

We all experience adversity and challenges in our daily lives with family, friends, school, businesses, health, finances, and faith. How you deal with and respond to difficult times makes all the difference. Today it is easy to quit and give up. After a while, it becomes a habit to quit if something does not go your way or you feel offended and frustrated. Sometimes it may be the right thing to do because a situation cannot be salvaged. Most of the time it is because we do not understand the big picture. We only see how adversity affects us and not others.

Rebound is a personal reaction to a setback, adversity, or crisis. It is the ability to get back on track when you are derailed. In basketball, getting the rebound gives your team a second chance to score and gets the team back on track to win the game. The ability to

rebound in life becomes a necessity to maintain your physical, mental, and spiritual wellness. While rebounding is not easy, it is necessary in life to progress. Many of us are in positions of authority with responsibilities and accountability to others. We set the example for others and need to stay strong as others depend on us.

So how do you rebound when needed? It requires a positive attitude, love, hope, strength, courage, forgiveness, effort, good communication, and most importantly, faith. Orthodoxy teaches us that all things are possible when we live our faith. Our faith enables us to rebound during difficult times. Always stay in the fight, keep the faith, and never give up.

Thomas Phillips is a parishioner splitting time between Tampa, FL and Denver, CO. His son Tom is a student at USF studying finance and accounting.



Χρόνια Πολλά! Happy Nameday!

May 1
FILOSOFOS, ISIDORA, JEREMIA, TAMARA

May 2
ANASTASIOS, ANESTIS, AVGERINOS, BORIS, ESPEROS, LABROS, MATRONA, PASCHALINA, PASCHALIS, STASINOS

May 3
GEORGE, GEORGIA, RODOPI

May 4
IRINI, MARKOS, MELIA, NIKOS, RAPHAEL

May 5
EFRAIM, EIRINAIOS, IRINI, THEOHARIS,

May 6
IOV, SERAPHIM

May 7
KRINI, PANAGIOTIS, PIGI, POLYZOIS, ZISMOS, ZISIS, ZOE

May 8
MELIOS, THEOLOGOS

May 9
CHRISTOPHER, ESSAIAS, THOMAS

May 10
SIMON

May 11
ARGYRIS, ARMODIOS, DIOSKOURIDIS, METHODIOS, OLYMPIA

May 12
EPIFANEIOS, THEODOROS

May 13
GLYKERIA

May 14
ARISTOTELE, ISIDOROS, THERAPON

May 15
ACHILLIOS, KALI, PAHOMIOS

May 16
MYROFORA

May 17
ADRONIKOS, JUNIA, SOLON

May 18
FAEINI, GALATEIA, JULIA

May 19
MAGDALINI, MARYLENA, MENANDROS, PATRICK, THEOGNOSTOS, THEOKTISTOS

May 20
LEEDA, LIDIA, LITO,

May 21
CONSTANTIN, CONSTANTINA, HELEN, NANTIA

May 22
EMILIOS, KODROS

May 23
BATHSHEBA

May 24
CHRISTIAN, MARKIANI, PALLADIA, PHOTINI

May 26
KARPOS, SINESIOS

May 27
ALYPIOS, IOANNIS ROSSOS

May 28
DIMITRIOS, DIOSKOURIDIS

May 29
IPOMONI, OLIVIANOS, THEODOSIA

May 30
EMMELEIA

May 31
ERMEIAS, MAGOS

Why is Orthodox Pascha so late again this year (2021)?

By Fr. Panayiotis Papageorgiou

I received today the following question: “I know that our Pascha is always held after the vernal equinox, after the first full moon following that, and also after the Jewish Passover. But, the Passover begins tomorrow (March 27), the vernal equinox was on March 21 and the first full moon after the vernal equinox is on March 28. What factor am I missing as to why our Pascha is on May 2nd?”

The short answer to the question: The calculation of our Pascha is according to the Julian Calendar. In 2021, the Vernal Equinox according to the Julian Calendar is on April 2 and the next full moon is on April 26, hence our Pascha is on May 2nd.

The long answer to the question: The Orthodox Pascha calculation is based on the Julian Calendar, which was in use when the First Ecumenical Council in 325 AD decided when the Resurrection was to be celebrated in order to unify the practice in the whole Church. Hence, Pascha has always been celebrated after the vernal equinox (March 21 with the Julian Calendar) and after the first full moon (after the vernal equinox) and usually occurred after the Jewish Passover (which was also calculated according to the Julian Calendar).

In 1582, the Europeans changed the calendar (under Pope Gregory the 13th) in order to make corrections to the lag of time caused by the Julian calendar, thus creating what we know as the “Gregorian Calendar”, which we follow today in America, as well.

In 1583 the Pope began to calculate the date of Easter based on the new calendar (disregarding what the Orthodox Churches were doing). With the Gregorian Calendar the vernal equinox was now occurring 13 days earlier than in the Julian calendar and the full moon following that could also be different. He also disregarded the date of the Jewish Passover.

In addition, the Jewish leadership also made adjustments to the calculation of their Passover based on the astronomical adjustments/corrections used in the Gregorian Calendar.

Hence, the calculation of the Orthodox Pascha, which is still based on the Julian calendar, can now happen both after the Western Easter as well as after the Jewish Passover. The biggest span between the two happens when the full moon occurs right before the vernal equinox (March 21 with the Julian calendar, which is on April 2 with the Gregorian Calendar) and the next full moon would be the one considered the Paschal Moon in the calculation, which could put Pascha as much as a month later.

Hence, in 2021, the Vernal Equinox according to the Julian Calendar is on April 2 and the next full moon is on April 26, hence, in 2021 our Pascha is on May 2nd.

Fr. Panayiotis Papageorgiou is the Proistamenos of the Holy Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church in Marietta, GA.



The Matter of the Heart

by Max Lucado

Isn't there a time or two when you went outside for a solution when you should have gone inward? Reminds me of the golfer who was about to hit his first shot on the first hole. He swung and missed the ball. Swung and whiffed again. Tried a third time, missed again. In frustration he judged, “Man, this is a tough golf course.” He may have been right, but the golf course wasn't the problem.

You may be right, as well. Your circumstances may be challenging, but blaming them is not the solution. Nor is neglecting them. Consider the prayer of David. He said, “Create in me a new heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). *Real change is an inside job. You might alter things a day or two with money and systems, but the heart of the matter is, and always will be, the matter of the heart.*

On the Lighter Side

At our age, we can hide our own Easter eggs, wait half an hour and have no clue where we left them!

These GPA looking gas prices need to go. \$3.89 is summa cum laude gas. I need some academic probation gas.

People hear the coronavirus is coming and start panicking by buying toilet paper, hand sanitizer and soaps. This is stuff that you should be buying year round. Just keep our hands washed. Jesus is coming too but I don't see any of you running to buy a Bible or going to church. . .Just sayin. If you ain't got Jesus, all that hand sanitizer and soap ain't gonna save ya anyways!

If done properly, being a priest is a walk in the park. Jurassic Park, but a park.

On the serious side

Do not be surprise that you fall every day: do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly, the angel who guards you will honor your patience. ~St. John Climacus

When God blesses you financially, don't raise your stands of living. Raise your standard of giving. Always pray to have eyes that see the best in people, a heart that forgives the worst, a mind that forgets the bad, and a soul that never loses faith in God.

For a marriage to be happy, it must not be built on the principle of trying-it-out. Crowns are placed upon the heads of those being married in the Church, and these crowns symbolize martyrdom. Martyrdom, because someone decides to live for the other, transcending his egotism, and abandoning a life lived only for himself. And not just for a day, or for two years, but for your whole life. This is real martyrdom, when a person rises to the full measure of his human dignity. ~Archpriest Artemy Vladimirov

Forgive others. Not because they deserve forgiveness. But because you deserve peace. ~Mel Robbins

Jesus cried. He knew Lazarus was dead before He got the news. But still, He cried. He knew Lazarus would be alive again in moment, but still, He cried. He knew death here is not forever. He knew eternity and the Kingdom better than anyone else could. Yet He wept. Because this world is full of pain and regret and loss and depression and devastation. He wept because known the end of the story doesn't mean you can't cry at the sad parts.

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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.

America is losing its religion

By Bryan Walsh, author of *Future*

New surveys show Americans' membership in communities of worship has declined sharply in recent years, with less than 50% of the country belonging to a church, synagogue or mosque.

Why it matters: The accelerating trend towards a more secular America represents a fundamental change in the national character, one that will have major ramifications for politics and even social cohesion.

By the numbers: A [Gallup poll released last week](#) found just 47% of Americans reported belonging to a house of worship, down from 50% in 2018 and 70% as recently as 1999.

- The shift away from organized religion is a 21st century phenomenon. U.S. religious membership was 73% when Gallup first measured it in 1937, and stayed above 70% for the next six decades.

Context: The decline in membership is primarily driven by a sharp rise in the "nones" — Americans who [express no religious preference](#).

- The percentage of Americans who do not identify with any religion rose from 8% between 1998 and 2000 to 21% over the past three years, while the percentage of nones who do not belong to a house of worship has risen as well.

The big picture: The story of a more secular America is chiefly — though not entirely — one of generational change.

- Membership in houses of worship is correlated with age, with the oldest Americans much more likely to be church members than younger adults.
- But while church membership is lower among younger generations, the dropoff is particularly stark among millennials and Gen Z, who are about 30 percentage points lower than Americans born before 1946, compared to 8 points and 16 points respectively for baby boomers and Gen X.
- Children who grow up without organized religion [are less likely to join houses of worship when they become adults](#), so it stands to reason that the secularization trend will only continue in the future, barring major demographic or cultural changes.

Yes, but: [Generational replacement](#) — the idea that society-wide changes in values between the young and the old can be attributed to their different circumstances growing up — doesn't tell the entire story.

- Even the oldest Americans have seen a slight rise in the percentage of nones, while 20% of Gen Xers report no religious affiliation, up from 11% in 1999.

Details: Whatever their religious practices, Americans are increasingly rejecting many of the moral precepts found in most major religions.

- [A 2017 Gallup poll](#) found a significant majority of Americans believe practices like birth control, divorce, extramarital sex, gay and lesbian relations are all morally acceptable.

In a [piece last year for Foreign Affairs](#), the political scientist Ronald F. Inglehart argued that [as birthrates have dropped](#) thanks in part to contraception and falling infant mortality, modern societies have become less observant "because they no longer need to uphold the kinds of gender and sexual norms that the major world religions have instilled for centuries."

The catch: Just because conventional religious practice is on the decline doesn't mean Americans will have no need to fill [what the journalist Murtaza Hussain calls](#) the country's "God-shaped hole."

- While the earlier phases of the civil rights movement were built on the strength of the Black church, today many young people are [flocking to campaigns like Black Lives Matter](#) that aren't religious in nature, but often adopt the language of religion, spirituality and justice.
- "Political debates over what America is supposed to mean have taken on the character of theological disputations," Shadi Hamid, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, [wrote in a recent Atlantic essay](#). "This is what religion without religion looks like."

What's next: As religion decreasingly becomes something Americans practice, it may instead become another identity, subsumed into the ongoing culture wars.

- The trend may also shake up the electorate. The [journalist Matt Yglesias noted](#) that when a white person switches from being Christian to non-affiliated, they are more likely to become a Democrat, "but when a Black person makes the same switch, the correlation goes in the other direction."
- That could help explain the fairly secular Donald Trump having partial success in [increasing the GOP's share of the non-white vote in 2020](#).

The bottom line: The U.S. remains an unusually religious country, with more than seven in 10 Americans still affiliating with some organized religion, according to the Gallup poll.

- But conventional religion's power is on the wane, and it might take a miracle for that to change.



~ May 2021 ~													
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat							
2 PASCHA Agape Vespers 11:00 a.m.	3 St. George Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	4 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	5 St. Irene Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	6	7 Life Giving Font Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	8 St. John the Theologian Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.							
9 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Mother's Day	10 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	11 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Meeting of Ministry Heads 6:00 p.m.	12 **	13 Fr. Stavros OCN 7:00 p.m.	14 **	15 St. Pachomios (Fr. Stavro's Ordination Anniversary) Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.							
16 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m.	17 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	18 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. PC Meeting 6:30 p.m.	19 **	20	21 ** Sts. Constantine & Helen Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	22 Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.							
23 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Parish Assembly Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	24 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	25 Suffering Book Club 6:30 p.m.	26** Mid-Pentecost Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	27	28 **	29 Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.							
30 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	31 Memorial Day Office Closed												

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1**Holy Saturday Vespers Liturgy 8:30 a.m. Great Canon 11:00pm Resurrection Service 11:45 p.m.
2 PASCHA Agape Vespers 11:00 a.m.	3 St. George Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	4 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	5 St. Irene Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	6	7 Life Giving Font Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	8 St. John the Theologian Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
9 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Mother's Day	10 Bible Study 6:30 p.m	11 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Meeting of Ministry Heads 6:00 p.m.	12 **	13 Fr. Stavros OCN 7:00 p.m.	14 **	15 St. Pachomios (Fr. Stavro's Ordination Anniversary) Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
16 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m.	17 Bible Study 6:30 p.m	18 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. PC Meeting 6:30 p.m.	19 **	20	21 ** Sts. Constantine & Helen Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	22 Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
23 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Parish Assembly Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	24 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m	25 Suffering Book Club 6:30 p.m.	26** Mid-Pentecost Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	27	28 **	29 Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
30 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	31 Memorial Day Office Closed					

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
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Pastoral Assistant Alex Limberatos
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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
George Chagaris 727-420-1920
Amin Hanhan 813-846-2957
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Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352
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Mike Xenick 813-340-8737

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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
Volunteer Coming Soon

Book Study
Alex Limberatos 262-370-0586

Buildings & Grounds
Euripides Panos 813-352-3972

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

Choir
Pauline Spencer, Director 813-390-1782
Ruth Losovitz, Organist 727-688-2782

Community Outreach
Greg Melton 813-967-2074

**Connect Through Christ -
Special Needs Ministry for Children**
Dante and Lindsey Skourellos 813-765-9534

Dance Groups
H XAPA MΑΣ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668
Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963
IIAPEA, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
IIANH'IYPI, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

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

Finance Committee
Gary Ward 813-846-3898

Food Pantry
Volunteer Coming Soon

GriefShare
Donna Hambos 813-843-8412

Gasparilla Parking
John Kokkas 727-992-4165

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

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

Junior Olympics
Dwight Forde 727-685-9028

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

Parish Nursing Ministry
Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026

Orthodox Christian Fellowship
Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Oratorical Festival
Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

Photography Ministry
Karina Findlay 813-476-9632

Philoptochos
Jeanie Nenos 813-451-9116

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

Sunday School
Vickie Peckham 813-758-3102

12 Disciples
Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Usher
Volunteer Needed!

Welcoming Ministry
Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

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

Young Adult
Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

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

Youth Protection
Volunteer Needed!

The Messenger of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is published on a monthly basis. Publication is the first of each month. Deadline for notices and announcements for The Messenger is the 10th of each month.

"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.