

# THE MESSENGER

## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

# March 2022

### 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

### Fr. Stavros' Message

### H.A.B.I.T.S.

**O**n March 1, 2020, it was Forgiveness Sunday in the Orthodox world. Great Lent was about to begin March 2. I remember the day vividly. We had our Sunday school pre-Lent retreat, and I was so happy that Fr. Stratton was here to give Antithoron so I could leave church quickly and teach a session. We had begun to hear about the Coronavirus impacting places in this country, specifically New England and New York, and it seemed like things might be slowing down a little. Sunday, March 8, was a normal Sunday. It was the Sunday of Orthodoxy. We had an overflow crowd, our children were part of the Sunday of Orthodoxy procession. By March 13, it was determined that schools would be out at least "a couple of weeks" to let the coronavirus "blow over." March 15, we had a crowd half the size than usual. It was apparent that this was going to have an impact on our community. By March 18, we held Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, there was no Lenten dinner, and there were about 12 people in church. At the end of the service, I remember announcing that this would

likely be the last public school for awhile. And sure enough, by Friday, March 20, the church was closed save for the priest, chanter and the few people needed to do the service.

This is not political commentary. There is no agenda or opinion on the pandemic. What is truth is that the church is not as full as it was two years ago as we get to March

2022. Some people come to church but not as much as they once did. Some have gone to other churches. And some have stopped coming altogether. Being a Christian was a difficult proposition before March 2020, it has been made even more challenging in the last two years, and going forward there will be even greater challenges it seems.

Regardless of where you are in your Christian journey, it's time to start again. If you're going strong, it's time to assess how you can be even more convicted in your faith and in the way you live your life for Christ. If you are lukewarm, it's time to take it to a deeper level. If you've changed the channel, it's time to come back. And if you've never really had a relationship with Christ, it's time to start.



Last Lenten dinner of 2020



Sunday of Orthodoxy 2020

Continued...



Great Lent will begin on Monday, March 7, 2022. (Pascha is April 24) By the time you get this message the start of Great Lent will be only days away. It is our custom in the Orthodox world to use the Triodion (the four-Sunday period which precedes Great Lent) to reflect on changes we need to make in our spiritual lives. We put these changes into effect with the beginning of Great Lent. Over the next 40 days plus Holy Week, hopefully some new habits develop. And at Pascha, there is a celebration of spiritual renewal, with small new habits that will become permanent ones. This is how it is *supposed to work*. *In reality, Lent is often seen as a period of austerity and deprivation. There is a tendency to either be robotic about Lent, following the rule of the law when it comes to things like fasting; or to say "it's not really possible to do all that we are supposed to do" as justification for doing nothing or next to nothing.*

What I want our community to focus on this year is the word HABITS. Over the six weeks of Great Lent, we are going to use this word, HABITS, as an acronym for how to a) get something out of this Lenten period; b) get back to the basics of what believe; c) have a better idea of some practical applications of Christianity to our everyday lives; and d) to create new HABITS so that when Lent is over, we haven't made radical but temporary changes, but instead have made some small but permanent ones. Each Sunday will highlight a different letter in our acronym HABITS. We will do so, as follows:

H Have a plan  
A Affirm your faith  
B Be a Friend  
I Intentionally choose Him  
T Trust Him  
S Surrender to Him

The topic will be introduced each Sunday in the sermon. On Wednesdays, we will resume the pre-Sanctified Liturgy Lenten dinners. At each dinner, Fr. Stavros will offer a presentation to expound on what was introduced the previous Sunday, offering some practical application of each part to our everyday life. And following each presentation, there will be a small group discussion with guided question. The Wednesday evening schedule will be as follows:

6:00 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy  
7:15 p.m. Dinner (provided by our ministries)  
7:45 p.m. Presentation by Fr. Stavros  
8:15 p.m. Small Group Discussion  
8:45 p.m. Final thoughts, wrap up and closing prayer  
9:00 p.m. Depart for home

Our topics will be as follows:

Sunday, March 6/Wednesday, March 9 Have a plan  
We will discuss how to make a bold plan for how to spend the Lenten season, evaluate how our Lenten plan has worked over the first few days of Lent, and talk about how to keep the Lenten plan going far into the future.

Sunday, March 13/Wednesday, March 16 Affirm your faith  
We will discuss some of the basics of the faith and how to commit/recommit ourselves to our practice of the Orthodox Christian faith.

Sunday, March 20/Wednesday, March 23 Be a friend  
Using the story of the healing of the Paralytic as a foundation, we'll talk about how to be a good friend, the importance of encouraging people in their Christian journey, and the importance of allowing others to encourage you.



Sunday, March 27/Wednesday, March 30 Intentionally Choose Him

On the Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross, we read Christ's words "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me." (Mark 8:34) We will discuss how to be intentional about making choices the keep us following Christ.

Sunday, April 3/Wednesday, April 6 Trust Him

On the fourth Sunday of Lent, we hear a man plea to Christ to heal his son. He confesses to Christ, "I believe! Help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24) If we are honest, this is where we all are at least some of the time. We believe something or we wouldn't be part of this church or reading this message. When life gets hard and perplexing, we all struggle to stay strong in our belief. This week will focus on trusting God at all times.

Continued...





Sunday, April 10/Wednesday, April 13 Surrender to Him  
The ultimate expression of Christ's love was to surrender His life on the cross. Our ultimate expression of faith in Christ is to surrender our life to Him. What does that look like and how do we do it? Come for our last session and find out.

The dinners for each week will be sponsored as follows:

Wednesday, March 9 Choir

Wednesday, March 16 AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope

Wednesday, March 23 Nursing/Welcome Ministry

Wednesday, March 30 Philoptochos

Wednesday, April 6 Sunday School

Wednesday, April 13 Parish Council

Each ministry is asked to bring Lenten dishes and help to serve the dinner.

### Make a Plan for this Lent

This issue of *The Messenger* gives information on the many things that are happening during Lent that provide us ample opportunities to grow in our faith and experience spiritual renewal.

~There are more liturgical services in the months of March and April than in any other months of the year.

~There will be at least 5 opportunities to worship each week of Great Lent.

~Fr. Stavros and Fr. John will be available for confession by appointment throughout Lent (and throughout the year).

~The Lenten Covenant is again included in this issue of *The Messenger* for those who want to make a personal plan for growth this Lent.

### The Restoration of Holy Images—US

On the first Sunday of Great Lent, we commemorate the Sunday of Orthodoxy, which marks the day that the icons were returned to the churches in 843 after a nearly 150 absence, during a time when many were arguing that icons were a heretic violation of the second commandment which forbid graven images. The word "icon" in

Greek is "eikona" which is more accurately translated as "image." It is interesting to note that in Genesis 1:26-27, when God made man in the image and likeness of God, the same word "eikona" is used for image in the Greek translation. Thus, God made man as an icon of Himself. We are each "icons" of God, as we have His image imprinted in and on us. The Sunday of Orthodoxy marks the return of the Holy Images (Icons) to the churches. It marks the restoration of the Holy Images, the idea that the Holy Images (Icons) are indeed good things. In a similar way, let's use the Sunday of Orthodoxy and indeed this Lenten season as an opportunity to restore our own Holy Images, to work on return our icons (souls) to church and to our God, who made us to look like Him.

We may look at ourselves and our lives and think that they don't resemble the image of God right now. And that's okay! What is not okay is to stay in the position we are in. We all have the ability, like the Prodigal Son, to make our way back to God. And we all need the trust that He waits for our return with open arms, with mercy and with joy. Let's enter the Lenten season ready to work on restoring our images, our personal icons, so that when we reach the Resurrection of Christ, we are renewed in faith, and our images, the icons of our souls, shine brighter than they do today.



Lent is a time to think about our spiritual HABITS, change some of them, and make some new, different and better ones. It takes 30 days for something to become a habit. Lent and Holy Week afford us 47 days to do this. Let's each

H Have a Plan

A Affirm the faith

B Be a Friend

I Intentionally Choose Him

T Trust Him

S Surrender to Him

Have a blessed period of the Great Lent! Kali Sarakosti!

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

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



# Stewards of God's Grace - Stewards of our Jobs

By: Fr Stavros Akrotirianakis

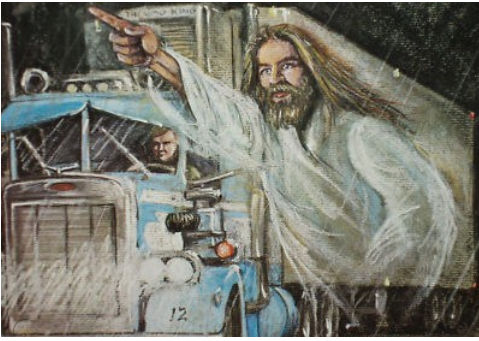
*Our word for our parish for 2022 is "stewards." Every month this year, Fr. Stavros will write a short article on one aspect of this word, to keep it at the forefront of our minds as we journey through 2022.*

*As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. 1 Peter 4:10*

I heard a podcast recently where the presenter said that if everyone interjected God into their job, then every job is holy, every job is a ministry. This doesn't mean that we need to preach God's word in our jobs. Sadly, that's probably not allowed in many jobs. However, we can be God's light in any job, we can shine His light in any job situation. In Matthew 5:14, Jesus tells us "You are the light of the world." And in Matthew 5:16, He says "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." In other words, we let our light shine by the example we set. Because God is loving, we are to be loving. Because God is joyful, we are to be joyful.

There is no job where we can't be respectful, or offer a smile to someone. That isn't just a good thing to do, it can become and should become a Godly thing to do.

Every job is important. I was speaking at a GOYA retreat recently, where I made the case that the truck driver is more valuable than the doctor. When pressed as to why I thought that was so, I replied, "without the truck driver, no medical supplies or medicines get to the doctor. And how effective is the



doctor going to be without supplies or medicines?" It is the farmer who grows the food, who gives it to the truck driver, who delivers it to the store, where someone puts it on the shelves, while someone else makes sure the store is clean. Any break in any of these links to the chain would have us all hungry and dead. So, don't discount the efforts of the farmer, the truck driver, the clerk or the maintenance person. All are needed so that we can eat.

The word "holy" means "set apart." We've discussed this many times. We can bring holiness into our jobs if we see ourselves as "set apart by God" to do whatever it is we are doing. When we bring holiness into our jobs, they cease being jobs (where we labor for money) and they become ministries where we serve out of love. The Greek word for "ministry" is "Diakonia" which means "service." The one offering the Diakonia is the "diakonos" the servant. The good steward then is the one who uses his talents to be a good servant in whatever ministry can use his or her talents.

Many people think of work only as a way to make money. This is why many people are not working these days, because they are making money to stay home or they don't feel like they are making enough money and want more. It is necessary to see work as vocation, something that puts money in

our pockets and bread on our table. However, it is also necessary to see work as ministry, where our emphasis is on serving one another, irrespective of what we (or they are at another job) are earning.

Rather than reflecting on the question "what am I worth?" we need to be thinking "what are they (other people) worth?" And even more so on the question, "What is my soul worth?" Jesus reminds us in Mark 8:36-37, "For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his (soul)? For what can a man give in return for his (soul)?" There is no amount of money that will outweigh the value of our souls. Therefore, while we work for money to put food on our tables, we should labor more for that which will not perish, our souls.

The priesthood, for me, is both ministry and vocation. It is vocation in the sense that I earn a salary and use the salary to pay my mortgage, for food, for leisure, clothes, etc. The priesthood, however, is more ministry than vocation. It ideally becomes a means by which I glorify God with the hope that He will one day glorify me in heaven.

Ideally this is the way we approach any job and every job, as both vocation and as ministry. We are a steward of our jobs in the sense that each of us will work at our job temporarily. If you are a doctor at an office, a nurse in a hospital, a teacher in a classroom, or a truck driver on the road, you won't be doing your job in 100 years, or probably even 50. Someone else will be doing it. Will you take care of your job and turn it over to the next person in a better way that you received it? When I was in Asheville, my previous parish, the Parish Council President said to me one day "We know you won't be here forever, so just run as far and as hard and as fast as you can for however long you are here and then we can't be upset when you are longer here, because you will have done your best and gotten us as far as possible." I think of any job in this way—run as hard and as far and as fast as you can for as long as you are doing any job, and then no one will be upset when you are not doing it—not you, not those you served, and not God either.



Well done, good and faithful servant! On January 23, we welcomed back Lieutenant Colonel George Steffens back to Tampa, after his long and distinguished career in the United States Army.

# Stillness: Exercise for the Soul

## By Vasili Panagopoulos



Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Great Lent is upon us!

I am looking forward to my first Lenten season with each of you. Lent is my favorite time of the year. I enjoy the journey towards Pascha: the many services, chanting the beautiful hymns, and reading Scripture. Great Lent is also filled with

themes to focus our attention on different aspects of our lives. These themes correspond to the Gospel Readings for each Sunday of Great Lent, and we can “live the Gospel” by participating in each theme. Some of these themes are centered around forgiveness, fasting, prayer, and giving. We are also encouraged and instructed to fast from food, increase our prayers, give more of our time, talents, and treasure, attend more services, go to Confession and above all, receive Holy Communion. These directions are extremely important and fundamental to our spiritual life, and it can seem daunting to absorb everything and also carry out the instruction. That’s why this year, I have a new “challenge” for Lent. Stillness.

We live in a society centered around time. We are constantly on the go, going from one task to the other from the moment we wake up to when we go to bed. We were all raised that way from our youth. We wake up, get ready, go to school, attend our classes, come home, do homework, eat dinner, and go to bed. We repeat this process until we graduate, and either continue in college or



start working. Once we enter a field of work, it is the same process. Perhaps you add a spouse and children to the mix, you mingle your schedules together, and the process continues until you retire.

Suddenly, years have passed and you ask yourself, “Where did all the time go?”

In the midst of that, when you do have downtime, how do you spend it? Unfortunately, more times than not, we spend it on our phones, scrolling endlessly on social media, playing video games till the break of dawn, or binge watch Netflix all weekend. There’s nothing wrong with relaxing, but could we be spending more of our downtime doing something more productive? I’m not suggesting reading our Bible or the lives of the Saints, or even praying for that matter.



I’m talking about being still.

Not listening to music, watching the news, playing a game, or even going on a walk, just being still. This is a great exercise for our mind, but more so for our soul.

When we are still, we become more attuned with ourselves.

When we are still, we heighten our senses and become more attuned with God.

When we are still, we can appreciate God’s creation.

As a result of this, we become peaceful, we slow down, we live in the moment.

St. Paisios of Mount Athos desired to become more still throughout his life, because of the peace that it gave him. The world around him was stressful, constantly moving, distracting him and pushing him away from God. “External stillness, along with asceticism and unceasing prayer, brings inner stillness to the soul, and very quickly. After that, external turmoil does not bother you” (St. Paisios, St. Paisios of Mount Athos pg. 455).

Continued...





We aren't living out in the desert or in a monastery where we can focus all of our attention on Lent 100% of the time. We still have our studies, jobs, daily responsibilities, and obligations. It is easy to get caught up in life and forget about Lent while we live our regular lives if we are not attentive. But we can give a little part of our day to being still (external stillness), and coupled with fasting and prayer we can have inner tranquility and stillness (hesychia). Once we acquire that inner stillness, the rest of life will become less stressful and less distracting. The small things won't bother you, and the big things will become more tolerable.

Great Lent is a time for fasting, reflection, repentance, prayer, and forgiveness. When we are still, we can control what we consume: nutritionally and through our eyes and ears. We can reflect on our lives and discern where we need to improve; we can focus on prayer, and we can forgive and accept forgiveness.

My challenge for myself and for everyone is this: find just five minutes everyday to be still and be with God. Separate yourself from all distractions. Find a quiet place, perhaps outside, or while you're alone at work, in another room at home, and just be still and quiet. Overtime, if you enjoy this still time, increase it to ten minutes, fifteen, a half hour.

External stillness brings internal stillness; internal stillness brings peace to our soul, and builds a better relationship with God.

May we have the intercessions of St. Paisios to find peace this Great Lent, and may that inner peace carry on through the rest of our lives.

Καλή Σαρακοστή! Blessed Lent!

With love in Christ,  
Vasili



## Man Of God - A Film of St. Nektarios

### Join St. John in watching this family film together!

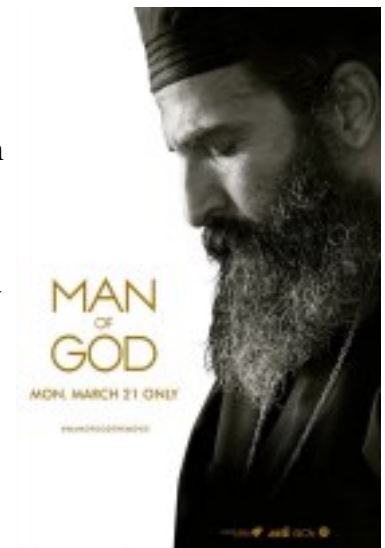
We are pleased to announce that "Man of God," the highly anticipated award-winning film based on the inspiring life of our beloved Orthodox saint, Saint Nektarios of Aegina, is coming to movie theaters across the United States on Monday, March 21st as a one night only Fathom Events release. Our parish is organizing an opportunity to see it together with our church community. Everyone is invited to attend this special screening.

If there is enough interest, we have been in contact with the manager at the Regal Citrus Park Theater to inquire about getting a block of seats in a private auditorium on Monday, March 21 at 7:00 PM. Tickets will cost approximately \$12-14 each.

**Please email Donna Trakas at [dptrakas@verizon.net](mailto:dptrakas@verizon.net) by Monday, March 7th at 6:00 PM with the number of tickets you would like.** More details will follow once we know we have enough interest.

We look forward to hearing from you!

With love in the Lord,  
+Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis





# St. John the Baptist Community News



**Souper Bowl of Caring**—Thank You! On Super Bowl Sunday, February 13, (who won the game and who won the pot) We collected two whole boxes of food and \$477 to benefit Hope Children's Home, a local foster home.

**Gasparilla**—Our church made \$3,451 from last month's Adult Gasparilla Parking. Thank you to our Ye Holy Krewe this year for being our hands on deck!

**GOYA**—Our GOYA meeting for March will be Sunday, March 20, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be served.

**GOYA Lenten Retreat**—Our 17<sup>th</sup> Annual GOYA Lenten Retreat will be held on Friday, March 25-Sunday, March 27 at Mary Help of Christians conference center in East Tampa. GOYAns interested in attending should contact Michael and Bessie Palios.

**Men's Group**—The Men's group will meet on Sunday, March 27 at 5:00 p.m. We meet once a month, go to a restaurant for fellowship and discussion. We finish by 7:30 p.m. All men of our parish are welcome to join. New people are welcome, and bring your non-Orthodox friends, they are welcome also.

**Women's Bible Study meets on Tuesday** from 10:00-11:30 a.m. with both in-person and zoom options. Fr. Stavros leads this group. In March, our meeting will be on Tuesdays, March 8, 22 and 29. We are studying St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.

Monday night Bible study—will continue meeting at 6:30 p.m. on most Monday evenings. Join us in person or via zoom for some very informative, lively and interactive discussions on how we apply Biblical principles in our everyday lives. See the Sunday bulletin for specific topics. In March, Fr. John's Bible study will take place as follows; Tuesday, March 8; Monday, March 14; Tuesday, March 22; Monday, March 28.

**GriefShare meets every Thursday In-Person and via Zoom at 6:30 p.m.** It may be hard for you to feel optimistic about the future right now. If you've lost a spouse, child, family member, or friends you've probably found there are not many people who understand the deep hurt you feel. This can be a confusing time when you feel isolated and have many questions. "Going to GriefShare feels like having warm arms wrapped around you when you're shivering." GriefShare groups meet weekly to help you face these challenges and move toward rebuilding your life. Each GriefShare session has three distinct elements: Video seminar with experts, support group discussion with focus and personal study and reflection. We will meet from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the Administration Building Meeting Room on Thursdays, starting January 21, for 13 weeks, ending on Thursday, April 22. For March, GriefShare will meet March 3, 10, and 24. For more information please contact Donna Hambos at 813-843-8412 or dhambos@msn.com. Books for the program will be provided. Donation for the book suggested but not required. Open to all family and friends. *Griefshare remains open enrollment with support towards healing and hope. You can begin at any time.*

**Looking for Donation for Two Icons**—We are looking to buy two icons for the Paschal and Nativity seasons. We are looking for donations of \$160 for a Nativity Icon and \$40 for an Icon of the Resurrection.

## PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY

MEMBERS IN THE SATURDAY OF THE SOULS MEMORIAL SERVICES - March 5, March 12

In Memory of

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

**\*\*You only need to write the first name of each person. Please mail to the church office by Friday, March 4.**

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

### In Memory Evangeline "Engie" Halkias



On behalf of the Halkias & Chagaris families we would like to "Thank" everyone in our beloved St. John's Family for your love, prayers and support during this difficult time.

Special thanks to everyone involved in decorating the Church so beautifully in our mother's' honor: Vickie Peckham, Debbie Nicklow, Maria Xenick, Felix Ramirez, and Alex Limberatos. Thank you to Presbytera Denise Stefero for her angelic voice and George Hambos for accompanying her.

It was an honor to have Charlie participate and join Vasili Panagopoulos in chanting so beautifully. Thank you both.

Special thanks to Fr. Stavros for the meaningful tribute to our wonderful, dear mother. God Bless you all!

May her memory be eternal.

With love,  
the Halkias and Chagaris families

## Your stewardship has resulted in helping people in Africa!



In December, our community was visited by Fr. Anastasios Simona, a priest who served in Cameroon, in Africa. Because of your generous stewardship, and our commitment to supporting charitable causes, we were able to give him

a donation of \$2,000. We recently heard from him. The \$2,000 dollars was used to dig a well in the desert to provide water to those who live there. Here are a few pictures of the church in Africa.



### Parish Registry

**Baptism**-Stevie Lee DeYoung, daughter of John and Virginia DeYoung, was baptized on Sunday, January 23. James and Patricia Sanders were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

**Baptism**-John Dionysis Papaefstathiou, son of Louis and Joanne (Vourloumis) Papaefstathiou was baptized on Sunday, February 6. Spiro and Theodora Komninos were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

**Wedding**-Hali Drizis and Kyle Austin were married on Saturday, February 5. Faye Konstantinidis was the Koumbara. Congratulations!

**Wedding**-Christina Hunt and Brandon Padilla were married on Saturday, February 12. Stamatena Panarites was the Koumbara. Congratulations!

**Funeral**-Engie Halkias passed away on Sunday, January 30. Her funeral was held on Monday, February 7. May her memory be eternal!



# Eulogy-Engie Halkias

Trisagion-February 6, 2022  
by Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis

*Engie Halkias was one-of-a-kind, and the eulogy for Engie matched the "one-of-a-kind" person that she was. Because there have been many requests for this eulogy, it is being reprinted in the Messenger this month.*

Yesterday afternoon, I was mowing the lawn, and thinking about what I could say this evening about the life of Engie Halkias, who I considered not only a valued co-worker but a dear friend. As I was praying to God for some clarity, He brought to my mind one verse of Scripture, the words of Jesus Christ from the book of Revelation 22:13, one of the last verses of the last book of the Bible, where He says: "I AM the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Engie lived the kind of life that for every alpha, there needed to be an omega. For everything that she began, there needed to be a tidied up ending. So, I'm going to remember Engie Halkias this evening, by taking a word that starts with each letter of the Greek Alphabet, from alpha to omega, to remember a woman whose Alpha was humble and whose Omega is holy and glorious. I hope that when I finish this list, rather than sorrow, you will feel joy for her life that was, and for the eternal life we hope she will inherit.

## Agapi love

If you didn't know any better, you'd think that Engie was not capable of learning anyone's name. She simply called everyone "Agapi." Engie just loved everybody. Whether she had known you for years or just met you, Agapi just fell out of her mouth when she called someone by name. More important, agape fell out of her heart to everyone.

## Viothitiki Helpful

Engie would help out in so many ways. First, the obvious, as a wife, mother, worker and friend. She also was the first to volunteer when the call for help was made. And if there was no call for volunteers, she would volunteer anyway, always asking what she could do to help.



## Yiayia Grandmother

She was so proud of her two grandsons—Demetri and Thanasi. She enjoyed spoiling you and watching you grow up. How proud she was to see you starting families of your own, with Demetri marrying Camille, and Thanasi about to marry Hannah. And with the arrival of little George, she got to see a great grandchild as well.

## Demetri

Engie's beloved husband of 48 years. She met Demetri in Chicago, where she was working at the prestigious Marshall Fields. They married in 1962. They would relocate soon after to Omaha, Nebraska, where Demetri had a teaching job at Creighton University and Engie became active in both the greater community and in the Greek community. She and Demetri relocated to Tampa in 1972, where they bought the house she would live in for the rest of her life. Engie and Demetri were a good team. She respected him. He doted on her. They both liked to laugh. They both enjoyed serving the church, and both made a significant mark on this community. When he passed in 2008, Engie was devastated. And even now, years later, she would still get emotional when talking about him. I'm comforted by the thought that they are now reunited.

## Ellatha Greece

Engie came to the United States in 1948, entering America at Ellis Island. Her father had left Greece when she was just an infant, so she was reunited with him, essentially meeting him for the first time. From Ellis Island, she went to Chicago, then to Nebraska and eventually to Tampa. She was a proud American, loved this country, and assimilated well, learning a new language, adjusting to life in a new country, eventually raising a family and running a business. Though she fully assimilated into the American way of life, Engie never forgot her Greek roots. Demetri formed the American Foundation of Greek Language and Culture (AFGLC) and she was at his side as this group supported Philhellenes as well as scholarships which have helped many students of St. John as well as surrounding communities to go to college. Engie visited Greece many times and adorned her home with many things from the old country.

## Zoe Life

Engie lived 86 good years. Her health was perfect up until a few months ago. While we are all sad to some degree, I think it is fair to say that most of the sadness is for ourselves. Engie had a long and full life. She got to see her children's children, as we pray at the wedding service, she was married for almost half a century, raised children, worked, retired, volunteered and it was only in the last few months that she had any health crisis at all. Amazingly, before last November, the last time she had visited a doctor was at the birth of her youngest son, Angelo.

## Iremi Calm, composed, serene

If Engie ever got mad, I never saw it. She was always calm. In stressful situations, she was always composed. And her countenance was serene. Now, that didn't mean that Engie didn't have a sense of order. She knew exactly what she wanted in life, she knew how she wanted to decorate things, she had a sense of order about everything, but she articulated that with a calmness and serenity, rather than with an authoritarian voice.

## Theos God

Engie loved God. Engie loved God. There are lots of people who love their families, and who love their jobs. There are even lots of people who love the church. But there are not that many that love God. Engie loved God. She loved worshipping Him. She loved being in His house. She loved being in here when it was full for worship. She loved being in here when it was empty.

Continued...



As she would tell me, she would clean the church, and spend time in here alone, with God. She had a sense of heaven. Two weeks ago today, we had a beautiful conversation about heaven. It was the last such conversation of many, that we had had about heaven, God, and salvation.

#### Ioannis St. John

Engie loved this church. She used to say all the time, I love God, I love my family, and I love my church. She had just about every role you could have in this church, from the Philoptochos to Daughters of Penelope, to the Greek Festival, to being a greeter and to founding the Altar Angels.

#### Kathara Clean

One of the most significant roles Engie played in our church, especially during my time here, was being in charge of the altar angels. In this role, she kept the church clean. She ordered all the flowers and did all the decorating. She and I saw eye to eye, perfectly, the vision for how the church should be decorated. She said to me one time “you have expense taste but good taste.” And I replied “and so do you.” That’s why we got along so well. Engie put together over the years a book with all the details for how the church is decorated for every feastday. That book will continue to be used. She used to say “what we do every year is so beautiful, it doesn’t ever seem like we need to change anything.” Indeed, we don’t. The Engie Halkias decorating plan will continue in the years to come. Engie was crushed when the pandemic started two years ago. She called me the day that we had to close down the church and said, “don’t you worry Father, pandemic or not, we will decorate the church for Holy Week.” And she did. Felix built us a small kouvouklion, the tomb of Christ, that Engie decorated with silk flowers over a period of several weeks. We haven’t had to replace those flowers yet, so for the next few years at least, when we use the small kouvouklion on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August and on Holy Friday, her handiwork will still be part of our church services. Engie also meticulously hand washed and ironed the red cloths used for Holy Communion, the only person to do this job in the 17.5 years I have served at St. John.



#### Loukoumades

Loukoumades and Engie were synonymous. No one makes them like her. Many people come to our festivals just to eat her loukoumades. Who can forget the year there was a grease fire and the fire department came and Engie was telling them that the show would go on to quickly clean up the mess so she and her crew could get back to work. I will think of Engie every time I eat loukoumades and I know you will too.

#### Mitera Mother

Engie was blessed to be the mother of four children—George, Kalliope, Chris and Angelo. She took that role seriously, guiding, encouraging, and telling you what to do until her last days. How blessed she was to add three more children to her family, through marriage—she loved Elaine, George and Lenka. How blessed she was that all of you lived near her all of her life. And how blessed she was that all of you were attentive to her these past several months and all of you were with her as she took her last breath. She modeled for you so many of these traits we are describing here and her personality, as well as that of your father, Demetri, will live on in you.

#### Nouna Godmother

Engie was not only mother of four children, but Godmother to over two dozen Godchildren. She answered the most profound question we are asked in our lives—Do you believe in Christ?—on behalf of all of them, she prayed for all of them, and she modeled for all of them what it means to be a Christian. So many times this role has become just a social role, but Engie fulfilled this role with the utmost dedication.

#### Xiyimeni Reliable, Trustworthy

I only knew Engie for the last 17 of her 86 years, and I can personally say she was both reliable and trustworthy. I trusted her with the decorations of the church. We’d communicate about things and then she’d go about her work and I knew when I came into the church that I would always be not only pleased but awed at the beauty of her work. Probably because she’d still be in there making adjustments so everything would be just perfect. She was also so reliable that I never had to worry if I forgot anything, because she’d be the one calling me to remind me that it was time to do something in the church.



#### Oikoyenia Family

Besides her husband, children and grandchildren, Engie’s family was much larger. She loved her mother, Katina, whom she made the journey to America with. And when she finally got to know her father, Christos, she loved him as well. Her sister Helen and her family blended right in with Engie and hers. Her brother John was always a pillar of strength. And through their families, she had many nieces, nephews and cousins.

#### Pisti Faith

A life without faith is a long and slow march to death. A life with faith is a journey with God to His glorious Kingdom. Engie was a person of deep faith. When we say “with the fear of God, with faith and with love draw near,” that fear is more “awe” than foreboding.

Continued...



Engie had an awe of God. When she entered into this church, she always felt like she was standing in His presence. She would ask if God would be upset if the vacuum cleaner was too loud. In addition to awe, she had love of God. She never complained to God. She sometimes complained to us, but never to Him. She understood that the journey to salvation is like a big play where we each have a role. She embraced her well. Another word starting with the Greek letter Pi that was very important to Engie was the Panagia. Engie loved the Panagia. She was always talking to the Panagia. She saw the Panagia as a friend. Her and Demetri donated the beautiful blue altar cloth that is on the altar table, because we always have it on the altar when we celebrate the feast of the Panagia in August.

#### Rizomeni Grounded, Rooted

Engie was grounded and rooted in so many things—faith, family, culture, work—people who are not grounded tend to have emotions that are all over the place, and a questionable work ethic and other ethics. Engie was solid, consistent, and a joy to be around.

#### Spouthi Study

Because Engie spent so much time at the church, many people forget that she was also a serious student and ran a business of her own. She went to the art institute and studied interior decorating. She established “Engie’s interiors” and Silver Spoon of Tampa, where she sold elegant heirloom children’s clothing. Many a child was baptized with clothing and apparel that came from Engie’s store.

Timia Fair, decent, honest, precious and respect are all tied to this one word

This is my favorite word on this list. You knew Engie liked you or something you did when she called you or it “precious.” I think she liked me a lot because she used this word often. You are precious, oh, this is so precious. The biggest impression Engie left on me had to do with this word, respect. She would always end our conversations with “I love you and I respect you.” Love is impossible if there is no respect. Respect is the basic building block of any relationship. Perhaps this is why Engie loved so many people and so many people loved her, she had a great respect for people, for their opinions, for their values, and just for them. Engie was one of the most fair, decent and honest people I’ve ever met. Our relationship was precious to me, that’s why I’ll miss her.

#### Iyiis Healthy, Whole, Sound (body, mind, soul)

Yes, Engie was all these things—she was remarkable healthy in body, to get to your mid-80s and not constantly be at the doctor, or taking any kind of medication speaks to a truly healthy body. Her mind was sharp until her last days, as she was dictating to every-

one the details of how she wanted her funeral to be conducted. Yes, she was still in charge, right to the end. We’ll come back to her soul in a minute.

#### Philoxenia hospitality

Engie’s home was open to everyone. So was her heart. She hosted many guests in her home. She invited anyone and everyone to whatever she was doing, whether it was into her store, into Philoptchos, or into this community. Many people who come to church here now will testify that the first people they met were Engie and Demetri Halkias, who made them feel so welcome. On a personal level, Engie made me and my family feel welcome so many years ago. She never said “hey new priest, this is how we do things.” She would say, “you are our priest, tell me how I can help you.”

#### Hara Joy

If you want to see what joy looks like, watch the stewardship video Engie made 15 months ago, where she talked about loving our church, and how she loved working for the church. There is not one pretentious word in her video. It just overflows with joy.

#### Psihi Soul

The most important part of us is not our family, or our career, or our accomplishments. The most important part of our bodies, our lives and our legacy is our soul. Our soul is the part of us that reflects God. When we push God out, that soul is dark. When we let God shine in us, we shine for others. Last Sunday, the day that Engie passed away, she listened in the morning to the Divine Liturgy. The Gospel Lesson talked about the Light of the world. Light is the only characteristic we share with God. He said “I AM the light of the world.” (John 8:12) And He told us “You (we) are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:14) He said “Let your light so shine before men so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16) Engie and I had beautiful conversations over the years about God and heaven. Two weeks ago, she asked me to offer the prayer for the separation of soul and body. And she said she was ready to meet God. How beautiful is that!

#### Oraia Omorphi Beautiful

And on the subject of beautiful, our last word is Oraia. Engie had an appreciation for beauty. She like beautiful things. But she also saw the beauty in things people did. Whatever a person did for her, no matter how small, she would describe it as oraia. And as I wrap up this eulogy, this is a fitting word on which to end. Engie Halkias, oraia, beautiful. An elegant woman with a beautiful soul. From alpha to omega, she was all these things.

May her memory be eternal!





# 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 December. There is one verse for each week. I have written a few comments below each verse to get your mind going. Don't let my thoughts be your interpretation. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you through your reflection on Scripture.

## March 6-12

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



The verses this month will match with our acronym of HABITS for Lent. The first letter, H, is for "have a plan." Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:21 "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Many of us live our life with a budget. Not only a budget for money, but for time and energy. We budget time for our families, for our jobs, for our hobbies, for leisure, exercise, sleep, etc. We budget our money for our mortgage, entertainment, bills, and necessities. We also budget for luxuries like a night out. In planning where our time and money goes, it is good to reflect how much time and money goes towards our Orthodox Christian faith. How much time do we spend praying, worshipping, reading Scripture, etc.? If there are 168 hours in the week, subtract the hours you sleep, work, take care of family, do household chores, spend on entertainment and hobbies, and then see how much remains for your spiritual life and for charity. Take your income and subtract the bills and the necessities and how is the rest divided? Where we put our time and our treasure says a lot about our faith. If we take all our time and our money and subtract all the necessities and luxuries, how much is left for God and our practice of the faith? It takes an intentional plan to put God in our budget of time and money. Ideally, He should get the first place and not the leftovers.

## March 13-19

*Let not loyalty and faithfulness forsake you; bind them about your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.*  
*Proverbs 3:3*

Each morning when we get dressed, we put on clothes that will keep us warm or cool, depending on the season. We put on clothes that will keep us comfortable in whatever we are doing on a given day. And sometimes we put on clothes that make a statement about us—we advertise a product or display a cute slogan, or we dress "up" for a special occasion or "down" for a leisure experience. Metaphorically, as we are getting dressed each day and making our preparations to leave our homes and go out into the world, we should "put on" "loyalty and faithfulness." We never forget to leave our homes without a shirt over our heads or shoes on our feet. No matter how busy or stressed we are, we never forget these basics. In the same way, no matter how busy we might be, no matter what the day has in store for us, we should put on loyalty and faithfulness, remembering that we are Christians who are supposed to demonstrate love and charity to God and to the least of His children. Ideally, this becomes automatic preparation to leave our homes, so that it become an automatic and important part of our lives. The theme for this week is "affirm the faith." Putting on loyalty to God and faithfulness to Him affirms this.

## March 20-26

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up.*  
*Ecclesiastes 4:9-10*

The theme for this week is "be a friend." In Ecclesiastes 4: 9-10, we read that "two are better than one," as regards having friends. No person is an island. We were created to live in community. That might be the community of marriage, or a community of friends at school or at work or at church. Even hermits who live a monastic life still come back into the monastic community for prayer and encouragement. The benefit of community—whether it be a church community or a community of friends—is that when one falls, there is another to lift him or her up. As members of a community, we should be looking out for those who are falling so that we can run to them to lift them up. When we are falling, we shouldn't be embarrassed to reach out to friends and be intentional about asking for help.

## March 27-April 2

*And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*  
*Joshua 24:15*

The theme for this week is "Intentionally choose Him." This statement of Joshua is very unequivocal. Addressed to people who were forsaking God and following different "gods," Joshua was emphatic that "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." We live at a time when people have forsaken our God and follow other "gods." In this case, a "god" is whatever one worships, whatever is at the front of one's life. Many people are worshipping popularity and popular people. Many people have made the phone or nice clothes their idol. Many see themselves as the center of the universe—they have made themselves gods. It takes a good amount of intentionality to choose God and to choose to run the race of Christianity, especially when it seems like fewer and fewer people are doing it. We have to come to the place where Joshua was, where is said with zeal, boldness and intentionality, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"



# Liturgical Schedule for March

Saturday, March 5 **Second Saturday of Souls**

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

*Memorial Service at the end of the Divine Liturgy*

Sunday, March 6 **Fourth Sunday of Triodion—Forgiveness Sunday**

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Forgiveness Vespers 6:00 p.m.

Monday, March 7 **Clean Monday—First Day of Great Lent**

Canon of St. Andrew 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Sacrament of Holy Unction 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 9 9<sup>th</sup> Hour 5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Friday, March 11 9<sup>th</sup> Hour 9:30 a.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Salutations to the Virgin Mary-1<sup>st</sup> Stanza 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 12 **Third Saturday of Souls**

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

*Memorial Service at the end of the Divine Liturgy*

Sunday, March 13 **First Sunday of Lent—Sunday of Orthodoxy**

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.

*Procession of the Icons at the end of the Divine Liturgy*

*DAYLIGHT SAVINGS BEGINS—SPRING FORWARD*

Monday, March 14 9<sup>th</sup> Hour 9:30 a.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Great Compline 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 16 9<sup>th</sup> Hour 5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Friday, March 18 9<sup>th</sup> Hour 9:30 a.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Salutations to the Virgin Mary-2<sup>nd</sup> Stanza 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 20 **Second Sunday of Lent—St. Gregory Palamas**

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.

Monday, March 21 Great Compline 4:30 p.m. (Note: Earlier Start Time)

Wednesday, March 23 9<sup>th</sup> Hour 5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Friday, March 25 **Annunciation to the Virgin Mary**

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

Salutations to the Virgin Mary—3<sup>rd</sup> Stanza 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 27 **Third Sunday of Lent—Veneration of the Holy Cross**

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.

Monday, March 28 Great Compline 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 30 9<sup>th</sup> Hour 5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:30 p.m.

Friday, April 1 9<sup>th</sup> Hour 9:30 a.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Salutations to the Virgin Mary-4<sup>th</sup> Stanza 6:30 p.m.

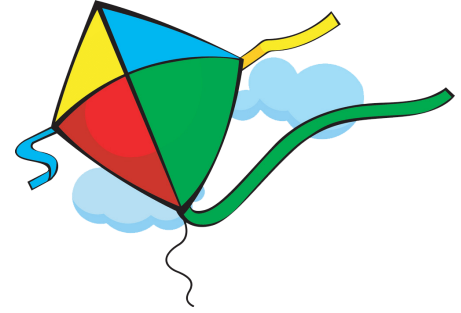
Sunday, April 3 **Fourth Sunday of Lent—St. John of the Ladder**

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.

Monday, April 4 Great Compline 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 6 9<sup>th</sup> Hour 5:30 p.m.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.



# Liturgical Notes for March 2022

## **Saturday of the Souls – Saturdays, March 5 and March 12**

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

## **Sunday, March 6 - Forgiveness Sunday (Cheesefare)**

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

## **Sunday, March 6 - Forgiveness Vespers**

Great and Holy Lent begins on Monday, March 7, a day called Clean Monday, or “Kathara Deftera” in Greek. Vespers is the service that ends one day and begins another, so we will celebrate the Vespers of Forgiveness and beginning of Great Lent on Sunday evening, March 6, at 6:00 p.m. This service lasts about an hour and marks the beginning of Great Lent, which is announced during one of the hymns mid-way through the service. During this hymn, the priest changes vestments from white to purple, the lights in the church are dimmed and the mood of the service becomes somber. In fact, it is the opposite of the Resurrection Service on Easter, where everything begins dark and goes to light. The service concludes with a prayer of forgiveness being read over the congregation and the exchange of mutual forgiveness among the members of the congregation. This service is an especially appropriate way to begin the Lenten season, and for those who attended last season, is one of the most moving services of the church year.

## **Monday, March 7 - Canon of St. Andrew**

The Penitential Canon of St. Andrew will be read from 10:00-11:00 a.m. on Monday, March 7 as we begin Great Lent. The Canon, in its entirety, takes hours to read. We will read and chant an abridged version of this Canon on Clean Monday. Service books for this service will be available in the narthex.

## **Monday, March 7 - Holy Unction on Clean Monday**

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

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

Since the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is offered on each Sunday of Lent, and this Divine Liturgy is slightly longer than the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the Divine Liturgy will begin at 9:45 a.m. from March 13-April 17. The Choir will begin the Doxology at 9:40 a.m.

## **Mondays of Lent - Great Compline**

The service of the Great Compline will be read on the following Mondays of Lent—March 14, March 21 (4:30 p.m.), March 28, April 4 and April 11. This service lasts about an hour and consists of Psalms and hymns of repentance. Service Books for this service will be available.

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

The Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts (also called Pre-Sanctified Liturgy) will be held on the Wednesdays during Great Lent. This service consists of Vespers with Holy Communion that was “Pre-Sanctified” the previous Sunday. It is an opportunity to receive Holy Communion frequently during the season of fasting. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy is preceded by the reading of the 9<sup>th</sup> Hour, a short service with penitential prayers as well as the recitation of the Creed, a pre-requisite for the reception of Holy Communion. Service books for this service will be available. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy will be celebrated on the following Wednesdays of Great Lent: Wednesday, March 9; Wednesday, March 16; Wednesday, March 23; Wednesday, March 30; Wednesday, April 6; and Wednesday, April 13. Each ministry is encouraged to attend one Pre-Sanctified Liturgy as follows:

Wednesday, March 9 Choir  
Wednesday, March 16 AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope  
Wednesday, March 23 Nursing/Welcome Ministry  
Wednesday, March 30 Philoptochos  
Wednesday, April 6 Sunday School  
Wednesday, April 13 Parish Council

## **Fridays of Lent - 9<sup>th</sup> Hour and Pre-Sanctified Liturgy**

The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy has Traditionally been celebrated on Wednesdays AND Fridays of Great Lent. The 9<sup>th</sup> Hour will begin at 9:30 a.m., with the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy from 10:00-11:15 a.m. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy will be held on the Fridays of Lent as follows: Friday, March 11; Friday, March 18; Friday, April 1; Friday, April 8; and Friday, April 15. *Pre-Sanctified Liturgy will also be held on Monday, March 14, with the 9<sup>th</sup> Hour at 9:30 a.m. and the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy at 10:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy will also be held on Monday, March 14 at 10:00 a.m. (9<sup>th</sup> Hour at 9:30 a.m.)*

Continued...

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

This service also lasts about an hour and is a series of prayers and devotions that invoke the intercessions of the Virgin Mary for our salvation. It will be held on March 11, March 18, March 25, April 1 and April 8. Service Books for this service will be available.

### **Sunday, March 13 - Sunday of Orthodoxy**

A grand procession with icons took place on March 11, 843 A.D., marking the permanent triumph of icons and their return to the churches after a 150-year absence. From this time, icons were defined as objects to be venerated and not worshipped. They are spiritual mirrors through which we see the heavenly saints. Their restoration in our churches is a rue victory for Orthodoxy. Thus, on the first Sunday of Lent each year, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Triumph of Orthodoxy with a procession of icons, together with the reading of a Synodal Statement, authored in 843, marking their return to the church. *If anyone has new icons that have not been blessed, please bring them to church on Sunday, March 13, the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and place them in the windows of the church. They will be blessed with Holy Water during the service.*

### **Sunday, March 20 – Second Sunday of Lent - St. Gregory Palamas**

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

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

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

### **Sunday, March 27 - Third Sunday of Lent - Veneration of the Holy Cross**

On the 3rd Sunday of Great Lent we celebrate the Veneration of the Cross; the Cross helps us to prepare for the Crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are not just witnessing from afar the passions of our Lord, but we participate in them. In the Synaxarion we read, “Through the forty-day fast, we too are in a way crucified, dying to the passions.” Our efforts to keep up with the Fast, through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, might take a toll over our bodies; we need help and encouragement, and the help and encouragement comes from the power of the Cross. In the middle of Great Lent, the Church gives its faithful a sign of victory, one that can bring strength to them in this time of fasting. The Sunday of the Holy Cross is one that brings everything into perspective, especially with the Gospel reading (Mark 8:34-9:1), the Lord saying to all His disciples: *"If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?"* A special procession of the Holy Cross, on a tray covered with flowers, will be held at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

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

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

## **Some other important opportunities...**

### **Lenten Covenant**

As we have done in years past, we will offer the Lenten Covenant, a “covenant” made between you and God about your plan for spiritual growth this Lent. A copy is included in *The Messenger*. *Please fill out one and put it in the special box in front of the church on March 6 or 7.*

### **Sacrament of Confession**

Many people have already made appointments for their confessions to be heard, many for the first time in their lives. It is confidential. It helps you reconnect with God and unburden yourself of guilt. It helps you to make a new start in your spiritual journey and is an integral part of any successful Lenten journey. If you have questions about confession, please ask. There is no better way to prepare for Pascha than to receive this sacrament. Confessions will be heard up to April 15, and then again after Pascha. Please make your appointment as soon as possible, because our priests like to give people whatever time they need. As it gets closer to Holy Week and more and more people are coming, they must go quicker, and it is very important not to be rushed in this Sacrament.



# OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2022

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS		THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week <b>FEBRUARY 13th</b>		<i>TRIODION WEEKS</i> <b>Publican and the Pharisee</b> Epistle: 2 Timothy 3: 10-15 Gospel: Luke 18: 10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week <b>FEBRUARY 20th</b>		<b>The Prodigal Son Returns!</b> Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6: 12-20 Gospel: Luke 15: 11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare <b>FEBRUARY 27th</b> FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY		<b>The Last Judgement</b> Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8: 8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25: 31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare <b>MARCH 6th</b> FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY		<b>Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise!</b> <i>FORGIVENESS SUNDAY</i> Epistle: Romans 13: 11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6: 14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent <b>MARCH 13th</b>		<i>GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS</i> <b>SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY</b> Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent <b>MARCH 20th</b>		<b>ST GREGORY PALAMAS</b> Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent <b>MARCH 27th</b>		<b>VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS</b> <i>HALF WAY TO PASCHA!</i> Epistle: Hebrews 4: 14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8: 34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bowl
4th Sunday of Lent <b>APRIL 3rd</b>		<b>ST JOHN of the LADDER</b> Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9: 17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent <b>APRIL 10th</b>		<b>ST MARY of EGYPT</b> Epistle: Hebrews 9: 11-14 Gospel: Mark 10: 32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! <b>APRIL 17th</b> GREAT WEEK BEGINS		<i>GREAT AND HOLY WEEK</i> <b>ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM</b> Epistle: Philippians 4: 4-9 Gospel: John 12: 1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY <b>APRIL 22nd</b>		<b>GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY</b> <i>JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS</i> CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! <b>APRIL 24th</b> NO FASTING!		<i>BRIGHT WEEK</i> <b>HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!)</b> Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: Jan 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!

# Family Calendar for Great Lent 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>March 6</b> <i>Matthew 6:21</i> <b>Sunday of Forgiveness</b> Divine Liturgy <b>Forgiveness Vespers</b> <i>Ask forgiveness of your family members</i> <b>"Have a Plan"</b>	<b>7</b> <i>Jeremiah 29:11</i> <b>Clean Monday - Great Lent begins</b> <b>Canon of St. Andrew</b> <b>Holy Unction Service</b> <i>No screens today</i>	<b>8</b> <i>Proverbs 16:3</i>  <i>Call your Godparents to wish them a Blessed Lent</i>	<b>9</b> <i>1 Chronicles 28:9</i>  <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <i>Pray for sick children</i>	<b>10</b> <i>Proverbs 3:29</i>  <i>Send a card to a friend who lives in another state</i>	<b>11</b> <i>Ephesians 1:9-10</i> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <b>Salutations to the Virgin Mary</b> <i>Make a list of five things you are thankful for</i>	<b>12</b> <i>Proverbs 12:20</i> <b>Saturday of the Souls</b> <b>St. Theodore</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <i>Pray for a loved one who has passed away</i>
<b>13</b> <i>Hebrews 11:22-24</i> <b>Sunday of Orthodoxy</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <i>Bring an icon from home to have blessed</i> <b>"Affirm your faith"</b>	<b>14</b> <i>Luke 16:10</i> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <b>Great Compline</b>  <i>Sing a church hymn together as a family</i>	<b>15</b> <i>Acts 16:5</i>  <i>Write a poem of praise to God</i>	<b>16</b> <i>Hebrews 11:1</i>  <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <i>Pray for your priests</i>	<b>17</b> <i>Romans 1:12</i>  <i>Thank God for something in nature He created</i>	<b>18</b> <i>Psalms 25:10</i> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <b>Salutations to the Virgin Mary</b> <i>Make a prosphora bread to offer at church</i>	<b>19</b> <i>Proverbs 3:3</i>  <i>Pray for five silent minutes about how much God loves you</i>
<b>20</b> <i>Mark 2:3-4</i> <b>St. Gregory Palamas</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <i>Give your Sunday School teacher a hand made card</i> <b>"Be a friend"</b>	<b>21</b> <i>Proverbs 18:24</i>  <b>Great Compline</b>  <i>Collect some clothing to donate</i>	<b>22</b> <i>Sirach 6:14-15</i>  <i>Secretly put a plant on a neighbor's porch</i>	<b>23</b> <i>Proverbs 17:17</i>  <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <i>Pray for world leaders</i>	<b>24</b> <i>Ecclesiastes 4:9-10</i>  <i>Do an intentional act of kindness for someone at school</i>	<b>25</b> <i>Luke 1:35</i> <b>Annunciation to the Virgin Mary</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <b>Salutations to the Virgin Mary</b> <i>Memorize a short bible verse</i>	<b>26</b> <i>John 15:13-15</i>  <i>Make a donation to a charity you love</i>
<b>27</b> <i>Mark 8:34</i> <b>Veneration of Holy Cross</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <i>Bring a flower home from the cross</i> <b>"Intentionally choose Him"</b>	<b>28</b> <i>Hebrews 4:12</i>  <b>Great Compline</b>  <i>Draw a picture of the Cross with the word "love" on it</i>	<b>29</b> <i>Psalms 25:12</i>  <i>Draw a picture of the Cross with the word "love" on it</i>	<b>30</b> <i>Joshua 24:15</i>  <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <i>Pray for people who are alone</i>	<b>31</b> <i>Matthew 22:14</i>  <i>Choose a Bible verse on love and put it on your refrigerator</i>	<b>April 1</b> <i>Luke 10:42</i> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <b>Salutations to the Virgin Mary</b> <i>Forgive someone who hurt you</i>	<b>2</b> <i>Hebrews 4:12</i>  <i>Make a list of three things you love about each person in your family</i>
<b>3</b> <i>Mark 9:24</i> <b>St. John of the Ladder</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <i>Draw a ladder and put a Lenten goal on each step</i> <b>"Trust Him"</b>	<b>4</b> <i>Proverbs 3:5-6</i>  <b>Great Compline</b>  <i>Learn the words to a new prayer</i>	<b>5</b> <i>Psalms 4:5</i>  <i>Read about the life of your patron saint</i>	<b>6</b> <i>Habakkuk 3:17-18</i>  <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <i>Pray for your teachers</i>	<b>7</b> <i>Isaiah 12:2</i>  <i>Smile at everyone you walk by today</i>	<b>8</b> <i>John 20:29</i>  <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <b>Akathist Hymn</b> <i>Read a favorite Bible story with your family</i>	<b>9</b> <i>Daniel 6:23</i>  <i>Watch a religious themed movie with your family</i>
<b>10</b> <i>Mark 10:44-45</i> <b>St. Mary of Egypt</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <i>Sing "Agnus o Theos" in Church today</i> <b>"Surrender to Him"</b>	<b>11</b> <i>Psalms 46:10</i>  <b>Great Compline</b>  <i>Clean your room without being asked</i>	<b>12</b> <i>James 4:10</i>  <i>Do a chore in your yard</i>	<b>13</b> <i>Matthew 6:10</i>  <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <i>Pray for healthcare workers</i>	<b>14</b> <i>James 4:7</i>  <i>Find a charity where your family can volunteer</i>	<b>15</b> <i>Luke 14:11</i>  <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <i>Visit someone (in person or over zoom) who lives alone</i>	<b>16</b> <i>John 11:25-26</i> <b>Saturday of Lazarus</b> <b>Service of Proskomide</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <i>Make and serve someone a Lenten meal today</i>
<b>17</b> <i>John 12:12-13</i> <b>Palm Sunday</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <b>Vespers</b> <b>Service of the Bridegroom</b> <i>Replace your old palm cross</i>	<b>18</b> <i>Matthew 25:14-15</i> <b>Holy Monday</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <b>Service of the Bridegroom</b> <i>Read the story about Joseph from the Old Testament</i>	<b>19</b> <i>Luke 15:7</i> <b>Holy Tuesday</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <b>Service of the Bridegroom</b> <i>Read the story of Kassiane the hymnographer</i>	<b>20</b> <i>Matthew 14:13-14</i> <b>Holy Wednesday</b> <b>Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</b> <b>Service of the Bridegroom</b> <i>Receive Holy Unction</i>	<b>21</b> <i>Matthew 26:26-28</i> <b>Holy Thursday</b> <b>Liturgy of St. Basil</b> <b>12 Gospels service</b> <i>Color eggs red for Pascha</i>	<b>22</b> <i>Luke 23:42-43</i> <b>Holy Friday</b> <b>Royal Hours</b> <b>Unnailing from the Cross</b> <b>Lamentations</b> <i>Pray about Jesus on the cross</i>	<b>23</b> <i>Matthew 28:1-3</i> <b>Holy Saturday</b> <b>Liturgy of St. Basil</b> <b>Resurrection Service</b> <i>Come see the leaves scattered at the morning liturgy</i>
<b>24</b> <i>Mark 16:6</i> <b>PASCHA</b> <b>Agape Vespers</b> <b>Christ is Risen!</b> <b>Truly He is Risen!</b>	<b>25</b> <i>Psalms 118:24</i> <b>Bright Monday</b> <b>St. George</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <i>Joyfully sing Christ is risen!</i>	<b>26</b> <i>Matthew 28:19-20</i>  <i>Crack your red eggs while saying "Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!"</i>	<b>27</b> <i>John 3:16</i>  <i>Find a picture with the verse John 3:16 and print it out</i>	<b>28</b> <i>John 1:4-5</i>  <i>Play with someone who feels left out</i>	<b>29</b> <i>John 1:14</i> <b>Bright Friday</b> <b>Life-Giving Fountain</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <i>Say a prayer for the gift of clean water</i>	<b>30</b> <i>1 Peter 4:10</i>  <i>Make resurrection rolls</i>



# March 2022 Sunday School Update

On behalf of our Sunday School we pray that you will have a meaningful Lenten journey, starting March 7th. The Sunday School will start off right by having a Pre-Lenten Retreat on March 6th.

February has been a busy month for our Sunday School students. Our topics for February were: The Saints of the Orthodox Church (The Three Hierarchs); The Presentation of Christ, Salvation (The Story of Zachaeus), The Publican and the Pharisee, The Prodigal Son, and The Last Judgement. Of course we also celebrated Valentine's Day. Here are a couple of photos from our Pre-K3 and 5th and 6th Grade Crafts.



We would like to welcome Vasili Panagopoulos, our Pastoral Assistant, to our Sunday School. He will visit each of our classes and last month he presented a lesson to our Pre K3, Pre K4, Kindergarten, and 7th - 8th Grade classes.

This month's YOUTH SUNDAY took place on Feb. 6th. We need to thank our children who are singing louder and more beautifully than ever and our Epistle Reader, Toulia Trakas. She did an exceptional job. We would not have a Youth Choir without Maria Xenick. She has done an amazing job directing our youth in this music program. Thank you Maria.



Our Hope and Joy sponsored SOUPER BOWL of CARING was a huge success on Feb. 2nd. Thank you to Zackie Ameres and our students, pictured below, who helped with this fundraiser for Hope's Children's home. We would like to thank everyone for their support of Souper Bowl of Caring. We collected two BIG pots of food and collected \$487. Thank you again for supporting our youth ministry and the underprivileged youth in our greater community.

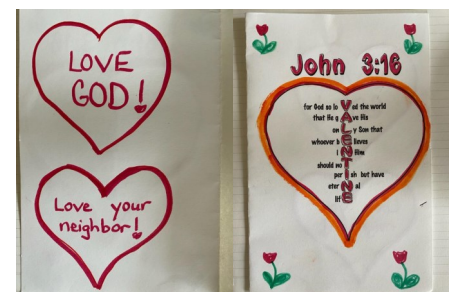
Our 1st through 4th Graders learned about and made Prosphora on January 30th and our 7th and 8th graders also did the same on February 20th. Thank you Melissa Krinos for providing this program year after year! Our children are truly great stewards of St. John's Greek Orthodox Church.

One of the best ways to prepare for Pascha is to participate in the Sacrament of Confession. Each Sunday School class had, or will have, the opportunity to participate in this important Sacrament. On February 20th, our 4th, 5th and 6th Graders attended. On February 27th our 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Graders participated in the Sacrament of Confession. Our 7th - 12th graders will go to Confession during their GOYAN Lenten Retreat. We would like to thank Father Stavros for hearing the confessions of these young children. It is a wonderful thing to see our children going to Confession year after year.



## MARCH CALENDAR:

- Sunday, March 6th: Youth Sunday  
Pre-Lenten Retreat - Forgiveness Sunday
- Sunday, March 13th: Topic: Icons/Sunday of Orthodoxy –  
First Sunday of Lent - ALL Sunday School Procession of the Icons
- Sunday, March 20th: Topic: Being a Good Friend –  
Second Sunday of Lent – Paralytic  
Vasili Teaches Grades 1-3
- Sunday, March 27th: Topic: Holy Cross – Third Sunday of Great Lent  
Prosphora: Pre-K 3 & 4





Please Join us for...

# Great and Holy Friday Sunday School Retreat

Friday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>

Please join us for a day of reflection, activities and worship with Sunday School friends as we Journey through Holy Week in preparing for the Triumphant Resurrection!



## Holy Week

The retreat will conclude in time to attend the  
Apokathelosis Service -

The Unnailing/Burial of Christ at 3p

All parents are encouraged to attend!

We Hope you can join us!

Please call or email Zackie Ameres to RSVP at

813-245-3813 or [zackiec@yahoo.com](mailto:zackiec@yahoo.com)

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## Church Is Hard

Church is hard for the person walking through the doors, afraid of judgement.

Church is hard for the Priest's family, under the microscope of an entire body.

Church is hard for the prodigal soul returning home, broken and battered by the world.

Church is hard for the girl who looks like she has it all together, but doesn't.

Church is hard for the couple who fought the entire ride to service.

Church is hard for the single mom, surrounded by couples holding hands, and seemingly perfect families.

Church is hard for the widow and widower with no invitation to lunch after service.

Church is hard for the person with an estranged child.

Church is hard for the person chanting while being overwhelmed by the weight of the lyrics.

Church is hard for the man insecure in his role as a leader.

Church is hard for the wife who longs to be led by a righteous man.

Church is hard for the nursery volunteer who desperately longs for a baby to love.

Church is hard for the single woman and single man, praying God brings them a mate.

Church is hard for the teenage girl, wearing a scarlet letter, ashamed of her mistakes.

Church is hard for the sinners.

Church is hard for me.

It's hard because on the outside it all looks shiny and perfect. Sunday best in behavior and dress.

However, underneath those layers, you find a body of imperfect people, carnal souls, selfish motives.

But, here is the beauty of church—

Church isn't a building, mentality, or expectation.

Church is a body.

Church is a group of sinners living in fellowship among the saints.

Church is a body of believers bound as brothers and sisters by an eternal love.

Church is a holy ground where sinners stand as equals before the Judgement Seat of Christ.

Church is a refuge for broken hearts and a training ground for mighty warriors.

Church is a converging of confrontation and invitation. Where sin is confronted and hearts are invited to seek restoration.

Church is a lesson in faith and trust.

Church is a bearer of burdens and a giver of hope.

Church is a family. A family coming together, setting aside differences, forgetting past mistakes, rejoicing in the smallest of victories.

Church, the body, and the circle of sinners-turned-saints, is where He resides, and if we ask, He is faithful to come.

So even on the hard days at church—

The days when I am at odds with a friend, When I've fought with my spouse because we're late once again. When I've walked in bearing burdens heavier than my heart can handle, yet masking the pain with a smile on my face. When I've worn a scarlet letter, under the microscope. When I've longed for a baby to hold, or fought tears as the hymns were chanted. When I've walked back in, afraid and broken, after walking away.

I'll remember, He has never failed to meet me there.

# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

## IN PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# The Lenten Covenant

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

## **How does the Lenten Covenant Work?**

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

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

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

## **Lenten Covenant for Children** (Older children should fill out the regular form)

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

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

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

Sign your name

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



# The Lenten Covenant

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Important Lenten Prayers

## TRISAGION PRAYERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim

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

## LORD OF THE POWERS—Lenten Hymn

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



# Donations Needed for Great Lent and Holy Week

Great Lent begins March 7. We have many special celebrations during these weeks. We know that many of you would like to contribute to the decorating of our church and icons during this period. For your convenience, below is a list of items needed for the celebration of the Sacred Services of Lent and Holy Week. Please contact the church office to reserve your desired offering for the health of your loved ones or in memory of a deceased loved one.

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

<b>Lent</b>	Wireless Microphones in the Church	Duracell or Energizer AA Batteries	Many
<b>March 11</b>	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 1st Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$100
<b>March 18</b>	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 2nd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$100
<b>March 25</b>	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 3rd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$100
<b>March 27</b>	Veneration of the Holy Cross	Flowers for Tray for Procession	\$400
<b>April 1</b>	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 4th Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$100
<b>April 8</b>	Akathist Hymn	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$100
<b>April 17</b>	<b>Palm Sunday</b>	Flowers for Icon of Palm Sunday	\$100
		Palms Strips & Branches	\$250 total
		Pillar Candles for Windows (20)	\$15 each
<b>April 17</b>	<b>Palm Sunday</b>	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex	\$100
	Bridegroom Service	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom on Solea (2)	\$100 each
<b>April 20</b>	<b>Holy Wednesday</b>	Flowers for Icon of Last Supper	\$100
	Holy Unction	Olive Oil, Flour, Prosphora (2)	See Fr. Stavros
<b>April 21</b>	<b>Holy Thursday</b>	Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion	\$100
		Wreaths for Bottom of Cross (2)	\$150 each
		Wreath for Top of Cross	\$250
		Scattered flowers at base of cross	\$50
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)	\$15 each
<b>April 22</b>	<b>Good Friday</b>	16 Bags of Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers	\$100
		Flowers for Epitaphios	Several
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Apokathelosis	\$15 each
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Lamentations	\$15 each
		Icon of Extreme Humility	\$100
<b>April 24</b>	<b>Pascha</b>	Flowers for Icon of Resurrection	\$100
		Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb	\$100
		Silk Flower for Royal Doors	\$100
		Easter Lilies	\$25 per Lily



**Attention: All Military (Active and Retired),  
First Responders and Government Workers:**

You are invited to an initial meeting to establish a New Ministry at St. John's. Our goal is to discuss how we can help, promote, and recognize those who are serving or have served our nation and its cherished values.

Please text, call, or email Father John Stefero at **678-637-4425** or [jwstefero50@hotmail.com](mailto:jwstefero50@hotmail.com) if you are interested in attending.

A date and restaurant will be determined soon for our initial meeting.

**Youth Protection Program Reminder:**

At this time, many of our Youth Workers' background checks are coming up for renewal, which is done every two years. On or about your two-year mark, Praesidium will automatically send an email to you from [backgroundcheck@praesidiuminc.com](mailto:backgroundcheck@praesidiuminc.com) when a new background check is needed. Please be on the lookout for these emails, as the link for a background check expires after two weeks. Also, the Youth Protection Program administrator will notify you via email when it's time to renew your online training by completing the 2-part/2-quiz Youth Safety module and the 1-part/1-quiz Youth Worker Regulations module.



If you have any questions or concerns, please contact

Suzanne Pileggi at [smpileggi1@gmail.com](mailto:smpileggi1@gmail.com) or (813) 244-5855.

**St. John Stewardship Report 2020-2022**

Year to Year Comparison ~	2022*	2021*	2020*
Pledged Year to Date	\$351,764	\$405,378	\$381,345
Received Year to Date	\$168,893	\$141,178	\$80,112
Average Pledge	\$2,033	\$1,741	\$1,815
Median Pledge	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
# of Individual/Families Pledged/Giving	173	237	210
*YTD as of 2/14/22, 2/19/21, 2/7/20			

**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. Please contact our new volunteer, Sheila Vukmer, for any questions (412-719-1005).



# TWELVE DISCIPLES PROGRAM

*I had rather speak five words with my understanding... than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. (1 Cor. 14:19)*

St. John the Baptist's Twelve Disciples Project continues, as dozens of your fellow Orthodox Christians, Prayer Warriors, set aside a few minutes each day to pray for "mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, protection and pardon and remission of the sins for servants of God" all members of the St. John's congregation. Are you interested?

You too may join us in this endeavor that, not only broadens your community awareness with others in our congregation, but also sharpens each of our personal prayer disciplines.

"Prayer is doxology, praise, thanksgiving, confession, supplication, and intercession to God. 'When I prayed I was new,' wrote a great theologian of Christian antiquity, 'but when I stopped praying I became old.' Prayer is the way to renewal and spiritual life. Prayer is aliveness to God. Prayer is strength, refreshment, and joy. Through the grace of God and our disciplined efforts prayer lifts us up from our isolation to a conscious, loving communion with God in which everything is experienced in a new light. Prayer becomes a personal dialogue with God, a spiritual breathing of the soul, a foretaste of the bliss of God's kingdom." <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-fruits-of-true-prayer?inheritRedirect=true>

"Pray for others by name and ask people to pray for you, too. The Church is a praying Body. When we pray for others, we lift them up and embrace them. It connects us in Christ, no matter how far away our loved ones may be from us. Prayer is even more intimate when we offer up specific people, by name, (and their specific needs) to the Lord." (Sam Williams, blogs.goarch.org, Sept. 24, 2015)

Participating requires no special talent, no physical ability, no financial investment but only a desire to offer up prayerful love for your fellow members of the St. John the Baptist congregation. There are no restrictions. You may choose a time during the day when you can spend a quiet moment with God.

If you'd like to participate (to enjoy the presence of God as you develop your prayer rule) and receive the prayer along with at least one page of names to pray for, please contact Mathew Balasis, 727-345-4855 ([mathewbalasis@verizon.net](mailto:mathewbalasis@verizon.net)).

Participation will warm your spiritual heart.

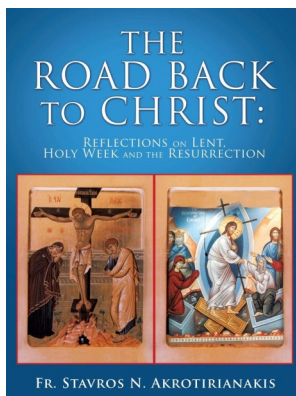


*Prayer List: Lord Jesus Christ, Physician of our Souls and Bodies, visit and heal your servants: Felix; Sylvia Michos; Eva Coppalla; Christopher; Christopher; Mary & Peter Nenos; Tony Ekonomou; Keith Lynn & Patrick Carroll; Ourania Tziotis, Irina, Marina, Yuri, and Christophoros; Ashley Snyder; Evangelos & Caroline Critkas; Constantinos & Kalotina Klimis; Christine Alex, June, Lillian Thomas; Scotty; Desi Serriera; Ashley Kladakis; Dora Kallas, Kathy & Andrew Bouzinekis; Anastasia; Virginia Georgiou, Ron Myer, Toulia Tsaros, Fr. Pat Legato, Nellie Pringle, Yolanda Webb, Angela Bougas, Tony Ekonomou, Ron, Jason Vickers, Rex Garrison, Tina Chakonas, Ann Demas, Christina Noel Kouzes Houck, Evangeline Xeroteris, Ashley Henderson, Natalie Henderson, Chris, Debbie, James, Avery, Lily, Jacob, Jesse, Ann, Rosario, Antonia Caffentzis, Alissa, John, Angela, Joey, Christine Scourtes, Steven, 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, Debbie Phelps, Mary Voykin, David Voykin, Denise Badrane, Don Payne, and all victims of war, terrorism, crime, natural disaster, and all of whom we are unaware.*

## St. John's Bookstore



*Throughout Great Lent our bookstore is offering a wide selection of books focused on the many ways we can grow spiritually during the Lenten period. Daily meditations, prayer books, Lives of the Saints, guides to preparation for Confession, Holy Week service books, and Lenten cookbooks are just some of those featured. Our bookstore is open Sundays following Divine Liturgy. Stop in and see the many items available.*



**The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection** is now on sale! It is a series of daily reflections to be read from the beginning of Triodion (this year that is February 13) through All Saints Day (this year that is June 19). Pick up your copy today so you can begin reading it on February 13. This book costs \$18.99 and all monies taken in at the bookstore go to the church.

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

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

### Live Streaming

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

To access this page

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

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



## Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

**Over 3,460 people have!** The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 6 years! Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email Alex at [alex@stjohntpa.org](mailto:alex@stjohntpa.org) and ask him to add you. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email Alex or follow the link at the bottom of the daily emails to do so. If you want to forward to a friend, please use the "forward to a friend" option. Also, make sure [prayerteam365@gmail.com](mailto:prayerteam365@gmail.com) has been added to your contacts so that these emails stay in your Inbox rather than going to the Junk or Spam folders.

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

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

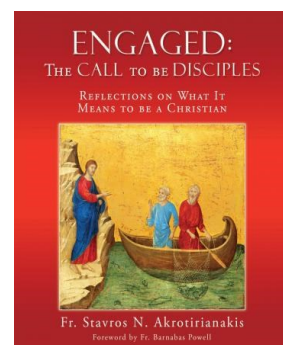
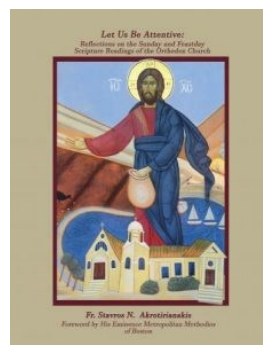
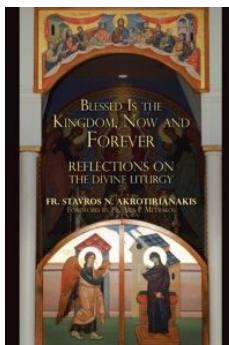
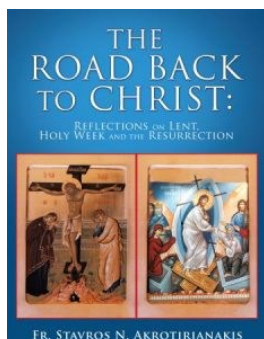
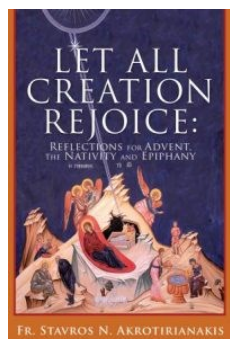
*Let All Creation Rejoice: Reflections on Advent, the Nativity and Epiphany*

*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*

*ENGAGED: The Call To Be Disciples, Reflections on What it Means to be a Christian*





# March is National Nutrition Month - Faith Care Nursing

## A PSA from St. John's Nursing Ministry

According to Hippocrates - *Our food should be our medicine and our medicine should be our food.*

March is National Nutrition Month. Good nutrition is essential in keeping current and future generations healthy across the lifespan. It is important to understand access to healthy, affordable foods greatly contributes to a person's diet and risk of related chronic diseases.

Nutrition encompasses the things we consume. Good nutrition means eating a balanced and healthy foods. It's important to make sure you are getting the nutrients, vitamins, and minerals your body needs to function properly.

### What should a healthy diet consist of?

**Protein:** Fish, chicken, red meat, dairy products, eggs, nuts, and beans.

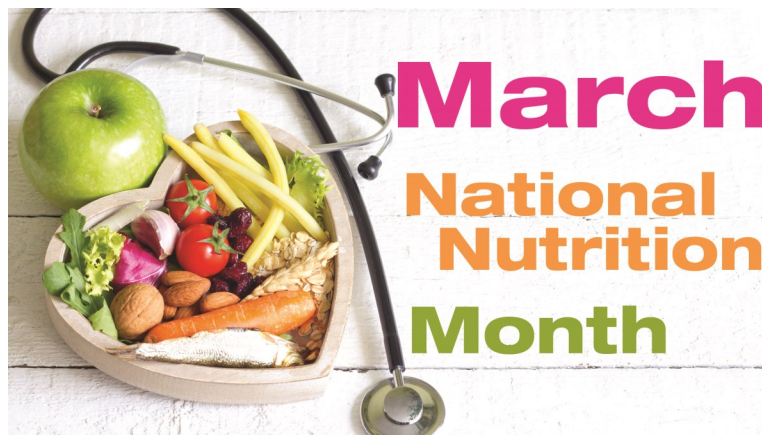
**Complex carbohydrates:** Fruits, starchy vegetables, whole grains, beans, and legumes.

**Healthy fats:** Fatty fish (such as cod and salmon), avocados, flaxseed, nuts, and oils.

**Vitamins:** Foods that contain vitamins A, B, C, D, E, and K such as leafy greens and citrus fruits.

**Minerals:** Calcium, potassium, zinc, folate, magnesium, and iron which can be found in legumes, dairy, and various fruits.

**Water:** Essential for hydration, calorie control, skin and muscle health, and kidney and bowel.



**March**  
**National**  
**Nutrition**  
**Month**

### Improving Access to Healthier Food

According to Thomas Mantz, president and CEO of Feeding Tampa Bay, an arm of Feeding America and the main supplier of food banks in the Tampa Bay area, 'As of December 2021, in our area right now, 10 counties including and surrounding Tampa, there is a population base of just over 4.3- almost 4.4 million people. And right now, statistically, just shy of a million folks are considered food insecure based on established criteria.'

Eating a healthy diet is difficult without access to nutritious food.

Each year, chronic diseases account for 70% of all deaths in the United States. Poor diets lead to chronic illnesses such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity.

Retail and packaged foods are generally high in calories, sodium, solid fat, added sugars, and refined grains.

Low-income and minority communities often lack convenient places that offer affordable healthier foods.

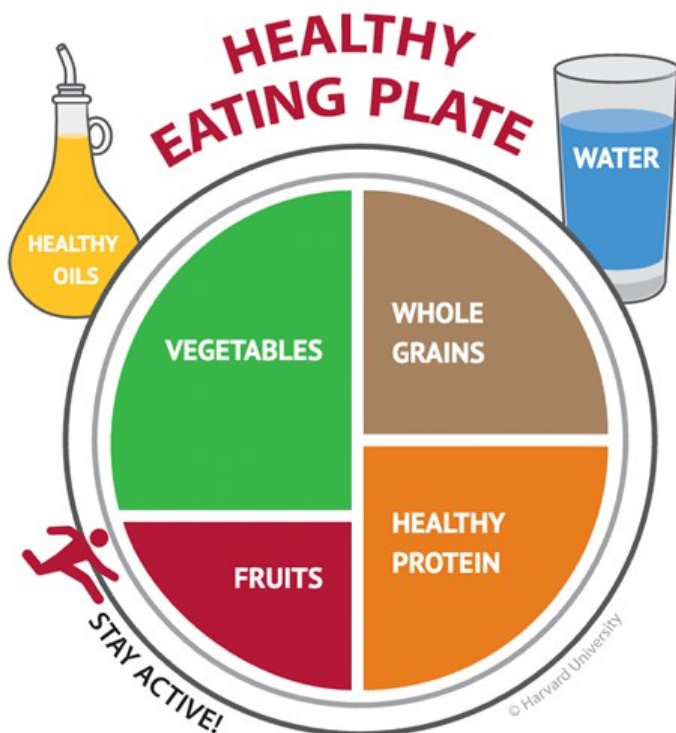
When healthy foods are not available, people may settle for foods that are higher in calories and lower in nutritional value.

For more information on why good nutrition matters and how to improve healthy food access, explore the options below.

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/vegetables-and-fruits/>

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/partnerships/national-hunger-clearinghouse>  
<https://foodfinder.us/>

Hunger hotline text option. Text 97779 with a question that contains a keyword such as "food" or "meals". The automated response will include resources located near an address and/or zip code.





# 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**



# YOUNG ADULT RETREAT

Saturday, March 5 | 10am - 4pm

St. John the Baptist | 2418 W. Swann Ave. Tampa, FL 33609

*Theme: Getting Encouraged in Our Faith as We Begin  
Great Lent*

- All Young Adults Ages 18 - 35
- No Fees
- Lunch Provided

Divine Liturgy | 10am  
Session One | 11:30pm  
*Lunch*

Session Two | 1:30pm  
Q&A - Final Thoughts | 3pm  
Closing Prayer | 4pm

*Please RSVP by March 1 to [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com)*

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

**We welcome people of all ages to join us as a member or as a friend of YAH.**

## **MEETING DATE AND TIME:**

- Our meetings are held once a month from 11:30 to 1 p.m., usually at the Koumolis Hall. From time to time we may go on fieldtrips or have lunch at a restaurant in place of meetings at the hall.

## **BIRTHDAYS:**

- Mary Nenos turned 95 years old on February 13!

## **Core Values: Love, Worship, Community, Learning, & Service**

We continue to reach out to those who are homebound during the pandemic as part of our Church's fulfillment of the core values of love and community. We contacted by

	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
Phoned	40	20	32	38	37	15	14	12	17
Left Messages	3	1	6	9	2	8	7	7	8
Visited	3	1	7	1	3	2	2	9	7
Sent Cards	2	4	2	0	6	2	1	3	0
Left Text Messages	3	1	4	2	8	2	3	3	2

**PASSED AC-**

## **TIVITIES**

- The December meeting was a Lenten pot-luck luncheon and holiday gift exchange at the St John Kourmolis Center. Elections were held and Bill Manikas was chosen to be president and Dora Morgan was re-elected as recording secretary.
- The January meeting was held at the Carrabba's Italian Restaurant. The president passed out a list of potential fieldtrips that we may go on. These potential fieldtrips are in a radius of two hours from Tampa.
- The February luncheon/meeting was held at Mykonos restaurant in Tarpon Springs, and then we went to the Agora and Greek Boys to shop for Lenten Foods.

For more information,  
contact  
Bill Manikas  
wmanikas@gmail.com / 813-716-8185  
Dora Morgan  
813-613-3738

## **PLANNED ACTIVITIES**

- The March meeting will be held on Saturday, the 12th. after the service of Saturday of the Souls at 10:00 a.m. Afterwards we will have a Lenten lunch at the Kourmolis Center which will be catered by the Evos restaurant. Father Stavros will be our "guest entertainer" with a surprise. Otherwise we will watch a video on St. Necktaros.

## **History of St. John the Baptist's Greek Festival - By Dr. Bill Manikas**

Before the current annual Greek festival developed, fund raisers were held annually, at the social club, the American Hellenic Center. Church dinners were held around church elections to raise money. In the 1940s dinners were held quite frequently, and then they became monthly events. Though they were open to the public, mainly Greeks attended to socialize and dance.

Then in the 1960s and 1970s the community put on the annual smorgasbord. Because of the large crowds, attending, this event was moved to the Curtis Hixon Hall in 1980. During the first year the Gasparilla Room was the setting; however, it was too small. The following year the event was transferred to the main hall. Since the Hixon Hall did not have cooking facilities, the cooking was done at the Egypt Lake Elementary School, Alessi Bakery, originally located on Howard Ave., and the little kitchen at Maas Brothers located on Gandy Blvd. (now Macy's) which had a restaurant with large ovens. There the men, who included John Palios and Speros Georgiou, cooked and cut the leg of lamb and other meats on Saturday morning and took them down to Curtis Hixon Hall.

The president of the Philoptohos, Mary Nenos, made a proposal to the Board of Directors (the Parish Council) that the smorgasbord become a multi-day affair, and that it would be a community project. The proposal was approved, and in 1981 the two-day Greek Festival was held on Friday and Saturday at the Curtis Hixon Hall. In that first year

of the festival, the net income was \$50,780.20, and the monthly paper the Hellenic South reported that there were over 40,000 in attendance.

Many ladies, including Engie Halkias and Christine Scourtes, made arts and crafts at their homes. In addition, Mary Nenos had a booth at the festival, selling religious items. In addition, several ladies helped Mary make pastries at Mary Nenos' restaurant.

The Greek Festival was not just a Greek community affair, but it became an integral part of the life of the City of Tampa and of Hillsborough County. It did not take long for the greater Tampa community to anticipate the annual event. In the early 1980s as many as 12,000 people attended. Tasty foods, excellent wines, vibrant music (lately provided by John Demas) and dances, travelog films, cultural and religious display booths, boutique shops and Greek pastries became available for people to enjoy the Greek traditions and heritage. Since it was an important event in the city of Tampa, the festival was held at the State Fairgrounds in 1988 because Curtis Hixon was booked up for the year. In the second half of the 1990s the festival was held on the church grounds, and it became a three-day affair. Unfortunately, The COVID-19 Pandemic has interrupted the annual affair.



# March 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.

### **How Can You Help?**

1. **Get tested**
2. **Education.** Understand the hereditary disease and the need to provide support those afflicted of Greek & Mediterranean descent, those who can possibly be bone marrow donors and for research..
3. **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. Any one 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
4. **Make Donations in the month of March**
  - Please make **check** payable to **AHEPA Cooley's Anemia Foundation** with **"Cooley's Anemia"** in the "Note" section of the check. Send your check to Tom George 506 Lantern Circle, Tampa, FL 33617
  - Tom Georgas and Mike Trimis will be collecting donations at **Church**
  - Call with your **Credit Card** Information to Tom Georgas at (813) 985-0236 or Mike Trimis at (813) 784-4872
  - (Donations are Tax Exempt under IRA Section 170 (c) (4))**

### **5. AHEPA Bone Marrow Registry**

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/>

# Thank You to all of Our Friends!

Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL  
Demet & Eleni Anagnostiadis - Bethesda, MD  
Nicholas & Doris Andreadakis - Lititz, PA  
Andy Apostolopoulos—Asheville, NC  
George & Maria Andros - Birmingham, AL  
Nicholas Anton - Dunedin, FL  
Gaby & Alicia Atik - Treasure Island, FL  
Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL  
Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC  
Katherine Beasley - Vero Beach, FL  
Christopher & Jaime Brewer - Tampa, FL  
Pete & Carol Caldwell - Ringgold, GA  
William Camarinos - Alexandria, VA  
William & Kanella Jane Chapman - Ellenton, FL  
Nicholas & Sondra Chronis - Mt. Pleasant, SC  
Emmanuel Chrysakis - Palm Harbor, FL  
Victor & Cynthia Cucuz - Tampa, FL  
Fr Stratton & Pres. Denise Dorozenski - Sterling Heights, MI  
Eric & Artemis Mellen - Longwood, FL  
Peter George - Tampa, FL  
Ron & Maria Gregory - St. Petersburg, FL  
Charlie & Eleftheria Hambos - Orlando, FL  
Gabriel Hurst - Largo, FL  
Michael Ibrahim - E. Brunswick, NJ

Judith Jogerst  
Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI  
Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL  
Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL  
Demitrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH  
John & Cathie Koch - New Port Richey, FL  
Tommy Kolouris - Tampa, FL  
Sharon Kush - Tallahassee, FL  
Evangelos & Helen Liras - Tampa, FL  
Fr Michael & Pres Virginia Massouh - Seminole, FL  
Kathleen Spanos Mendez - Ponte Verda, FL  
Charles Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA  
Kay Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA  
Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA  
John & Deanna Palmer - Greenville, SC  
Theodora Pappas Poletis - Nottingham, MD  
Luke & Arianna Quinn - Arlington, MA  
Nadine Raheb  
Pericles & Fotini Stamatiades - Asheville, NC  
Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI  
Lillian Thomas - Dyer, IN  
Wesley & Melisa Thompson - Clearwater, FL  
Christopher & Georgette Tsavoussis - Dunedin, FL  
William Yotis - La Grange, IL

**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

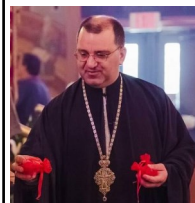
**Please mail this form and check to: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church  
2418 W. Swann Ave Tampa, FL 33609.**

## 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 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 >



**Vasili**  
414-254-5134>



**Alex**  
<262-370-0586

## Matthew 25 Temporarily On Hiatus

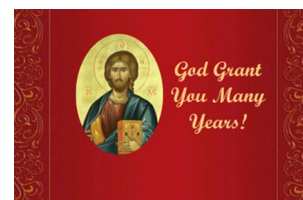
Our Community Outreach Ministry, Matthew 25, is temporarily on hiatus until further notice. Matthew 25 is waiting for approval to change its base of operations and hopefully will resume in springtime 2022. We appreciate your patience and will disseminate details once this ministry reorganizes and relocates.

# Happy Birthday!

Suzanne Pileggi - Mar 1  
Julia Blankenbaker - Mar 2  
Dean Makris - Mar 2  
Euripides Panos - Mar 2  
Juliana Stingulescu - Mar 3  
Christopher Nicolaou - Mar 5  
Gary Speegle - Mar 5  
Genie Carter - Mar 6  
Makis Crassas - Mar 6  
Mark Hartung - Mar 6  
Isabella Lappas - Mar 6  
Katerina Sotiropoulos - Mar 6  
Maria Apockotos - Mar 8  
Gabriela Dimitrijeovich - Mar 9  
Angela Bougas - Mar 10  
Timothy Clements - Mar 10  
Vasiliki Papakosta - Mar 10  
Helen Bennett Reader - Mar 10

Nikitas Damianakis - Mar 12  
Theodore Edquid - Mar 12  
Anthony Fotopoulos - Mar 12  
Aristotle Kyros - Mar 12  
Marianne Paras - Mar 12  
Noah Menendez - Mar 13  
Katerina Soteriou - Mar 13  
Aspasia Panos - Mar 14  
Marcelle Triantafilou - Mar 14  
John Mekras - Mar 15  
Stacie Milonas - Mar 16  
Christos Nicolaou - Mar 16  
Christina Diniaco - Mar 17  
Tia L'Hommedieu - Mar 17  
Alex Peckham - Mar 19  
Azar Hanhan - Mar 20  
Amelia Hampton - Mar 21  
Steven Skijus - Mar 22

Olivia Pliego - Mar 23  
Xander Halikoytakos - Mar 24  
Mary Ann Konstas - Mar 24  
Alexandria Stilian - Mar 24  
Pauline Hunter - Mar 25  
Arianna Krinos - Mar 25  
Arianna Isabella Quinn - Mar 25  
Lorelei Elly - Mar 26  
Maria Palios - Mar 26  
Alexander Santos - Mar 26  
Theodore Kafantaris - Mar 27  
Matthew Robinson - Mar 27  
Nikolas DeJesus - Mar 30  
Jovan Lakic - Mar 31





# Memorial & Kolyva Protocol

1. Memorial Services MUST be scheduled through the church office at least two weeks in advance of when you want the service.
2. Memorial services for 40 days and one year will be done on the Sunday closest to the appropriate date. All other memorials will be done on the designated Memorial Sunday each month.
3. Please let the office know when you call or email whether you will be providing your own kolyva or whether you wish for the Philoptochos to provide. If a family chooses to make their own Kolyva(es), the family will be responsible for scooping the Kolyva(es) in the kitchen after the Memorial Service to share with the entire community.
4. If the Philoptochos does the kolyva, there is a \$100 charge for this service-checks may be made payable to "St. John Philoptochos."
5. Also, please send the church office all of the names you wish to have commemorated at the memorial service, and how many pews, if any, you would like reserved for your family.

## Χρόνια Πολλά! Happy Nameday!

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

**March 2**  
EFTHALIA, TROADIOS

**March 3**  
KLEONIKOS

**March 4**  
GERASIMOS

**March 5**  
ARHELAOS, EVLOGIOS, KONON

**March 6**  
ISYHIOS

**March 7**  
EVGENIOS

**March 8**  
HERMES, THEOFYLAKTOS

**March 9**  
AETIOS, ELIANA, FILOKTIMON, ILIANA, LY-  
SIMAHOS, SARANTOS, SEVIRIANOS, SMARAG-  
DA, SMARAGDOS, VIVIANOS, XANTHOS

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

**March 12**  
FANI, THEOFANIS

**March 13**  
LEANDROS, MARIOS, ORTHODOXIA

**March 14**  
BENEDICT, EFRASIOS, MATHILDE

**March 15**  
AGAPIOS

**March 16**  
CHRISTODOULOS, IOULIANOS

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

**March 18**  
EDWARD

**March 19**  
CHRYSANTHIS, DAREIA, HRYSANTHOS, CLAU-  
DIA

**March 20**  
RODI, RODIANOS, GREGORY

**March 21**  
AXIA, LOXANTRA, ROXANNE

**March 22**  
DROSOS, DROSOULA

**March 23**  
Lydia

**March 25**  
ETHNEGERSIA, EVAGGELOS

**March 26**  
POULIOS, SYLAS

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

**March 30**  
SOSTHENES, JOHN

**March 31**  
YPATIS

## On the Serious Side

The purpose of Lent is not to force on us a few formal obligations, but to "soften" our heart so that it may open itself to the realities of the Spirit, to experience the hidden "thirst and hunger" for Communion with God.  
~Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

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

---  
Empathy: Let me hold the door for you. I may have never walked in your shoes, but I can see your soles are worn and your strength is torn under the weight of a story I have never lived before. So let me hold the door for you. After all you've walked through, it's the least I can do. ~Morgan Harper Nichols

---  
Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly, because if you only want to do it well, you won't try things.  
~Anonymous

---  
Three ways to fail at everything in life: 1. Complain about everything. 2. Blame others for your problems. 3. Never be grateful.

---  
Me: So, Lord, why do you allow things like hate, famine, war, suffering disease, crime, homelessness, despair, etc. to exist in our world.  
Jesus: Interesting that you should ask because I was about to ask you the same exact question.

---  
Hurt people hurt people. That's how pain patterns gets passed on, generation after generation after generation. Break the chain today. Meet anger with sympathy, contempt with compassion, cruelty with kindness. Greet grimaces with smiles. Forgive and forget about finding fault. Love is the weapon of the future.  
~Yehuda Berg

---  
When people praise you, don't let it go to your head. When they criticize you, don't let it get to your heart.

## On the Lighter Side

Person: What's the dumbest thing you've ever done?  
Me: Awfully bold of you to assume I've peaked.

---  
A Plea for warm thoughts from someone in Florida: Will this winter ever end? It's been 2 ½ days since we suffered a 31 degree low, and now it's barely 70 degrees out three. Please send your hopes and best wishes! We will do our best to endure..

---  
Statement from NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell: The NFL, the players and the teams are deeply worried of the events that transpired last week after the Bengals-Rams Superbowl game. For the second year, there was a team with homefield advantage at the Super Bowl. As an organization, we have tried very much to avoid that situation, let alone allow it to happen two years in a row. Therefore, to guarantee that will never happen again, we will be moving every Super Bowl thereafter to AT&T Stadium in Dallas (Arlington), Texas. End of statement.

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The dying wish of an old Greek lady: When I die, bury me under the kafenio so my husband will visit me 7 days a week.

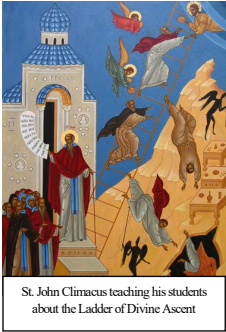
---  
Choir member: "could you play that note again? I don't think I'm singing it right."  
Translation: "I am literally the only person singing this note right."

---  
In the end, I will have to answer for every idle word, every unkind thought, every avocado I failed to eat while it was ripe.



# How To Tame Your Dragons

By Alex Limberatos



Great Lent is an incredible period in the Church calendar that affords us the opportunity of disciplining ourselves more than we might usually in our daily lives. Although the things we do and learn from Lent—restraint through fasting, humility through prostrations, prayer through increased services, etc—should be continued year round, a great outcome of Lent is the rallying of the Christian community towards developing spiritual muscle towards spiritual knighthood.

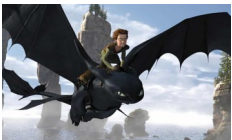
But what's all this training for? Who are we fighting.

Well, dragons. You heard me right, dragons. Allow me to explain.

Most of us are familiar with the Seven Deadly Sins. Well, these “vices” actually stem from the early church father, Evagrius, who coined “The Eight Passions”. The Eight Passions are said to dwell in the three parts of the human soul: The appetitive (hungry) part of the soul has gluttony, lust, and greed...the irascible (easily upset) part of the soul has wrath, sloth, and sorrow...and the intellectual part has pride and vanity. While in the west these passions are coined as vices or sins, in our faith they are described more as wants/drives that need to be tamed, not necessarily eradicated.

The tamed analogy gives a connotation that these forces are alive and sometimes have a mind of their own, which most would agree that's how it sometimes feels. Sometimes we aren't sure why a sudden craving for something strikes us, or why we said what we did in a fit of rage. It's like we aren't ourselves, that we are suddenly dominated by these forces in our lives that compel us to act kind of like an animal or beast. It's easy to see wild animals wrestle with the base appetitive passions and perhaps even the irascible passions, and when we think of “alpha status” among pack animals we understand how animals even struggle with pride. These feelings and urges feel very alive and often times autonomous, and we can feel them inside of us, especially when our heart feels like its racing, burning, or breaking. After all, in the heart is where we do battle with them.

A famous example of this is Cain & Abel. When God approaches Cain before he conspires to kill his brother, He tells Cain, “sin is crouching at your door, and it desires to have you.” There's an implication here of sin (or the passion) prowling like a wild beast, waiting to pounce upon and dominate Cain. In Genesis, it seems there are multiple passions at work inside of him as he dwells on how he is different from his brother (wrath towards the injustice of the inequity, sorrow as he pities his own circumstance, pride as he seeks to best his brother, to name a few). As we keep reading, we hear God not merely warning Cain of what is about to pounce on him, but what he's to do about it : Sin is crouching at your door...**but you must rule over it.**”



In the same way that Adam is given the task of ruling over the wild animals in the garden, now Cain is given stewardship over the beasts in his soul.

But what does it look like to tame a passion?

The motives of the passion can be purified and compelled towards goodness. Think of how your blood pressure might go up seeing someone get mugged...your wrath compels you to intervene. Think of the craving to go to church to receive the Eucharist...could this be a holy hunger? These are examples how the passions can be transformed to compel us towards righteous work. Another way of thinking of it is that these passions can remind us to pray and serve one another, and so we use the urges to help others. For example, if I'm stricken with a sudden appetite to go to Berns, I might pray for or give to those who regularly struggle with hunger on Howard Ave.

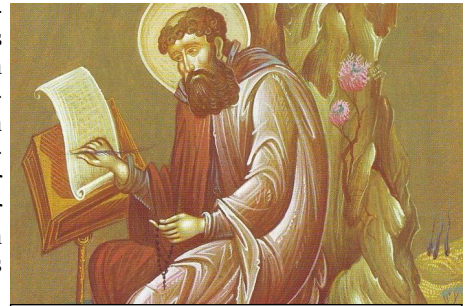
CS Lewis best paints this picture of taming the passions in his work “The Great Divorce”. He tells of a “ghost” that goes to Heaven who is joined to a red lizard that digs its claws into his shoulder and tempts him in his dreams. An angel approaches this man and asks if the man would like the lizard taken care of. The ghost at first is scared if he'll be harmed or destroyed in the process if this angel smites the lizard, but eventually consents. Instead of destroying the lizard, the angel transforms it into a magnificent horse. The lizard represents an appetitive passion or addiction, and is transformed into a chaste virtue, something that this man can now go spiritually far with.

Our passions are sometimes hard to identify because they look complicated, feel complicated. I like to think this is why psychologists have endeavored to come up with “feeling wheels”. But dragons are also hard to identify and complicated, possessing traits that belong to multiple animals (reptilian with their scales, winged like a bird, often running like a lion, etc). They appear big and powerful and they feel fiery and sharp. But imagine if something like these dragons, these passions, could be tamed, if that power and fire could be used for good.



It's not enough for us to merely say “no” to a passion. After all, power loves a vacuum. So our turning away or denying the animalistic pressure of a passion isn't enough unless we are compelled to do something righteous, to fill the hole with something holy.

In Great Lent, we celebrate three incredible spiritual giants that are emblematic of the fight against the passions: St. Gregory Palamas, St. John Climacus, and St. Mary of Egypt. St. Gregory of Palamas taught on the importance of silence and stillness (Hesychasm) by writing on the Jesus Prayer while integrating breath control in this prayer. St. John Climacus wrote the most popular Orthodox book, the Ladder of Divine Ascent, which outlines how one confronts each temptation, passion, and vice through his 30 steps on his ladder. And finally, St. Mary of Egypt's life shows us how a wanton life of sin can be transformed into an incredible life of chastity and prayer. Though centuries separate each of their lives, these three spiritual warriors unite together in Lent to train us into spiritual knights to combat our draconic passions. St. Gregory smiths for us the tools to combat and subdue these dragons, St. John Climacus gives us the tactics to fight them, and St. Mary of Egypt is the success story to show us how this is possible and what victory can and will look like



St. Gregory Palamas with his prayer rope

My brothers and sisters, bear with me as I tame my own dragons, and let us encourage one another to tame our own dragons this Lent through prayer, fasting, study, humility, acts of service, and love for one another and love for Christ.



A lion helping St. Zosimas bury St. Mary of Egypt



# Fr George Calciu: Why American Christians would Survive Persecution



It's been 15 years since the repose of my spiritual father, Fr George Calciu, a survivor of the communist brain-washing prisons in Romania. Someone recently asked me if he had given any advice about how American Christians might resist, if some kind of persecution arises.

He did answer that question, when a nun asked it in an interview. First, he said that he did not expect such a persecution in America, because the people are too deeply convinced of their freedoms. There would be too much entrenched resistance to the idea of submitting to steamroller government oppression, even apart from Christian faith. He also said that he thought tools like torture and massmurder could not be readily used in America, as they might be in other countries.

But he said the thing that really protects America is the widespread faith in Christ, held by "simple people."

He said, "Just today I was telling the fathers and some others that I visited France. I was completely disappointed because I love the French people. I love French culture. I used to be a professor of the French language in Romania. The connection between my country, my people, and the French people is very strong. We borrowed elements of the French culture, so the second language of my country was French.

"When I went to France, I saw that it is a lost country. The French people are a lost people. You cannot find a religious book in a public library. You cannot find a religious book in a secular bookstore, only in the bookstores that specialize in religious literature. If the president of France dares to say, 'God bless France,' the next day he has to resign. It is not allowed for officials to publicly pronounce the name of God in France. Since the French Revolution, the devil has been victorious in France."

But then he said: "When I returned to America from France, I took a cab from the airport to my house, and the driver started to talk to me about God, about the Bible. In shops people often start talking to me about God, about the Bible. As long as simple people speak about God, as long as simple people read the Bible, America is saved.

"For despite all the mistakes America has made, despite the war against Yugoslavia, despite all the killings of people, despite everything, America is blessed by God—not because Clinton or another president says, 'God bless America,' but because of these simple people, who speak of God, worship God, read the Bible, and preserve America against every evil and every attack of the devil."

Strangely enough, I thought I'd heard the very same thing in prayer once, when I awoke in the wee hours of a September 11, after Fr George had reposed. When I told a friend about it, he said, "Fr George said the same thing." I said "Really???" I had no idea.

So, I take that as a kind of confirmation. To me, the simple faithful that draws God's protection looked like a vast meadow of little white and yellow flowers, close to the ground, humble, covering America from sea to sea. It's a faith that may not be theologically complex, but it's grounded in a strong love of Jesus. That's why God protects us. That's what I "heard" in prayer, without ever knowing Fr George had expressed something very similar.



*Frederica Mathewes-Green is a wide-ranging author who has published 10 books and 800 essays, in such diverse publications as the Washington Post, Christianity Today, Smithsonian, and the Wall Street Journal. She has been a regular commentator for National Public Radio (NPR), a columnist for the Religion News Service, Beliefnet.com, and Christianity Today, and a podcaster for Ancient Faith Radio. (She was also a consultant*

*for Veggie Tales.) She has published 10 books, and has appeared as a speaker over 600 times, at places like Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Wellesley, Cornell, Calvin, Baylor, and Westmont, and received a Doctor of Letters (honorary) from King University. She has been interviewed over 700 times, on venues like PrimeTime Live, the 700 Club, NPR, PBS, Time, Newsweek, and the New York Times. She lives with her husband, the Rev. Gregory Mathewes-Green, in Johnson City, TN. Their three children are grown and married, and they have fourteen grandchildren.*



March 2022					
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
<b>** Fast Day</b>	<b>1 **</b>	<b>2 **</b>	<b>3 **</b> Griefshare 6:30 p.m. Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m.	<b>4 **</b>	<b>5 **</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Young Adult retreat
<b>6 **</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Sunday school pre- Lent retreat Forgiveness Vespers 6:00 p.m.	<b>7 **</b> Canon of St. Andrew 10:00 a.m.  Holy Unction 6:00 p.m	<b>8 **</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m  Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>9 **</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Litur- gy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner	<b>10 **</b> Griefshare 6:30 p.m. Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m.	<b>11 **</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Litur- gy 10:00 a.m.  Salutations 6:30 p.m.
<b>13 **</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m.	<b>14 **</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>15 **</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m	<b>16 **</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Litur- gy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner	<b>17 **</b> Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m.	<b>18 **</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Litur- gy 10:00 a.m.  Salutations 6:30 p.m.
<b>20 **</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m.	<b>21 **</b> Great Compline 4:30 p.m.. Man of God Movie 7:00 p.m. (at Regal Cinema, Citrus Park)	<b>22 **</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>23 **</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Litur- gy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner	<b>24 **</b> Griefshare 6:30 p.m. Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m.	<b>25 **</b> Annunciation Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations 6:30 p.m.
<b>27 **</b> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m.  Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	<b>28 **</b> Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>29 **</b> Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m	<b>30 **</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Litur- gy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner	<b>31 **</b> Griefshare 6:30 p.m. Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m.	<b>26 **</b> GOYA Lenten Retreat

## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

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## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

### Timetable of Services

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

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

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

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

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

Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

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

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

**Retired Priest in Residence** Rev. Fr. John Stefero  
813-876-8830 (Office) 678-637-4425 (Cell)

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vasili@stjohntpa.org

**Parish Council**  
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Euripides Panos, Vice President 813-352-3972  
Marilyn Sandborn, Secretary 813-855-8678  
Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898  
Jim Armstrong 954-295-6665  
Joanne Dalakis 781-888-3329  
Amin Hanhan 813-846-2957  
Nick Katzaras 863-581-2430  
Suzanne Pileggi 813-244-5855  
Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026  
Mike Xenick 813-340-8737

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debbie@stjohntpa.org fax: 813-443-4899

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VOLUNTEER NEEDED!

**Adult Greek School**  
Magda Myer 813-523-5771

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

**Altar Angels**  
Kalliope Chagaris 813-789-4134

**Altar Boys**  
Fr Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038

**Bookstore**  
Presbyteria Denise Stefero 678-464-4833

**Bible Study**  
Fr. John Stefero 678-637-4425

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

**Chanter**  
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 MAΣ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668  
Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347  
Marquet Edquid 813-422-8963  
ΠΑΡΕΑ, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136  
ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

**Daughters of Penelope**  
Diane Trimis 813-220-3389

**Festival**  
Mike Xenick 813-340-8737

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

**Food Pantry**  
Sheila Vukmer 412-719-1005

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

**Gasparilla Parking**  
VOLUNTEER NEEDED!

**GOYA**  
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goya@stjohntpa.org

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

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

**MOMS**  
Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862

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

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

**Oratorical Festival**  
Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

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

**Philoptochos**  
Melissa Krinos 813-716-9975

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

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

**Usher**  
Pete Trakas 813-505-2193

**Website / Social Media / APP**  
VOLUNTEER NEEDED!

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

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

**Young Adult/OCF**  
Alex Limberatos 262-370-0586

**Young at Heart**  
Bill Manikas 813-716-8185  
Dora Morgan 813-613-3738

**Youth Protection**  
Suzanne Pileggi 813-244-5855

**12 Disciples**  
Mathew Balasis 727-421-7376

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