

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*

October 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

Axios! Fr. Kyriakos Hambos

Editor's Note: Many of us watched Charlie Hambos grow up in our community. Many of our young adults served with him in the altar. We proudly sent him to Holy Cross Seminary in 2010, and warmly received him back as our first ever pastoral assistant in 2014. He is not the first person in our community ever to attend Holy Cross Seminary, but was the first ever to graduate. For seven years, we were blessed to work with him, to hear his beautiful voice at the chanter's stand, to gratefully welcome his hard work with youth and adults alike, and to watch him grow into the capable and mature servant that he is. We were sad to see him leave on August 1, 2021, but again proud to see him serving at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Orlando, FL. We then happily welcomed him back in November 2021 as he got married in our parish. He was ordained a deacon on July 29 at the Diakonia Retreat Center. And on August 21, he was ordained a priest at Holy Trinity in Orlando. At the ordination of a deacon, priest or bishop, it is customary for the man who is to be ordained to stand before his ordaining bishop and make a presentation of himself. Last month in the Messenger, we reprinted the address that he gave at his ordination to the Diaconate. This month, I cede the front page to our parish's son, Charlie, now ordained a priest, Fr. Kyriakos Hambos, and share the words he offered as his ordination to the priesthood.

Speech by Fr. Kyriakos Hambos at His Ordination to the Holy Priesthood

Sunday, August 21

Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity, Orlando, FL

Ordained by His Grace Bishop Sevastianos of Zela

Your Grace Bishop Sevastianos, I stand before you send, and who will go for us?" The part that I forgot, and the entire church with fear, with faith and with was the Prophet's response to the Lord. Isaiah's re-love, with your blessing as well as the Blessing of His sponse was, "Here I am, Send me!"
Eminence Metropolitan Alexios.

In my deacon ordination address just a few weeks ago, I quoted the sixth chapter of the book of Isaiah dare present myself before you and Almighty God to but I did not answer the question. The prophet tells us answer, like the Prophet Isaiah, "Here I am, Send that the Lord poses a question to him: "Whom shall I me!" Here I am, today. Call the

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Holy Spirit down upon me, to complete what is lacking and make this, your unworthy servant, Kyriakos, the deacon, a Priest for the furtherment of His Kingdom here on earth and in heaven.

In my short but fruitful time as a Deacon, I learned that I did not know as much as I thought I did. It was a humbling experience and I look forward to learn more. One of the things I most looked forward to when becoming a deacon was being able to distribute the sacraments, especially to those who could not come to church. Not sure I would get the opportunity as a deacon, but we received a call to bring someone Holy Communion and off I went. The patient's name was Zoe. And Zoe means life. Once Zoe received the Body and Blood of Christ, I explained to her, that I had just recently been ordained as a deacon and that she was the first person I was able to bring Holy Communion to outside of the church. She was elated and could not have been more excited. May there be many more times of joy like these and where I can bring LIFE to those that I meet the ministry of the church. And may the Lord our God also strengthen us in the sadness of life where the Church must enter the depths and darkness of life, calling us to be the light.

God has called me for a long time. Sometimes I heeded his call and sometimes I ran away. The only time, I felt true peace in my heart is when I followed the call. I know for a fact that if I did not follow the call to become a priest, and I went to stand before the Awesome Judgment Seat of Christ after passing on from this life, I believe that He would be disappointed. I can only hope and pray that even though, now I stand before the Holy Altar seeking the Holy Priesthood, that, Our Loving and All-Merciful God will not be disappointed in my humble service to His Church and to His People.

The priesthood is something that should not be taken lightly. I remember talking to a priest, a few months ago and I was expressing to him that I did not feel any concern or fear in becoming a priest and I was worried that I wasn't taking it seriously. He told me that the priest, especially when becoming a confessor, is given the power to forgive sins, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and this is a very serious thing. It is something I know I am not worthy of but something God has called me to do.

Some of my greatest lessons in the ministry of the Priest, both the joys and the sorrows were during my ministry as Pastoral Assistant with Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox

Church in Tampa. I will always remember and cherish those years for the rest of my life. I am so very grateful to Fr. Stavros for showing me the way. Every once in a while, someone would question how or why Father Stavros did something. It could be anything, but everything Father Stavros and every priest does should be done for the benefit of the souls of they are charged with. So after that person questioned him, he would pull a picture from his shelf of the παρακαταθήκη, the Divine Trust.

In a little while, after the consecration of the Holy Gifts, Your Grace, you will place the Lamb of God, the portion of the bread which has become the Body of Christ and you will place it in my hands and you will say, "Receive this Divine Trust, and guard it until the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, at which time He will demand It from you."

The Church is the Body of Christ and the church is made up of the people. As priests, we have an effect on the souls of those that we minister. In every thought, action and decision we make on behalf of the people, we have to remember this, because at the Second Coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, He is going to demand it back from us.

Today, I am going to be given that Divine Trust in the midst of all of you and may I be found worthy to give it back to Him, when He come to demand it from me.

In order for me to get to this moment today, to be given the Divine Trust and to enter the rank of the Holy Priesthood, I certainly and in no way did this by myself. Please allow me the opportunity to thank those who have been there along the way.

First and Foremost, I want to thank God for calling me to serve the church and being with me through the ups and downs. I look forward to learning and teaching how to love to live in your loving presence throughout the rest of my life.

Elefteria, thank you for joining me on this journey. The calling is just as much for you as it is for me. I know that below my hands that will hold the Divine Trust, will be yours, so that when the weight feels too heavy you will be there to help lift. Thank you for loving me unconditionally and supporting me no matter what. Thank you for sharing me with the church. I love you so much and I look forward to many many more years with you and Christ, right in the middle.

Your Grace, you have been by my side throughout this whole ordination process. Thank you for being my supporter and advocate along with His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios. Our special connection as Cypriots has created a bond between us and I want to thank you for being here with us today and for being the Hierarch to Ordain me to the Priesthood. Eis Polla Eiti Despota.

Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis, my spiritual father, friend, co-laborer in the Lord's Vineyard. It was you who I first told about my calling and it was you who guided me every step of the way. We worked so close together for such a long time. Thank you for being patient with me. Thank you for continuing to highlight my strengths and encouraging me in my weaknesses. You will always be a part of my ministry because you are one of the BEST Ministers and PASTORS I know. I look forward to the day where we will be serving side by side at the Holy Altar.

Mom, Dad, George and Joe, Thank you for your unwavering love and support throughout all these years. I hope and pray you will continue to do so. Thank you for offering me to the church and most importantly, thank you for bringing me to the church and making sure I had a solid foundation in Christ.

To the clergy that have traveled near, thank you for sharing this day with me and I look forward to serving with you.

Fr. Constantine Simeonidis, thank you for your patience in this process over the last year. You can finally go on vacation but don't leave me here by myself for too long.

To family and friends that have traveled thank you for coming. It means so much to Elefteria and I.

Thank you to the community of St. John the Baptist in Tampa, whom I had the pleasure to serve as Pastoral Assistant for 7 years. I know many of you have traveled to be here today and I can't thank you enough. Thank you for teaching me what a community should be like and for letting me learn all aspects of the ministry and church administration, whether that was on the roof or in the office. Thank you for supporting me and always being a place that I will call home.

Thank you to the community of Holy Trinity here Orlando for welcoming me as Pastoral Assistant over the last year. Thank you for loving us! Thank you for

making us feel at home. We look forward to serving you for many many years to come.

Thank you to the Pantelis Xikis and Rob Shand for leading the choirs so beautifully today. Thank you also to the altar servers who are helping in the altar.

Thank you to Joyce, Presbyteria Elaine, Flora, Maria Haun-Davis, Steve, James, Frankie, Debbie, Members of the Parish Council and everyone else who has made today possible. We greatly appreciate and love you very much.

Finally, thank you to those who were unable to be here us because they have passed on from this life and have gone to eternal life. I wouldn't be here without them.

May the Lord God Remember all of us in His Kingdom, both now and forever and to the ages of Ages. Amen.



Father Stavros' Message

The Divine Trust - The Parakatathiki

The ordination of a priest takes place immediately after the Great Entrance. It takes place after the Holy Gifts have been placed on the altar table, but before they are consecrated. This is because the primary role of the priest is to be the celebrant of the Divine Liturgy and to consecrate the Holy Gifts to be the Body and Blood of Christ. (The primary role of the Deacon is to distribute Holy Communion. He does not consecrate the Gifts. This is why the ordination of a Deacon takes place after the Consecration of the Gifts. The primary role of the Bishop is to teach the people. The ordination of a Bishop occurs right before the Epistle reading.) Once a priest has been ordained, he stands at the altar with the other priests (he is the first priest on the day of his ordination) and takes his part in the Divine Liturgy. After the Gifts have been consecrated and the Bread is now the Body of Christ, the Bishop pauses the Divine Liturgy, and places the entire Lamb (sometimes called Amnos, or the entire bread that has been consecrated as the Body of Christ) into the hand of the priest. This action is called the “Parakatathiki” or “The Divine Trust.” For now, this is not just the Body of Christ to be used in Holy Communion at that Divine Liturgy, but this Parakatathiki symbolizes the Body of Christ, that is, the church, and represents every person that the priest will ever meet in his ministry. If someone were to crush that piece of Bread into crumbs, there would be thousands if not millions of crumbs. Each crumb represents each person that the priest will ever minister to, either directly (because of something he says or does to someone) or even indirectly (priests offer messages that reach people they don’t even know).

The Bishop will say to the newly ordained priest, as he places the Parakatathiki into his hands, “Receive this Divine Trust and guard it until the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, at which time He will demand it from you.” The priest is then escorted next to the Cross of Christ behind the Holy Altar Table, and remains there from after the Consecration until it is time for Holy Communion, at which point he is escorted to the front of the Holy Altar Table and returns the Parakatathiki to the Bishop. This represents when he will present it back to Christ at the Second Coming.

The whole concept of this is actually very scary. These words from the Bishop are without a

doubt the scariest words I have ever heard in my life. And the scariest words I ever will hear in my life. I’ve heard some scary words—your mother has passed, your father has passed, you might have a serious illness, etc. All of these scary words had life consequences. But the words of the Parakatathiki have ETERNAL consequences. For to handle this wrong can mess up someone for eternal life. It can send them to eternal condemnation. The recent ordination of Fr. Kyriakos Hambos, and witnessing him holding the Parakatathiki, brought my mind back to the day I did this back in 1998. I had no way of knowing then that I was just over six years away from a collision course that would find me serving in Tampa at St. John. I had no way of knowing that I would be co-directing a summer camp. I had no way of knowing all the different people I’d meet along the way, the joys and the heartaches I would experience.

I don’t think about the Parakatathiki enough. If I did, I’d probably quit, run away, and beg God for His forgiveness for all of the ways I have failed to safeguard



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the Divine Trust given to me. I remember a conversation I had with an older priest back in 2002 at a clergy laity conference in Los Angeles. We were sitting in a restaurant at the hotel at 2:00 a.m. and he started talking about the Divine Trust, and how he was getting older, and therefore closer to the day he would stand before God and account for it. He said he had nightmares about it. I still remember that conversation, 20 years later, and I still pray for Fr. George (the name of the priest who talked with me that night), that he will stand worthy before the throne of God when the time comes for him to present it back to Him.

I think about mistakes I've made, and one person in particular who died, that was my spiritual child. During the Second Gospel on Holy Thursday evening, we read that when Jesus was betrayed and arrested, He told the Roman soldiers to let those who were with him go free. "This was to fulfill the word which He had spoken, 'Of those You gave Me, I lost not one.'" (John 18:9) I still get emotional each year when I read this Gospel passage. Priests are taught that to lose a soul from those entrusted to us, to lose one crumb of the Parakatathiki, is enough to cost us the Kingdom of God. And that when we stand in front of Him, each priest will hold the Divine Trust. The rest of the people who are not priests will not have to do this. This is what makes the priesthood so scary, because it has not only consequences in this life—people who might disagree with us and even dislike us, picking up family and transferring to a different parish, balancing responsibilities of parish and family, and the tough things that are part of pastoral care—it has consequences for eternal life. This is one more reason to pray for our priests, the ones we know and the ones we don't. Because each priest will stand before God with the Parakatathiki in His hands.

I make decisions every day in this parish, in this ministry. I make some decisions that are popular and some that are not. Somewhere in the back of my mind is the thought of the Parakatathiki. Please know that this thought guides many of my decisions, especially the tough ones, and the unpopular ones. It keeps me accountable to God and my own conscience. The one who receives a trust is called a "trustee." The trustee is free to decide what he wants to do with the trust. In like manner, the priest is free to decide how he wants to set up his ministry. That is because each priest has his own understanding of the priesthood as well as his own set of skills that are unique to him. That's why no two priests are

alike. We all do the same thing, we just do it a little different. And the Divine Trust is an endorsement of that, with the caveat that we need to be careful with what we are doing since at the Second Coming, the Divine Trust will be demanded of us, as will be an accounting of how we've handled it. My understanding of both Christ and the ministry has changed over the nearly 25 years since I was ordained as a priest, because I have changed, grown, hopefully matured, and been shaped by the things that have happened in my life and ministry.

The recent ordination of Fr. Kyriakos, and the powerful picture of him standing in the shadow of the cross of Christ holding the Parakatathiki brought this to the forefront of my mind. I pray that Christ will strengthen Fr. Kyriakos, me, and the rest of the priests who accepted this Divine Trust when they were ordained to the Holy Priesthood, that we will guard it with wisdom and with humility, that we will present it back to Christ at the Second Coming just as we received it, full, intact, and that He will welcome each of us to stand at His right hand in His Kingdom.

Some Big Announcements Were Made on August 28

Editor's Note: After Divine Liturgy on Sunday, August 28, we had a celebration to burn our mortgage. The church has had a mortgage since 2003, plunged into debt by the former day school building a new school complex in 2003, despite a feasibility study that recommended not to do so. Subsequent to this, the old day school administration ran up hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt they couldn't pay, for which the church took out a mortgage. Through twenty years of work, we have now retired that mortgage. A second announcement concerned the Greek Festival and how it will be different this year. Much of that was contained in my pastoral message in the September issue of The Messenger. Third, we presented very rough drawings of what an expansion of our church might look like. Several people have asked for copies of it. Below is the sermon from Sunday, August 28.

Trust in the Lord—Changes to the Festival, Our Building and our Future

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. Proverbs 3:5

There are many times in life when we are called upon to do just that. The Gospel lesson this morning was about forgiveness, specifically about a man who had been forgiven a huge debt, but who couldn't forgive his servant a small debt. The lesson

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here is that we can't expect the Lord God to forgive the totality of our sins, if we are unable to forgive others for their sins against us. It is difficult to forgive certain sins people have committed against us, and yet, this is exactly what we are called to do, to trust in the Lord and not to lean on our own understanding of exactly how we can forgive or who should be forgiven. Many times, when people come to confession and own up for what they've done, even shedding tears of repentance, yet they still have a hard time accepting God's forgiveness. Here is another example of trusting in God and accepting His forgiveness, even when our own understanding makes us feel that we are unworthy of it.

There are many times in life where we will come to a place of decision, where even our own understanding might lack a large measure of confidence, where we are supposed to trust in the Lord, and not rely on our own understanding.

Our parish of St. John the Baptist is at such a crossroads. There are some things that are going to be presented at our parish assembly meeting after church involving our mortgage, our festival and our church sanctuary. These things are and have been big things in the life of our parish. Allow me to speak briefly on two of them.

Our understanding of many things has changed over the past 18 years that I have served this parish. Yes, this week marks a milestone of service to St. John, as I finish year 18 and this Thursday, September 1, will begin year 19. Our parish has doubled in size in the last 18 years. Some families have left or moved and still the parish is double the size it was in 2004 when I arrived here. Our stewardship has grown. In 2004, our stewardship was \$120K. Today it is \$600K. While our parish has doubled in membership, our stewardship amount has gone up 5 times over. This is because our understanding of stewardship has changed. Our understanding of who and what we are as a church has changed. And our understanding of charity has changed. Eighteen years ago, our church had \$50K in liquid assets and \$2M in liabilities. That means there was \$50K between us and selling off our property to pay our bills. We're not in that place any more. For the past three years, we've funded our operating budget without needing funds from a Greek Festival. At the same time, our charitable giving has broken a record each year. Which means that we are giving more to the church as stewards and our church is giving back more to the community.

The Church exists for exactly two things—first, to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the nations, beginning in our own community, our own parish, and in our own city. And second, the church exists to serve others. Jesus was very specific about how we are to serve others when He spoke about feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, and visiting those who are sick and in prison. It is important that we have a church in which to worship. It is important to have facilities in which to offer ministries. It is necessary that we have adequate staff to lead our parish. And it is necessary that we pay our bills. But this can't be the entire focus of the church. We exist to spread the word of God and we exist to serve others—ourselves as well as those outside of our parish.

The Parish Council and I have made a decision this year to again resume the Greek Festival. The Festival affords us the opportunity to come together as a parish and to share our faith, culture and food with the greater Tampa community. We all love the fellowship and comradery that happens in our parish when we work and dance together. We've missed that. We know that things have changed in the last three years. Several of the critical workers at the festival have either passed away, or moved away. Costs have gone up, manpower has gone down. We will have to outsource more this year as far as labor and food goes. Profits won't be anywhere near what we've enjoyed in the past. With this in mind, the Parish Council and I have decided to scale the Festival back this year—dinner on Friday, all day Saturday, and no festival on Sunday. No vendors. No raffle. Sunday we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy at the regular time. We will have a memorial service to remember those who have passed on in the last three years. And then we will have a party for our community, ourselves, to celebrate us.

Because we've shown over three years that we've made our budget without a Festival, and because our understanding of the church and her mission has changed, and our commitment to charity has increased, we've decided that this year we will be donating all of our festival profits to charity. This is a statement of loving concern for charities in our local community and those who utilize them. This is a statement of faith, that we believe the words of Jesus Christ, who commanded us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. This is a statement of trust in the Lord with all of our hearts, and not merely relying on our own understanding, which for many people is a mantra of "get all you can and keep

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no fundraisers, no passing trays, no selling candles—and we’ve managed to pay our bills, as well as make needed repairs. We’ve done that. You’ve done that.

The past three years have seen several of our long-time parishioners passed away, move away or move on. As we prepare for our Festival, we will certainly miss the faces of many people we will undoubtedly be thinking about. In their place, however, are more people who have joined our parish. Attendance is approaching pre-covid levels, levels that filled our church to standing room only. At a time when churches of all denominations, including the Orthodox, are in a state of decline, we are in a state of growth. This is a blessing. But it also brings us to a reality that if our church seating capacity remains what it is, there will not only be no room for us to bring others to Christ, there won’t be room for the people who are already here. It’s time to start the conversation about potentially expanding our church sanctuary. No shovel is going into the ground anytime soon. No decisions have been made. We’ve merely begun some preliminary conversations about what is possible in terms of whether we can expand this building. And the simple answer is, it is structurally possible to do so, and it certainly would cost less than starting from scratch. There is a plan that would allow us to add seats to the sanctuary, add a narthex, put bathrooms in the narthex, improve handicap access, and deal with some issues we’ve put off like redoing our HVAC system and updating our electrical.

We have our tenant for five more years, and during that time, the income from the school will allow us to make some needed repairs, take care of some deferred maintenance, and put away some money for future expansion.

However, it’s time for us to think about what our parish would look like if we had use of our entire property all of the time. It’s time to think about what we can be. Imagine instead of school classrooms we rent out and can’t use all week, that we had rooms that our organizations could call their own. Imagine Sunday school classrooms that didn’t have to be taken out of a drawer on Sundays. Imagine rooms where ministries like GriefShare, AA meetings, parenting classes, tutoring help, etc. could be offered to the local community on a daily basis. Imagine a library filled with Orthodox books, where we could come to read and relax. Imagine what we could be if we had use of our entire property all of the time. Imagine what we could offer to our local community as stewards rather than as landlords.

In Proverbs 29:18, we read “*where there is no vision, the people perish.*” Churches are not immune to this. More churches than ever, including Orthodox churches, are perishing from a lack of vision, because they are focused too much on belonging—getting money, having fundraisers, etc., just to keep the doors open—rather than focusing on *be-ing* the church. For three years, we’ve made it without a Greek Festival. For 18 years we’ve whittled down our mortgage. It’s time to cast forth a vision of what this church can be, and this begins when we put our trust in the Lord and do not lean on our own understanding. This does not happen in one sermon, or on one day, or by one person. It’s going to take time and effort from all of us.

We are at a crossroads as a church, with the potential for some pretty big things on the horizon. I’d be lying if I didn’t say I was a little nervous. Change is exciting but also scary. Different is scary. Change is scary. Think about how many changes you’ve made in your own life—going to college, getting married, having children, buying a home, getting a job, moving—all of these were exciting, scary, and have shaped you into who you are. The potential to change some things and more clearly focus on how we as a Church are going to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ, both in growing our parish and serving the community of Tampa, these things are going to shape our church for the future, and in all seriousness, will determine whether or not we even have a church years from now. Not because we are making some serious financial decisions, but because the churches are being swallowed up by the secular world, God is getting lost in the craziness of our world, not because He is lost but because we are lost. The church is not an organization to which we belong. We all have plenty of things we belong to, we don’t need one more. The church is a place to be—a place where we can be intimate with the Lord through the Eucharist, a place where we can be supported and encouraged by people who are struggling just like us, a place where we can love, worship, learn and serve in the context of community, a place where we can be the stewards that God has called each of us to be, and a place where we can be of service to our greater community.

Our core values are love, worship, community, learning, service. Our word for this year is Stewards. The Greek Festival, with its goal of radical generosity, as well as the possibility of expanding our church sanctuary, and reclaiming the use of our property on a full-time basis, these are things that

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will embody our core values, and inspire us to be better stewards.

I want to invite you next door to a meeting where these things will be discussed further, and before the meeting begins, I invite you to come and celebrate a milestone that has been 18 years in the making for our community.

If I leaned solely on my own understanding of things, not only would my life be a catastrophic failure, I would be sitting in my childhood room, afraid to have taken any chances in life. Of course, we lean on all

kinds of people and things that shape our understanding of life. And at the end of the day, all of that will land on empty, if we haven't placed our trust in the Lord, and let Him shape our understanding. So, let's work to come to a place as a community where we trust in the Lord, and not lean only on our own understanding, and let's continue to work to be the church that Christ has called us to be, one that places Him at the center, makes spreading His word the priority, and manifests His word in service and in generosity towards others. Amen.

+Fr. Stavros

Sermon for September 11th

By: Fr. John Stefero

Editor's Note: On Sunday, September 11, we commemorated the 21st anniversary of the terrorist attack on America of 9/11. Fr. John offered the homily, reprinted here, as he was in the Pentagon on that fateful day. First responders stood vigil at the memorial table as we offered a service of remembrance. A bell tolled for each of the Orthodox victims and we all sang God Bless America to conclude. A solemn day of remembrance at St. John.

1.) At every Divine Liturgy, we commemorate two very important aspects of our Orthodox Christian Faith – these two things are inextricably linked and very pertinent to us today as we commemorate the September 11th terrorist attack on our country, 21 years ago. The first word is **Sacrifice** and the second is **Remembrance**.

A.) The Orthodox Study Bible defines the word '**Sacrifice**' as the offering of something up to God. In the Old Covenant, God commanded His people to sacrifice animals, grain, or oil as an act of thanksgiving, praise, forgiveness, and cleansing. However, these sacrifices were only a foreshadowing of THE ONE PERFECT SACRIFICE – that of Jesus Christ. He, the eternal Son and Word of God Who gave His life as THE sacrifice on the Cross to free humanity from the curse of sin and death. In John 1:29 we hear John the Baptist declare: "Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!"

B.) Why did Jesus die on the Cross for us sinners? There is only one answer and that is "because of His LOVE for us." John 3:16: "For God so LOVED the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life!"

C.) At every Divine Liturgy we participate in Christ's death and resurrection by receiving His precious Body and Blood in Holy Communion.

2.) The second word or aspect is that of '**Remembrance**.'

A.) The Greek word here is **anamnesis** which means making present by means of recollection. The Eucharist is not merely a calling to mind but a remembrance of and mystical participation in the very Sacrifice of Christ, His Resurrection, His Ascension, and soon His Second Coming. From I Corinthians 11: (23-26) we hear: "Take eat; drink of It all of you; This do, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."

B.) It is very interesting that immediately after the priest invokes the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, he reads the Prayer of Remembrance. We remember the ancestors, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics, every righteous spirit made perfect in faith; as well as our most blessed Lady the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist, the whole Church and the entire world. It's important for us to remember and honor those who have dedicated their lives and even made the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

3.) So how do these 2 aspects of **Sacrifice and Remembrance** pertain to the events of September 11th.

A.) First, people sacrificed that day out of their love for their fellow human beings. They truly put into practice the words of Jesus as found in John 15:12-13: "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. **Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.**"

1.) 2,753 people lost their lives at the World Trade Center Towers in New York on 9/11. While people were running away from Ground Zero, others like Stephen Siller, a firefighter who had just completed his work shift, drove his truck to the entrance of the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel. Since it had already been closed for security purposes, Stephen strapped 60 lbs. of gear to his back, and raced on foot through the tunnel to the Twin Towers, where he gave up his life while saving others.

2.) Stephen had everything to live for – a great wife, five wonderful children, and a devoted extended family. His parents were lay Franciscans and he grew up under the guiding principle of St. Francis of Assisi, who said: "**while we have time, let us do good!**" Stephen DID GOOD!

B.) In Shanksville, PA, there is now a Memorial for the 40 individuals who lost their lives on Flight 93. Todd Beamer became one of the most famous national heroes of that flight when he and others decided to rush the cockpit and take down the plane before it was headed to either the Capitol or the White House in Washington, D.C. It was only 20 minutes of flying time away from our capital. He'll forever be remembered for the words: "LET'S ROLL!" Beamer left a lovely wife, 2 sons, and a daughter who was born four months after his death.

C.) At the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., 184 people lost their lives that day (125 military personnel and civilians in the Pentagon along with all 64 people aboard the plane).

1.) Along with other 20 other chaplains and chaplain assistants from Joint Commands, I was in the Pentagon when the plane hit. We were in the opposite side of the building where

the plane hit, in a room below the Secretary of Defense Conference Room.

2.) We had just returned from a break where we watched on TV the Twin Towers being struck. A few minutes after returning to our room, we were all evacuated. People saw the crosses on our uniforms and we were told "we will need your help when you get outside." Since the Pentagon is so big, we did not even know that the terrorists had already crashed into the building on the opposite side.

3.) After exiting the building, we saw people running in all directions. Most were in a state of shock and disbelief! In times like this, the adrenalin starts to flow. We started to minister to those who made it out of the building. Most of these were either burn victims or were choking from smoke inhalation. One Army soldier in particular wanted me to pray for her and I did so while holding her hand, reassuring her until the medical personnel could attend to her. Last year on the 20th anniversary of 9/11 I saw her on a TV interview where she shared her experience on that day. It showed a picture of my holding her hand and the medic who attended to her. It was good to learn that she is doing well today and was one of individuals who fortunately made it safely out of the Pentagon.

4.) Then we had a scare. We were told another plane was heading to Washington, D.C. We heard airplane engines and were afraid this was the 2nd plane coming. Fortunately, the plane we heard was an Air Force F-16 that had been scrambled to safeguard the airspace.

5.) Then we were asked to don masks and gloves to go into the area that had been hit. Unfortunately, due to the intense heat and the dense smoke we could not go beyond a certain point. Even the first responders with full gear were prevented from entering.

6.) One of the eeriest things I've experienced was the complete silence on the streets of Washington, D.C. that evening. It wasn't until later in the afternoon that we had cell phone service and I was able to call Presvytera Denise informing her that we were alright. I think it was worse for the families

Continued...

of us who were there not knowing the outcome of their loved ones, than it was for we ourselves.

7.) Where was God in all this one may ask? (a) many people were not in that wing where the plane hit due to renovation; (b) it was upgraded recently with reinforced steel rods – plane got to C Ring but not the D and E rings. There could have been many, many more casualties in the Pentagon that day, but I'm convinced that God was looking down with mercy on us that day.

8.) Since 9/11, many heroes have served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries to prevent subsequent terrorist attacks. I keep one picture of a family in my notebook to remind me that veterans and first responders continue to serve our nation and are willing to defend the freedoms we enjoy. This picture is of a soldier, Anthony Villarreal, who received devastating injuries to include burns over most of his body and the loss of limbs that he incurred in Afghanistan. Yet he is thankful to be alive and his wife and child are there to support him. I'll place this picture on the table for the luncheon so you can see it more clearly. One of the many service organizations have helped him with making his home handicap accessible.

4.) Edmund Burke, the Irish-born British statesman and economist in the late 1700's made 2 famous

statements. The first was "**The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.**" The second was "**Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it.**" Good men and women **DID** act on 9/11 so that evil would not prevail. However, it is now up to us to remember 9/11 **every** year so it is **NEVER** repeated.

A.) The Memorial outside the Nazi Concentration Camp in Dachau, Germany has 2 simple words: "**NEVER AGAIN!**" May an attack such as on 9/11 NEVER AGAIN occur on our soil.

At this time Father Stavros will lead us in a service of remembrance of the victims of 9/11. You can find a copy in the bulletin so that you can participate and sing with the choir. We will remember the souls of those who passed away, tolling a bell for each of the Orthodox Christians who perished, as well as a general memorial for first responders and all other victims. We will pray for continued healing for those who were left behind. And we will pray for peace in our country and in our world. It is necessary for us to pause each year to remember what happened 21 years ago. As we toll the bell and stand in silence, it is a time to remember, reflect, respect and to pray. A flag displays the names of all who died. The picture on the solea is of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, in the shadow of the twin towers after they were hit. The icon today is of the Resurrection, praying that God will resurrect the souls of all those who fell asleep in the Lord on that terrible day, 9/11/2001.



We are all Called to The Synaxis

By: Vasili Panagopoulos

Last month on September 1st, I had my last meeting with my book study group. We read the book, *"The Divine Liturgy: A Commentary in the Light of the Fathers"*, by Hieromonk Gregorios. In an attempt to define the Divine Liturgy in the Introduction of the book, Hieromonk Gregorios says, "The Divine Liturgy is the mystery of Christ. In it, things near and things far, the beginning and the end, co-exist side by side: 'The Passover of the Lord appears, the ages are brought together [that is, differences of time are removed], heaven and the earthly world are made one.' As Christ is *Alpha and Omega, the first and last, the beginning and the end* (Rev. 22:13), so the Divine Liturgy is the *synaxis* of space and time in Christ and their transfiguration into liturgical space and time." In other words, the Divine Liturgy is the most intimate time that we can experience with Christ in this world, and when we receive His Body and Blood, we see the true light, that being Christ transfigured in ourselves. I share this passage with you because it really defines the nature of the book study, and why I chose this book.

Back in April when I was trying to decide which book to read for the book study, I was given a recommendation for this book from a priest/friend, *The Divine Liturgy*, which I had read before but didn't consider for this. Then I realized that the Divine Liturgy is the most celebrated service in parish life, but in my experience, it is also the least understood. For this reason, I chose to offer this book to our community and shed a bit of light on the Divine Liturgy. We learned about its commencement at the Last Supper, its historical upbringing, and how it was celebrated by the Apostles, until the present day. In light of this, we also read about the many experiences of the saints which have been recorded through the centuries. A very well-written book by Hieromonk Gregorios, that serves as a means to better our understanding of the Divine Liturgy and bring us closer to Christ, and that is what I believe each participant did by the conclusion of the book study.

Going back to the passage above, I want to focus on one sentence: "the Divine Liturgy is the *synaxis* of space and time in Christ and their transfiguration into liturgical space and time." The word *synaxis* as defined by Hieromonk Gregorios translates from Greek to English as *assembly*. "The gathering together of many people for a particular purpose. The liturgical *synaxis* is the gathering of the faithful within the

church for the celebration of a Mystery or a service. The presence of Christ in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy gives this particular *synaxis* another dimension: all the children of God come together where heaven and earth, and the past, the present and the future, are concelebrating."

Why do I bring all of this to your attention? We live in a time where the phrase "spiritual but not religious" seems to be used often. Typically this phrase is accompanied by something along the lines of, "I don't have a religion, I just believe in God" or (especially in regards to Holy Confession) "I can just pray at home, why do I need to go to Church?" This phrase, "spiritual but not religious" is an oxymoron.

I saw a picture recently of the inside of an Orthodox Church during a Divine Liturgy and the photo was accompanied by a caption that read, "A man asked a priest: 'If God is everywhere, why should I go to Church?'" The priest replied: "The whole atmosphere is filled with water; but when you want to drink you have to go to a fountain or a well." You may live a little while without drinking water, but eventually, you'll die. Same with our souls and how often we commune at The *Synaxis, the Divine Liturgy*. We may survive on prayer alone, but eventually, we will suffer by not spiritually nourishing ourselves with His Body and Blood.



To be religious means to belong to a group. In Orthodox Christianity, we rely on our brothers and sisters to help us. Here are two examples of how vital our brothers and sisters in Christ are:

1. A priest (or bishop) CANNOT celebrate the Divine Liturgy without at least one other person present. This law comes from when Jesus told his disci-

Continued...

ples, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

2.) The healing of the paralytic was only possible through faith that Christ would heal him.

But it wasn't just the faith in the paralytic that



healed him, but also the faith of his fellow brothers. By definition, the man could not move. He needed the assistance of his brothers, to let him down through the roof and into the house that Jesus was in. In one way or another, we are all paralyzed.

Perhaps physically with our health, or spiritually through our passions. We all share that in common. What is needful, is that we all have people to let us down through the roof, to help us go to Christ and receive His healing. (Matthew 9:2-8)

Make it a priority to go to The Synaxis, to receive the True Light, and surround yourself with like-minded people who will help carry you to Him. Be the person who also carries people to Christ to receive healing. We are all invited to The Synaxis, I pray that we all accept the invitation.

With love in Christ,
Vasili

Messages from Metropolitan Anthony Bloom and C.S. Lewis

A relationship with God must begin and develop in mutual freedom. If you look at the relationship in terms of a mutual relationship, you will see that God could complain about us a great deal more than we about Him. We complain that HE does not make Himself present to us for the few minutes we reserve for Him, but what about the twenty-three and a half hours during which God may be knocking at our door and we answer “I am busy, I am sorry,” or when we do not answer at all because we do not even hear the knock at the door of our heart, of our minds, of our conscience, of our life. So there is a situation where we have no right to complain of the absence of God because we are a great deal more absent than He ever is.

~Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, “Beginning to Pray.”

To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.

~C.S. Lewis

Love to take Photos? Come join our Photo Ministry!

It's a fun and creative way to serve and to show the community all the beautiful services and wonderful activities we have here at St. John.

All abilities are welcome.

Please call or text Karina Findlay at (813) 476-9632.

Adopt a College Student- VOLUNTEER NEEDED

A unique ministry that we have at St. John's is the “Adopt a College Student” ministry.

This individual, amongst other things, would be in charge of outreach towards our college students across the nation. Where they are, what they are studying, and most importantly, what we could be doing for them from St. John's in Tampa.

The primary role would be to “disperse” these college students amongst your ministry members, and they would “adopt” these college students and provide them with care from St. John's.

Interested in learning more? Email or call the office.



TAMPA GREEK FESTIVAL

eat dance & be greek

www.tampagreekfestival.com

FRIDAY,
NOVEMBER 4th
4:00 pm - 11:00 pm

SATURDAY,
NOVEMBER 5th
11:00 am - 11:00 pm

Let's get excited to
share our faith and
our culture with the
Tampa Bay area!

**FOR 2022 GREEK
FESTIVAL UPDATES,
TEXT @TPAGRKFEST
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**We are proud to be
donating 100% of the
profits to benefit
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**SIGN UP TO
VOLUNTEER
EACH SUNDAY AFTER
LITURGY**

contact mike xenick at mxenick@gmail.com or 813-340-8737
to find out how you can get involved!

St. John Greek Orthodox Church ~ 2418 W. Swann Avenue ~ Tampa, FL 33609
(813) 876-8830 ~ www.stjohntpa.org

Liturgical Schedule for October

Sunday, October 2
Orthros 8:45 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Monday, October 3
Teaching Divine Liturgy (as part of Orthodoxy 101)
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 5
Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, October 6
St. Thomas the Apostle
Orthros 9:00 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, October 9
Orthros 8:45 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, October 16
Orthros 8:45 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, October 18
St. Luke the Evangelist
Orthros 9:00 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, October 23
Orthros 8:45 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Monday, October 24
Evening Divine Liturgy of St. James
Orthros 5:00 p.m. | Divine Liturgy of St. James 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, October 26
St. Demetrios
Orthros 9:00 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday, October 28
Holy Protection of the Virgin Mary
Orthros 8:45 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, October 30
Orthros 8:45 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Tuesday, November 1
Sts. Cosmas & Damian the Unmercenarys
Orthros 9:00 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday, November 4
Orthros 9:00 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

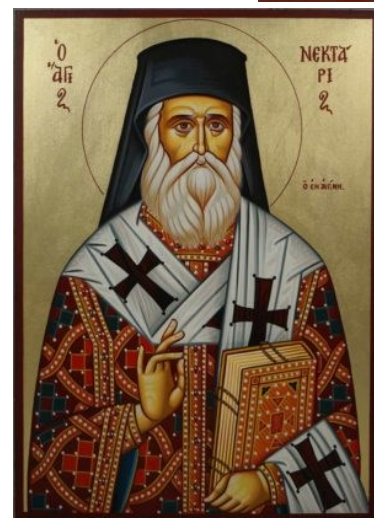
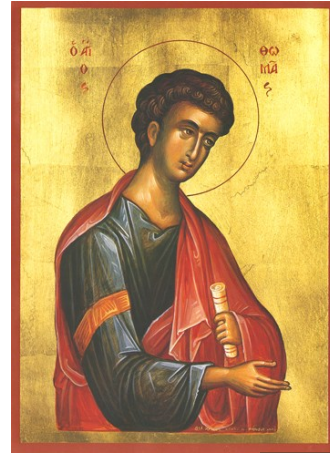
Saturday, November 5
Orthros 8:00 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 9:00 a.m.
(Note earlier start time for Orthros and Liturgy)

Sunday, November 6
Orthros 8:45 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Tuesday, November 8
Archangels
Orthros 9:00 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, November 9
St. Nectarios
Orthros 9:00 a.m. | Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

The faithful will be anointed with oil from the tomb of St. Nectarios at the end of the Liturgy
Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.



Liturgical Notes for September

Monday, October 3- Teaching Divine Liturgy - St. Dionysios the Areopagite - St. Dionysios converted to Christianity after hearing St. Paul preach in Athens, becoming one of the first Athenians to convert. He later became the first bishop of Athens, who was later martyred for his faith. As part of the Orthodoxy 101 class, we will have a teaching Divine Liturgy on Monday, October 3, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. The Divine Liturgy will be celebrated on the solea of the church, and there will be periodic pauses in the service for people to ask questions and for Father Stavros to offer explanations.

Wednesday, October 5 – Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary – We will continue to offer Paraklesis once a month, so that we can pray for all the members of our community by name, out loud. We will alternate some in the evening and some in the morning.

Thursday, October 6 – St. Thomas the Apostle – St. Thomas is one of the twelve Apostles. He is celebrated both on October 6 and the Sunday after Pascha. He is famous for being the one who doubted the Resurrection. However, he showed up, doubts and all, and confess Christ as both Lord and God. He later founded the church in India and was martyred for his faith.

Tuesday, October 18 - Feast of St. Luke - St. Luke was one of the Four Evangelists, along with Sts. Matthew, Mark and John. He was an artist, writer, and doctor, and is probably one of the most intelligent of all the saints in the history of our church.

Sunday, October 22 - Special Prayer for Medical Personnel - St. Luke, Apostle, Evangelist and also Physician, has his feastday celebrated on October 18. In conjunction with this, as he is the patron saint of doctors, we are going to offer a prayer for everyone in the medical field on Sunday, October 22, at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. All doctors, nurses, dentists, researchers, students, and anyone connected to the medical field is encouraged to attend.

Monday, October 24 - Liturgy of St. James - Evening Liturgy - The Orthodox Church celebrates four different Divine Liturgies throughout the liturgical year. The most prominent is the Divine Liturgy written by St. John Chrysostom, which is celebrated almost every Sunday and on most feast days. The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is celebrated 10 times a year—on the eve of Christmas, the eve of Epiphany, on the five Sundays of Lent, Holy Thursday morning, Holy Saturday morning, and on the feast of St. Basil, which is January 1. The Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated on Wednesday and Fridays of Great Lent and the mornings of Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, and Holy Wednesday. The Divine Liturgy of St. James is celebrated only once a year, on his feastday, which is October 23. The Divine Liturgy of St. James is the oldest of the Divine Liturgies and is also the longest. It was written around 70 A.D. making it the oldest Eucharistic service in the entire Christian world. Among the interesting things about this service is that by the end of the first century, the structure of the Liturgy we celebrate today was already loosely in place. The Divine Liturgy begins not in the altar, but in the Narthex of the church, as was the custom of the early church. The priest and faithful enter the church together from the narthex, and the next part of the service is conducted on the solea, with the priest facing the people. The priestly prayers, while very long in the liturgy, reveal a beauty and completeness which would later be shortened by St. Basil and even more by St. John Chrysostom. The most unique part of this service comes at the reception of Holy Communion. This the only Divine Liturgy that has become the custom for the faithful to receive Holy Communion in separate elements, in similar fashion with how the clergy commune. The communicants first receive the Holy Body of Christ in their hands and consume it, and then drink from the Holy Chalice. This is a special beautiful tradition which will be continued at St. John the Baptist, and it is encouraged that all who attend this service fast beforehand and prepare to receive Holy Communion at this Divine Liturgy. *Because the feast of St. James falls on a Sunday this year, and His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios (who granted us permission to have this service) asked that we not celebrate it on a Sunday, for practical reasons, we will hold the Divine Liturgy of St. James on MONDAY, October 24 at 6:00 p.m. (Orthros 5:15 p.m.)*

Wednesday, October 26 - Feast of St. Demetrios St. Demetrios was born into a wealthy and distinguished Christian family in the Greek City of Thessaloniki in the late 3rd century. Demetrios was noted for his wisdom, and was a good speaker and polished orator. St. Demetrios was also a distinguished soldier. Thessaloniki was known for popular gladiatorial games which attracted the local pagans. Travelling with the Emperor Galerius after a military victory, Demetrios stopped in Thessaloniki, where many pagans, who were jealous of his successful life, denounced him as a Christian before the emperor, who ordered Demetrios be put in prison. A man named Nestor befriended Demetrios in prison. The Emperor went to the arena to see his favorite gladiator, Lyaos and offered a reward to whom-ever could defeat him. Nestor accepted the challenge, and through the prayers of St. Demetrios, defeated the gi-

Liturgical Notes for September

ant. When Nestor refused to kill Lyaïos, because he had been helped by the “God of Demetrios,” the Emperor ordered that both be killed. This occurred in the year 306. We commemorate St. Demetrios on October 26 and St. Nestor on October 27. We will celebrate Divine Liturgy for St. Demetrios on Wednesday, October 26, at 10:00 a.m.

Friday, October 28 – Feast of the Holy Protection of the Virgin Mary (Oxi Day) - (Mostly) GREEK Liturgy October 1 has been celebrated for many centuries as the feastday of the Holy Protection of the Virgin Mary. October 28, 1940, is observed in Greece as Oxi Day, the day the Greeks said “no” to the Axis powers who were trying to invade Greece. Since 1940, the church of Greece moved the feast of the Holy Protection of the Virgin Mary (Agia Skepi) to October 28, to coincide with Oxi Day. In other jurisdictions, it is still celebrated on October 1. Because many of us have our roots in Greece, celebrating the Holy Protection of the Virgin Mary on October is something that has great meaning. In trying to serve the many and diverse needs of our parish, we get requests periodically to do more Greek in the services. Our use of Greek in worship reflects a congregation that by and large does not speak Greek. Making an effort to accommodate these requests, occasionally a weekday Divine Liturgy will be scheduled that will be celebrated *mostly in Greek. October 28 will be one of these. Based on the turnout, we can schedule more in the months to come.*

Tuesday, November 1 – Feast of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, the Unmercenary Healers Sts. Cosmas and Damian are the Patron Saints of the Philoptochos, as they went from place to place healing people and not taking any money for their services. Sts. Cosmas and Damian (called the Agii Anargyri) are also saints we pray to for intercession when

Pastoral Notes—Clearing Up Some Misconceptions By Fr. Stavros

Order for Holy Communion—The order for Holy Communion is 1) choir; 2) altar boys (when there is Sunday school); 3) Sunday school teachers; 4) Sunday school students; 5) Everyone else; and 6) anyone who cannot get up to the solea, the priests bring Communion to where you are in the church. Someone asked me recently (in kind of a critical way), why we offer Holy Communion to those who are disabled last, i.e. isn't that sort of mean. To clear up any misunderstanding, the reason why we do that last is because it involves us walking around the church with the chalice containing the Body and Blood of Christ. At the beginning of Holy Communion, the chalice is more filled, and easier to spill. Walking through the crowd of people with the full chalice doesn't seem like a smart idea, especially when the job of the priest is to safeguard the Holy Communion. It is much easier, and safer, to go offer Holy Communion to those who are unable to get up to the solea last, as there are no crowds to walk through. If you are disabled, or unable to get up to the solea for Holy Communion for any reason, kindly let one of the ushers know and they will get the attention of one of the priests to make sure everyone has the opportunity to receive Christ if they wish to do so.

Policy on Bridesmaids Dresses—Several months ago, I addressed the subject of bridesmaids dresses and specifically wearing dresses that are appropriate for a church, and not a night-club, or worse. I heard through the grapevine that people were questioning this, wondering if this is too much micromanagement. I'm happy to report that several couples getting married this fall have spoken to me about this and the conversations have actually been pleasant. They are resulting in either more conservative dresses, or the bridesmaids wearing shawls at the wedding service. As for any misconception that there is widespread angst about this, people are actually rising to the occasion with this and doing what has been asked, which is to dress respectfully in church.

So many memorial services! Why must everyone participate? The memorial services are done in the context of the community, usually appended to the end of the Divine Liturgy, so that the people who are grieving may feel supported in their grief. Sooner or later, all of us will end up in the front row because someone in our family has passed away. How wonderful that our entire community participates in these services. What a great source of support to a bereaved family! We share everything in our community, the joys and the sorrows. Sorrows are lessened when they are shared. When we support people in their grief, even a time of sadness can be filled with some joy that those who are bereaved are not alone, but have the support and prayers of many.

St. John the Baptist Community News

Orthodoxy 101-Two sessions left-Orthodoxy 101 has two sessions left in October. Monday, October 3 we will have a teaching Divine Liturgy from 6:30-8:30 p.m. This is open to anyone in our community, you don't have to be part of the Orthodoxy 101 class. Fr. Stavros will celebrate the Divine Liturgy on the solea, pausing frequently for questions and answers. On Monday, October 10, we will have the concluding session of Orthodoxy 101, on Scripture and Tradition, Theology versus Yiayialogy. The class will be again from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Monday night Bible study with Fr. John—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. For October, the dates are: Tuesday, October 4; Monday, October 10; Monday, October 17; Tuesday, October 25 and Tuesday, November 1.

Women's Bible Study-Our Tuesday morning women's Bible Study began in September. We are studying the Gospel of John. We meet on most Tuesdays from 10:00-11:30 a.m. either in person or on zoom. For October, the dates are Tuesday, October 4; Tuesday, October 11; Wednesday, October 19; Tuesday, October 25; and Monday, October 31.

Joy Tweens Movie Night—On October 7, we will have a movie night for just our tweens in the Kourmolis Center. Stay tuned for details in our weekly bulletin and Sunday school flyers.

JOY/HOPE Fall Festival - On Sunday, October 23, our JOY/HOPE group will have a Fall Harvest Celebration in the Kourmolis Center from 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Join us for an afternoon of games, dinner, crafts and fellowship. Come in costume! (no witches or devils, please!) Please bring an item to stock our St. John's Food Pantry which supports those in need. (Pasta, Sauce, Flour, Canned fruit, canned veggies). Kindly RSVP by October 19 to Zackie Ameres.

Dance Practices will be starting again in preparation for our Greek Festival—Alexandra DeMaio will lead our youngest dancers, H Hara Mas (3 year old through sixth grade), who will practice after Liturgy on Sundays beginning September 18. There will be a group for very young, and then a 4-6th grade group under H Hara Mas, which will be directed by Maraquet Edquid. Marina Choundas will lead our Pareia Dancers—this is our GOYA age group. Practice schedule to be determined. The Adult group is called Panigyri Dancers and they are led by Alexandra DeMaio and will practice on Wednesday evenings.

GOYA-There are lots of GOYA events in October.

GOYA Meeting-Our regular GOYA meeting will be on Sunday, October 2, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

Senior Lock-in-There will be a lock-in for our 10th-12th grade GOYAns on Saturday, October 8, beginning at 5:00 p.m. If you are interested in attending, please RSVP by Tuesday, October 4.

Volleyball Tournament -The Tampa GOYA will be participating in the volleyball tournament in St. Petersburg at St. Stefanos, which will be held October 21-23. Details will be given at GOYA and you'll sign up through the computer and register on-line.

Church Clean Up Day-The GOYAns will be doing a clean-up day at the church on Saturday, October 29. Details forthcoming. This is in preparation for the Greek Festival, to help beautify our grounds and for the GOYAns to offer some service to our community.

Men's Group-Our men's group will meet on Sunday, October 30, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Any men of our community are welcome to join us for dinner, discussion. Please bring \$20—we will order in for dinner. Please mark down our dates for men's group for this academic year—Sunday, October 30; Sunday, November 20; Sunday, December 11; Sunday, January 29; Sunday, March 26; Sunday, April 30 and Sunday, May 21.

Save the Date—Men's Retreat—Saturday, February 18—Men's Retreat for Orthodox Men of the Tampa Bay Area.

Young Adult Retreat—We are hosting a Young Adult Retreat for all young adults of the Tampa Bay area on Saturday, October 1, from 10:00-4:00 p.m. The theme is “Strengthening Our Connection with Christ: A discussion on where the points of disconnect are with knowledge, faith, practice and orthodoxy.” Open to all young adults age 18-40. The retreat will be led by Fr. Stavros.

Get Together for College Students who are going to college in the Tampa Bay Area—October 2 after Liturgy—We are exploring a program for college students (primarily those from out of town, but local students as well) who are studying at colleges in Tampa (USF and UT). We have many students from St. John who are studying in other cities and we hope that the churches of those cities are welcoming to them. We want to do our part to welcome out of town college students to our parish. We will be inviting these students to church on Sunday, October 2, and having a discussion with them after Liturgy. And we will see who may need rides, etc. We will reach out to our community afterwards to see who may need rides, or other support, and who may be able to offer that. Stay tuned.

Fr. Stavros will be out of town October 13-17—Fr. Stavros will be out of town from Thursday, October 13-Monday, October 17. For pastoral emergencies, please contact Fr. John.

Fr. Stavros will be attending clergy meeting at the DRC October 19-21. For pastoral emergencies, please contact Fr. John.



**Burning the
Mortgage on
August 29th!**

Burn Baby Burn!

Photos from Fr. Kyriakos' Ordination on August 21th

**AXIOS!
He is Worthy!**



**Commemoration
of 9/11**



St. John The Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Community Outreach

Hello and WELCOME! **On the 3rd Saturday of each month**, we volunteer 2 1/2 hrs of our time to provide for the needy and homeless of our community in East Tampa. We partner with local charity Matthew 25, Metropolitan Ministries and USF Medical School to serve breakfast, provide clothing and medical needs for our guests.

To Volunteer: Click on our Sign Up Genius below. If you forget to sign up, you can still come!

Place: Tampa Hope @ 3704 E. 3rd Ave. Tampa East

Time: 8:00 AM to 10:30AM

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

Matthew 25 founders Peggy & Mike Kanter, as well as Greg & Victoria Melton, are Go To people if you have questions or need direction on where you may be needed when you arrive.

Below find the Sign Up Genius for every upcoming 3rd Saturday of Month. Find the dates that work for you and sign up.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f48a5a62da3f49-community1>

(Or use QR code)

Greg Melton 813-967-2074 gmelt12@gmail.com



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.

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).



Veterans / 1st Responders Ministry Update!

If you would like to join us, please contact Father John. Our next meeting will be held October 13 at 6:30 p.m.

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 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 or (813) 244-5855.



St. John Stewardship Report 2020-2022

Year to Year Comparison ~	2022*	2021*	2020*
Pledged Year to Date	\$442,703	\$493,873	\$513,416
Received Year to Date	\$446,745	\$370,839	\$412,959
Average Pledge	\$2000	\$1,277	\$1,401
Median Pledge	\$1,200	\$850	\$823
# of Individual/Families Pledged/Giving	350	390	391
*YTD as of 9/16/2022, 9/16/2021, 9/16/2020			

Marriage is a Skill

Marriage is a skill.

We would probably do better at it if we stopped evaluating it with words like "happy" and start thinking of it as a project.

You don't have a good marriage on your wedding day. You've started a new project, learning a new skill that can contribute to mutual healing and growth.

That picture-perfect wedding picture is not a picture of a perfect marriage. It's a picture of a project that's just begun. It's the first day of school. It's an opportunity for repentance. It's a path of transformation.



God doesn't give us the spouses we want for our happiness and comfort. He gives us the spouses we need for our salvation.

When you discover that your spouse has qualities that challenge you, those are the areas where God is saying you need the most work.

Marriage can be a great consolation if undertaken well, but that consolation is not its point. Holiness is its point.

When marriage reveals our sins, we haven't "lost" anything -- that means it's working. And we get a chance to change.

And if we change in the right way, we grow to become more the likeness of the One Who created marriage.

They won't be putting any of that on a greeting card any time soon, though. "Have a Great Lifetime of Repentance on Your Path to the Kingdom" just doesn't have that Hallmark ring.

COMING IN OCTOBER!

PHILOPTOCHOS CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP FOR ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CAREGIVERS NATIONWIDE



- Are you caring for a loved one who is elderly, or has a chronic or life-threatening illness or health condition, or who is disabled?
- Do you wish you could talk to others who are facing the same caregiving challenges as you?
- Would you find it helpful to share your thoughts, concerns, and questions about caregiving with those who understand our faith, culture, and community?
- Are you so overwhelmed you're not even sure what to ask or who could help?

If you answered yes to any or all the above and would like more information, contact the

PHILOPTOCHOS CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

Facilitated by professionals knowledgeable in caregiving and aging services, we will “meet” on Zoom, six consecutive Tuesday evenings. In a **confidential and safe environment**, we will discuss best practices to help caregivers navigate the myriad of diverse and distinct challenges they face including managing the physical needs and cognitive issues faced by their loved ones; balancing family responsibilities; impact of caregiver stress, guilt, frustration, exhaustion and burnout; family dynamics and decision-making; long-distance and holiday caregiving; financial concerns; and preparing for the future.

The last session, led by an Orthodox Christian member of the clergy, will examine caregiving within the context of our religion, faith and culture to help caregivers gain understanding, build strength and resilience.

Secular and spiritual resources to help caregivers cope will be distributed.



Because the group will meet on “Zoom”, it will be accessible to caregivers throughout the USA.

Six consecutive Tuesday evenings:

Dates: October 18 – November 22, 2022

3 sessions @ 7pm – 8pm EST • 3 sessions @ 7pm – 8:30pm EST

Pre-registration Required

For information and to pre-register, please email **supportgroup@philoptochos.org**

Space is limited - Don't delay - Email us today.

Sponsored by:

*Department of Social Services of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, Inc.
126 East 37th Street • NY, NY 10016 • (212) 977-7770 • socialwork@philoptochos.org*

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 the YAH

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

Meeting Date & Time

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

Birthdays

Mike Halikoytakis: 9/5, Pres. Denise Stefero: 9/9

Bill Manikas: 9/24, Denise Madlin: 9/29

Denise Badrane: 10/15, Christine Scourtes: 10/11

Carole Fotopoulos: 10/14, Vange Xeroteris: 10/18

Diane Trimis: 10/25, Margaret Halikoytakis: 10/25

Planned Activities

In June we visited the Tampa Art Museum where we had a private tour, by Branko Van Oppen of the Classical Greek Art collection. It is one of the largest collection of its kind in Florida. Afterwards we had a pleasant dinner at Miquels' Restaurant.



In July we met for a potluck luncheon at the Kourmolis Center and Bill Manikas led is in a game of Trivia Pursuit on religious topics.

In August we met for a potluck luncheon at the Kourmolis Center, and afterwards we played bingo with many members winning prizes. The luncheon was attended by over 20 members.

In September we had brunch at the Village Inn on North Dale Mabry Hwy. It was a different experience but a successful one. There were sixteen members in attendance.

For more information and to get on our email list, contact:

Bill Manikas at wmanikas@gmail.com or 813-716-8185

Dora Morgan at 813-613-3738

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 the servants of God", all members of the St. John's congregation. Should you be interested in participating and expanding your personal prayer rule, please contact Mathew Balasis, 727-345-4855 (mathewbalasis@verizon.net).

Bishop Savas, Metropolitan of Pittsburgh, said "our goal is to offer ourselves, each other, and our whole lives to God. To live Eucharistic lives with thanks and offering, not just on Sunday, but all day every day." OK, but how do we accomplish this?

When you participate in the Twelve Disciples Project, you will see one way that answers the how. Praying for one another.

"Christ is in our midst." "He is and always shall be."

During the Divine Liturgy and prior to reciting the Creed, the priest faces the congregation, and says, "let us love one another". At this point, some present in the congregation quietly turn to those next to them and whisper "Christ is in our midst." "He is and always shall be", is given as a response as the priests, (should there be more than one) exchange "the kiss of peace."

Only then, after we acknowledge our love for Christ and one another, do we press deeper and offer our *profession of faith, or, our confession as Orthodox Christians. The Creed, a summary of what we believe, was created during the 1st Ecumenical Council in 325 c.e., and refined by the Ecumenical Councils that followed.*

In the preface to his book, "Christ in Our Midst", Rev. Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos, explains, "Renewal and spiritual life in the Orthodox tradition derive from this profound awareness of the presence of the risen Christ in our midst, and this awareness is the source of newness, love, joy, hope, victory, thanksgiving and doxology."

What do we mean when we utter the above statements? I know that most of us really believe them as we prepare to recite the Creed during the Divine Liturgy prior to receiving Communion, but does this extend to our other day-to-day personal practices? Do we demonstrate in all our relationships that "Christ is in our midst?" Do we believe and practice this at 1pm Sunday afternoon?; at 9am Monday morning?; at the golf course on Tuesday?; in the board room on Wednesday?; at the family dinner table on Thursday?; in other words, in all of our relationships with all individuals we encounter?

Yes, in a few weeks St. John will "renew" our members with both a Festival whose entire proceeds will be directed to worthy recipients and later when we will be asked to commit to share our personal stewardship goals for 2023. Will each of us pray for the Holy Spirit to guide our decision as we select our stewardship options? Will it be as if "Christ is in our midst?" Our Parish has been blessed with many ministries where stewards may assist to demonstrate that truly: "Christ is in our midst." Do you intend to become a part of one or more of St. John's ministries? Please pray to our Lord and Savior to assist you and to guide your Stewardship decision.

The miracle of birth prepares our physical features but development of our spiritual features with Christ-like traits and sensitivities must be guided by the Holy Spirit to approach the fullness of life with our Savior. Indeed Christ IS in our midst; He is and always will be!

Who are the Twelve Disciples Group?

The opportunity for you to share the joy of praying for others is available to you should you join the Twelve Disciples Ministry. Participating in the Twelve Disciples group 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 (Just as fellow parishioners are also offering daily prayers for you and your family.) There are no restrictions. You choose the time during the day when you can spend a quiet moment with God.

One of the results of this meditative prayer is that you will develop a personal relationship with the members on your prayer list.

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).

Participation will warm your spiritual heart and reveal that truly **"Christ is in our midst!"**



Prayer List: Lord Jesus Christ, Physician of our Souls and Bodies, visit and heal your servants: Stavroula; Felix; Sylvia Michos; Eva Coppalla; Christopher; Christopher; 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, 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, Alice Stoccardo, John Alexander, Michael Romero, George Hambos, Dean Kondilis and Family, Bill and Nancy Manikas, Patricia Costello, 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 the Baptist is on Social Media!

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

Live Streaming

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

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



Like



Pictures Go to Flickr.com and search "St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church" or go to www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoctampa

Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

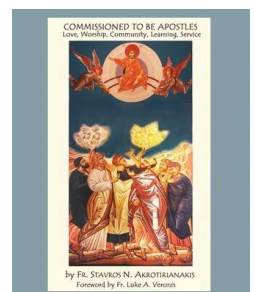
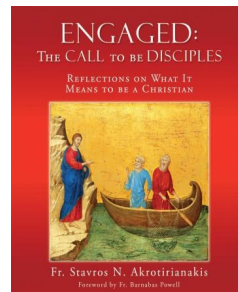
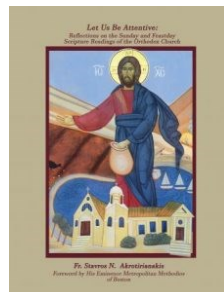
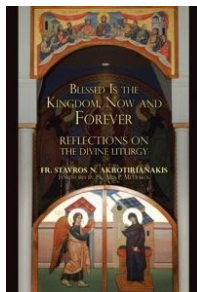
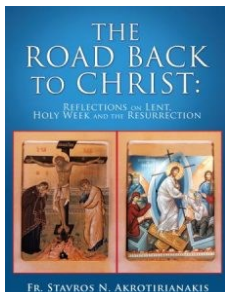
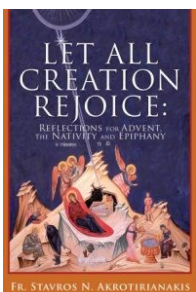
Over 3,689 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 6 years! Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email Vasili at Vasili@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 prayer-team365@gmail.com has been added to your contacts so that these emails stay in your Inbox rather than going to the Junk or Spam folders.

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

Father Stavros has authored SIX books that are available both in the bookstore and online. 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
Commissioned to be Apostles: Love, Worship, Community, Learning, Service



Nursing Ministry October 2022
October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month
Breast Cancer Awareness, the Basics

Blood Drive at St. Johns

Overview

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, DOH, breast cancer is one of the most common kinds of cancer in women. It is estimated that 1 in 8 women in the US will get breast cancer during her lifetime.

The good news is that mammograms can help detect breast cancer early – ideally before it spreads to other parts of the body. Most women can survive breast cancer if it is found and treated early.

How often should you get mammograms?

Always check in with your doctor regarding your mammogram frequency. Currently, the US Preventative Task Force, USPTF, recommends – biennial mammography screening for women aged 50-74 years of age. The decision to start mammography in women prior to the age of 50 is an individualized one that should be discussed with your health care provider; potential benefits versus the potential harms may elicit biennial screening in women 40-49 or even younger.

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is an x-ray image of the breast. Mammograms use low levels of x-rays a type of radiation. The risk of harm from this is very low.

Mammograms are used to screen/test for breast cancer in women with no signs or symptoms. They can also help doctors determine if cancer is causing symptoms such as lumps or other changes in the breast.

The mammography procedure involves working with a technician who will assist with breast placement and then takes several pictures that take about 15-20 seconds to capture. The whole process takes about 20 minutes.

What is breast cancer?

Breast cancer is cancer that forms in breast tissue. Like all cancers, breast cancer can spread to other parts of the body.

Talk to your health care provider if you notice any of these changes:

- A lump or an area that feels very firm in the breast or the armpit
- A change in the size, shape, or feel of the breast
- Any fluid or discharge from the nipple area
- Skin on the breast that is itchy, red, flaky, or dimpled

What if my provider finds something?

Mammograms let your healthcare team look for lumps and other changes inside your breast. If a lump or other changes in the tissue are found, you may need other tests to find out if it is cancer or not.

Want to learn more about breast cancer - <https://www.cancer.gov/types/breast>



Did you know...

- Someone needs a blood transfusion every two seconds
- One in three people will need a transfusion at some point in their life
- One donation helps save the lives of three people

The community of St John the Baptist will host a blood drive on October 16th

To donate, you must be 16 years old, weigh 110+ pounds, and be in generally good health.

Donating blood is truly one way to be a hero and help save lives.

Please ask your Nursing Ministry if you have any questions.

Marcelle Triantafilou, BSN, RN

Take Advantage of the Parish Assistance Program

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is excited to share we will continue to offer the Parish Assistance program together with BayCare Behavioral Health. The 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 that are sensitive to the values and beliefs of those they serve and provide compassionate care to children, adults, parents, and seniors. Parishioners can confidentially contact BayCare directly to request up to three free 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. 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-healthservices> Help is available for life issues including:

Help is available for life issues including:

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

This service is completely confidential between parishioner and a BayCare Christian Therapist



BayCare Behavioral Health

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.

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>



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.

THE WELCOME MINISTRY

invites you to

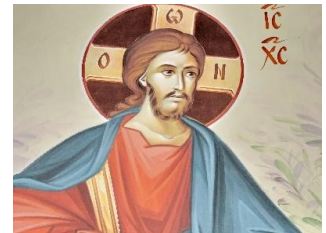
**COME SERVE WITH US AS A
GREETER!**

A warm heart and smile are all you need to be a
part of this energetic and vital ministry

Please contact Maria Xenick at mpxenick@gmail.com or
(813) 765-3587

DO NOT NEGLECT TO SHOW *hospitality* TO STRANGERS,
FOR THEREBY SOME HAVE ENTERTAINED *angels unawares.*
HIEBREWS 13:2

St. John's Bookstore



Our bookstore offers a series of booklets featuring various Akathist hymns priced under \$5. Stop in and browse through them this month. Among those offered are:

Akathist to Jesus – Light to Those in Darkness

Prayers to Jesus, the Light of the world, for help in times of depression, pain, and despair. The Akathist guides those living in darkness to the Light of Christ.

Akathist to Almighty God – For Help in Trouble

An Akathist prayed in times of difficulty. We pray that God bring solace to the soul and strengthen our faith in the merciful providence of our loving Lord.

Akathist to the Mother of God "Pantanassa" – Healer of Cancer

Written in commemoration of the Mother of God "Pantanassa" (Queen of All), an Athonite miracle working icon effective in many healings of cancer and other ills.

Akathist to the Mother of God – Nurturer of Children

A Prayer Service for one who desires to pray for a son, daughter, or godchild. The prayer is an offering to the Theotokos asking to raise these young ones to be worthy heirs of Christ's kingdom.

Sunday School News

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS:

We are so glad to have the 2022-2023 Sunday School year off to a great start. Thank you to all the teachers, parents, and children who are committed to our program.

We are very excited about our Weekly Topics that each classroom will include into their program. The topics for the month of SEPTEMBER were PRAYER, THE SIGN OF THE CROSS, and THE CREED.

Our HALL of FAITH program will continue again this year! We have a number of students who have been added to our Hall of Faith for the Lord's Prayer. They are:

Walter L'Hommedieu Nina L'Hommedieu
Michael Mantzanas Timmy Clements
Chyanne Clements Niko Kyrus
Ilianna Matassini

This program is to encourage our children to memorize and understand The Lord's Prayer and The Creed. Our Pre-K through 5th Graders will be focusing on The Lord's Prayer and our 6th graders through High School will focus on The Creed. Look for our HALL of FAITH poster on our Sunday School bulletin board. Will your child's name be on it?

Please feel free to contact us with any questions, suggestions, or comments regarding St. John's Sunday School Program. Parents: If you do not receive our weekly e-mails about our Sunday School Program, please contact Vickie Peckham at 813-758-3102 or e-mail her at vickiepeckham@gmail.com

OCTOBER CALENDAR:

Sunday, October 2nd: Topic: Reading the Bible

Sunday, October 9th: Topic: The Ten Commandments

Sunday, October 16th: Topic: Making Moral Choices

Sunday, October 23rd: Topic: The Light of Christ - Making Faith Personal - Youth Sunday

Sunday, October 30th: Topic: Saints Cosmas & Damian - Serving with Love



6th Grade
celebrating
the new
Sunday



5th Grades
with their
cards for Fr.
Kyriakos



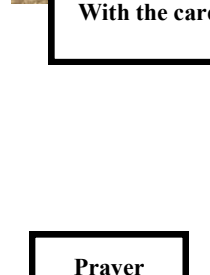
Sample of
messages for
Fr. Kyriakos



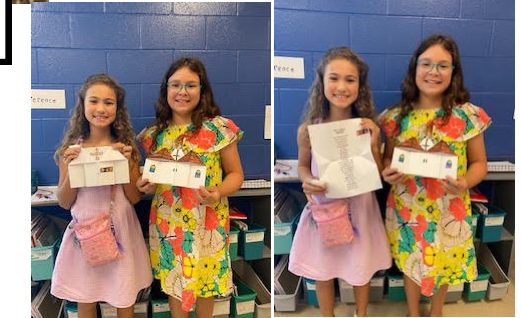
Fr. Kyriakos
With the cards

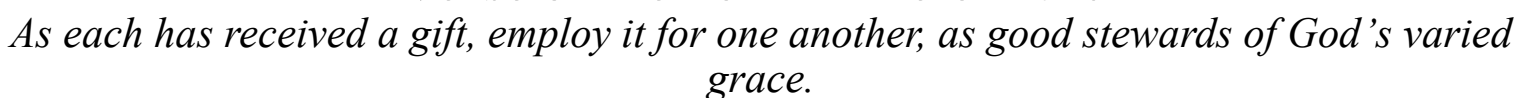


Decorated
Cards



Prayer
Bracelets





Stewards of God's Grace - Stewards of Our Talents/Gifts

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

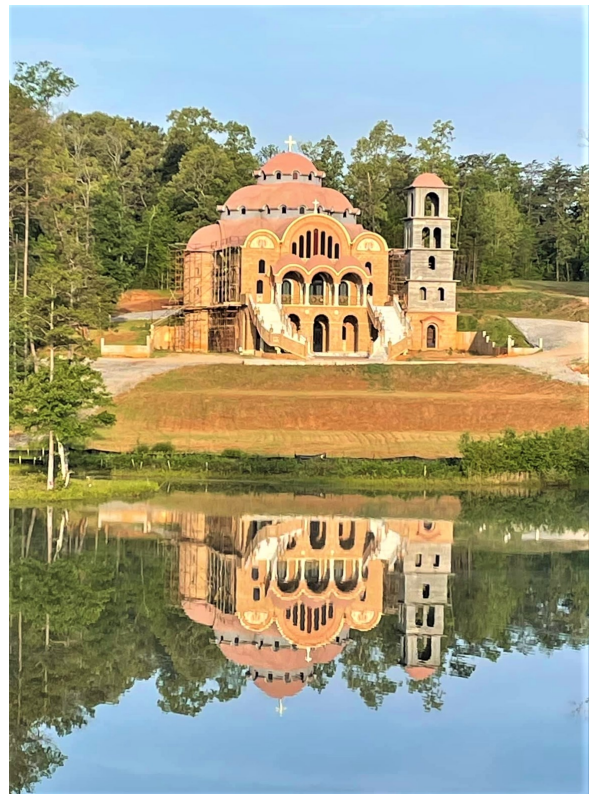
As we have discussed all year, a steward is a temporary caretaker. We will take care of many things in our lives for a long period of time. For instance, we take care of families our whole lives, for friendships and job for much of them. Perhaps the most basic stewardship is of today itself. It is very important that we be able to be stewards of today. Because today is what we have. We cannot steward yesterday, because it is over. We cannot steward tomorrow until tomorrow because it hasn't happened yet and isn't a guarantee.

Many people live with one eye on the past, often of regret or shame. And many live with one eye on tomorrow, often with hope for something better, and sometimes with trepidation over what is coming. Sadly, many people do not have any eye on today, they are not good stewards of the present. One of the challenges we have is to be good stewards of today, and even specific moments of the day. Many of us interact with various people throughout our day. We drive our cars on highways filled with people. We interact with people at work. We see our families at home. We interact with total strangers in the store or at the bank. Are we good stewards of these interactions? Are we good stewards to the people who are right in front of us, or right next to us?

Psalms 118:24 reads "This is the DAY that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." It doesn't say "this is the year, or the decade, or the life," but rather "this is the day." We must learn to become good stewards of the day, of the present moment, of the present opportunity.

Many years ago at summer camp, my Spiritual Father and I were walking from our apartment to another part of the camp. He was on the way to teach a class and I was on the way to the ropes course. He asked me what I was thinking about as I was walking. I told him I was thinking about

the ropes course. When he asked why, I told him because I would be there in a few minutes. He then pointed out that during the time we were walking, that I should take time to appreciate the lake, the sky, the trees, and the breeze, as well as any people we might encounter along the way that we could say hello to. I was so concerned about what was happening five minutes in the future that I was missing out on the present. We spend (perhaps waste) so much time thinking about the future that we miss out on the present. How many times have I come to the Divine Liturgy thinking about what I have to get done, and while in Liturgy I neither got the stuff done nor enjoyed the service. There is certainly a valuable lesson to be learned on being a good steward of today and its various moments. One can certainly "live longer" if one is a good steward of today. Because if we add up all the moments we've wasted not being present, we'll realize that we've taken months if not years off of our lives. Be a good steward of today, because today is that we have, this moment is what we have.



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 October. 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. If you have any favorite verse you'd like me to comment on, please forward it to frstav@gmail.com.

October 2-8

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light."

Genesis 1:1-3

The Bible begins with the presence of the Holy Trinity. God the Father is mentioned in the first verse, as "God (the Father) created". The Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit) was moving over the waters. The voice of God, where God said, "Let there be light," this is the voice of the Word of God, Who would later become incarnate in the flesh as Jesus Christ. It is critically important for us as Christians to understand the

concept of the Holy Trinity. Two things to take away here—first, God existed in Trinity from before time, eternally. All three persons of the Trinity were present in the creation. And second, that the creation was the result of God's handiwork. He made us. We did not make ourselves. The first thing that He created was light. This is significant because light is the quality that we share with God. Christ reveals Himself as the Light of the world (John 8: 12) and tells us that we are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14)

October 9-15

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.

John 1:1-3

The Gospel of John also goes back to the beginning, the creation of the world. We know from Genesis 1:1-3 that God made the world in Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each person of the Trinity has different names. God the Father is also called the Creator, the Almighty, and sometimes simply, God. The second person of the Trinity is the Son, Word, Jesus, Christ, Messiah, Savior, Lord. The third person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit, the Counselor, the Comforter. All three persons were present at the creation. This is confirmed in the beginning of the Gospel of John. If we swap out "Word" and replace it with "Christ," the passage reads "In the beginning was Christ, and Christ was with God, and Christ was God. Christ was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Christ, and without Christ was not anything made that was made." This is significant because the birth of Jesus is often depicted and understood as just that, a birth, so that before the birth, the one being born was not an entity. Christ's appearance in the world was not a birth, but an incarnation in the flesh, a taking on of human flesh by the Word of God, Who was present from the beginning, co-creating with God.

October 16-22

To you it has been given to now the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.

Luke 8:9

On this Sunday in mid-October, we hear the Parable of the Sower, from Luke 8:5-15. The Parable begins with Christ telling the disciples that a sower went out to sow seed, and some fell on the path, and some on rocks and some on thorns and some in good soil. His disciples asked what this meant. Jesus responded by telling them that the meaning of the parables would be revealed to them, but not to others. The parables are mysteries, secrets, of the Kingdom of Heaven. In Greek, the word for "sacrament" is "Mysteria," or "mystery." The sacraments of the church are like the ultimate parables. For instance, the sacrament of Holy Communion is couched in the Divine Liturgy. To the untrained eye, the Divine Liturgy is a series of incantations between priest and choir, with the priest wearing ornate robes and swinging a container emitting smoke. However, to the trained eye and heart, the Divine Liturgy is the Kingdom of Heaven unfolding in real time to those who are present. It is the Kingdom of God present right here, and right now. Those who have hard hearts will see, but not really understand what they are seeing. They will hear but not comprehend. This is why we pray for hearts that will see and ears that will hear, so that what we are experiencing doesn't remain a parable or a secret but rather becomes a glimpse into the Kingdom of God in this life.

October 23-29

And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the Word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Luke 8:15

This is the conclusion of the Parable of the Sower. Jesus explains to the disciples that the seed sown by the sower is the Word of God. Some fell on the path, it never took root. Some fell on rocks, meaning the devil came and took the seed away from the one who believe. What fell on the thorns represents those who receive the Word of God with joy but in

time of temptation they fall away. Finally, what fell into the good soil represents those who hear the Word of God, hold it fast in an honest and good heart and bring forth fruit with patience. It takes patience for people to grow a tree that will bear fruit. The soil must be cared for, the fruit must be nurtured. To grow the seed of God in us also requires patience and honesty. It requires us to hold fast to the word, to not let it slip from our minds and hearts in times of temptation. However, the first thing we need to do is actually hear the word, proclaimed in worship, and read in the Scriptures. We must first hear the word of God, then hold onto it with patience, honesty and goodness, and then it will bring forth fruit.

October 30-November 5

Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.

Matthew 6:9

This verse was chosen to coincide with Halloween. You can read an article on the origin of Halloween elsewhere in this issue of "The Messenger." At one point, the holiday was called "All Hallows Eve" and was the celebration of All Saints Day. To hallow something means to make it holy, to regard something as sacred. All Hallows Eve was the commemoration of all of the holy people who had passed on. Now it has just become a feast of frivolity. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray by first calling upon the name of our Father, God, who is in heaven. When Jesus says we should pray "Hallowed be Thy name," it is a prayer that the name of God, that God Himself and the things of God would be revered; recognized as holy, and worthy and beautiful. By extension, then, if we are God's children, who are hallowing His name, we then should also be working to set ourselves apart, to be holy, to be sacred, to be dedicated to Him. It seems that the world, especially at Halloween, but really throughout the year, is encouraging us to do and be anything but hallowed and sacred. The Christian life is supposed to be a journey to holiness, recognizing the name of God as Holy, recognizing ourselves as His children, and hallowing ourselves, making ourselves holy.

Policy for Letters of Recommendation

Every year, Father Stavros gets many requests for letters of recommendation for students to get into college or for scholarships. Here are some guidelines to assist those who will be making these requests.

The person for whom the letter is being written needs to contact Father Stavros, not their parents. Please give Father at least two weeks' notice to write a letter. Please send your information to Father in an email at frstav@gmail.com.

1. Your current school, year of study, major, and career objective
2. The name of the scholarship, who it is to be addressed to, and whether the letter is to be mailed, or given to the student in a sealed envelope.
3. The kind of scholarship that you are applying for - is it for sports, or writing, or business, etc.
4. The due date of the letter
5. Some information about yourself that will be helpful in writing the letter - i.e. if the letter is for leadership, please send leadership activities.

Parish Assembly Meeting – October 23

On October 23, we will have our fall Parish Assembly Meeting. It will be offered both in person and via zoom. Instructions will follow. There are two things that we will do that are critical to our parish for the coming year. The first is to pass a budget. For most of the items on the budget, there is not much to discuss. We are not going to debate whether to pay the electric bill or the sewer bill. These are fixed costs to our church regardless of how many people attend here or how much we spend or save. There are a couple of areas of the budget where there is something to discuss. These include personnel and charitable giving. The kind of budget that we pass says a lot about the kind of parish we want to have. And our financial support of our parish through stewardship says a lot about how important spreading the message of Christ is to us individually. While the budget will reflect a certain amount for stewardship, we don't offer stewardship in order to achieve some goal—rather we offer stewardship in a prayerful and personal way which reflects our love for Christ.

Parish Council Elections

There was no Parish Council Election in the fall of 2020. This was because of the pandemic. The Metropolis of Atlanta said that everyone serving on the Parish Council would have one year added to their term. This means that everyone on the Parish Council at present is either in the added year to their original term, or will have one year added. Those who were elected in 2019 are up for re-election, and those elected in 2021 have one year left to serve on their term. Additionally, everyone on the Parish Council is able to serve three consecutive terms, which for those who are currently serving may amount to 7 years, since one of those terms is a three-year term.

Even though it is October, it will be time to start thinking about Parish Council Elections. **On October 23, we will hold our fall Parish Assembly and open up nominations for the Parish Council.** This year, there are five (5) positions coming up for election for a two-year term. According to the Parish By-laws, nominations for the Parish Council will be closed following the Parish Assembly Meeting on Sunday, October 23. If you wish to be nominated for the Parish Council, please plan to attend the meeting on Sunday, October 23 and have someone nominate you, or send a letter to Fr. Stavros prior to the commencement of the

meeting, stating your wish to be nominated for the Parish Council and he will read it at the meeting and have someone nominate you. Parish Council Elections will be held on Sunday, December 5, following the Divine Liturgy. A mailing to all eligible voters will occur following the close of the nominations period which will have the names of the candidates, a picture of each candidate and a statement by each candidate.

In preparation for nominations and elections, please keep in mind the following:

Regarding eligibility to be a candidate for the Parish Council: Uniform Parish Regulations (UPR) Article 18, Section 1:

PARISHIONERS

Section 1: Every person who is baptized and chrismated according to the rites of the Orthodox Church is a parishioner. The religious, moral and social duties of a parishioner are to apply the tenets of the Orthodox Faith to his/her life and to: adhere to and live according to the tenets of the Orthodox faith; faithfully attend the Divine Liturgy and other worship services; participate regularly in the holy sacraments; respect all ecclesiastical authority and all governing bodies of the Church; be obedient in matters of the Faith, practice and ecclesiastical order; contribute towards the progress of the Church's sacred mission; and be an effective witness and example of the Orthodox Faith and Traditions to all people.

A parishioner in good standing practices all the religious and moral duties as described in this Section 1. At a minimum, a parishioner in good standing must: be eighteen years of age or over; be current in his or her stewardship and other financial obligations to the Parish, abide by all the regulations herein stated and the Parish Bylaws; and cooperate in every way towards the welfare and well being of the Parish. (Stewardship is recommended to be ten percent (10%) of one's annual income as stated in Holy Scripture to help meet the financial obligations of the Parish, the Metropolis and the Archdiocese.)

2. Regarding Election of Parish Council: UPR Article 25, Section Two

Section 2: A candidate for the Parish Council must be a parishioner in good standing of the Parish for at least one (1) year immediately preceding the date of the election and must live his or her life in accordance with the Faith and canons of the Church. The Priest determines whether the Parishioners are in canonical and financial good standing as specified in Article 18, Sections 1 through 3.

Section 3: Candidates for election to the Parish Council shall be nominated in accordance with the provisions of the Parish Bylaws.

All candidates shall attend a seminar conducted by the Priest prior to the election at which the Priest shall discuss and explain to the candidates the Uniform Parish Regulations, and the significance of the affirmation of office.

At the discretion of the respective Hierarchy, such seminar may be held locally or regionally, provided that candidates are given appropriate advance notice and more than one reasonable opportunity to attend the seminar in a location within close proximity to the applicable Parish. (This seminar is being held in Palm Harbor at Sts. Nicholas, Rafael and Irene Greek Orthodox Church on Saturday, November 19).

In the event that an otherwise eligible candidate(s) cannot attend the scheduled seminar(s) for justifiable cause, the Priest shall meet privately with such individual(s) to provide the seminar.

At the conclusion of the seminar all candidates must sign a statement acknowledging that they understand the Regulations and will abide by them and the affirmation of office. If a candidate for the Parish Council does not attend a seminar and sign the statement, his/her name shall be deleted from the list of candidates.

~ Each candidate is expected to be active in the sacramental life of the church. This is covered in Article 18, section one, above. This includes the sacrament of confession. If a candidate has not been to confession in the past year, they are not eligible to run for the Parish Council. In the event your spiritual father is serving another parish, he can send a one-line email to Fr. Stavros indicating your participation in this sacrament in the past year.

~All candidates for the Parish Council will be subject to a background check. Any background check that

reveals a felony conviction will make a candidate ineligible to serve for ten years. Any background check revealing a conviction for financial misconduct—embezzlement, fraud, etc., will make a candidate permanently ineligible to serve on the Parish Council.

~Each candidate is asked to write a half a page on why they want to run for the Parish Council and to supply a recent photograph that is able to be photocopied well. The statement and photo need to be to the church office no later than November 15.

Thank you for your interest in being a Parish Council candidate. If you have any questions on any of the above, please feel free to contact me at any time.

+FR. STAVROS

Parish Council Nominations

At the conclusion of the Parish Assembly Meeting in October, we will again nominate people for the Parish Council for 2023. This is a critical decision each year, as it affects how our church will function in 2023 and beyond. Year after year, people decide to run for the Parish Council. Some are qualified and some are not. Some come in to speak with me about running, even asking a blessing to run. And many do not come into speak with me, they certainly don't seek any kind of blessing to run. As I have mentioned in previous writings and sermons, getting a blessing from the bishop in a Liturgy when multiple priests are serving creates a good sense of order, which in turn, leads to a good sense of Christ. Running without any input or blessing from the priest can create disorder and disharmony in the Parish Council and in the parish. I'm asking then, if you are thinking about running for the Parish Council, please make an appointment and come see me before October 23, and let's talk about it.

Children's Comments about the Bible

A group of children were asked questions about the Bible, here are their responses as written by them, including their incorrect spelling to keeps things authentic.

1. In the first book of the bible, Guinness. god got tired of creating the world so he took the sabbath off.
2. Adam and eve were created from an apple tree. Noah's wife was Joan of ark. Noah built and ark and the animals came on in pears.
3. Lots wife was a pillar of salt during the day, but a ball of fire during the night.
4. The jews were a proud people and throughout history they had trouble with unsympathetic genitals.
5. Sampson was a strongman who let himself be led astray by a Jezebel like Delilah.
6. Samson slayed the philistines with the axe of the apostles.
7. Moses led the jews to the red sea where they made unleavened bread, which is bread without any ingredients.
8. The egyptians were all drowned in the dessert. Afterwards, Moses went up to mount cyanide to get the ten commandments.
9. The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple.
10. The seventh commandment is thou shalt not admit adultery.
11. Moses died before he ever reached canada then Joshua led the hebrews in the battle of geritol.
12. The greatest miricle in the bible is when Joshua told

his son to stand still and he obeyed him.

13. David was a hebrew king who was skilled at playing the liar. He fought the Finkelsteins, a race of people who lived in biblical times.

14. Solomon, one of Davids sons, had 300 wives and 700 porcupines.

15. When Mary heard she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the magna carta.

16. When the three wise guys from the east side arrived they found Jesus in the manager.

17. Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.

18. St. John the blacksmith dumped water on his head.

19. Jesus enunciated the golden rule, which says to do unto others before they do one to you. He also explained a man doth not live by sweat alone.

20. It was a miricle when Jesus rose from the dead and managed to get the tombstone off the entrance.

21. The people who followed the lord were called the 12 decibels.

22. The epistels were the wives of the apostles.

23. One of the oppossums was St. Matthew who was also a taximan.

24. St. Paul cavorted to christianity, he preached holy acrimony, which is another name for marraige.

25. Christians have only one spouse. This is called monotony.

Origin of Halloween

We are often told that Halloween is of pagan origin. We are told that it has its roots in the ancient Irish festival of Samhain, and we are told that the ancient pagan Irish performed human sacrifices on the night of October 31 to commune with the ungodly spirits of their dead ancestors. We are told that Christian missionaries tried and failed to "baptize" these ancient pagan rituals by moving the commemoration of All Saints to November 1 but that they failed to convince the Irish pagans to attend Vigils at the Church on October 31 and they persisted in their pagan festivities.



None of this is true. Much of it is based on anti-Catholic propaganda from the 19th century. Many of the traditional practices of Halloween have historical anteced-

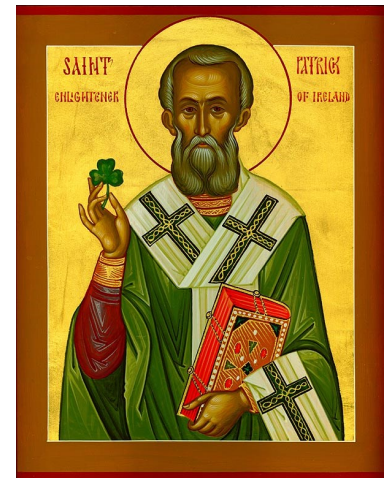
ents as popular expressions of Christian piety and most of the objectionable practices connected with Halloween are developments of our American Culture of the past century. Much like how commercialization has ruined the spirit of Christmas, it has ruined the spirit of All Hallows. Much like our contemporaries have lied about the early history of Christmas calling it a Christian takeover of earlier pagan solstice celebrations (another lie that originated in anti-Catholic propaganda), so too our modern pagans have laid claim to Halloween, a holiday which had never previously belonged to them.

The first thing to know about Halloween, or more properly Hallowe'en, is that it is an abbreviation of a longer name: Hallows Even, or Hallows Evening, or Hallows Eve. It was the beginning of a Christian festive period of Hallowtide, which is centered around the feast of All Hallows or All Saints and the feast of All Souls.

In the Christian East, we celebrate All Saints on the Sunday after Pentecost and we remember All Souls on a number of Saturdays. In the West, All Souls comes directly after All Saints; first the Church Triumphant is celebrated and then the Church prays for the deceased. It is important for Orthodox Christians to know that the Feast of All Saints in the West was moved to November 1st by Pope Gregory IV in the 8th century, prior to the division of the churches. The

celebration of All Saints on November 1 and its Vigil the evening prior has been found by historians to have reached Northumbria, Scotland and Ireland by the early 9th Century. The celebration of All Saints in Ireland therefore predates the Christianization of Rus.

When March comes along we all, both East and West, appropriately remember St. Patrick the Enlightener of Ireland who very successfully brought Irish paganism to an end. Within a few generations of Patrick's death in 461, there was nothing whatever left of Irish paganism. By the time the Feast of All Saints on November 1st reached Ireland in the late 8th or early 9th century, paganism had been gone for centuries. The only reason we know that there was some pagan festival called Samhain is because of the records of Monks, who noted the Holiday, but failed to mention anything whatsoever about the practices of such a day. We know absolutely nothing about the pre-Christian Samhain. Nonetheless, the word does survive in modern Gaelic and means something close to our word "autumn." This is not unlike the English word "Easter," which now only designates the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ, even though St. Bede tells us it once referred to some unknown Anglo-Saxon pagan festival. The earliest records we have about the content of Irish pagan rituals only date back about 200 years. It is not possible that they are anything other than speculation, propaganda, or outright fiction.



As concerns the traditions of Halloween, most of them are of a pious Christian origin. Trick-or-treating is connected to the tradition of "souling" a custom where children would beg alms (in the form of little cakes) in exchange for the promise to pray for people's deceased loved ones. It was a charitable exchange all around. Its connection to Halloween has more to do with the prayers and masses offered for the deceased on All Souls Day. It was in America that it was changed to trick-or-treat, maybe a less charitable exchange of goodies for the promise of good behavior, but this was more acceptable in Protestant America than praying for the dead.

Costumes are historically connected with Halloween,

but also other Christian Celebrations. This became more common after the Black Death, the great bubonic plague of the 14th Century. Dressing as the dead and the "Danse Macabre" (a direct allusion to the scriptural story found in 2 Maccabees and the martyrdoms recorded there), depictions of which adorn a number of Churches and Holy Places. The depictions, personification of death, and the dressing up as dead ones are aimed at bringing a moral message to believers. As we remember all of the Saints and pray for all of those who have died, we need to reflect on our own mortality and live in the knowledge that death will come for us. The point of it all is to encourage repentance.

Of course modern costumes rarely convey this message and many go too far and seem to celebrate evil and death. Some revel in sin and exalt pagan themes, perverting the Christian celebration of All the Saints. Of course such things are problematic and must be avoided just like those frenzied pre-Christmas sales that have resulted in the death of some shoppers and pervert the Christian meaning of Christmas and must be avoided. However, it is clearly still possible, especially for Western Christians to have a pious and holy celebration of Halloween. I pray that Christians of the Western Rite are successful in reclaiming their holiday and their heritage from those who would commercialize or subvert it.

-Fr Benjamin Naasko

A Good Explanation on the Concept of God

In a mother's womb were two babies. One asked the other: "Do you believe in life after delivery?" The other replied, "Why, of course. There has to be something after delivery. Maybe we are here to prepare ourselves for what we will be later."

"Nonsense," said the first. "There is no life after delivery. What kind of life would that be?"

The second said, "I don't know, but there will be more light than here. Maybe we will walk with our legs and eat from our mouths. Maybe we will have other senses that we can't understand now."

The first replied, "That is absurd. Walking is impossible. And eating with our mouths? Ridiculous! The umbilical cord supplies nutrition and everything we need. But the umbilical cord is so short. Life after delivery is to be logically excluded."

The second insisted, "Well I think there is something and maybe it's different than it is here. Maybe we won't need this physical cord anymore."

The first replied, "Nonsense. And moreover, if there is life, then why has no one ever come back from there? Delivery is the end of life, and in the after-delivery, there is nothing but darkness and silence and oblivion. It takes us nowhere."

"Well, I don't know," said the second, "but certainly we will meet Mother and she will take care of us."

The first replied "Mother? You actually believe in Mother? That's laughable. If Mother exists then where is She now?"

The second said, "She is all around us. We are surrounded by her. We are of Her. It is in Her that we live. Without Her, this world would not and could not exist."

Said the first: "Well I don't see Her, so it is only logical that She doesn't exist."

To which the second replied, "Sometimes, when you're in silence and you focus and listen, you can perceive Her presence, and you can hear Her loving voice, calling down from above."

Maybe this was one of the best explanations of the concept of GOD."

~this lovely parable is from Your Sacred Self by Dr. Wayne Dyer

◀ Sep 2022	October 2022					Nov 2022 ▶
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Philoptochos collecting items for active military all month						1 Young At Heart Young Adult Retreat
2 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. H xara mas dance College student discussion GOYA 5:00 p.m.	3 Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m. Teaching Liturgy	4 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	5 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. Choir Practice	6 St. Thomas Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Adult Greek School	7 ** JOY Tween's movie night	8 GOYA Senior Lock-In 4:00 p.m.
9 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. H xara mas dance Founder's Day— AHEPA/Daughters, Memorial	10 Leadership Team Meeting Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	11 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	12 ** Choir Practice	13 Fr. Stavros out of town 10/13-10/17 Adult Greek School Veterans/First Responders 6:30 p.m. (Zaharias Room)	14 **	15 Community Outreach
16 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. H xara mas dance	17 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	18 St. Luke Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	19 ** Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Clergy Meetings 10/19- 10/20 Choir Practice	20 Adult Greek School	21 ** Volleyball tournament-St. Pete	22 Young adult retreat Volleyball tournament-St Pete
23 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Parish Assembly Meeting H xara mas dance JOY/HOPE Fall Festival	24 St. James Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.	25 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Philoptochos Board Meeting (Zoom)	26 ** St. Demetrios Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Choir Practice	27 Adult Greek School	28 ** Holy Protection of Virgin Mary Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	29 GOYA Church Cleanup Day
30 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. H xara mas dance Philoptochos General Meeting (Zaharias Room) Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	31 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.					

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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

office@stjohntpa.org

www.stjohntpa.org

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St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Timetable of Services

Saturdays: Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sundays: Orthros 8:45 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Weekdays: Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

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

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

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

Pastoral Assistant
Vasili Panagopoulos 414-254-5134 (Cell)
vasili@stjohntpa.org

Parish Council
John Zelatis, President 813-727-2271
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 Dalaklis 813-385-8205
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

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

Adopt a College Student
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
Presbytera Denise Stefero 678-464-4833

Bible Study-Monday Night
Fr. John Stefero 678-637-4425

Bible Study-Tuesday Morning
Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038

Buildings & Grounds
Euripides Panos 813-352-3972

Chanter
Vasili Panagopoulos 414-254-5134

Choir
Tara Swartzbaugh, Director 813-313-0439
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
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963
ΠΑΡΕΑ, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

Daughters of Penelope
Elena Paras Ketchum 813-229-0144

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
Michael & Bessie Palios 813-523-0346

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

Joy Tweens
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963

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

Young Adult/OCF
Vasili Panagopoulos 414-254-5134

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.