

THE MESSENGER

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

March 2023

VISION:

Love God, Love your neighbor and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ as an Orthodox Christian community.

MISSION:

The mission of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is to welcome and serve people with love, truth, joy and peace, and to create an environment that encourages all to seek salvation through Orthodox Christianity.

CORE VALUES:

Love, Worship, Community, Learning, Service

Fr. Stavros' Message

First Things First: Making Time for What Matters Most

Of all the things we have, time is the one thing we can't get more of. People are constantly losing things. Many of us have had the experience of losing a job and getting another one. Many of us have lost an opportunity, like we planned to go to the beach and it rained and we lost the opportunity, but we will get another one. Once time is gone, we can't get more of it. The other thing we can't replace is people, relationships. While I still have two people I call parents, and they will always be my parents, I don't have them in person any more, as they have both passed away. Several people in our community have lost children, and many more have lost spouses and good friends. These, also, cannot be replaced easily.

We live in a world that is moving at a faster and faster pace. It is easy to almost drown in this world, between carting our kids around, traffic jams every time we're on the road, phones that never stop buzzing with texts that just keep coming, to distractions that are constantly tempting, to sleep that none of us is getting enough of, to finances that are getting tighter, to jobs that are getting more demanding. Wow, does any of that describe your life?

And then Lent happens.

If we were to carefully audit our time, we all spend a lot of time on stuff that truly doesn't matter. We could check ESPN once a day. Why do we need to check it five times? We spend time texting, when it probably

would be quicker to just call. Social media is mostly a time-sucker, which doesn't offer a whole lot in return. We've quickly lost sight of what matters most.

Talking About Salvation

How many hours a week do you work? How many hours of your LIFE do you spend talking about your salvation? I spoke about this in my recent Orthodoxy 101 class, when we were talking about the subject of confession. Someone asked how often one should go to confession. I answered that we should treat confession the way we treat going to the doctor. To go when we are acutely sick (or in the case of confession, have acutely sinned) and to go once a year for a check-up. We should be going to confession at least once a year, not just to receive absolution for our sins, but to talk about our salvation. Let me unpack both.

Absolution means the loosing of sin, in other words, wiping sin and shame off of our record. That is the greatest benefit of confession, to be rid of shame and to feel like a new person, a complete person, once again. The other benefit of confession, though it can be done outside of confession as well, is spiritual conversation, to actually talk about the state of your soul and where you are on the journey to salvation—zipping along, slowing down, taking a detour, took the wrong road, didn't even get started. We spend time talking about all kinds of things but we don't spend nearly enough time talking about the thing that matters most,

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salvation. Planning for a vacation begins months before the trip.

There is the decision of where to go, how to get there, where to stay, all require conversation. Then there is the excitement and anticipation of going, packing, last minute preparations, etc. Think about the effort we make for one trip that we will go on and which will end. And then think about the effort we are making for that one trip we will go on which will never end.

It's really time to put first things first. That trip to the mall, to the party, to the vacation, to the movies, to school, to work, to the game. Those trips add up, most of our time is spent preparing for or making those trips, as well as fulfilling our purpose in making them. We have our whole life to prepare for that trip to meet the Lord. Yet, as we know, life moves fast and before we know it, much of life will have passed by and we will not have worked on the trip that matters most.

Let's go back to confession for a moment. One who goes for confession is filled with a desire not only to be rid of shame (if one only cared about his feelings, that is narcissism, not faith), but a desire for repentance, to grow closer to Christ, to change directions to one that is focused more completely on Him. That's what repentance is, a change in direction from where we are going to where God wants us to go. For some of us, this change involves a small tweak and for some of us, it might involve a complete 180-degree change.

Repentance should not only, however, be part of a yearly, or occasional confession. Repentance should be a continuous process. Repentance is almost like a work of art. We first paint a background of faith, then we put in details, and then further details, down to the most minute details. Repentance involves fixing the "big ticket" things we are doing wrong. It replaces them with Godly things. It gets us more intimately involved with God. So that ultimately all we want is God.

Humility

Before we can get to repentance, we have to find humility. Humility is a disposition which realized "I am not the center of everything."

This is something that the world is by-and-large lacking today. When is the last time we saw a humble politician, actor or athlete? Everyone about promoting their brand. Every politician thinks he or she is right and everyone who doesn't agree is wrong. Because of our phones, the never-ending new

cycle and social media, we never actually see humility. We've forgotten what it is. Perhaps we never knew. Humility, again, is a recognition that we are not the center of the universe. More specifically, it is an understanding that God is the center of the universe. That we revolve around Him, not the other way around. If we are not the center of everything, that means we are not always right and our brand isn't always the best. It means there is always room for improvement, and always room to tip our hat to the other guy. Being humble doesn't mean we can't be confident.

It doesn't mean we can't celebrate wins. It's that we see ourselves as part of the universe, just not the center of it.

A Recap of Triodion

During the month of February, the church marked the season of Triodion, or pre-Lent. There were four specific lessons for us to learn that precede Great Lent. The first Sunday of the Triodion was about the Publican and the Pharisee, and the lesson was we needed the humility of the publican, not the self-congratulations of the Pharisee. The second Sunday was the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The lesson was repentance. The prodigal son "came to himself" and realized that he had estranged himself from his father. Deciding to throw himself at the mercy of his father, he found that his repentance was reward with forgiveness and restoration. He, however, had to make the journey back based on his desire, not the father's coercion.

The third Sunday was the account of the Last Judgment, which is based on how much we love our neighbor. Christ tells us that in serving and loving our neighbor, we are actually serving and loving God, and when we fail to do these things, it is as if we are indifferent not only to others but to God as well.

The fourth Sunday was about forgiveness. If we expect God to forgive us, we must forgive one another. Secondly, we were encouraged to put up treasure not only on earth but in heaven as well.

Our theme for Triodion this year was about sowing seeds—we talked about the health of our bodies, minds and souls and planting some new seeds this Lent.

Great Lent

This brings us now to the time of Great Lent. Most people think of Lent as the time that we fast. I prefer to look at Lent as a time of nurturing new seeds of faith. And this requires nourishment and discipline/consistency. Fasting is definitely part of this. Fasting is a discipline, designed to help focus our bodies on going without certain types of food, so that minds/thoughts/words can go without certain types of behavior. This leads to a spirit that grows closer to God, because it is disciplined. We are all made with the innate desire to crave something. Either it's going to be the things of God or the things of the flesh.

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No one craves nothing. Most of us are in love with the things of the flesh—food, power, ego, money, etc. By putting aside the most essential thing we are in love with, food, we can focus more on craving God.

The church, in its wisdom, does not leave us to fend for ourselves during this time of nurturing our new seeds. It provides nourishment, which comes through the plethora of services offered during Great Lent. Every Monday evening (except for the first Monday when we offer Holy Unction) of Great Lent, we will offer the service of the Great Compline, which will afford us an opportunity to be nourished through Psalms and penitential prayers. (see separate article on the services of Great Lent) Every Wednesday evening and Friday morning, we will offer Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, to afford us an opportunity to be nourished through Holy Communion. Every Friday evening, we will be afforded the opportunity to be nourished through the inspiration of the Virgin Mary and her shining example of obedience and servanthood.

First Things First: Making Time for What Matters Most

As further nourishment, both physically and spiritually, we will again offer the Lenten Wednesday dinner series after Pre-Sanctified Liturgy each Wednesday evening. Each Wednesday evening, a different ministry will provide us physical nourishment in the form of a Lenten dinner. We are so grateful for the blessing to receive food prepared by our ministries, so that we can skip the hassle of shopping and cooking and devote instead time to worship and learning each Wednesday. Additionally, we will be offering a series entitled “First Things First: Making Time for What Matters Most.” Each week there will be a different topic, with a short presentation by Fr. Stavros followed by a small group discussion at each table, using several questions that will be provided. These gatherings provide a great opportunity to experience all of the core values of our church—our love (for Christ, for worship, for one another), worship (praying the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, community (gathering together for worship, food and fellowship), learning (learning some of the basics again) and service (as we offer food and receive food that others have offered).

The series will be held as follows:

Wednesday, March 1 First Things First: Worship
(dinner sponsored by Sunday school)
Wednesday, March 8 First Things First: Community
(dinner sponsored by choir)
Wednesday, March 15 First Things First: Love (dinner sponsored by AHEPA/ Daughters)
Wednesday March 22 First Things First: Learning
(dinner sponsored by Young at Heart/Welcome Ministry)
Wednesday, March 29 First Things First: Service
(dinner sponsored by Philoptochos)
Wednesday, April 5 First Things First: Priorities
(dinner sponsored by Bible Study and Young Adult)

This series on “First Things First” will give us a healthy infusion of knowledge and encouragement, as well as a chance to reflect, both individually and in small groups, about these basics of the faith and how they fit into our lives.

The Lenten journey culminates with Holy Week, which this year is April 8-16, and will be the subject of next month’s message. In summary though, Holy Week is both a remembrance (of what happened 2,000 years ago) and a revival (many Protestant denominations have revival weeks, where people come many times over a short period of time and are infused with knowledge and encouragement, having had their faith revived. The Holy Week journey is really set up by our participation in Great Lent.

The journey ends on Pascha and the theme there is renewal. Much more on that to follow as we get closer. Renewal is the result of the humility, repentance, confession, discipline and nourishment that are the pillars of the Lenten journey. Again, we invite you. This issue of *The Messenger* has lots of ideas and information on our Lenten services and other things.

By the way, if you are interested in confession, both Fr. John and I are available by appointment, not just during Lent but all year round. You owe it to yourself and your salvation to talk one hour a year about it. We owe you the opportunity.

None of us has all of this right—the first things (faith and salvation) are generally not first. This Lent is an opportunity to put God first for a while. They say that it takes 30 days to make a habit. Put Him first for Lent (all totaled, it’s 40 days of Lent plus 9 for Holy Week), and it will help keep Him there the rest of the year. Keep Him there for the rest of the year, it will help keep Him there for the rest of your life. Keep Him there for the rest of your life, and it will help you be prepared for eternal life.

Life is about both the destination and the journey. Without a destination, the journey will seem pointless. And without the journey we never arrive at the destination. First things first—the destination is heaven, the journey is the Christian life. If you don’t understand the destination, come this Lent and learn more about it. If you know the destination but are having a hard time making the journey, come this Lent so you can make it more purposeful and intentional. It starts with realizing what are the first things that need to be first, and then making time for what matters most. Have a blessed lent!

With love in the Lord,
+Fr. Stavros

Forgiveness leads to the Father

By: Vasili

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
Good Fast! Καλή Σαρακοστή!

When you read this article, we will almost be at the beginning of Great Lent. The window of time for preparing for Great Lent is closing, but is still open. The Sunday of Forgiveness is the last preparatory Sunday before the start of Great Lent, before Clean Monday. (Great Lent actually starts Sunday night during the Vespers of Forgiveness when the Priest instructs the chanter to sing the Evening Prokeimenon. At this time, the priest changes the vestments on the altar, around the Church, and the ones he's wearing to Purple or Black. This will be done at St. John's at the Vespers service on February 26.)

The weeks prior, we were taught to pray like the Publican (and how not to by the Pharisee), we were instructed to run back to Christ when we fall away from Him, which we do every time we commit sin, and we were given clear instruction as to how we can inherit the Kingdom of Heaven - by feeding, clothing, and visiting Christ's people, because when we do it to our neighbor, we do it to Christ. But, on the Sunday of Forgiveness, we hear the words: "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Why are these the last words

we hear from our Lord before the beginning of Great Lent? Why is forgiveness so important before the Great Fast? Because there is no true fasting without reconciliation - you cannot have fasting without forgiveness.

"Before we enter the Lenten fast, we are reminded that there can be no true fast, no genuine repentance, no reconciliation with God, unless we are at the same time reconciled with one another. A fast without mutual love is the fast of the demons." -Bishop Kallistos Ware, The Lenten Triodion, pg. 47.

I want to highlight a key part of the above quote: "...no reconciliation with God." The main theme, the main commemoration of the Sunday of Forgiveness, is Adam's expulsion of Paradise. The Triodion period speaks to how we are able to return to Paradise: through repentance as taught by the Publican; through coming back to Christ, as taught by the Prodigal Son; through serving our brethren, as taught by the righteous. Bishop Kallistos Ware puts it beautifully, "Lent is a time when we weep with Adam and Eve before the closed gate of Eden, repenting with them for the sins that have deprived us of our free communion with God. But Lent is also a time when we are preparing to celebrate the saving event of Christ's death and rising, which has reopened Paradise to us once more (Luke 23:43)."

What, then, do you have to reconcile with someone? If there is something you need to forgive someone of, or if you need to ask for forgiveness from someone, take this opportunity to do so. Start the Lenten Fast on the right foot, the correct foot. You have that opportunity today, but you may not have it tomorrow, for no one knows the day or the hour in which the Son of Man will come again.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, please forgive me.

In Christ,
Vasili



Sermon from the Sunday of the Canaanite Woman

On the Efficacy of Prayer

January 29

By Fr. John Stefero

Canaanite Woman – (Sunday Before Publican & Pharisee)

In today's Gospel lesson of the Canaanite woman, we can learn much about WHAT it means to pray and HOW we are to pray. We hear about a Samaritan mother, begging for one specific thing from Christ. She offered a simple prayer to Him with her words: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!" She cried out for mercy because her daughter was possessed by a demon.

The Canaanite woman truly loved her daughter. She loved her so deeply that she considered her daughter's problem her own. Note, that she cried, "Have mercy on me!" (Not, on my daughter). Her love was so great that she took on her daughter's suffering as her own.

Initially, Jesus did not answer her. Why?

To teach her persistence, humility, and trust. However, the woman's love and sense of desperation were so great that she was NOT going to let Jesus go until He helped her. She kept after Him despite His silence, despite the objection of the disciples, and despite her being undeserving. She fell at His feet in an act of deep respect and reverence, saying, "Lord, help me!"

No wonder Jesus exclaimed, "Woman, GREAT is your faith, let it be done to you as you desire!" He granted the request because of her faith, and she went home to find that her daughter was cured from that very hour.

Using this Gospel lesson as a background, I would like to briefly address 3 aspects of prayer: (1) What is prayer; (2) Why should we pray; and (3) How to pray.

What is Prayer?



Prayer is an encounter and a relationship with the Living God. No other religion offers this. Christianity gives us direct access to God - the God Who listens to us, Who helps us, but most importantly, the God Who loves us.

Prayer is also defined as a dialogue with God carried out in the quiet of our hearts. The more ancient definition of prayer calls it the 'lifting of the mind and heart to God, the standing in His presence, the constant awareness and remembrance of His Name, His existence, His power, and His love.' This kind of prayer is also called "walking in the presence of God."

Why Should We Pray?

The main reason we should pray is that Christ told us to do so! In Luke 11:2 Jesus says: "And WHEN you pray," He didn't say 'And IF you pray.' In Luke 18:1 Jesus told His disciples "that men always ought to pray and not lose heart."

The root of all prayer, and indeed all life itself, is the desire for God, whether a person wants to admit that or not. Why? Because we are all made in the image and likeness of God with the innate desire to seek and become one with Him. St. Augustine said, "our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee." Whatever the nature of our lives, regardless of the wounds we carry, as human beings, we share in the blind attraction toward God. The desire for God is the starting point of all prayer.

Perhaps we have heard that "prayer changes things." This is true. But "prayer also changes us!" To pray means to bring us into such a life of communion with the Father that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are increasingly conformed to the image of the Son. In other words, we become more God-like in terms of doing His will and following His commandments.

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Saint Ephraim the Syrian beautifully sums up why we should pray with his words: “Virtues are formed by prayer. Prayer preserves temperance, suppresses anger, restrains pride and envy, draws down the Holy Spirit into the soul and raises man to heaven.”

How to Pray

The first, and perhaps most important, thing to say about ‘how one should pray’ is that there is NO RIGHT WAY to pray. Because prayer is an expression of each person’s relationship to God, there is no ONE right way to pray. God has made us all different, so we each pray in a unique way.

Saint Anthony points this out by saying, “Cannot all works please God equally? Scripture says, Abraham was hospitable, and God was with him. And Elijah loved quiet, and God was with him. And David was humble, and God was with him. So, whatever you find your soul wills in following God’s will, DO IT, and keep your heart.”

In “*The Three Hermits*,” a short story by Tolstoy, we hear of three hermits who lived on a small, remote island and were focused on seeking “salvation for their souls.” Their prayer was simple - “We are three; You are three (referring to the Trinity); have mercy on us.” Miracles sometimes happened when they prayed in this way. The bishop, however, hearing about them, decided to visit and help them in their search for salvation. He proceeded to explain the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity and to teach them the Lord’s Prayer. But the simple monks blundered and could not remember the words. They worked late into the night until the bishop was satisfied that they have memorized the prayer. He set sail for the mainland, pleased to have enlightened the souls of such simple men.

Suddenly, off the stern of the ship the bishop saw a huge ball of light skimming across the water. It got closer and closer until he could see that it was the three hermits running on surface of the water “as though it were dry land.” Once on board, they said to the bishop, ‘We are so sorry, but we have forgotten some of your teaching, would you please instruct us again?’ The bishop, now humbled, meekly replied to the hermits, “Forget everything I have taught you and continue to pray in your old way for your prayer will reach the Lord, you men of God.”

The Canaanite woman in today’s Gospel offered two short prayers to Christ: “Have mercy on me, O Lord” and “Lord, help me.” But she cried out to Him from the depth of her heart and soul, with persistence, humility, faith, and trust, thus receiving the answer to her prayer.



St. Macarius of Egypt teaches us: “There is no need for much speaking; but say, “Lord, as You wish and as You know best, have mercy on me.” And if the spiritual warfare grows fierce, say “Lord, help.” For He knows what is best for us and is merciful to us.”

The beginnings of prayer reside in the desire of the heart to know God, not in a specific method or style. Prayers are a cry of the heart, a longing of the soul. If we have discovered this longing within ourselves, then we have within us the seeds from which prayer can grow.

Let us bow our heads as I close with a prayer by Saint Philaret of Moscow who so beautifully sums up the essence of prayer:

“O Lord, I do not know what to ask of You. You alone know my true needs. You love me more than I myself know how to love. Help me to see my real needs which are concealed from me.

I dare not ask either for a cross or consolation. I can only wait on You. My heart is open to You. Visit and help me, for Your great mercy’s sake.

Strike me and heal me, cast me down and raise me up. I worship in silence Your Holy Will and Your inscrutable ways.

I offer myself as a sacrifice to You. I put all my trust in You. I have no other desire than to fulfill Your Will. Teach me how to pray. Pray You Yourself in me.”

Amen.

What the Heck is a Chaplain?

By Alex Limberatos

It's been a while now of being back in hospital ministry, and I've been so overjoyed and blessed for all the support our spiritual family of St. John has shown me in this return.

Hospital chaplaincy is a unique ministry wherein I'm blessed to have the opportunity to speak to, console, and pray with patients, hospital staff, and loved ones of so many different backgrounds. Yes, this means that I visit with so many people who are not Orthodox. In fact it's usually uncommon for me to visit with any Orthodox patients—thank God we are all so healthy!

That being said, since the very beginning of my ministry of hospital chaplaincy in 2019 when I began my residency, I've noticed that sometimes we Orthodox aren't always sure what a chaplain is or does. You can imagine the finesse I've had to use when introducing my role to someone who only speaks Greek in the hospital!

Chaplain: "Doulevo stin poimantiko ergasia, kyrie."

Patient: "Poimantiko ergasia?"

Chaplain: "Prosefchomai me ola stin nosokomio."

Patient: "Oh! Esai Papas?!"

Chaplain: "Ochi..."

It is perfectly a fair question to ask, and admittedly I'm still working on a succinct job description. The challenge in describing this vocation is that we chaplains not only are we multi-faceted, but our work changes so much based on each day's needs. There is an unfortunate trope that we are the angels of death, the harbingers of bad news that only see the really really sick patients.

Patient: "A chaplain?! Am I dying?!"

Chaplain: "Well, we all are, sir."

Because there is so much mystery that shrouds this vocation and because I have so much joy for this work, I wanted to write a break-down of what we hospital chaplains do, just incase you run right into one in the wild.

Emergency Family Support

Code Blue is an "all hands on deck" endeavor, and in the Baycare system that has included the work of chaplains. When a cardiac arrest or trauma occurs, chaplains respond to the crisis. Sometimes the crisis means being a supportive presence to an overwhelmed/distraught staff member, but most of the time it means being with family whether they are in the patient's room or in the waiting room. It's nerve-wrecking having to wait for news in these crisis', and sometimes staff is so busy that updates don't come quick enough for family. As a chaplain, I've sat in the waiting room with family members, talking to them about their loved one and what they're thinking and feeling, reminding them that although some of the staff may be too preoccupied to give a report that the family still has support through the hospital. There's also a role we play in being an intermediary and intercessor for the family, of reminding a physician or nurse that the family is waiting for an update or needs more closure. A crisis is harrowing on its own, and no family member or friend should have to suffer feeling abandoned or anxious without some peace of mind or solidarity.

Console the Grieving

The most obvious function we all can imagine of pastoral care is the presence of clergy at the delicate moment of death. This is a usually two-fold ministry, serving the patient and serving their family. Often our ministry is to the family as hospice & palliative measures sedate the patient and make them comfortable in their passing. A chaplain will touch base with the members of the family and see where they are in the grieving process, process the thoughts and feelings associated with the loss, and offer hospitality. Because I don't often get to know the soul that is passing, I often ask family to share memories of the person they are losing. There is laughter in the sharing as well as tears. We chaplains offer prayer and even ritualize the moment, making all members of the family part of an active good-bye together. There is special reprieve from family, friends (and even the nurses and doctors who took care of the patient) laying hands on their loved one and offering a good-bye in fellowship. It's sometimes even been the case that in these collective good-byes that the patient reposes in

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Console the Dying

I enjoy asking those who are reflecting on the life they are leaving behind where life has taken them, for them to share what highlights they cherish, and ask what words of wisdom they'd like passed on. Sometimes these interactions entailed passing on an important message from their loved one who can't be physically present, a word of peace that gives the patient the "permission" that is sometimes awaited for to repose. And sometimes it means sitting at bedside reading the psalter aloud. This is the part of the job most of us tend to think about when we hear "chaplain". The bulk of this important and hard work goes to Palliative or Hospice chaplains, though it's not uncommon that I'm allowed to enjoy these sacred conversations with those who are reflecting on life and wrestling with a poor prognosis. There happens to be more lucidity in one's spirituality as one reflects on what time we have left and what best suited purpose there is with that allotted time.

Meaning Making Moments, Not Last Rites

Often I get asked if I perform last rites or give communion in the hospital. Not being clergy, I do not administer the sacraments, though sometimes a request comes to me to offer this. Integrity to my Orthodox faith is important in my pastoral care, and so when a sacrament is asked for by a patient or family member, I not only abide within the boundaries of my faith but I also understand what is really being asked is for a "meaning making moment." These "meaning making moments" involve prayer and family engagement in the life of their loved one. Whereas in laity it can be sometimes awkward to gather a family in prayer around their loved one, the chaplain offers this opportunity, leading in prayer and inviting family to join in and add their own petition and sentiment. The subjects of sickness and death can be uncomfortable subjects to talk about and difficult circumstances to behold. As a chaplain, I like to invite family to make a step into the challenge, to invite them to lay hands on their loved one in prayer, for them to open their heart to what they want to say when it may be difficult to just getting a word out. As a chaplain, the meaning making is...well...meaningful because in the boldness of this office one can show others that one need not feel sterile or repulsed from these experiences in the hospital, but instead help family "follow the leader" so that we all can become comfortable in praying, being present, and grieving on our own.

Fellowship, Not Communion

Similar to what I mentioned above, although the request has come to me to provide communion to a diverse population of denominations, this request exists outside my bounds. As a chaplain, I have gladly helped patients connect with a priest, a pastor, whoever their spiritual leader, per their request so that their sacramental and spiritual needs are met. The chaplain then often becomes a sort of middleman, though there is great comfort from both patient and family when a chaplain is able to make the call for said religious leader as one can either feel too overwhelmed in one's own feelings to make the call on their own or feel estranged from their faith community for any number of reasons. Nonetheless, when a priest, a pastor, or rabbi is unavailable, we do what we can to "step into" that role while not compromising our own identity. Rest assured, this gesture of pastoral care goes both ways as I've not only referred patients to other chaplains that match their faith background, but I have been referred to Orthodox patients who ask for an Orthodox chaplain to visit with them and pray with them.

Being stuck in the hospital is an isolating thing as family and friends are often at work or out of town when life throws us a curveball. We also become disoriented by this feeling that the rest of the world keeps spinning and moving while our world comes to a sharp halt from sickness. Even with the busy schedules of our nurses, a patient can feel left in the dust and without a lot of human connection. A chaplain is that individual who can pause with the patient, to slow down with them, and share in a communion of fellowship, of conversation and prayer. The most edifying conversations I have had in the hospital are those when I see the cathartic and relieving effect that fellowship and conversation have for someone who is struck with a pain that medicine is not addressing. Even richer encounters have been when after our conversation a patient shares that the fellowship we share in inspires them to reach back out to their faith community and lean on their particular clergy for continued pastoral care.

Advanced Directives

Strange as it may seem, a hospital chaplain may just be the hospital caregiver who talks to you about healthcare surrogates and a living will. This shocked me as well when I began this ministry, but after the many advanced directives I introduced and assisted with, I came to realize how appropriate it is for clergy to talk about these subject matters. Advanced directives are an invitation to reflect on our mortality—something our Orthodox faith tells us to continually to grapple with—which can dovetail into some important reflection of hopes, fears, regrets, and possibilities for change. Because different faith traditions may sometimes lean on one side or another on the milieu of medical decisions we are presented with, and a chaplain is there to help facilitate conversation on what someone might feel about their own convictions in receiving particular interventions in a crisis. We chaplains also are familiar with family systems and dynamics, and often my discussions with patients involve whether or not support is had and identifying who are those trusted people of support. The goal of an advanced directive is for one's own medical decisions to be honored and respected when one loses their own voice, and so your hospital chaplain before and during any crisis seeks to honor those wishes and help give voice to them.

Serve Everyone, Every Creed

As already alluded to, we chaplains see everyone. I've sat down with and prayed with every Christian creed and denomination one could think of, and have sat down with and conversed with (sometimes for hours) with creeds not at all coming from an Abrahamic tradition (Buddhists, Native Americans, Neo-Pagans, Atheists, etc). As a chaplain, in each visit I discern whether or not to offer aloud prayer. Most my visits end, instead, asking if the patient has any particular needs. Most of the time our patients are just grateful that a friendly face said hello and slowed down to ask them how they are coping and be curious as to where life has taken them. Many will end up saying that the heart-to-heart conversation is "just what the doctor ordered". Chaplaincy isn't really a vocation is not one of evangelism or missions. That being said, I would argue chaplaincy does involve witness, a witness of the virtues through our peace, love, and boldness, as well as witnessing to the truth of all being made in the image and likeness of God through compassion and listening (though never said in so many words). I've had some criticize the office of chaplain as limp as it may miss the mark of honoring The Great Commission (go make disciples of all nations). That being said, I hear the commandments of compassion in this ministry through Matthew 25: I was sick, and you visited me.

Unsolicited Empathy

Here's a secret. Even if you end up in the hospital and don't ask for a chaplain, you might still run into one. Why? Because even unsolicited visits can end up becoming deep, meaningful, and therapeutic. Our visits are opportunities to slow down and reflect with someone willing to listen, to share in some fellowship, and to join our hopes and concerns in prayer. When there isn't a crisis or a consult for us, we chaplains go to our floors, check in with staff about any needs, and we try to make sure every patient on our floor has been seen a chaplain, even if that visit is brief and serves no other purpose than to let a patient know "we are around if you ever need someone to talk to". Sometimes that means being kicked out when we were never asked for. Most of the time it's a brief "hey how's it going, who are you, here's who I am, we're here if you need us" kind of check-in. There's an icon of Jesus knocking on a front door that my wife and I have at the entry of our house, and this is how I often see most of my visits: God knocking on the doors of our hearts where our

Continued...



thoughts and feelings are and inviting Him in. Sometimes I end up in a patient's room for over an hour because their diagnosis, home life, struggles of faith, you name it IS something they didn't realize could benefit from talking about to someone. It isn't always healthy for us when we sit and stew on our thoughts alone, and so it benefits all of us when we can lean on a willing outlet such as pastoral care.

Staff Support

Staff often have hard days too for all the heaviness that takes place in the hospital. I've seen nurses hold it together until they've left their patient's room once they feel they can cry it out on their own. I've led debriefs for team members who suffer sudden and tragic losses or who have hearts breaking for those in their care. As chaplains, we are there for all hospital staff, a listening ear and a voice of encouragement for these impressive stewards of so many lives. Doctors, nurses, techs, ES, whatever your role...we chaplains see you, we pray for you, and we are available if you just need to vent or have a good cry.

Collaboration with Staff

Again, the hospital staff, from doctors to nurses, have a great deal on their own plate, and it is sometimes too much to expect for them to sit down and hear the entire story of our patients.

Whether we are asked to see a patient or "round" on a patient unsolicited, the chaplain is able to offer perspective to the staff that sometimes can get missed. Because of our psycho-social overlap, we often have lots of rapport with the behavioral health teams and collaborate with them on providing our patients with the best care. Because we worry for the well-being and resources of the patient, we also do quite a lot with social services and help begin the conversation with resources available to them outside the hospital. We've also been intermediaries for palliative care, a listening ear to family members that sometimes wrestle with their guilt for "letting go" of their loved one when a difficult prognosis is given. And, though it goes without saying, we have a ton of conversations with the nursing staff that pour their hearts out for those we minister to and act as chaplains in their own right.

This is a ministry wherein the door for God is usually always left at least a crack open, and that's an exciting part for me to knock on each patient's door. Being in the hospital is a pause on life and I've found often facilitates

for reflection on one's own mortality, purpose, and much more. It's a time to reevaluate, be honest with oneself, and begin to ask big questions that we often don't think about when all is going well in life. For me, it's a rich and rare blessing to have so many opportunities to be attentive in these crux' of life, to reflect God's presence even in turmoil and despair, and to listen to and guide each vulnerable soul that wrestles with such big topics.

Now, I want to be clear on an important distinction of us chaplains: there is no substitute of provision of care that one's own clergy provides. The work of a hospital chaplain in the hospital is not meant to supplant or replace a patient's clergy or the provision of the sacraments. The care we provide is admittedly brief and transient, and that is in part because of our work load as well as in part due to the relative short stay our patients typically have in the hospital. We are the reminder that "God is with us" to our patient population, that we are available to the spiritual needs of prayer, empathy, and fellowship especially in times when one hasn't the in-house support from family, friend, church, or otherwise—this became especially true during Covid.

I hope in writing this I've dispelled some misconceptions of us chaplains as dispensers of sacraments and bearers of bad news.

Yes we pray, but we also assure the patient and loved one they aren't alone when the daunting hospital building can make someone feel otherwise

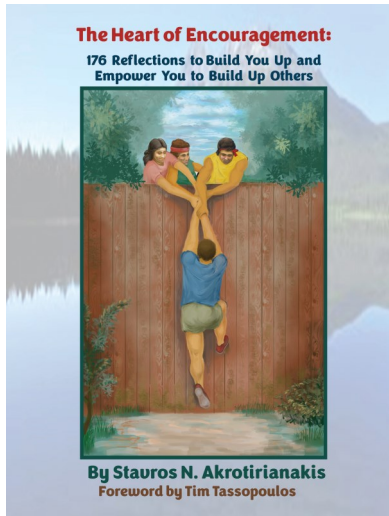
isolated. Yes you'll often see us consoling when death is near or has arrived, but we also sit down and talk when there isn't something so life-threatening that nonetheless deserves to be talked about.

So what does a hospital chaplain do? In short, we attempt to example God's presence and listening ear in times of isolation, and we ensure a human, empathic component of care while someone faces the harrowing throws of disease and death. As for what a military chaplain does, I'll leave that Fr. John Stefero to explain.

Alex Limberatos serve as a lay hospital chaplain for Baycare Health Systems. He currently assists at Morton Plant Hospital, Morton Plant Northbay Hospital, Mease Dunedin, and Mease Countryside Hospital. He is working full-time in this capacity and working on his Board Certification of Chaplaincy while volunteering and worshipping at St. John the Baptist.

The Heart of Encouragement: 176 Reflections to Build You Up and Empower You to Build Up Others

By Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis



One of God's greatest blessings on my life is the ability to write. I love writing. For the most part it comes easy to me. By God's grace, I have written a daily reflection called "The Prayer Team" since February 2015. This has resulted in the publication of seven books, the latest of which is "The Heart of Encouragement." Each month

this year, I'm going to include one reflection from the 176 reflections of this book, as a way to share a small sampling of the contents with you in the hopes that you will buy this book. This is not about pushing a product. It's about sharing a message, a message we all need to hear. We all need more encouragement. Please read this reflection below, and if you like it, please consider purchasing the book for yourself or for someone else. It can be purchased from our bookstore or from Amazon/Barnes and Noble. Everyone wants to make a difference in the world. This book is my attempt to reach this parish and far beyond it with the hope that by God's grace, this book will help change the world even a little bit for the better. +Fr. Stavros

Two Sides of a Tapestry

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has born our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.

Isaiah 53:1–5

Do you know who this Scripture passage from Isaiah describes? The person who is being described as despised, rejected, sorrowful, and afflicted? The Prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 53, foretells of the passion of Jesus Christ. For us to be healed, which is the resurrection, it took a man bearing our griefs and sorrows. Jesus Christ, whom we now esteem as our Lord and Savior, was once bruised, battered, and killed.

Had anyone of us come up on Golgotha two thousand years ago, we almost certainly would not have felt encouraged and uplifted. Without knowing the rest of the story, I'm not sure I would have felt uplifted. Here was a man dying on a cross—the most painful and humiliating way to die, reserved for the worst of the worst of the criminals. Yet, we now know that this scene of pain and suffering paved the way for the greatest triumph in the history of humanity, the resurrection, which paves the way to salvation for each of us.

A tapestry is a fabric woven by hand that has a picture or design on it. The front side of the tapestry that we see will be a beautiful picture or design, made of threads woven by hand or with a loom. The back side of the tapestry will be all the loose ends of the thread or yarn. While the front side will look beautiful and finished, the back side generally looks unkempt and not in order. If we only saw the back of a tapestry, we would not be impressed. Most likely, we'd be very disappointed. However, when we look only at the front of a beautiful tapestry, we don't understand the complexities of what lies on the other side.

Had people witnessed the crucifixion, they might have compared it to the back side of a tapestry—lacking beauty, completeness, structure, and order. The resurrection is the front of our analogous tapestry—it weaves together beauty and glory and hope. When we look at the resurrection, it may be easy to forget what was on the other side, what was behind the resurrection. Just like if we look at only the crucifixion, the resurrection lacks meaning, and we just see a jumbled and painful mess.

In many ways, we are like tapestries. We each have the outward appearance, the place where we might appear beautiful, accomplished, and confident. The back side of our tapestry looks entirely different. It looks disorganized and chaotic. If we look at only the front side, we don't see the whole picture. If we look only at the back side, we don't see the whole picture either. This is true whether we look at others and even when we look at ourselves.

There is no person who is completely organized and beautiful like the front of the

Continued...

tapestry. Everyone has some “loose threads” behind their public persona. Likewise, there is no person who has no outward beauty, who is just a mess of disorganization. At least there is no one who has no potential of outward beauty. Just as we all have some chaos and loose ends in our lives, we also have beauty.

As we wrap up our discussion of helping and being patient, we need to be patient with others, and we need to be patient with ourselves. God created each of us to be a beautiful tapestry, made in His image and likeness, and able to project His beauty and glory. Because of our fallen world, there is not one of us who doesn't have challenges below the surface. This is why things like being part of a community are so important and why encouragement is so vital. We need others to encourage us and let us know that they see the front of our tapestry, even when we are focused on the back of it. And we ourselves need to understand both sides of our tapestry, there can always be a beautiful side, and there will always be a side that needs some work.

Lord, thank You for the joys in my life, the outward manifestations of happiness and hope (list some). Lord, You know the secret hurts of my life (list some of them). Give me the patience to manage the parts of me that are chaotic and disorganized. Help me to see the good in myself and the good in others. Help me to encourage others to improve their shortcomings that can be managed and to accept the ones that cannot. Bring others around me who can do the same for me. Amen.

Encouragement Challenge: There are two sides to every person. Be encouraged to share the front side and to see the beauty of the front sides of the tapestries of others. Be encouraged to be patient with the back side, our own and those of others.



Inspiration

Listen earnestly to anything your children want to tell you, no matter what. If you don't listen eagerly to the little stuff when they are little, they won't tell you the big stuff when they are big, because to them all of it has always been big stuff.

~Catherine M. Wallace

If you left the Church to get away from hypocritical people, you should also quit your job, drop out of school, disconnect yourself from all of your friends and family, lock yourself in your room while you're at it. There will be flaws wherever there are humans. We need not start seeing church for what it is: It is a hospital with wounded and hurt people. You will find messed up, conniving, calculating, imperfect individuals, including yourself. As much as you want to deny it, we all go for healing. So if you felt betrayed by a fellow Church member, put your nursing cap on, and think of them as your patients. Treat them with care, love and kindness despite their rudeness.

On the Lighter Side

Things You Say After 50

1. Where the heck is my phone?
2. How did I get this bruise?
3. This isn't my password either? WTH?
4. How do they expect you to read this small print?
5. Where did I put my glasses?
6. I don't care if it doesn't look fashionable, it's comfortable!
7. Who the heck is calling at 9:30 p.m.?
8. Does anyone say please and thank you anymore?
9. Geez, how do you throw your body out of whack just sleeping wrong?
10. This scale can't be right!
11. What the heck is wrong with people nowadays?
12. Why did I come into this room?

Liturgical Schedule for March

Wednesday, March 1	9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Friday, March 3	9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations to the Virgin Mary-1 st Stanza 6:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 4	3rd Saturday of Souls—St. Theodore Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Memorial Service at the end of the Divine Liturgy
Sunday, March 5	1st Sunday of Great Lent—Sunday of Orthodoxy Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Procession of Holy Icons at the end of the Divine Liturgy
Monday, March 6	Great Compline 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 8	9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Friday, March 10	9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations to the Virgin Mary-2 nd Stanza 6:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 12	2nd Sunday of Great Lent—St. Gregory Palamas Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.
Monday, March 13	Great Compline 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 15	9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Friday, March 17	9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations to the Virgin Mary-3 rd Stanza 6:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 19	3rd Sunday of Great Lent—Veneration of the Holy Cross Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Procession of the Holy Cross at the end of the Divine Liturgy
Monday, March 20	Great Compline 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 22	Paraklesis 10:00 a.m. 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Friday, March 24	9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Great Vespers/4 th Stanza of Salutations 6:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 25	Annunciation of the Virgin Mary Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, March 26	4th Sunday of Great Lent—St. John of the Ladder Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.
Monday, March 27	Great Compline 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 29	9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Friday, March 31	9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Vigil of the Akathist Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m. Divine Liturgy 8:15 p.m.
Sunday, April 2	5th Sunday of Great Lent—St. Mary of Egypt Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.
Monday, April 3	Great Compline 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 5	9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Friday, April 7	9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.

Saturday of Souls



Sunday of Great Lent



Annunciation of the Virgin Mary



**Don't forget to Spring forward on
Sunday March 12**



SPRING

Liturgical Notes for March

Saturday of the Souls – Saturdays, March 4

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

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

Since the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is offered on each Sunday of Lent, and this Divine Liturgy is slightly longer than the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the Divine Liturgy will begin at 9:45 a.m. from March 5-April 9. The Choir will begin the Doxology at 9:35 a.m.

Mondays of Lent - Great Compline

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

Wednesdays of Lent – 9th Hour and Pre-Sanctified Liturgy

The Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts (also called Pre-Sanctified Liturgy) will be held on the Wednesdays during Great Lent. This service consists of Vespers with Holy Communion that was “Pre-Sanctified” the previous Sunday. It is an opportunity to receive Holy Communion frequently during the season of fasting. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy is preceded by the reading of the 9th Hour, a short service with penitential prayers as well as the recitation of the Creed, a pre-requisite for the reception of Holy Communion. Service books for this service will be available. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy will be celebrated on the following Wednesdays of Great Lent: Wednesday, March 1; Wednesday, March 8; Wednesday, March 15; Wednesday, March 22; Wednesday, March 29; and Wednesday, April 5. Each ministry is encouraged to attend one Pre-Sanctified Liturgy as follows:

Wednesday, March 1 Sunday School
Wednesday, March 8 Choir
Wednesday, March 15 AHEPA/Daughters
Wednesday, March 22 Young at Heart/Welcome Ministry
Wednesday, March 29 Philoptochos
Wednesday, April 5 Bible Study/Young Adults

Fridays of Lent - 9th Hour and Pre-Sanctified Liturgy

The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy has Traditionally been celebrated on Wednesdays AND Fridays of Great Lent. The 9th Hour will begin at 9:30 a.m., with the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy from 10:00-11:15 a.m. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy will be held on the Fridays of Lent as follows: Friday, March 3; Friday, March 10; Friday, March 17; Friday, March 24; Friday, March 31; and Friday, April 7.

Liturgical Notes for March

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

This service also lasts about an hour and is a series of prayers and devotions that invoke the intercessions of the Virgin Mary for our salvation. It will be held on March 3, March 10, March 17, March 24 and March 31. Service Books for this service will be available. *On Friday, March 24, the order of service calls for Great Vespers for the Feast of Annunciation with the "Salutations" to the Virgin Mary please at the end. The service will be the same length. However, instead of the "Canon" of the Akathist and prayers of the Small Compline that are offered traditionally at the Friday night service, we will offer Great Vespers.*

Sunday, March 5 - Sunday of Orthodoxy

A grand procession with icons took place on March 11, 843 A.D. (which was the first Sunday of Great Lent that year), marking the permanent triumph of icons and their return to the churches after a 150-year absence. From this time, icons were defined as objects to be venerated and not worshipped. They are spiritual mirrors through which we see the heavenly saints. Their restoration in our churches is a rue victory for Orthodoxy. Thus, on the first Sunday of Lent each year, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Triumph of Orthodoxy with a procession of icons, together with the reading of a Synodal Statement, authored in 843, marking their return to the church. *If anyone has new icons that have not been blessed, please bring them to church on Sunday, March 4, the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and place them in the windows of the church. They will be blessed with Holy Water during the service.*

Sunday, March 12 – Second Sunday of Lent - St. Gregory Palamas

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

Sunday, March 19 - Third Sunday of Lent - Veneration of the Holy Cross

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

Wednesday, March 22 – 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. For March, the Paraklesis will be offered on Wednesday morning, March 22, from 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Liturgical Notes for March

Saturday, March 25 - Feast of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary

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

Sunday, March 26 - Fourth Sunday of Lent - St. John Climacus

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

Friday, March 31 - Vigil of the Akathist

It is the tradition of the Orthodox Church (practiced in monasteries and in a few parishes) that the Akathist Hymn is celebrated as part of an all-night vigil, culminating in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. A Vigil is when more than one service is held in sequence. We will begin the Akathist Hymn at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, March 31, followed by the Divine Liturgy at 8:15 p.m., with both services concluding by 9:30 p.m. This will afford us the opportunity to pray the Divine Liturgy together in a more subdued atmosphere (and how often do we get to celebrate Liturgy at night in our church?) and to receive Holy Communion on this very special feast day. For those who wish to receive Holy Communion, please abstain from food after 2:00 p.m. on that Friday.

Sunday, April 2— Fifth Sunday of Lent - St. Mary of Egypt

St. Mary of Egypt was anything but a Saint throughout the first part of her life. From a very young age, she was a prostitute. Being from Egypt, she decided that she wanted to see the Holy Land and the Tomb of Christ (also known as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre). As she went to enter the Church, a force kept her from entering. She was unable to enter, while so many others did. She realized that God had done this to have her stop her sinning. She promised to God that day she would stop. She repented with a pure heart, and she was allowed to enter. She went for Confession, received Holy Communion, and then went to the desert to live for years in repentance. Years later, she was visited by a Priest-monk, Zosimos (later a Saint in our Church). He gave her Holy Communion, and they discussed her trials and tribulations. Although she suffered much, she was so happy to be with Christ. Later that same day, she fell asleep in the Lord. Her example of repentance is SO great, we commemorate her life many centuries later.

Important Liturgical Notes for March

Why does Liturgy seem longer on Sundays during Lent?

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

Sacrament of Confession

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

Altar Boy Schedule for Lent

CAPTAINS	St. Matthew	St. Mark	St. Luke	St. John
John Palios	Thanos Kantaras	Michael Snyder	Teddy Kafentaris	Christos Nenos
Genaro Scarfogliero	Gabriel Gonzales	Zachary Carter	Andrew Thatcher	Constantine Ameres
Nicholas Akrotirianakis	Michael Galin	Dorian Setzer-Torres	Kris Christopher	Zachary George
Nicholas Carter	Leo Sengsouvanha	Leo Lenardos	Vasilios Panos	Alex Findlay
James Magos	Kenny Kane	Niko Kyrus	Jonah Blankenbaker	Gianni Matassini
Demetri Passalaris	Philip Kane	Josh Roby		Nathan Moran
George Xenick	Andreas Stefanou			Michael Meadows
Nicholas Magos				
PJ Zelatis				

Wednesday, March 1	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.	John Palios and St. Matthew
Friday, March 3	Salutations 6:30 p.m.	Genaro Scarfogliero and St. Mark
Wednesday, March 8	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.	James Magos and St. Luke
Friday, March 10	Salutations 6:30 p.m.	Demetri Passalaris and St. John
Wednesday, March 15	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.	Nicholas Akrotirianakis and St. Mark
Friday, March 17	Salutations 6:30 p.m.	Nicholas Magos and St. Matthew
Wednesday, March 22	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.	George Xenick and St. John
Friday, March 24	Salutations 6:30 p.m.	PJ Zelatis and St. Luke
Wednesday, March 29	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.	Nicholas Carter and St. Matthew
Friday, March 31	Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m.	Genaro Scarfogliero and St. Mark
Wednesday, April 5	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 5:30 p.m.	John Palios and St. Luke

Parish Registry

Baptism-Anastasia Bliziotis Aviles, daughter of Pablo and Vanessa Aviles, was baptized on Sunday, January 22. Melinda Demetroulis was the Godmother. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Willa Eleni Loos, daughter of David and Christina Loos, was baptized on Sunday, February 5. Nikolas Christodoulou was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

Condolences to Myra Armstrong on the passing of her brother, Frank (Fanourios) Giakoumis. May his memory be eternal!

St. John the Baptist Community News

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 March, the dates are Tuesday, March 7; Monday, March 13; Monday, March 20 and Monday, March 27.

Women's Bible Study-Women's Bible Study meets on most Tuesday mornings with Fr. Stavros from 10:00-11:30 a.m. either in person or on zoom. We are studying the Gospel of John. For March, the dates are Tuesdays, March 7, 21 and 28.

GOYA—The GOYA Meeting for March will be Sunday, March 19 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

Parea Dancers—Our Parea Dance Group (GOYAns) will be having a monthly practice one Sunday each month after the Divine Liturgy. Our February practice will be on Sunday, March 5.

Young Adults-Our Young Adult Group will meet for dinner/discussion on Monday, March 6 (note different day this month) from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Young Adults are encouraged to come earlier and participate in the Great Compline service beginning at 5:30 p.m. The group also meets informally for social events. If you are interested in getting notices via What's App, contact Aris Rogers at 813-309-5525.

Men's Group-Our men's group will meet on Sunday March 26, 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, March 26; Sunday, April 30 and Sunday, May 21.

Greek Independence Day Program-We will mark Greek Independence Day with a luncheon and short program on Sunday, March 26.

Fr. Stavros will be out of town March 16-18. He has been asked to be part of a conference aimed at helping people discern a priestly calling which will be held at Holy Cross School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Daylight Savings—Don't forget to set your clock forward one hour on Sunday, March 12.

SAVE THE DATE!

Fr. Stavros to be a guest on "Live with the Louhs" on Tuesday, March 21. Fr. Stavros will be on a podcast/call in show called "Live with the Louhs" on Tuesday, March 21 at 8:00 p.m. This show is hosted by Fr. Nicholas and Presbytera Roxanne Louh from the St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church in Jacksonville, FL. Fr. Nicholas and Pres. Roxanne will be interviewing Fr. Stavros about his book "The Heart of Encouragement."

Special thanks Captain Alex Limberatos and the members of YE HOLY KREWE helping for Gasparilla Parking fundraiser on January 28.

We made \$4,700 on this event.

- ◆ Mike Palios
- ◆ Jamie Valaes
- ◆ Tony Magos
- ◆ Tom Georgas
- ◆ Mary Maas
- ◆ Mike Xenick
- ◆ Sandra Pappas
- ◆ Joanne Dalaklis
- ◆ Andreas Tziotis
- ◆ Bill Commimos

The Philoptochos Society of
St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
is sponsoring a Women's Retreat



*Behold, I am the
Handmaiden
of the Lord:*

Letting life be according to His Word

Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis - Retreat Leader

Saturday, March 25 - Feast of the Annunciation
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

All women are welcome, Orthodox or not

**Starting with Divine Liturgy, followed by lunch,
presentations and group discussions**

Donations Accepted

**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK
ORTHODOX CHURCH**

2418 W. Swann Ave. Tampa, FL 33609

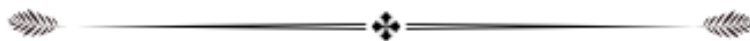
Kindly RSVP by March 22 to office@stjohnntpa.org



First Things First:

MAKING TIME FOR WHAT MATTERS MOST A SIX-WEEK LENTEN STUDY

Join us Wednesday evenings during Great Lent



March 1 First Things First: *Worship*
Dinner Sponsored by the Sunday School

March 8 First Things First: *Community*
Dinner Sponsored by the Choir

March 15 First Things First: *Love*
Dinner Sponsored by the AHEPA/Daughters

March 22 First Things First: *Learning*
Dinner Sponsored by the Young at Heart and Welcome Ministry

March 29 First Things First: *Service*
Dinner Sponsored by the Philoptochos

April 5 First Things First: *Priorities*
Dinner Sponsored by the Young Adults and Bible Studies

EACH WEDNESDAY EVENING SCHEDULE:

- 6:00 pm Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
- 7:15 pm Lenten Dinner provided by one of our ministries
- 7:45 pm Presentation by Father Stavros
- 8:05 pm Small group discussion
- 8:30 pm Concluding remarks and closing prayer



GREAT LENT 2023
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
TAMPA, FL

TWELVE DISCIPLES PROJECT

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



St. John the Baptist's Twelve Disciples Project continues, as dozens of your fellow

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

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

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

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

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



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

Participation will warm your spiritual heart.

JOY TWEENS

On February 17, our JOY Tweens delivered all the donations collected by HOPE & JOY's "SOUPER BOWL OF CARING" to Hope Children's Home. They spent the afternoon touring the campus and learning about this Christian home and school that rescues and cares for children in need.

In March, we have a fun offsite activity scheduled for Sunday, March 5, from 2:00pm-4:00pm. Our JOY Tweens will be working together to solve puzzles and find their way out of an escape room! Please see our March Constant Contact for details and the SignUpGenius.

Souper Bowl of Caring-results

Chiefs: \$267 plus 1 box of food

Eagles: \$311 plus 1 box of food.

Winners: the beautiful kids at Hope Children's home

Our JOY Tweens went to the Hope Children's Home in Tampa to donate the things collected from the Souper Bowl of Caring, and in addition took a \$1,000 check from our parish, from our charitable causes budget.



"Souper Bowl of Caring"
Which team will raise the most donations for the children of
Hope Children's Home
The Chiefs !!

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

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

As a ministry we invite anyone who wishes to enjoy fellowship with members of St. John's Greek Orthodox community. We meet once a month to partake, usually, in a potluck luncheon at the Kourmolis Hall. We meet new friends, share stories, watch religious videos followed by a discussion under the guidance of Father Stefero, and play games such as trivia pursuit (religious topics) and bingo. Prizes are awarded to the winners.



January 21st YAH luncheon---
27 members were present

**After lunch we had the blessing
of the Vasilopita**

MEETING DATE AND TIME:

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

BIRTHDAYS: Peter Nenos—3/30; Pam Nolan---3/31

February 25th. was our last month's potluck luncheon at the Kourmolis Hall.

It followed the Divine liturgy, and a memorial service. After the luncheon we had a video presentation on Vessel of Grace; The Life of St. Paisios the Athonite.

This was followed by an Orthodox trivia quiz.

PHILOPTOCHOS MINISTRY

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Annunciation Chapter

Philoptochos Society of St John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Tampa Florida



The Annunciation Chapter #5011 of Philoptochos, St John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, would like to invite you to join us in our mission of outreach for the 2022-23 Membership year.

While the word “philoptochos” means “friends of the poor”, it does not begin to describe the many facets of the organization that chose this name. The Greek Orthodox Philoptochos are involved in all areas of philanthropy. From helping global victims of catastrophes like earthquakes and tsunamis to helping a local parishioner to pay a bill, Philoptochos seeks to help all those in need. You can find out more at <http://philoptochos.org>.

YES! I would like to offer my love and service by joining the Philoptochos Society in its philanthropic efforts! Please accept my \$35 stewardship contribution. Your contribution alone will do so much to help those in need!

Please make checks payable to: Philoptochos

Name _____
Date _____
Street Address _____
City _____ State _____
Zip _____
Home Phone _____ Cell _____
Please circle which number is the preferred contact: **HOME/ CELL**
E-mail address _____

Please return form to: Melissa Krinos, 8728 Hickorywood Lane, Tampa FL 33615 or to the Philoptochos mailbox in the church office.

Philoptochos OCMC Luncheon

our Philoptochos again sponsored our Lunch to benefit the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) on Sunday, February 12. A big thank you to the Halkias family who donated hot dogs, buns, and beans. Thank you to those who made chili. We raised \$650 from the luncheon, which will be combined with \$2,500 from our parish, so a total of \$3,100 is being sent by Philoptochos to the Orthodox Christian Mission Center.

...for I was hungry and you gave Me food; for I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.

...in as much as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

Matthew 25-36; 40

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

IN PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

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

Honor your father and mother

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

Thou shall not kill.

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

You shall not commit adultery.

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

You shall not steal.

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

You shall not bear false witness.

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

You shall not covet.

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

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

Important Lenten Prayers

TRISAGION PRAYERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PSALM 50 (51)—A Psalm of Repentance

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

Then shall they offer calves upon your altar.

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

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

Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim

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

LORD OF THE POWERS—Lenten Hymn

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

Donations Needed for Great Lent and Holy Week


Great Lent begins February 27. We have many special celebrations during these weeks. We know that many of you would like to contribute to the decorating of our church and icons during this period. For your convenience, below is a list of items needed for the celebration of the Sacred Services of Lent and Holy Week. Please contact the church office to reserve your desired offering for the health of your loved ones or in memory of a deceased loved one.

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

Lent	Wireless Microphones in the Church	Duracell or Energizer AA Batteries	Many
March 3	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 1st Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$125
March 10	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 2nd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$125
March 17	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 3rd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$125
March 19	Veneration of the Holy Cross	Flowers for Tray for Procession	\$500
March 24	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 4th Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$125
March 31	Akathist Hymn	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$125
April 9	Palm Sunday	Flowers for Icon of Palm Sunday	\$125
		Palms Strips & Branches	\$300 total
Holy Week		Pillar Candles for Windows (20)	\$20 each
April 9	Palm Sunday	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex	\$125
	Bridegroom Service	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom on Solea (2)	\$125 each
April 12	Holy Wednesday	Flowers for Icon of Last Supper	\$125
	Holy Unction	Olive Oil, Flour, Prospora (2)	Donations
April 13	Holy Thursday	Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion	\$125
		Wreaths for Bottom of Cross (2)	\$200 each
		Wreath for Top of Cross	\$300
		Scattered flowers at base of cross	\$75
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)	\$20 each
April 14	Good Friday	16 Bags of Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers	\$125
		Flowers for Epitaphios	Several
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Apokathelosis	\$20 each
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Lamentations	\$20 each
		Icon of Extreme Humility	\$125
April 16	Pascha	Flowers for Icon of Resurrection	\$125
		Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb	\$125
		Silk Flower for Royal Doors	\$125
		Easter Lilies	\$30per Lily

OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2023

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS		THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 5th		<i>TRIODION WEEKS</i> Publican and the Pharisee Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week FEBRUARY 12th		The Prodigal Son Returns! Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare FEBRUARY 19th FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY		The Last Judgement Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare FEBRUARY 26th FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY		Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! <i>FORGIVENESS SUNDAY</i> Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 5th		<i>GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS</i> SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 12th		ST GREGORY PALAMAS Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent MARCH 19th		VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS <i>HALF WAY TO PASCHA!</i> Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent MARCH 26th		ST JOHN of the LADDER Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent APRIL 2nd		ST MARY of EGYPT Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! APRIL 9th GREAT WEEK BEGINS		<i>GREAT AND HOLY WEEK</i> ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY APRIL 14th		GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY <i>JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS</i> CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! APRIL 16th NO FASTING!		<i>BRIGHT WEEK</i> HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!

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.

St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!

Have you downloaded our App?

Download the St. John's app in the App Store, or Google Play Store by typing in "St John GOC Tampa." You can access the Messenger, weekly bulletin, livestream services, and much more all through our app!

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](https://www.facebook.com/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



Youth Protection Program Reminder



**GREEK ORTHODOX
ARCHDIOCESE
OF AMERICA**

At this time, the Youth Protection Program is currently under revision and changes from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Please be on the lookout in weekly bulletins and future Messengers with the updated Youth Protection Program.



If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Suzanne Pileggi at smpileggi1@gmail.com or (813) 244-5855.

FOOD PANTRY

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.

St. John Stewardship Report 2021-2023

Year to Year Comparison ~	2023*	2022*	2021*
Pledged Year to Date	\$322,877	\$351,764	\$405,378
Received Year to Date	\$141,510	\$168,893	\$141,178
Average Pledge	\$953	\$2033	\$1,741
Median Pledge	\$863	\$1000	\$1000
# of Individual/Families Pledged/Giving	201	173	237
*YTD as of	2/14/23	2/14/22	2/19/21

Relationship between salt and blood pressure

By Nursing Ministry

The body needs a small amount of sodium to function, but most Americans consume too much sodium. High sodium consumption can raise blood pressure, and high blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Most of the sodium we consume is in the form of salt.

How does salt affect blood pressure?

- Research shows a strong relationship between the amount of salt consumed and raised levels of blood pressure.
 - When salt intake is reduced, blood pressure begins falling within weeks in most people.
- In countries where people consume diets low in salt, people do not experience the increase in blood pressure with age that is seen in most Western countries.
 - Reducing sodium intake lowers blood pressure, with greater effects among people with hypertension.

Is it salt or sodium?

- Sodium chloride is the chemical name for salt.
- Ninety percent of the sodium we consume is in the form of salt.
- The words salt and sodium are not the same, yet these words are often used interchangeably. For example, the Nutrition Facts Panel on foods in the grocery store uses “sodium,” while the front of the package may say “no salt added” or “unsalted.”

Facts About Sodium Consumption and Sodium in Our Food Supply

- * The 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that Americans consume less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium each day as part of a healthy eating pattern.
 - About 90% of Americans 2 years old or older consume too much sodium.
 - The average daily sodium intake for Americans 2 years old or older is more than 3,400 mg.
- Americans are consuming substantially more sodium than in the 1970s. Since 2010, some manufacturers have reduced sodium in some foods, and the amount of sodium consumed has decreased slightly in some groups of people.
- About 70% of sodium consumed is from processed and restaurant foods. Only a small portion of sodium or salt is used in cooking or added at the table.
- Because sodium is already in processed and restaurant foods when they are purchased, reducing personal sodium intake can be hard, even for motivated people.
- Sodium content can vary across the same types of foods by brand. For example, a slice of frozen cheese pizza can have between 370 mg and 730 mg of sodium; a cheeseburger from a fast-food restaurant can have between 710 mg and 1,690 mg.
- Sodium information currently is not always readily available for restaurants or prepared foods and can be hard for the consumer to estimate.

Reducing Sodium and Reducing Cardiovascular Disease Burden

- Lowering high blood pressure reduces the risk of heart disease and stroke. Adults with elevated and high blood pressure especially benefit from lowering their blood pressure.



- If manufacturers gradually reduced the amount of sodium in processed and prepared foods, public consumption of sodium could be reduced to safer levels with little or no change in behavior on the part of the individual consumer.
- Sodium intake from processed and restaurant foods contributes to high rates of high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke. Because nearly 500,000 deaths each year are related to high blood pressure, reducing sodium intake could prevent thousands of deaths annually.
- Reducing average population sodium intake to 2,300 mg per day may save \$18 billion in health care dollars and reduce cases

of high blood pressure by 11 million annually.

- Sodium reduction continues to be an effective and safe strategy to lower blood pressure.
 - Lowering blood pressure reduces and prevents heart attacks and stroke.
 - Hypertension is having blood pressure that is consistently high.

Tips for eating less salt. Ideas to help you get started

- **Don't add salt when cooking.** Try adding different flavors and allow a little time for your taste buds to adjust.
- **Avoid very salty flavorings.** Ready-made sauces, soy sauce, stock cubes and gravy granules can all be very salty, look out for low salt options or try some new flavorings.
- **Get extra flavor into your recipes.** Add herbs, spices and seasonings like chili, pepper, ginger, lemon, or lime juice.
- **Taste food before you add salt.** Sometimes people add salt out of habit, remember to taste your meals first.
- **Take the salt shaker off the table.** So you're less likely to be tempted.
- **Be careful of condiments.** The salt shaker's fellow table dwellers can be very salty too, like mustard and ketchup.
- **Try a salt alternative.** If you really can't do without a salty flavor, try using a small amount of a **low-sodium salt substitute**.
- **Make your own marinades.** Marinating meat or fish in lemon or lime, or with yogurt and spices, avoids the need to add salt for flavor.
- **Cut down on high salt foods.** Cooking sauces, table sauces such as ketchup and mustard, cheese, bacon, olives and pickles can contain a lot of salt.
- **Check the labels.** Salt contents vary greatly. Check the labels of foods before you buy them and compare with other products – you'll often find lower salt low-salt options.
- **Choose low salt bread and breakfast cereals.** They can contain a lot of salt and add a lot to our diet – as we eat so much of them. Check the labels to compare brands.
- **Avoid smoked and processed meats and** These contain a lot of salt, so limit how much you eat.
- **Call ahead when you eat out.** If you are eating out, ask if your meal can be made with less salt. This isn't always possible, but it's always worth asking, and there may be options with less salt than others.
- **Use the FoodSwitch app.** It compares the salt content of similar products so you can find the healthier options easily.
- **Don't give up.** If food tastes bland to start with, don't give up. After a few weeks your taste buds will adjust, and you will start to enjoy food with less salt – like switching to tea without sugar.

Which foods are high in salt?

Certain foods are particularly high in salt. Try to avoid them or find a lower-salt version:

- tomato ketchup
- tinned, packet and chiller cabinet soups
- beef, chicken, and vegetable stock cubes
- gravy granules
- soy sauce
- dried fish
- mustard
- pickles
- curry powders
- ready-made sandwiches
- microwave and frozen ready meals
- breaded chicken products
- sausages
- bacon
- ham



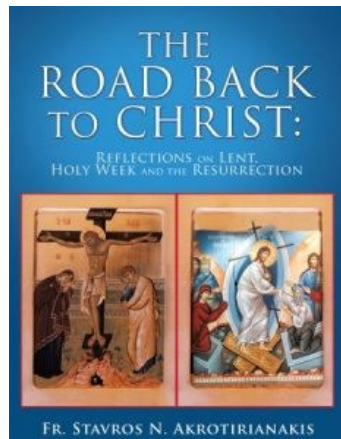
You can also download the free **FoodSwitch app** which does the hard work for you. By scanning the barcode of a product, the app will tell you how much salt it contains and offer suggestions for a similar but healthier alternative.

Checking labels for sodium

Salt is made up of sodium and chloride, and it's the sodium that raises blood pressure. 1g of sodium is the same as 2.5g of salt. By law, companies must list the salt content of food on the packaging, but some imported foods list sodium rather than salt. Follow these guidelines to choose lower sodium (and salt) foods.

- Low – 0.1g sodium or less per 100g - Eat plenty of these.
 - Medium – 0.1-0.6g sodium per 100g - These are usually fine to eat, but choose low salt options where you can
 - High – 0.6g sodium or more per 100g - Try to avoid these or eat them only occasionally.
- Set a goal to lower your blood pressure by staying away from salt and let's see how many points we can lower our blood pressure numbers for the month of March. Track the Systolic (top number) separately from the Diastolic (bottom number). Track and let me know!

Marcelle Triantafillou, BSN, RN
Nursing Ministry



The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection is now on sale!

It is a series of daily reflections to be read from the beginning of Triodion (this year that is February 5) through All Saints Day (this year that is June 11). Pick up your copy today so you can begin reading it. All monies taken in at the bookstore go to the church.

The Prayer Team celebrated its 8th Anniversary on February 20!

For eight years, Fr. Stavros has been writing a daily reflection. It comes out every morning at 12:30 a.m. via Constant Contact. From Monday-Friday, Father will be writing on the subject of "The Liturgy of St. Basil" and on Saturday - Sunday, Father is writing on the Scriptures of each Sunday.

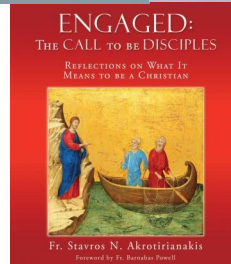
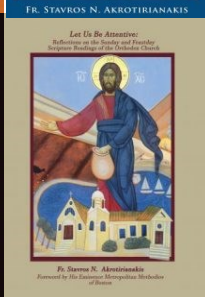
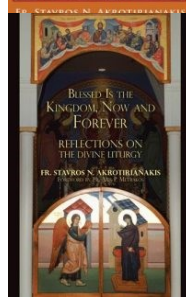
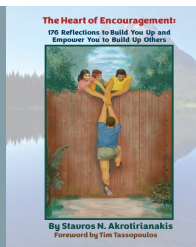
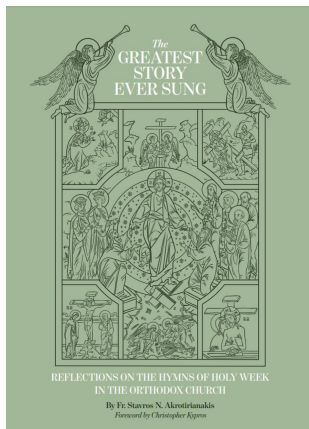
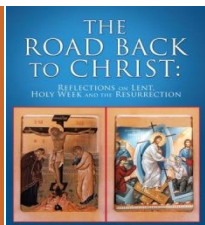
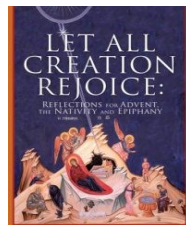
Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

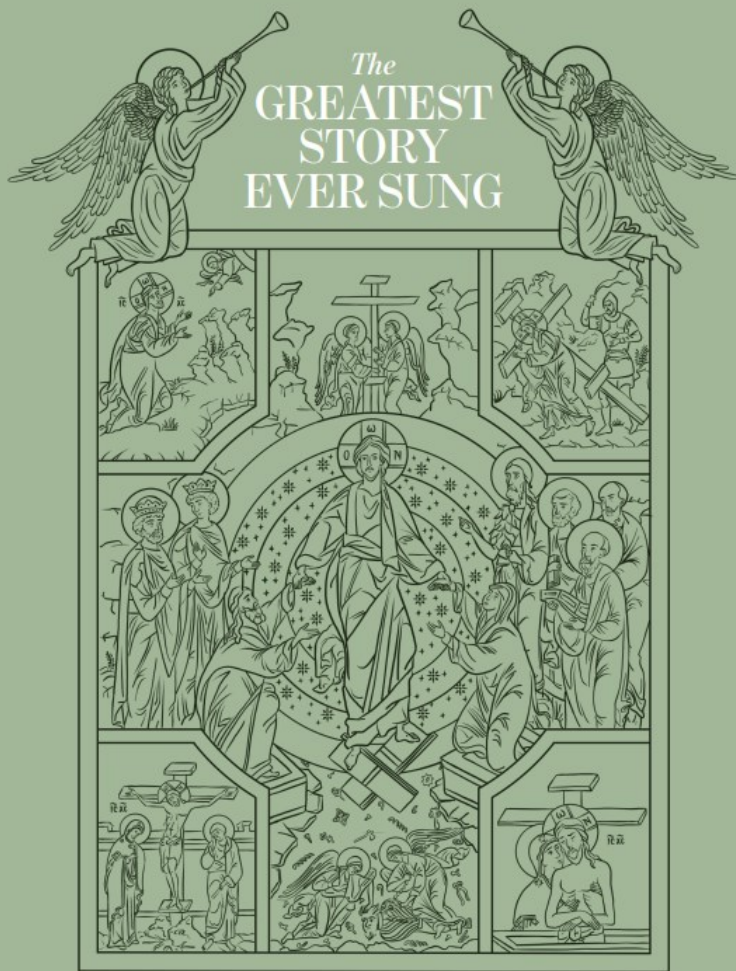
Over 3,837 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 6 years! Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email 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 Vasili 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 EIGHT 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
The Heart of Encouragement: 176 Reflections to Build You Up and Empower You to Build Up Others
NEW: *The Greatest Story Ever Sung*





The GREATEST STORY EVER SUNG

REFLECTIONS ON THE HYMNS OF HOLY WEEK IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

By Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis
Foreword by Christopher Kypros

The Greatest Story Ever Sung: Reflections on the Hymns of Holy Week in the Orthodox Church By Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

For most of Christian history, learning about Christ could not be done through personal reading, as the majority of the world was could not read. Learning was done through listening to preaching, and through the singing of hymns. The events of Holy Week, from the triumphal entry of Christ in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, to the Cross of Good Friday, to the glorious Resurrection on Pascha, have been taught throughout the centuries primarily through song. In fact, the most well-known Orthodox hymn, "Christ is Risen", provides in twenty-two words, a summary of the Resurrection and its meaning for Christian salvation.

Holy Week in the Orthodox Church is a journey of nine days and nearly twenty services that put us back in Jerusalem two thousand years ago through Scripture, ritual and most especially through hymnology. Scripture captivates the mind. Ritual captivates the eyes. Hymnology is what captivates our emotions and our hearts and

what stirs our souls to spiritual renewal. *The Greatest Story Ever Sung: Reflections on the Hymns of Holy Week in the Orthodox Church* reflects on both the well-known and lesser known hymns of the services of the Orthodox Holy Week. It will take you on a journey not only to the week of Christ's Passion but to the depths of your own faith.

This book will capture your emotions, warm your heart and stir your soul to spiritual renewal. It will help you remember the saving work of Jesus Christ two thousand years ago and will help you to get more out of the Holy Week services in the years to come.

The foreword is written by Christopher Kypros, a dedicated choir director and composer who has poured his soul into leading choirs in singing these beautiful hymns. Consisting of sixty-one short reflections, this book guides the reader from the Saturday of Lazarus through the Agape Vespers on Pascha, taking us on a familiar journey that many of us know through Scripture, but instead leading us by way of the beautiful and powerful hymns that comprise the greatest story ever sung.

This book is dedicated in loving memory of Artie Palios.

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.

WELCOME TO OUR PARISH

If you are new to the Tampa Bay area or just visiting, we would love to get to know you better.

PLEASE TEXT THE WORD

"WELCOME" TO 813-790-5950

FOLLOW THE PROMPTS TO GIVE US
YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION AND FROM THERE
YOU WILL BE DIRECTED TO OUR ONLINE CONNECTION CARD

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

St. John's Bookstore



Our bookstore has an entire section of titles geared toward the many issues young married couples face. Check out the following books along with many others in our bookstore this month.

Under the Laurel Tree – Grieving Infertility with Saints Joachim and Anna

Children of My Heart – Finding Christ Through Adoption

Fertile Ground – A Pilgrimage through Pregnancy

Of Such is the Kingdom – A Practical Theology of Disability

Parenting Toward the Kingdom – Orthodox Christian Principles of Child Rearing

Preserve Them O Lord – A Guide for developing marital unity for Orthodox Couples

Sunday School News

On behalf of our Sunday School we pray that the beginning of your Lenten journey has been meaningful. The Sunday School started off right with our Pre-Lenten Retreat on Feb. 26th followed by a Parent Retreat led by Fr. Stavros.

In addition to our Pre-Lenten Retreat for our students and parents, our Sunday School topics for February were: The Publican and the Pharisee, The Prodigal Son, and The Last Judgement. Of course we also celebrated Valentine's Day by making cards and crafts for our parents.

Last month's YOUTH SUNDAY took place on Feb. 5th. We need to thank our children who are singing louder and more beautifully than ever and our Epistle Reader, Toulia Trakas. She did an exceptional job. We would not have a Youth Choir without Maria Xenick. She has done an amazing job directing our youth in this music program. Thank you Maria.

Our Hope and Joy sponsored SOUPER BOWL of CARING was a huge success on Feb. 12th. Thank you to Zackie Ameres and our students who helped with this fundraiser for Hope's Children's home. We would like to thank everyone for their support of Souper Bowl of Caring. We collected two BIG pots of food and a generous amount of money. Thank you again for supporting our youth ministry and the underprivileged youth in our greater community.

One of the best ways to prepare for Pascha is to participate in the Sacrament of Confession. Each Sunday School class had an the opportunity to participate in this important Sacrament. On February 19th our 4th, 5th and 6th Graders attended. On January 22nd our 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Graders participated in the Sacrament of Confession. Our 7th - 12th graders went to Confession during their GOYAN Lenten Retreat. We would like to thank Father Stavros for hearing the confessions of these children. It is a wonderful thing to see our children going to Confession year after year.



March Calendar:

- WEDNESDAY, March 1st: Pre-Sanctified Service and Dinner sponsored by the Sunday School
- Sunday, March 5th: Topic: Icons/Sunday of Orthodoxy
 - First Sunday of Lent
- ALL of the Sunday School students will participate in the Procession of the Icons
- Sunday, March 12th: Topic: Being a Good Friend
 - The Paralytic - Second Sunday of Lent
- Sunday, March 19th: Topic: The Veneration of the Holy Cross
 - Third Sunday of Great Lent
- Sunday March 26th: Topic: Faith - St. John of the Ladder
 - Fourth Sunday of Great Lent YOUTH SUNDAY

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

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

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

Friends of St. John the Baptist - Some of you who receive *The Messenger* do not live in the Tampa Bay area or are members of other Greek Orthodox parishes. We would like to ask for your support of our parish by being a “Friend of St. John the Baptist.” Your contribution as a “Friend” will help offset the cost of mailing *The Messenger*, among other things. Being a “friend” does not make one a steward of St. John the Baptist or afford membership rights and responsibilities, but gives one who is a member elsewhere, an opportunity to make a gesture of financial support to our parish.

Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

Friend of St. John the Baptist:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

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

_____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$200 _____ Other

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

PHOTOGRAPHY MINISTRY

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.



SCHOOL OF GREEK LANGUAGE

All parents who are interested in registration of their children to the School of Greek Language and Culture can communicate with Mr. Giavaras (Tel. 718 419 4413, email: igiavaras@gmail.com).

The lessons take place every Saturday between 12:30pm-2:30pm at Bridgeprep Charter School behind Saint John's Church. The school is tuition free for the first year thanks to the generosity of our great sponsor Mr. Michalis Halikoytakis.

St. John's Bookstore

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



Altar Angels

I would like to personally "Thank" all the ladies who volunteer and devote time to cleaning and beautifying our Church on a weekly basis. Their time and talents are greatly appreciated.

Special thanks to the Altar Angels:

Vickie Peckham, Ourania Stephanides, Tina Andre, Donna and Toulia Trakas, Jackie Voulgaris, Skip Higdon, Georgia Diamantakes and Kathy Kaburis. We are a great team! God Bless You All!

PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY

MEMBERS IN THE SATURDAY OF THE SOULS MEMORIAL SERVICES - March 4

In Memory of

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

****You only need to write the first name of each person. Please mail to the church office by Tuesday, March 1st**

You may also email the names to office@stjohntpa.org

FIFTY-TWO VERSES - I N - FIFTY-TWO WEEKS THE BIBLE PROJECT BY FR. STAVROS



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

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

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

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

Below are verses for the month of March. There is one verse for each week. I have written a few comments below each verse to get your mind going. Don't let my thoughts be your interpretation. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you through your reflection on Scripture. If you have any favorite verse you'd like me to comment on, please forward it to frstav@gmail.com.

March 5-11

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered abused suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward.
Hebrews 11:24-26

These verses from the Book of Hebrews are read on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, the First Sunday of Lent. Moses was a Hebrew. At the time he was born, Pharaoh ordered that all Hebrew males be killed, so that the Hebrews would not overrun the Egyptians. The mother of Moses put him in a basket and put him in the river, where he was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter, who raised him as her own son. Moses, ethnically a Hebrew, could have remained as "royalty" in the house of Pharaoh, but left the fleeting pleasures of that life to become the leader of the Hebrews on behalf of God. Many times in life, we are tempted by the fleeting pleasures of sin. We don't want to either be a disciplined disciple and for sure not a persecuted follower. These verses remind us that we are to keep our eyes on the reward, heaven, even if it means we will receive ill-treatment along the way. Keep your eyes on the eternal prize!

March 12-18

And when they could not get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay.
Mark 2:4

This miracle of the healing of the Paralytic is read on the second Sunday of Great Lent. The miracle is preceded by the paralyzed man being bought by four friends. Many times, we have focused on the importance of friendships. This verse focuses on the creativity of those

friends to get to Jesus. Imagine first the thought of going on the roof to get to Jesus. Imagine the teamwork to hoist a paralyzed man up the walls of the house without him falling or getting injured. Imagine the risk in cutting a hole in the roof of a house that didn't belong to them, because they were so desperately motivated to get their friend to Jesus. Being a Christian today is greatly aided by teamwork. When we have friends around to help us and encourage us, it makes being a Christian not only easier but more comforting, knowing that we are not making the journey alone. We also have to be a little bold in our expression of Christianity. We might not cut literal holes in the roof of a house, but we need to cut some holes in the fabric of society that is becoming increasingly anti-Christian, and perhaps for good reason, perhaps because the Christians aren't acting like Christians. Perhaps we don't need boldness in the form of radical action but it is bold enough just to stick to the tenets of Christianity in the face of constant temptation to abandon them.

March 19-25

For whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.

Mark 8:38

This verse is read on the Third Sunday of Lent in the Gospel reading. There are two meanings to the word "pride". The first is a good thing—to be proud of someone, like your child, or to take pride in working hard or being accurate—this is a good kind of pride. The second is not a good thing—when we are proud to the point of being haughty or exclusive, when we do things only to benefit our egos, this is not a good kind of pride. Jesus tells us that we should be proud Christians, not in the bad elitist sense but in the working hard and being accurate sense. If we are ashamed of Jesus and of our Christianity, Jesus tells us that he likewise will be ashamed of us. And this will affect how we stand before the Lord "in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." In fact, this generation has become adulterous and sinful precisely because we are too proud as individuals and we are not putting pride in our Christianity. We are not working hard and being accurate in our Christianity but instead are leading with our own egos, whatever feels good to us. Christianity is a faith where we conform to God, and do not have God conform to us. We revolve our lives around Him, with Him at the center. When we have pride in the sense of working hard at our Christianity, our Father will also be proud of us, the kind of pride that a father has for his children, this is the pride that God will have for us, His children, when we work hard not to be caught up in the adulterous and sinful times in which we live.

March 26-April 1

And when He had entered the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And He said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting."
Mark 9:28-29

On the fourth Sunday of Great Lent, we read about the healing of a boy who suffered from an evil spirit. The father of the boy asked the disciples to cast it out and they could not. After Jesus cast it out, the disciples asked Him why they could not. He told them that this kind can only be cast out by prayer and fasting. Prayer and fasting go hand in hand. Fasting without prayer is dieting. Both prayer and fasting are a form of discipline. Prayer disciplines the soul while fasting disciplines the body. Both are done to help us stay focused on Christ. In prayer, we talk to Him. In fasting, we learn to discipline our bodies by going without certain kinds of foods (including many we love) so that we have the discipline to avoid the temptations that constantly entice us to go away from Christ. There are lots of "demons" in the world—lots of temptations that try to possess us. Many of them are in the form of addictions—like to alcohol, drugs, pornography, the internet in general. These addictions take over our minds, our thoughts, our actions, our bodies. It takes great effort to tame an addiction. Most addictions cannot be overcome, but rather are managed. And spiritually, a great way to combat an addiction is through prayer, which focuses us on God, and fasting, which disciplines us to avoid sin. **Certain chemical addictions are very powerful and require medical care and psychological guidance from people that God has called to be His healing vessels. Prayer and fasting are important, but it is also sometimes vital and necessary to go to a profession for help in healing.



Welcome Ministry-Maria Xenick

Joshua 24:15 “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”

Our verse of the year (above) and our word of the year for 2023, SERVE, gave me pause to reminisce about the legacy of serving that both of our sets of parents and grandparents gave to our family. They served in so many diverse ministries, which set the foundation for our faith. I credit them for giving me the desire to serve in various ways. I have taught Sunday school for many years and I love being with the kids! I am so blessed to serve alongside my husband Mike (we have sung in the choir together for almost 40 years!) and our three children, who each serve in their own unique ways.

It is a privilege to serve with the Welcome Ministry. With all humility, I can say that I have a heart for hospitality, and I always hope to use it in a way that honors the Lord and others who we meet. Our Welcome Ministry helps to set the environment for people to enter our parish and more easily integrate into the community. If you would like to serve as a greeter, please let me or any other greeter know! And if you try it once and decide it isn't for you, that's ok too!

While it might be a pretty awesome experiment to have every parishioner be a greeter at some point just to experience what it is like to say hello to everyone as they enter or exit, the truth is, not everyone would enjoy it. If you aren't sure how or where to serve, look at your interests and your abilities. Anything you are good at is a gift, and you can share that gift by using it to help others. In the words of a famous athletic brand, “just DO it!” May you find the encouragement to seek out a ministry here at St. John where you can serve and share your unique gifts, so you can grow closer to Christ and to others.





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

SIX BASICS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Are you interested in growing spiritually? Most Christians are not.

The usual category for this topic is discipleship. Believers *should* want to become more like Christ. However, in my experience, most don't because they do not understand the benefits of such growth. This is because they do not understand the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit produces fruit like love, joy, peace, and hope. **Who would not want to grow more of such fruit in their personal life?**

I am addressing especially believers who grew up in infant-baptizing churches, which includes most mainline churches. There the emphasis is on educating children so they can confirm the faith affirmed for them at their baptism by their parents and sponsors. Confirmation is usually done at age 14 at the end of grade school. Most children do believe the faith they are confirming—as much as 14-year-olds can. Some Evangelicals have a similar pattern: infant dedication and believer baptism, which often happens around the age of 14.

The high value for infant-baptizing churches is a life of faithfulness to confirmation vows. This practice “worked” for centuries, producing many fine, upstanding Christians. It's not working so well anymore. The difference now is living in a post-Christian society where Christian life and values are constantly under assault, already in high school and especially in college.

Most pastors witness how many of their confirmands disappear from church life after they have fulfilled their parents' expectations. In my church we confirm about forty children a year, meaning we have approximately 160 in high school in a given year. Yet youth events draw only about one-tenth that number.

No one asks why a child should grow physically. It just happens. Physical maturity is reached in the late teens. Basic personality is set in the early twenties. *Spiritual maturity* takes a lifetime.

In biblical Greek, maturity means to become all you can be. That's what Paul meant when he encouraged church leaders to build up the body of Christ until we all become mature, reaching to the heights of Christ's full stature (Ephesians 4: 12). There is no spiritual-growth endpoint in this life.

Spiritual growth is basically a two-sided affair for developing a closer relationship with God. We naturally focus on our part. But the initiative for growth lies with God, acting through the Holy Spirit. Our part is to regularly put ourselves where the Spirit can work on us. Church is one place, but so are many situations in daily life. Spiritual GROWTH is mostly about those other places.

Go to God in Prayer and Worship

Both exercise your relationship with God—prayer in private and worship in community.
Read God's Word for You

Scriptures can be read in many ways. For GROWTH, read for applications to your personal life.
Obey the Challenge to Deny Yourself

Jesus issued the challenge to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him.
Witness Through Servant Behavior

Actions speak louder than words. Biblical words about faith mean little to unbelievers.
Trust God in a New Venture

A basic meaning of faith is to trust. Test your trust through actions beyond your comfort zone.
Humble Yourself with Discipline

Chose a discipline to regularly keep yourself humble before God and others.

Why should you invest time in practicing the Six Basics? Simply, you will experience a more rewarding personal life. Where would you like to be in the future? In the Spirit, the best is yet to come.



YOUNG ADULT LEADERS
OF TAMPA BAY

Prepare Your Mind

STAY ON THE PATH

YOUNG ADULT RETREAT



CHRISTO PAPPADEMOS
KEYNOTE SPEAKER



DEAN & VICTORIA TIGGAS
SESSION LEADERS



DAVID TRACHSEL
GUEST SPEAKER

SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 2023 9:00 - 2:00 PM
HOSTED AT SAINT STEFANOS CHURCH IN ST. PETERSBURGH, FL

Community life at St. John!



**GOYA Clearwater Winter Event
January 27- 29**



JOY Tweens- January 29



GOYA



**Lock- in
February 4**

Family Calendar for Great Lent 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
February 26 <i>Matthew 6:21</i> Sunday of Forgiveness Divine Liturgy Forgiveness Vespers <i>Ask forgiveness of your family members</i>	27 <i>Psalms 95:6</i> Clean Monday Great Lent begins Canon of St. Andrew Holy Unction Service WORSHIP <i>No screens today</i>	28 <i>1 Chronicles 16:29</i> Call your Godparents to wish them a Blessed Lent	March 1 <i>Romans 12:1</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy <i>Pray for your priest</i>	2 <i>Hebrews 12:28</i> <i>Silently pray about how much God loves you</i>	3 <i>Psalms 63:3-4</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Salutations to the Virgin Mary <i>Make a prosphora bread to offer at church</i>	4 <i>Psalms 150:6</i> Saturday of the Souls St. Theodore Divine Liturgy <i>Pray for a loved one who has passed away</i>
5 <i>John 1:44-45</i> Sunday of Orthodoxy Divine Liturgy <i>Bring an icon from home to have it blessed</i>	6 <i>Psalms 133:1</i> Great Compline <i>Donate clothing to a charity COMMUNITY</i>	7 <i>Romans 12:4-5</i> Secretly put a plant on a neighbor's porch	8 <i>Proverbs 27:17</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy <i>Pray for sick children</i>	9 <i>Galatians 6:2</i> <i>Send a card to a friend who lives in another state</i>	10 <i>Matthew 18:20</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Salutations to the Virgin Mary <i>Make a list of five things you are thankful for</i>	11 <i>Hebrews 10:24-25</i> <i>Forgive someone who hurt you</i>
12 <i>Mark 2:3-5</i> St. Gregory Palamas Divine Liturgy <i>Give your Sunday School teacher a handmade card</i>	13 <i>John 13:34</i> Great Compline <i>Make and send a get-well card to someone who is sick</i> LOVE	14 <i>John 3:16</i> Draw a picture of the Cross with the word "love" on it	15 <i>Luke 10:27</i> Paraklesis Pre-Sanctified Liturgy <i>Pray for world leaders</i>	16 <i>1 Peter 4:8</i> <i>Do an intentional act of kindness for someone at school</i>	17 <i>1 John 4:18-19</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Salutations to the Virgin Mary <i>Smile at everyone you walk by today</i>	18 <i>1 Corinthians 13:4-7</i> <i>Make a donation to a charity you love</i>
19 <i>Mark 8:34</i> Veneration of Holy Cross Divine Liturgy <i>Bring a flower home from the cross</i>	20 <i>Philippians 4:9</i> Great Compline <i>Learn the words to a new prayer</i> LEARNING	21 <i>Isaiah 1:17</i> Read about the life of your patron saint	22 <i>Psalms 119:73</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy <i>Pray your teachers</i>	23 <i>Titus 3:14</i> <i>Choose a Bible verse and put it on your refrigerator</i>	24 <i>2 Peter 3:18</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Salutations to the Virgin Mary <i>Read a favorite Bible story with your family</i>	25 <i>Luke 1:35</i> Annunciation to the Virgin Mary Divine Liturgy <i>Thank God for something in nature He created</i>
26 <i>Mark 9:23-24</i> St. John of the Ladder Divine Liturgy <i>Draw a ladder and put a Lenten goal on each step</i>	27 <i>Ephesians 2:10</i> Great Compline <i>Clean your room without being asked</i> SERVICE	28 <i>2 Corinthians 9:11-12</i> Do a chore in your yard	29 <i>3 John 1:16</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy <i>Pray for first responders</i>	30 <i>Matthew 5:16</i> <i>Find a charity where your family can volunteer</i>	31 <i>Psalms 100:2</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Akathist Hymn <i>Visit someone who lives alone</i>	April 1 <i>1 Peter 4:10</i> <i>Make and serve someone a Lenten meal today</i>
2 <i>Mark 10:45</i> St. Mary of Egypt Divine Liturgy <i>Sing "Agios o Theos" in Church today</i>	3 <i>Matthew 6:33</i> Great Compline <i>Make a plan for the Holy Week services you will attend</i> PRIORITY	4 <i>Colossians 3:17</i> Write the names of your family members to give the priest to pray over during Holy Week	5 <i>Proverbs 3:5-6</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy <i>Pray for people who feel alone</i>	6 <i>Philippians 2:4</i> <i>Memorize a short bible verse</i>	7 <i>Proverbs 3:9-10</i> Pre-Sanctified Liturgy <i>Tell your family members what you love about them</i>	8 <i>John 11:27</i> Saturday of Lazarus Service of Proskomide Divine Liturgy <i>Watch a faith based movie or show with your family</i>
9 <i>John 12:15</i> Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy Vespers Service of the Bridegroom <i>Replace your old palm cross</i>	10 <i>Matthew 25:14-15</i> Holy Monday Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Service of the Bridegroom <i>Read the story about Joseph from the Old Testament</i>	11 <i>Luke 17:3-4</i> Holy Tuesday Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Service of the Bridegroom <i>Read the story of Kassiane the hymnographer</i>	12 <i>Psalms 147:3-4</i> Holy Wednesday Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Service of the Bridegroom Holy Unction <i>Receive Holy Unction</i>	13 <i>John 15:12-13</i> Holy Thursday Liturgy of St. Basil 12 Gospels service <i>Color eggs red for Pascha</i>	14 <i>Joshua 24:15</i> Holy Friday Royal Hours Unnailing from the Cross Lamentations <i>Pray about Jesus on the cross</i>	15 <i>Acts 2:22-24</i> Holy Saturday Liturgy of St. Basil Resurrection Service <i>Come see the leaves scattered at the morning liturgy</i>
16 <i>Psalms 51:10</i> PASCHA Agape Vespers Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!	17 <i>2 Corinthians 4:16</i> Joyfully sing Christ is risen!	18 <i>Ephesians 4:23</i> Crack your red eggs while saying "Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!"	19 <i>Isaiah 41:1</i> Find a picture with the verse John 3:16 and print it out	20 <i>Romans 12:2</i> <i>Play with someone who feels left out</i>	21 <i>Colossians 3:10</i> Life-Giving Fountain Divine Liturgy <i>Say a prayer for the gift of clean water</i>	22 <i>Isaiah 40:31</i> <i>Make resurrection rolls</i>

March 2023						Apr 2023 ▶
◀ Feb 2023	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
						Sat
Cooley's Anemia	**Fast Day			1 ^{**} 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Dinner/Discussion in Hall	2 ^{**} Adult Greek School Choir Practice	3 ^{**} 9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations 6:30 p.m.
5 ^{**} 1 st Sunday of Great Lent- Sunday of Orthodoxy Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Parea Dance Practice JOY Tweens Meeting	6 ^{**} Compline 5:30 p.m. Young Adult dinner/discussion 6:30 p.m.	7 ^{**} Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	8 ^{**} 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Dinner/Discussion in Hall	9 ^{**} Adult Greek School Choir Practice	10 ^{**} 9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations 6:30 p.m.	11 ^{**} Young Adult Lenten Retreat- at St. Stefanos, St. Pete
12 ^{**} 2 nd Sunday of Great Lent- St. Gregory Palamas Daylight Saving Begins Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. AHEPA/Daughters	13 ^{**} Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	14 ^{**}	15 ^{**} 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Dinner/Discussion in Hall	16 ^{**} Adult Greek School Choir Practice Father Stavros at the Seminary 3/16-3/18	17 ^{**} 9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations 6:30 p.m.	18 ^{**} Community Outreach Young at Heart
19 ^{**} 3 rd Sunday of Great Lent- Veneration of the Holy Cross Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m.	20 ^{**} Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Parish Council 6:30 p.m.	21 ^{**} Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Philoptochos Board Meeting (zoom) Fr. Stavros on Podcast with Fr. Nick Louh—8:00 p.m.	22 ^{**} Paraklesis 10:00 a.m. 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Dinner/Discussion in Hall	23 ^{**} Adult Greek School No Choir Practice	24 ^{**} 9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations 6:30 p.m.	25 ^{**} Annunciation of Virgin Mary Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Women's Retreat 10-4
26 ^{**} 4 th Sunday of Great Lent- St. John of the Ladder Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Youth Sunday Greek Independence Program/Luncheon Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	27 ^{**} Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	28 ^{**} Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	29 ^{**} 9 th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Dinner/Discussion in Hall	30 ^{**} Adult Greek School Choir Practice	31 ^{**} 9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m. Divine Liturgy 8:15 p.m.	

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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.

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Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347
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IIAPEA, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
IIANHITYPI, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

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Elena Paras Ketchum 813-229-0144

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Alex limberatos 262-370-0586

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Joy Tweens

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Dwight Forde 727-685-9028

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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.