

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

THE MESSENGER

“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

June/July 2014

MISSION STATEMENT:

St. John Greek Orthodox Church is dedicated to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.

VISION:

The church shall seek to fulfill its mission by:

1. Embracing the Spiritual Life of the Orthodox Church through regular prayer, worship, and frequent participation in the sacraments.
2. Supporting the Church through stewardship of time and talent and sacrificial giving.
3. Providing a welcoming, caring, loving environment.
4. Having its members exemplify Orthodox Christian character and morals.
5. Supporting ministries that facilitate the overall mission of the Church
6. Exemplifying commitment to community service and charitable outreach.
7. Creating an environment which encourages members to grow in their faith.

DOUBLE ISSUE OF THE MESSENGER—JUNE/JULY

This is our one double-issue of the Messenger that we put out every year, covering June and July. There are many articles to read, including the Oratorical Festival speeches given by our children. I am encouraged by the many people who comment on how much they enjoy the Messenger and I wish you not only “Happy Reading” but also a great summer. Remember, God doesn’t take a vacation from Church and I hope you won’t either. If you are visiting another town, please look up and see if there is an Orthodox Church there, as most major cities in our country have one. God bless you all! +Fr. Stavros

Father Stavros’ Message

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Acts 6:1-4

As the Apostles began to grow the Church following Pentecost, they quickly realized that without an infrastructure, and without assistance, there was no way that the Church could a) grow and b) do all the things that the Church was supposed to do. Because the Church includes teaching and preaching, praying and ministering, but also do-ing—leading efforts to outreach and help. The experience of the Church for some members is limited to an occasional sacrament. For others it is just the Sunday liturgy. But the Church is far more than services and sacraments—if the two greatest commandments of Christ are to love God and to love one another in the same way that we love God, then the focus of the

Church is a RELATIONAL MINISTRY—the Church seeks to help us love God through prayer, worship and teaching, and it seeks to help us love others through ministry towards them.

A powerful sermon or a nice article in The Messenger is not going to convert most people. I wish it were that easy. Then a priest could sit behind a desk or stand behind a pulpit and convert many and the job of the Church and the priest would be relatively easy—gear up for a sermon on Sunday, write one article a month for the newsletter. No, this is not how the Church works, and this is not the way that the faith by and large, is spread.

The spreading of the Gospel occurs in a relational context. If you read the New Testament, regarding the ministry of Christ, you will see that the overwhelming majority of His encounters with people were in small groups or even individually. Sure, there was the Sermon on the Mount and the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, but there were many more instances of small encounters—an encounter with Zacchaeus (Luke 19), or an adulterous woman (John 8), a blind man (John 9), a centurion (Matthew 8), Nikodemus (John 3), the

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woman at the well (John 4), the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda (John 5), just to name a few. In each of these instances, Jesus took time to teach, to heal, to inspire ONE person at a time. He met people where they were, so that He could lead them to Him. He didn't wait in an office for people to make appointments, but He went to them. The ministry of the church is relational. The Gospel is spread most effectively, it seems, to one person at a time.

This month, we will make history in our church. For the first time, we will employ a Pastoral Assistant. After four years of study at Holy Cross Seminary, Charlie Hambos, who grew up in our parish, is going to join with me in making a full time ministry team. We thankfully have many volunteers who comprise our ministry team but now we are adding a full time person to this team. This is a time of excitement for all of us as we begin this new chapter. It's also going to be a time for learning for our whole community, as we make an adjustment to welcoming a full-time ministry person. This month's message is not only dedicated to welcoming Charlie but to explain what we hope to accomplish in this community having a Pastoral Assistant, as well as beginning to disseminate what Charlie will be doing in this role.

First, I want to put out a few things so that there is not any confusion. If a person wishes to get married and be an ordained Orthodox clergyman, then he must be married before his ordination to the Diaconate. Charlie is planning on getting married one day, so this means that he will not be ordained as a priest or as a deacon until that time. Secondly, one must be ordained in order to distribute the sacraments, so Charlie will not be helping with Holy Communion on Sundays. So, what do we hope to gain through a pastoral assistant?

The easy answer is that a pastoral assistant will bring depth to our relational ministry. Instead of one person being available on a full time basis to teach, to preach and to counsel, we will now have two. Charlie will keep regular office hours and will be available to meet with people to guide them to a deeper understanding of the faith.

There are so many ministries running at our church, and this is a good thing. We had 7 small group Bible studies operating throughout this past year (they will resume in late summer). A second full time ministry person will insure that someone can occasionally visit each small group to answer questions and work with each group. Our average attendance at GOYA is between 20-25. It is very difficult to make a presentation to 25 teenagers when the group spans 7th-12th grade. First of all, it is difficult to lead a discussion with 25 people of any age. Secondly, the age and maturity span makes it difficult to have a "one size fits all discussion." A pastoral assistant will allow for smaller and similar age groupings in GOYA and other youth ministries.

A pastoral assistant will be another person available to interface with ministries and ministry heads. He will also be a back-up to the chanter, be able to serve in the altar, be able to visit Sunday school classes (which is something a priest could never do), will give sermons and write articles. Going back to the above scripture, a pastoral assistant can do many of the things that I am currently doing but things that don't necessarily require a priest—examples include doing wedding rehearsals, or handling paperwork for sacraments, and many administrative tasks. And with another person doing some of the ministries that the priest is currently doing, ministries that do not necessarily require a priest to do them, this will allow me as the priest to do a better job with the ministries that require a priest to do them. Just as the Apostles became exasperated with the great work to do without enough help to do it, they were more effective in their Apostolic mission once effective help had been found. The ministries of St. John will be even more effective and far reaching, I believe, now that effective help is coming. We hope to expand existing ministries, like ministry to college students, as well as to create new ministries with the arrival of our Pastoral Assistant.

Having said this, the coming months will be a learning process for everyone. There is a lot for Charlie to learn as he begins his first foray into full time parish ministry. There is a lot for me to learn in terms of dividing up responsibilities so that the ministries can be done most effectively. There is a lot for everyone to learn in terms of having two people who can answer many of the ministry calls. It will take a few months to really flesh out a job description for Charlie and for all of us to become efficient in working together.

I would also be remiss if I didn't say a word of thank to our membership at large. The fact that our church has grown and that our financial stewardship has grown to a point where we both need and can afford to take the step of hiring a pastoral assistant is due in part to you. Thank you for working together to make this dream a reality!

So, there are two words of the day. The first is patience. As with anything new, setting a good foundation for having a pastoral assistant and what he can do for our community will be a process and that process will require patience. But the second and most appropriate word for the day is excitement. What a beautiful thing that not only we are getting our first pastoral assistant in the history of our community, but what a beautiful thing that this person is someone we know and love, one of us—Charlie Hambos. For those who don't know Charlie, he grew up in our community, served in the altar for many years. I've known Charlie for almost ten years now, watched him graduated high school, go to and graduate college, and had many occasions to discuss the call to ministry with him. In 2010, our community celebrated Charlie's entrance into Holy Cross Seminary. It's hard to believe that that was four years ago! Each time Charlie has returned, we've witnessed his growth and preparation for ministry. His sermons, his chanting and his leadership skills have all grown tremendously. And so now, we open a new chapter in the life of our parish by welcoming back Charlie Hambos as our pastoral assistant. And we pray that this new working relationship with Charlie will last for a long time into the future. Welcome back Charlie Hambos! Congratulations on your graduation from the Seminary. And welcome to your new role as our Pastoral Assistant!

A Word of Thanks to our Sunday School Teachers—On Sunday, May 18, we had our end of the year ceremony for Sunday school. I wanted to share a few thoughts on that wonderful day. First, I want to thank the parents of a RECORD 155 SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDENTS who are part of our Sunday School program. We keep getting more and more kids every year, which is great. Secondly, I want to thank our Sunday school students themselves for coming so faithfully each week. It is so wonderful to see them come for Communion each Sunday, and to see them growing up. Kids that I baptized nearly 10 years ago are now in 4th grade, some of them were maidens during Holy Week, and others are about to become altar boys. How the time flies! Third, I want to thank Vickie Peckham for continuing to be our Sunday school director. Her enthusiasm for teaching our children is contagious. She spends so many hours behind the scenes coordinating things. I want to also thank Tammy Christou who jumped in this year to assist Vickie in directing the Sunday School.

The music ministry, led by Maria Xenick and Pam Irwin, has been inspiring and miraculous in its own right. As I mentioned in church on May 18, the entire section of pews next to the choir loft was filled with children, singing along and many times instead of the adult choir. What a beautiful thought that we are preparing this group of children to take the seats in the adult choir loft one day. Many churches have choirs that are aging without anyone in the wings being trained. We are doing two beautiful things through the youth choir—secondly, we are preparing a new group of choir members for the future, but first and most important, we are giving our children a love of worship and singing from a young age, so that whether they ever join the adult choir or not, they love and appreciate the liturgical music of our church. They will know it and can participate in singing all their lives.

And now to the Sunday school teachers. The commitment to be a Sunday school teacher is a serious one. It means that every week, you not only have to be at church and teach a lesson, but that you have to be preparing to teach. It means spending time during the week reading and researching and preparing to teach a lesson. It means coming up with meaningful, fun and creative ways to articulate the message of Christianity. In some classes, the age range is diverse. In all classes the levels of learning are diverse. And in all classes, at times, attendance is not predictable. Putting together all of these factors, it is indeed a challenge to teach Sunday school. And I want to sincerely thank our teachers for doing a great job this year. The fact that our numbers are growing and that the average weekly attendance of Sunday school is higher than it's ever been is a good testimony to the efforts of these teachers. So, I thank you again for all of your help this year!

Thoughts on the Vigil at the Holy Cross

I was wondering how I would feel this year, the second time I stood at the foot of the cross, on the Vigil for Holy Thursday. This year I found myself reading the Psalms and looking directly at Jesus on the cross during my readings. My heart was saying, "soon you will be free of pain and suffering and we will rejoice in your resurrection Lord! Thank you and I will try harder this year to walk the walk..." Found myself in direct union, for that hour... amazing feeling. This will always be a part of my journey... Thank you Charlie for the experience again! So comforting to know now that many parishioners are finding joy in the Vigil and keeping watch over our Lord!

Victoria Melton

I had the opportunity to participate in the vigil again this year. I came away from it thinking that God is trying to teach me something about time. His timing is perfect and, when we are truly seeking Him, then our worship of Him is timeless. Last year, I meant to set my alarm but somehow didn't yet I was awakened in just enough time to rush to the church for the vigil. This year, after reading from the Psalms and after admiring Christ's condescension to the cross which was directly under the Pantokrator, apparently I read for an extended period of time (while our leader, Charlie, took a well-deserved nap). I have no idea how long I read, but someone eventually relieved me. I can only imagine that Heaven is like that with us worshipping Christ sans timekeeping for eternity. I imagined myself keeping vigil while Christ hung on the cross almost 2000 years ago and I look forward to re-enacting this event again next year.

Brett Mourer

I was once again so happy to be able to participate in this year's Vigil at the Cross. I arrived early in the morning, and the church was dark, quiet, and peaceful. I was there at the same time as a few family members and friends, and all of us were focused on one thing – Christ hanging on the cross in the middle of the night. We took turns reading from the book of Psalms. Reading the Psalms out loud is an awesome way to pray selflessly – rather than praying for something for yourself, these words speak of God's promises, of His mercy, and of praise and of glory. It is most humbling to say them to our Lord and Savior as he hung on

the cross, abandoned by his friends. I was once again inspired by the fact that we at St. John did not leave Him alone through the night. Spending this time in our beautiful church in prayer is one of the most moving experiences I have had. Thank you to Charlie Hambos for sharing his time so generously with our community to lead this effort. I look forward to continuing this tradition as part of my Holy Week each year.

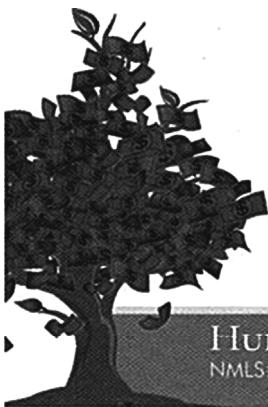
Maria Xenick

I have never read from the book of Psalms or the Bible before so when you asked for those who would take the time and come during the wee hours of that Thursday evening I was not sure if this task was for me. I attended service Wednesday evening and as you were speaking you had stated, "today was the day to receive, so tomorrow is the day to give". At that point I decided to "give", regardless of being uncomfortable. The following evening I arrived at the church around 1am and completed a total of about 20 minutes of reading which was at times difficult, but ultimately satisfying. I woke up the next morning full of energy and accomplishment, although a very challenging week I had an open mind and inner support to make it successful. We all find ourselves at times receiving, receiving, and receiving, this was a great opportunity to give and I look forward to next year.

Dan Bavaro

We had a unique experience since our whole family participated together. When we all bended down on our knees in front of the cross as a family, we were never closer together than any other point throughout the last 40 days or so. The experience made us wonder if we would have been brave and strong enough to have actually stood by His cross during His crucifixion. Would our children have been willing more so than us? Being able to read prayers during such a "quiet" moment in the church really brought us peace, especially hearing the voices of our children read as well. We were honored to be able to participate and hope to do it again.

Stefan and Kara Katzaras, Nicholas, James and Eleni



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Liturgical Schedule for June/July 2014

Sunday, June 1 Sunday of the Holy Father of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicea
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (Thomas Shearer, Alexios Diniaco, Nicholas Alsina, Antonio Bavaro, William Sotiropoulos)
Ushers: Mike Trimis, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis
Coffee Hour: Welcome Back Luncheon for Charlie Hambos

Saturday, June 7 Saturday of the Souls
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Memorial Service to Follow

Sunday, June 8 Pentecost
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. (note earlier starting time)
Kneeling Vespers (Service of the Descent of the Holy Spirit) 11:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers: Florin Pastrasciou, Kevin Fentress
Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Sunday, June 15 All Saints Day
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: CAPTAINS ONLY
Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, Perry Katsamakis, Peter Theophanous
Coffee Hour: Junior Olympics Luncheon

Sunday, June 22 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers: Gregory Tisdale, Demetrios Halkias, George Trimikliniotis
Coffee Hour: Philoptochos

Tuesday, June 24 Nativity of St. John the Baptist
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, June 29 Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers: Brett Mourer, Amin Hanhan
Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Monday, June 30 Feast of the Holy Apostles
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, July 6 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Fr. Michael Soter will be our guest celebrant
Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas
Coffee Hour: AHEPA/Daughter's of Penelope

Sunday, July 13 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Fr. Frank Kirlangitis will be our guest celebrant
Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers: Mike Trimis, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis
Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Sunday, July 20 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Fr. Stavros will be the celebrant
Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers: Florin Patrasciou, Kevin Fentress, Tammy Christou
Coffee Hour: Philoptochos

Sunday, July 27 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Fr. Frank Kirlangitis will be our guest celebrant
Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, Perry Katsamakis, Peter Theophanous
Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Friday, August 1 Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, August 3 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers: Greg Tisdale, Demetrios Halkias, George Trimikliniotis
Coffee Hour: TBA

Monday, August 4 Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, August 6 Transfiguration of our Savior
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, August 10 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve
Ushers: Brett Mourer, Wayne Blankenship, Amin Hanhan
Coffee Hour: Community Outreach

Monday, August 11 Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.

Liturgical Notes for June/July

Saturday of the Souls-There are four Saturdays set aside during the year for us to honor our loved ones who have fallen asleep. One of them is the Saturday before Pentecost, this year, June 7. We will have Liturgy and a memorial service that day. Please bring Kolyva (boiled wheat) along with a list of names of those whom you would like to have commemorated (separate sheet provided).

Pentecost commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles fifty days after Pascha. A special Vespers Service will be held after Liturgy on Pentecost (June 8), where three prayers will be offered, asking for the Holy Spirit to descend upon us as we mark this feastday. As a reminder, we do NOT kneel in church until AFTER the Liturgy on Pentecost (we do not kneel at the Liturgy on Pentecost) at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says "Again and again ON BENDED KNEES let us pray to the Lord."

Nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 24)-This marks the feastday of the Nativity (birth) of St. John the Baptist, the Forerunner of the Lord and patron saint of our parish.

Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul-The Paramounts of the Apostles, Sts. Peter and Paul, have their feastday together on June 29. Sts. Peter and Paul are not only two of our greatest saints but they are two of the greatest sinners. St. Peter denied the Lord three times and St. Paul was persecuting Christians in the early church. They show to us that through repentance, anyone can become a saint.

Feast of the Holy Apostles-June 30 is a day set aside to honor the 12 Apostles as a collective group. Each Apostle has his own individual Feast Day but on June 30, we celebrate all of them as a group.

GOYA

GOYA Meeting June 8-GOYA will have a meeting on Sunday, June 8, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. We will be preparing for the Junior Olympics. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

The GOYA Junior Olympics are Friday, June 13-Sunday, June 15. Make sure you sign up with Elaine Halkias (629-1843) if you are going to attend. New GOYAnS—those entering the 7th grade this fall—are welcome to join us for this meeting.

SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDIES

The Small Group Bible Studies will be on hiatus for the summer with the exception of the men's group, which will meet occasionally on Wednesdays and the Young Adult Group (see below). The Bible Study Small Groups will resume in September.

YOUNG ADULT BIBLE STUDY

The Young Adults will be taking a break from Bible Study and gathering over the summer for a book club! We are reading the book *Becoming Orthodox* by Peter Gillquist and will be meeting 3 times for discussion and fellowship. Please join us if you can! For information about the dates and times of these meetings, please email Mary Ann Konstas at mapkonstas@gmail.com to be included on the email list.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Thank you to everyone who continues to support our Community Outreach ministry to serve the homeless and those in need. For those who don't know, we serve breakfast at First Presbyterian Church on the third Saturday of each month from 8:00-10:30 a.m. Upcoming dates are Saturday June 21, Saturday July 19 and Saturday, August 16. For more information or to sign up to serve one Saturday, please contact, please contact Betty Katherine Palios at bettypalios@gmail.com or 813-468-1596.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

We would like to thank everyone for a successful Sunday School Year and Graduation Ceremony. Debbie and Chris Kavouklis hosted our end of the year party and everyone had such a fabulous time. We can't thank them enough for opening up their home to us.

Congratulations to our High School Graduates. These students were given a Holy Week Book from the Sunday School. We wish Alexa Alsina and Angelina Bertucci the best of luck in college. The following students had PERFECT ATTENDANCE for the ENTIRE YEAR of Sunday School and were acknowledged at our Graduation Ceremony.

+++Congratulations to Teddy Kafantaris, Calliope Kafantaris, Gianni Bavaro, Niko Bavaro, Maria Lola Bavaro, Antonio Bavaro, Yanni Trimikliniotis, Larissa Krinos, and Arianna Krinos.

FATHER STAVROS is such an inspiration to all of us and we appreciate everything that he does. The Sunday School Staff is very thankful for his leadership, guidance and teachings throughout this school year. We would like to thank all of our parents, for bringing their children to Sunday School, and to their children who are always eager to learn more about their faith. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the SUNDAY SCHOOL STAFF for making this Sunday School year a success. They are:

Director of Sunday School: Victoria Peckham
Asst. Director of Sunday School: Tammy Christou

Director Music/Pageant/Retreat: Maria Xenick
Nursery Coordinator: Donna Trakas
Pre-K (3 and 4 year olds): Alexis Scarfogliero and Debbie Nicklow
Kindergarten: Irene Kotaris and Bessie Palios
Grade 1: Heidi Borgeas and Amy Kafantaris
Grade 2: Marina Choundas
Grade 3: Stamie Garcia and Melissa Krinos
Grade 4 and 5: Debbie Ferekides
Grade 6: Victoria Peckham
Grade 7 and 8: Betty Palios
High School: Peggy Bradshaw and Isidoros Passalaris

We are blessed to have most of our teachers returning next year. Betty Palios who has taught Sunday School for a number of years, and who recently got married, will be the only one taking a break from teaching. Congratulations to Betty and Perry on your new life together! We are happy to announce that Kara and Stefan Katzaras will teach our 7th and 8th graders next year.

Our last day of Sunday School was on May 18th and it was also the last Youth Sunday of the year. Our children joined the choir in singing our liturgical hymns under the leadership of Maria Xenick. Melissa Krinos made the Proshora with each classroom this year and also taught them a lesson about it. We would like to thank our Kindergarteners who made the proshora for the May 18th Youth Sunday and our third graders who made the proshora

the previous month. These Youth Sundays have been a blessing and wonderful opportunity for our children.

We are proud to announce that the Sunday School has completed their STAIN GLASS WINDOW fundraiser and have donated \$4500 for their St. Thomas - Sunday School Window. THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU to everyone who has supported this project.

This year we were blessed that Father Stavros provided all the teachers with a weekly lesson that we all shared with our students. This summer we will compile these lessons into a 95 page book that we will use as a resource for many years to come. We can not thank Father Stavros enough for his dedication and commitment to our Sunday School. The topics for April and May were the following:

Sun. April 6th - Sun. Sch. Topic - HOLY WEEK - 5rd Sunday of Lent
Sun. April 13th - Sun. Sch. Topic - Palm Sunday and Pascha
Sun. April 27th - Sun. Sch. Topic - Saints and St. Thomas
Sun. May 4th - Sun. Sch. Topic - Roles in the Church (priest, chanter, choir, altar boys, teachers)
Sun. May 11th - Sun. Sch. Topic - Talents and Gifts
Sun. May 18th - Sun. Sch. Topic - Great Commission

We hope your Holy Week and Pascha experience reaffirmed and will continue to strengthen your faith in Christianity. Of course our children's participation in the many services of Holy Week/ Pascha made the week even more special. As always our Altar Boys did a fabulous job, the Maidens for the Bridegroom Services were superb, and the Myrhh Bearers were beautiful. We also can't forget that our children helped to make the Palm Sunday Crosses and our older students wrapped all the red Easter Eggs. The children of St. John's Church truly understand the meaning of STEWARDSHIP.

Our Holy Friday Retreat was the best ever. We must acknowledge Maria Xenick, Debbie Nicklow, and Amy Kafantaris for coordinating this event, the many people who helped, and of course the children for making this retreat a huge success. The five stations, each of which took a period of time from the Last Super to the Resurrection were very educational. And of course the craft projects couldn't of been more special.

A huge thank you to Peggy Bradshaw for coordinating our St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival again this year. We also need to thank her assistants, the judges, the parents, and of course the children who participated in this important event. CONGRATULATIONS to Angelina Bartucci, Mihail Kaburis, Larissa Krinos and Sophia Krinos who represented our parish at the District Festival on April 5th. Those students presented their speeches to the congregation on May 5th and all the participates including; Christos Nenos, Nicholas Katzaras, Brigham Sibley, Nedi Ferekides, Katina Smith and Peter Hanhan were acknowledged in a ceremony afterwards for their wonderful work.

CONGRATULATIONS to the Students who had PERFECT ATTENDANCE for the month of APRIL:

PRE-SCHOOL: Teddy Kafantaris and Santino Bavaro

KINDERGARTEN: Katerina Sotiropoulos and Maria Nicklow
1ST GRADE: Emily Nicklow, Ariana Choundas-Thatcher, Maria Palios, George Xenick and Calliope Kafantaris
2ND GRADE: Niko Bavaro Toula Trakas, Dimitri Passalaris, and Eleni Katzaras
3RD GRADE: Maria-Lola Bavaro, Andrew Choundas-Thatcher, John Palios, Gennaro Scarfogliero, and Yanni Trimikliniotis
4TH AND 5TH GRADE: Elizabeth Xenick, Hannah Passalaris, Lydia Berar, and Antonio Bavaro
6TH GRADE: Artemis Xenick and James Katzaras
7TH AND 8TH GRADE: Nicholas Katzaras, Christos Nenos, and Brigham Sibley
HIGH SCHOOL: Arianna Krinos and Larissa Krinos

CONGRATULATIONS to the Students who had PERFECT ATTENDANCE for the month of MARCH:

PRE-SCHOOL: Santino Bavaro and Teddy Kafantaris
KINDERGARTEN: Gianni Bavaro
1ST GRADE: Ariana Choundas-Thatcher, Maria Palios, George Xenick, and Calliope Kafantaris
2ND GRADE: Niko Bavaro and Makis Crassas
3RD GRADE: Maria Lola Bavaro, Andrew Choundas-Thatcher, John Palios, and Yanni Trimikliniotis
4TH AND 5TH GRADE: Angelina Krinos, Antonio Bavaro, and Elizabeth Xenick
6TH GRADE: Sophia Crassas and Artemis Xenick
7TH AND 8TH GRADE: Sophia Krinos, Brigham Sibley, and Savvas Ferekides
HIGH SCHOOL: Angelina Bartucci, Arianna Krinos, Larissa Krinos, and Nedi Ferekides

We are already planning for next year. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A STAFF MEMBER and/or if you have any suggestions on how we can improve our Sunday School Program, please e-mail Vickie Peckham at vickiepeckham@gmail.com or call 406-5626.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Get Acquainted Sundays, June 1 and July 6-In an effort to get to know one another better, we are going to continue our "get acquainted Sundays" one Sunday of each month. We will have nametags and markers in the entry way of the Kourmolis Center and will ask that each person put one on during coffee hour and introduce yourself to at least one person that you do not know. This will serve to help us increase our fellowship and sense of community. Our "Get Acquainted Sunday" for June will be Sunday, June 1 and for July it will be Sunday, July 6.

Get Daily Bible Readings Sent to your Email or Phone-One of the best ways to start each day is by reading from the Bible. There are prescribed readings for every day of the year in the Orthodox Church. You can go on the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America website at www.goarch.org, go into the search box and type in "Receive Daily Readings," follow the prompts and have this valuable resource sent right to your phone or email. Reading the Bible is so important and for those of us who don't make the time or are lazy to reach for the Bible, have the readings sent in a way that is easy to remember. Spend some time this new ecclesiastical year in God's Word, the sacred Scriptures!

Constant Contact Emails-Our parish utilizes Constant Contact as a way of staying in touch with parishioners, particularly on subjects that are time sensitive, i.e. funerals, special events, and last minute announcements. To keep you apprised of news in our parish, we will probably be sending out 1 (and no more than 2) message per week. This is an effort not to clog your inbox but to keep you informed of the goings on in our parish.

Junior Olympics-Volunteers Needed-St. John's will be hosting our annual Sunshine State Junior Olympics on June 13-15. This event brings over 200 GOYAns (teenagers) from all over Florida to our parish for a weekend of athletics and spirituality. Byron Nenos (969-2468, nenoslaw@aol.com) serves as the chairperson for this event. But in order for the event to be a success, we need many other volunteers to assist him in many capacities, including working at various athletic venues, cooking and serving at the church, and some administrative jobs, such as entering data as to who won various contests while the event is going on. This event is a chance to not only showcase our community and to do something meaningful for our young people, it is also a chance for us to work together on something and get to know one another better. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Byron Nenos. Thank you.

Parish Council Election Ratified-The Metropolis of Atlanta upheld our March election, which had been protested, ratifying Ed Gerecke, Mike Kafantaris and Sandra Pappas as elected members of the Parish Council. Furthermore, Catherine Mitseas was appointed to fill the seat vacated by Diane Trimis. At long last, a full Parish Council!

A call to all young men interested in serving in the altar-Any young men who are entering fourth grade (or older) who are interested in serving in the altar for next year should contact Fr. Stavros in the church office to be added to a team. All returning altar boys will be put on a new schedule to take effect September 1, so current altar boys need not sign up again. This is for NEW altar boys. Please contact Fr. Stavros by June 30 to be added to the list for the fall. If for some reason, you do not wish to continue to serve in the altar, please let Father know and he will remove you from the list.

Anyone interested in being an usher-Tom Georgas, our head usher, is always looking for people to assist him as ushers of our church on Sundays. Those who serve as ushers are assigned a Sunday to serve every 5-6 weeks and also during Holy Week. The ushers insure that we continue to have good order in our services by directing us to empty seats, answering questions, welcoming new people, and guiding people at Communion and after church. You can find Tom at Georgas@verizon.net.

Fr. Stavros to be out of town for vacation-Fr. Stavros will be taking vacation time as follows this summer: June 16-20, July 21-31; August 7-9. Fr. Stavros will also be at summer camp from July 3-19. Fr. Michael Soter will celebrate the Liturgy with us on Sunday, July 6. Fr. Frank Kirlangitis will celebrate Liturgy with us on Sunday, July 13 and Sunday, July 27. Father Stavros will celebrate all other Sundays of June and July. Also, if you have a pastoral emergency while Father is out of town, please contact the church office. Father will not be answering his cell phone while on vacation or at summer camp, so please call the office with any pastoral issues.

St. John's to Participate in Summer Camp—A large contingent of campers and counselors will be taking part in St. Stephen's Summer Camp this summer. Fr. Stavros has again been appointed camp director by His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios. Charlie Hambos will be at camp during the 2nd, 4th and 5th sessions. Several other counselors will be going from our parish, and a large contingent of GOYAns will be attending as well. One Sunday after the campers return, they will give presentations on their experience in church.

Don't take a vacation from Church this summer! If you are in town, church continues all summer long. If you are traveling, there are Orthodox Church in all major cities in the United States. Call the office and we'll be happy to let you know of Orthodox Churches in areas to which you are travelling.

Live Streaming of Divine Liturgy-Thanks to the hard work of Kevin Fentress and Paul Assimiades, and an anonymous generous donation, we are now live-streaming the Divine Services of the Church. If you go to our website, www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com and find on the menu bar the live streaming option, you can easily tune into the Liturgy if you are unable to attend. Please bear in mind that watching a service on your computer is not a substitute for coming to church. You should attend church in person. However, for shut-ins, people who have a hard time getting to night services, parents with

babies, if you are at home on a week-day and want to hear a week-day service, if you are sick, or can't make the service for some reason, or if you are out of town, please feel free to tune in. The services are live-streamed only and will not be archived.

Connection Cards—We now have what are called “Connection Cards” in the pews of our church. Obviously we want everyone to be connected to our church. If someone is new to our church, we should encourage them to fill out a connection card and join our church. If your contact information has changed, please fill out a connection card and send it to the office so we can update your address, email, etc.



Scan to like St. John on Facebook
[facebook.com/StJohnGOCTampa](https://www.facebook.com/StJohnGOCTampa)



St. John has a Facebook page. Please “like” our page and suggest it to your friends. Announcements are put on their frequently and we will also be posting photos in the near future.

Parish Registry

Baptism-Nicolas Perry, son of Christian and Athena Perry, was baptized on Sunday, May 4. Elefteria Oliver was the sponsor. Na Sas Zisi!

Chrismation-Keith (Demetrius) Howard, was Chrismated on Friday, May 2. Elliott Steele was the sponsor. Congratulations!

Wedding-Speros Ferderigos and Carrie Leigh Alexander were married on Saturday, May 3. Steven Vasilantonakis was the sponsor. Congratulations!

Funeral-Byron Nenos, Sr., passed away on May 2. Funeral services were held on May 8. May his memory be eternal!

Funeral-Helen Evie and Chloe Sofia Sarantos, infant daughters of Chris and Sara Sarantos, were laid to rest on May 9. May their memories be eternal!

Condolences to Diane Norcross, on the passing away of her mother, Stella (Stavroua) Tsangaris, who passed away on April 24. May her memory be eternal!

Congratulations to our Graduates

Charlie Hambos graduated from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Seminary with a Masters of Divinity (M.Div.)

Deborah Doucas graduated from USF with a Masters (with honors) in Public Administration (specializing in non-profit).

Alex Peckham graduated from the University of Florida with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Mass Communications. He will start law school in the fall at the University of Florida.

Alexa Alsina graduated from Plant High School. She is going to attend the University of Florida (UF) this fall.

Angelina Bartucci graduated from Academy of the Holy Names. She is going to attend Boston College this fall.

If you forgot to get us the name of your graduate, please contact the church office and we'll include your graduate in the next issue of the Messenger. And to our High School Grads headed off to college, please send Fr. Stavros your new mailing address so we can add you to the Messenger list and keep you up to date with the goings on at St. John.

Names to be Commemorated for Saturday of the Souls-June 7, 2014

Please write the names of all those whom you wish to be commemorated in the memorial service on the Saturday of the Souls on Saturday, June 7. Please mail into the office or bring to church on that Saturday.

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Oratorical Festival Speeches

In last month's issue of the Messenger, we published several of the Oratorical Festival Speeches offered by our Sunday School Students recently. The remaining presentations are offered below. Please take some time to read and enjoy the thoughts of our young people. Congratulations to each of our participants! We are so proud of you!

St. Paul writes, "God is faithful and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength (1 Cor 10:13). What are some times in your life in which you have experienced the truthfulness of St. Paul's statements?"

- By Sophia Krinos

The Bible is full of God's lessons to us about temptation. From the first chapters of Genesis, man has been tempted, starting with the story of Eve being tempted to eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. God in his wisdom wants us to have a very clear picture of temptation but also shows us the path to resist it.

"At the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide with you a way out." Each of us faces minor temptations every day of our lives. For example, if I am invited to sleep over at a friend's house on a Saturday night, I am tempted to go because it is easy to believe that missing church once is not important, or that praying at home is just as good as praying at church. But, in reality, I know that the idea of sitting at home and meditating or praying for an hour at a time without being interrupted is simply impossible. I know that I need the time at church to focus solely on God and my conversations with him.

Another example is the decision to fast on Sunday morning when your stomach is growling. So I have to decide to follow God's procedure rather than temporarily satisfying my growling stomach. I know that it is important to resist both small and large temptations, for each temptation that I don't resist pulls me further and further from God. If I don't have the strength to resist such a small temptation, how can I resist the larger ones like drugs and alcohol?

There are also many other larger temptations that God gives me the strength to resist. In middle school there is a lot of drama, and a lot of temptation to gossip about other people. Many times I have to

look to my faith in God to give me the strength to avoid confrontations and try to help others resolve their issues. It is not easy at all, and at times I have failed, but God helps me realize my failures and move forward a stronger person.

I also see the temptation to cheat on schoolwork, I have seen others cheat and it is easy to be tempted to take the easy road to a good grade. But I know that cheating would be a stepping stone to bigger sins, and look in my heart and ask God for the strength to do my best, not just take the easy path.

One of the best tools that God has gave me to face temptation is prayer. In Luke, chapter 22, verse 46, he encourages us to pray to avoid temptation, "And he said unto them, why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

In Luke Chapter 11 verse 4, he taught his disciples to pray: "And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."

Paul teaches us a good message on what temptations are and how God will give us his help to pass by temptations. Temptations should be expected, and dealt with in the way that God has showed us. Most importantly, we should look to God when faced with any temptation, and pray that he leads us on the path to his kingdom instead of allowing ourselves to stray down the path of sin.

Sophia Krinos is in 8th Grade.

Some people support, others criticize the public declarations of faith of celebrities, athletes, and actors, such as Tim Tebow, Jonathan Jackson, and Troy Polamalu. How do their acts affect your attitude toward being open about your faith? - By Angelina Bartucci

On a day to day basis in a very secular world, how are we to incorporate our faith? We can find many sources of inspiration around us. Tim Tebow can go on national television and stand up for his faith. Hundreds of thousands of martyrs before us have given up their lives for their faith. As we journey through our daily lives, I challenge myself, and you, to also stay strong in standing up for our beliefs.

As an Orthodox Christian, it can be difficult to practice my faith while trying to conform to what is socially acceptable. Even at my Catholic high school, I worry if it is acceptable amongst my peers for me to do a prayer before I eat. How about just making my cross? Tim Tebow was not worried about what was socially acceptable when he put John 3:16 on his eye black or when he knelt in prayer on the football field. Millions of people criticized and persecuted him for this public decla-

ration of faith, but he did not let it stop him. Tim Tebow inspires me to practice my faith openly. I don't care if someone at school judges me for making my cross; I care about my judgment day with God. I do not want to knock on the door of the Lord and have Him say, "I do not know you" as described in Luke 13:25.

Recently I was on an overnight field trip with my school. I was in the hotel room with three other girls whom I'm not very close with. On the last night of the trip, one of the girls asked me how many times I have missed church this year. I hesitated. Not because I didn't know the answer, but because this girl was not looking to congratulate me on a great church attendance record. I was well aware that admitting I have only missed church once this year would result in a snarky remark or an eye roll. In this short moment of hesitation, I had to decide whether or not I wanted to fit in with the crowd or stand up for who I am and what I believe in. I decided to admit it and told the girls how frequently I attend church. Not to my surprise, I got a sarcastic remark back. Then the three other girls bonded with each other talking about how much they hate going to church. I awkwardly sat there wearing my church T-shirt, and then I started rambling describing our Divine Liturgy and the beauty of our faith. Although I don't think I converted anyone, no matter how hard it may be or what persecution we may face, we should defend the Lord our God. In St. Paul's second letter to Timothy, Saint Paul states "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." I know the hope of eternal life with Christ outweighs any persecution we may face in this life.

So many people have sacrificed their lives by standing up for God. My favorite example of this is St. Sophia and her daughters Faith, Hope, and Love. They lived in a time where Christians were persecuted, and yet they proudly professed their faith to the emperor. St. Sophia's three daughters endured unspeakable torments but because of their love for God felt no physical pain. They were beheaded one by one in front of their mother so that St. Sophia would suffer from seeing her daughter's deaths. How many of us have the same love and devotion to God as St. Sophia and her daughters had. If a shooter broke through the doors of the church right now with a gun and said, "Stand up if you are a Christian!" would we have enough faith to stand up and give our lives for the Lord?

Ephesians 6:11 says "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Every day we must put on our armor. We must fight back with prayers to the Lord our God asking for strength. We need strength to stand up for Him, just as Tim Tebow and the saints did. Every day is a battle, and we must challenge ourselves to put our faith in the Lord, to let our light shine, and to never feel ashamed in our faith in the Lord.

Angelina Bartucci graduates high school this month.

Discrimination in America Today and How the Orthodox View Discrimination - By Nedi Ferekides

Blank stares, followed with an, "Oh," will be forever imprinted on my memory. That's the response I received each time it was revealed that I was a Christian during my freshmen year at a new public high school. I would quietly then answer, "...yeah," aware that this simple fact alienated me from them. I was different; no longer "like" all the other kids.

In today's society, public acts done for religion are either criticized as pretentious or honored as genuine. Tim Tebow writes bible verses. Troy Palamalu makes the sign of the cross. Kevin Durant leads a chapel with his team before every game. All three are high-profile sports stars. How are we to know if their actions are just acts or something much more? Luke 18:9-4 states the parable of a tax collector and a Pharisee praying in a temple. It highlights the difference between them, as the Pharisee was arrogant, praying for the benefit of himself, while the tax collector humbled himself, saying "God be merciful to me a sinner." Thus, when we see the acts of Tebow, Palamalu, and Durant - how are we to know of their true intentions? If Tebow truly just wants to get John 3:16 across, who are we to stop him? If Palamalu wishes to live his life as heaven on earth, why should we judge him? And if Durant wants to see other people walk with the Lord, portraying their God-given gifts before each game, who are we to discourage? As Christians, I think we may all agree that this is not how we should strive to act. Celebrities also face different obstacles in portraying their beliefs compared to us. Fame is a major aspect

that others use to criticize them by. However, Luke 5:15 shows us how fame can be beneficial, as we see Jesus' fame was used to bring the multitudes to him for healing and spreading his message.

Celebrities aren't the only ones who make public declarations of faith. Hollywood does too. Today, there is a movie out in theaters called "Son of God." This movie portrays the life of Jesus; however the whole story is not 100% biblically correct. This movie has attracted lots of attention as Diogo Morgado is the actor portraying Jesus in the film. His casting of Jesus has sparked controversy as Morgado is considered "very good" on the eyes. On Twitter he was even coined as "Hot Jesus." Orthodox Christians believe Christ was both human and God. He was perfect in every way and is depicted in icons as beautiful, with his slender body, long hair, and trusting eyes. So where do we draw the line between entertainment and the true teachings of Christ? Especially if it creates one convert? Luke 15:10 states that "There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

The acts of celebrities are truly unknown to us, however. God, all-knowing as he is, is the only one who truly knows. Whether it is an act or not, public declarations of faith are not necessarily wrong though, as the ultimate goal of life is heaven. Philippians 3:20 says "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Although I am not like any of these celebrities whose fame turns their actions grand, I have still been set apart for my Christian actions. As I said before, others were shocked at my faith and decisions to not partake in different activities. Some even taunted me, daring me to say or do different things. They were shocked at my reluctance, often saying, "Do you think you are too holy for us?" I was eventually even coined the nickname "Holy One." I was amazed that this mattered and tried hiding how it upset me. I wasn't trying to put myself above them in any way and never ridiculed them. Eventually most got over it, but not all, as one girl in particular constantly said, "You wouldn't understand. You're a Christian." My true friends saw beyond my beliefs

though, and I didn't let comments stop me from what I thought was right. This showed me that in today's world, everything you say and do, is watched and often analyzed. Religion and faith are often ideals that can make or break you depending on how your actions are perceived. However, as Orthodox Christians we must remember the verses of Matthew 5:14-16. We are light, that cannot be hidden, thus shine before others, so that they may see our good works and give glory to God.

Nedi Ferekides is going into 11th grade.

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Stewardship Welcoming Committee

Our Welcoming Committee has been busy at work for the last few months. We have welcomed over 50 new people, averaging four new people each week. It is a rewarding service to our church and to those who are coming to St. John for the first time.

The Welcoming Committee wants to encourage new people and visitors to learn about Saint John Greek Orthodox Church in Tampa, FL and to feel at home in our church, in the fellowship hour, and in the many other activities that comprise our parish life. The ultimate purpose of this committee is to actively invite our fellow Orthodox Christians in our community to worship with us, that we greet them warmly, welcome all who enter our doors, offer a place to serve in ministry, and make all feel included. Our goal is to create an experience that is both spiritual and familial, leading them to further serve God and others.

If you are outgoing, friendly and have a love of our Church, then this is the place for you! We need many volunteers to help each week greeting our newcomers and making introductions. We will have a team of four people each Sunday to serve on a rotating basis as greeters in the church and as ambassadors in the Kourmolis Center during coffee hour. We will also need a team to make follow up phone calls to our new potential church members to give them a personal, immediate connection with our parish community. We would love to have enough volunteers so that the commitment would only be once every two –three months.

If you are interested in joining this ministry, please contact Maria Xenick at mpxenick@gmail.com.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Hebrews 13:2

Meeting Schedule for June/July

Tuesday, June 3	Young at Heart	11:30 a.m.	TBA
Sunday, June 8	GOYA	5:00 p.m.	Kourmolis Center

Stewardship Update

	May 15, 2014	May 15, 2013
Pledged Families	300	255
Amount Pledged	\$380,358.04	\$291,207
Average Pledge	\$1,267	\$1,142

If you have pledged for 2014, we sincerely thank you for your support of our church. If you have not pledged for 2014, we ask that you please do so today. If you need a pledge form, please contact the church office and we'll be happy to send you one today. As you can see, we are ahead of last year's pledged amount but still have not met our stewardship goals which are \$400,000 in stewardship pledges and 350 pledging families. Please make your stewardship pledge TODAY if you haven't done so. In order to be considered a member of good standing of the church, you must fill out a form every year. If you need a pledge form, please contact the church office. Thanks!

Editor's Note: *I read articles pertaining to religions on several websites each month. Some articles are inspiring, others are annoying. I try to share some of the articles that I find interesting with you. The following article is somewhat disturbing, because it presents the way many people in modern America feel towards the Christian faith. For many, being a Christian is just a label that comes with no meaning and not much responsibility. At least, if people got to make up their own religion, that's how most people would want it. During the month of May, many of us heard the story of the woman sentenced to death in the Sudan because she would not renounce her Christian faith. As of this writing, no one knows what the final outcome of that story will be. It is sad to me that there isn't a world-wide outcry against killing a Christian. But it should not come as a surprise. What is described below is religion with no accountability, no responsibility, and really no end point. This obviously stands in opposition to what Orthodox Christianity is all about. Our church is not some social club where we merely hang out when we feel like it. And there is an end point—it is called the Kingdom of Heaven. But in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, one has to pass through a judgment of his/her life, done by the Lord Himself. The Bible clearly teaches that those who are judged favorably by God, based on what they have done in their lives, will be found worthy of entering the Kingdom of Heaven. And those whose lives are not judged favorably, will be consigned to Hell, for eternity. So, it matters not what the college students think, or what the anti-Christian media prints. What matters is the truth of Jesus Christ—this is the truth that sets us free from corruption in this life. This is the truth that will affect our entrance into Everlasting Life. I am embedding some comments into the article which follows, which are in italics.*

Millennials Invent New Religion: No Hell, No Priests, No Punishment

By Candace Chellew-Hodge

Isn't it blasphemy to invent a religion?" my student asked with concern.

Every semester, in the comparative religion class I teach at a local community college, I ask my students to divide into groups and create a religion from whole cloth.

"All religions were invented at some point," I offered, reminding him that while Jesus may have assigned Peter to be the rock upon which the church would be built, it was up to everyone else to determine the details. *Yes and no. Jesus gave very explicit details about the Christian Faith in the Bible—He taught about heaven and hell, told His disciples Commandments they needed to follow—love God and love your neighbor—and He taught in Parables that gave a clear understanding of what the Kingdom of Heaven would be like (a reward for those used their talents in Matthew 25, that it would come at an unknown hour in Matthew 25, that there will be a judgment for those who didn't help their neighbor, again in Matthew 25. The parables of the rich man and Lazarus and the Good Samaritan tell us that we must love our neighbors.) As for instructions on how to establish a church, the roots of all the sacraments are found in Scripture—they weren't just "invented". How we OFFER the sacraments was "invented" or rather established by the early Church and is "codified" (meaning practiced the same way the world over) through the Seven Ecumenical Councils (which were held from 325-787, i.e. a long time ago). So, we are not "inventing" our religion, or making it up as we go.*

It's fascinating (depressing) to watch the young (with a smattering of older) students invent a new belief system. I give them some guidelines: their religions must include some common elements such as doctrine, dogma, symbols, music, rituals—and most importantly, reformers. *On the subject of reform, what does that mean? Some people think we should "reform" our church. If we made the services to be all in English or encouraged the congregation to sing or encouraged everyone to go to confession or Bible study or minister to the poor, these would not be reforms but things that have been absent in contemporary churches that have been part of the church for just about all of its history. If "reform" means changing doctrines and taking away responsibilities, then what you have there is creation of a new religion, not the Orthodox Christian Church.*

A few of the groups have had fun with the assignment, coming up with religions like The Church of Charlie Sheen, that could rival anything the Pastafarians have come up with.

But last semester emerged as a perfect case study of millennial religion—a portrait of this generation (those between the ages of 18 and 30) in which one in four call themselves "atheist" or "agnostic" or "nothing in particular."

Most of the religions my class invented incorporated Eastern religious ideas like meditation—especially meditation used for psychological growth or personal fulfillment—as well as ideas like reincarnation and karma. When Western religions were included, the pieces taken from them were such things as pilgrimage, like the hajj to Mecca required by Muslims, or rituals like prayer. But the prayer was of a particular stripe, always centering on personal—or even material—enrichment. *Well, they totally missed the boat when it comes to prayer. Prayer is not about material gain or even personal need. Prayer is our connection with God. Prayer is the ANTITHESIS of selfishness and selfcenteredness. Prayer is selfless abandonment of the self and concentrating ourselves on God as our "center." If meditation consists of telling oneself "I am good, I am good, I am good," then meditation is self-centered. Prayer on the other hand, is where we say "God please love me, have mercy on me, and accept me, even when I am not good." There are religions that espouse a "name it and claim it" when it comes to prayer, and prayers that ask "to enlarge my territory." The consummate prayer is "The Lord's Prayer" where we not only glorify God but we go have an opportunity to ask for our personal needs to be fulfilled—not our egotistical wants and fantasies, but asking God for "daily bread", for the things we need to get through a particular day. And then trusting that He will provide those things. We don't believe in "reincarnation" in our faith—reincarnation is the idea that when our life ends here, we will come back to life in some other way—maybe as an animal, or a rich person, or an athlete. And karma is the idea of "what goes around comes around," that bad begets bad and good begets good and that you want to keep yourself in the right kind of "aura." Our faith isn't about auras or working to come back at the end of life as something else. Life is a passage to God's heavenly kingdom and faith is about keeping that as our focus and living our lives*

accordingly, being in a constant state of preparation for that eventuality.

There were several components of religion that were glaringly absent. Not one of them had career clergy who were in charge of services, rituals, or care of the congregation. *The priesthood is not a modern invention. Jesus Christ entrusted His church to His disciples, who in turn ordained others to carry on the leadership of the Church. Our Hierarchs have what is called "Apostolic Succession," which means that they trace their authority and lineage back to the time of the Apostles. This is certainly not "making it up as we go." Orthodoxy is about "belonging" and "unity" to other congregations, hierarchs, etc. If we decided to just break away and form our own "new and improved 'orthodox' church," well, we wouldn't be Orthodox at all. As for the clergy, in the Orthodox church, the call to priestly ministry is just that, a calling. While this ministry provides me with a salary, it is far more than just a vocation or a job. It is a calling that we priests take seriously. I don't look at the priesthood as a career, but as a life calling. Christ initiated the clergy precisely because He knew that the church would need trained and committed leaders who could do His work on a daily basis. The concept of the clergy is scripture-based, where people are appointed from the congregation at large to serve as the one who will celebrate the services on behalf of the congregation. If there is no leader, whether in church or in any other organization, then there is chaos. How can you have a sports team without a coach? Or a company without a president? Or a restaurant without a manager? Or a school without a teacher? The idea that there can be a church without a priest, or a pastor, or a leader is as preposterous as these example I have just given.*

There were, for the most part, no regular meetings of the faithful. Some had monthly or annual gatherings, like conferences, but most were very individualized religions, centering on personal growth and enrichment away from a physical community. *So, in the "ideal" church, there would be no need to gather regularly. The whole point of our church is that it is the place we gather regularly—for prayer, for worship, for support. I was so proud of our community recently, that on an occasion where we had a funeral for two new-born twins, over 20 people who didn't even know the family came to church to pray with them and support them. Can one grow spiritually on an individual basis? ABSOLUTELY. The one pitfall of community is when you are part of the community but you are not an individual believer—if you never pray or read the Bible or have a hard time believing. But trying to do it without the support of the community is also impossible. We exist "in communion" with other people. No one is an island. And one Christian is no Christian. We are Christians insofar as we exist in relation to other Christians.*

So, right off the bat, this generation has dumped its religious leaders, its priests or gurus, and has dispensed with the obligation of coming together each week as a community. I guess, if there's no one there to deliver a sermon or wisdom talk, what's the point of gathering together once a week? *There is no point in gathering together "for church" if there is no words of wisdom or prayer. You might as well be gathering once a week to hang out, or have coffee or watch sports because that's what church without prayer and worship would be, just hanging out.*

The most intriguing thing for me, however, was the fact that not one of the religions crafted by the student groups included a concept of hell, or any form of punishment for not following the prescriptions of the religion. *That's because no one wants any responsibility to do anything and no one wants any accountability for what they've done. And that is the epitome of selfishness—I'm concerned for nothing and for nobody except myself. And this is the antithesis of the Church and of Christ's message—to serve and*

to give up ourselves for the benefit of someone else. Everybody wants to go to heaven but how many people want to work at getting there. No one wants to go to hell. So, if we eliminate hell from the equation and say that everyone goes to heaven no matter what, we eliminate both problems.

"What happens if somebody transgresses from the beliefs of your religion?" I asked after one presentation.

"They can find another religion," was the answer.

"You mean you would excommunicate them from your religion?" I asked.

"No," they said, "they're always welcome to come back."

The tales of their "reformers" were not much more forceful. Other than tinkering with one or two doctrines or ideas, the reformers they imagined for the assignment were just as "feel good" about the religion as the original founders. *And sadly, this is what Christianity is becoming—a feel good psychological state.*

I asked the class after the presentations why they all chose to eschew the idea of hell.

"Religion today is so ... judgmental," one student offered. *I wonder what today's non-judgmental people think is going to happen at the Last Judgment. We confess in the Creed that God will come again "to judge the living and the dead." That's judgmental. What we are not supposed to do is condemn other people. But we can judge what they are doing is wrong. Take a very simple example—if I tell my son to do his homework or brush his teeth, can't he accuse me of being judgmental. He can say "you are judging me as unfavorable because I won't brush my teeth or do my homework." I don't view that as judgmental. I actually view that as helpful. If I tell my son, "do whatever the heck you want to do," then I am an irresponsible parent who can't complain when my son doesn't finish school or can't hold down a job. It is our JOB as parents to be judgmental in a loving way. When my doctor tells me to lose weight, I don't tell him that he's judgmental. I thank him for pointing toward a healthy lifestyle. And so when Christianity tells us to stop doing wrong and start doing right, the religion is not judgmental, but rather helpful.*

"Yeah," another agreed. "We don't need some church telling us what to do when they don't practice what they preach." *THIS comment I will agree with. Some Churches, including some instances in Orthodox Churches including our own, can be hypocritical at times. The challenge in every church and in every Christian life is to be Christ-centered while avoiding the temptations that are part of our fallen world.*

Here they were utterly consistent with an oft-cited poll of a few years ago, in which many millennials said they found the church too judgmental or hypocritical.

Ultimately, what the class presentations revealed most clearly to me, as a teacher, is how distant this generation is from a full-featured understanding of religion. *I would agree with that topic.*

These students held a romantic view of the idea of meditation, reincarnation, pilgrimage and other elements of major world religions. They like the idea of quiet meditation, especially if it can make their lives less chaotic and more balanced. They like the idea of reincarnation—you get another chance even if you mess this one up! Pilgrimage sounds fun, too. Road trip! Wouldn't it be wonderful if life were fun and frivolous and no one had to DO anything and everyone could be whatever they

wanted to be?! This would actually make the world a horrible place to be—we wouldn't have any discipline of any kind—there would be wanton violence, stealing, like living in the middle of a riot. These students hold an unrealistic but societally reinforced (constantly) idea of self-centeredness that they call self-improvement, reincarnation instead of repentance, and pilgrimage to wherever one wants to go instead of journeying to where God calls us to go.

But, what they miss about all of these religious practices is that deep within each of them lie the core ideas of human suffering, the concept of discipline, and the very real threat of punishment.

For Buddhists and Hindus, meditation is not just a way to calm the mind, it's a vehicle for enlightenment. Meditation, and other yogic/ascetic practices, are not meant to make you simply feel good.

Similarly, reincarnation isn't an invitation to take another ride through life. You must go back around to learn the lessons you didn't learn the last time. In that sense, reincarnation is not something to seek out, it is something to avoid.

Pilgrimage, too, is a way of seeking a way out of suffering. Christians walk the Via Dolorosa, for example, not to revel in Jesus' sacrifice, but to understand, in a deeper, embodied sense, his suffering.

By ignoring the question of suffering of humanity, and role of religion in addressing that suffering, I am afraid that this new generation is denying itself the opportunity to truly connect not just with the divine, if that's their thing, but with each other.

Unless they can acknowledge suffering—either their own or that of others—all the feel-good religion in the world will not be much good. *It is difficult to acknowledge suffering in a world where we have instant gratification. One thinks he is "suffering" if he doesn't have the latest i-phone. Until we collectively learn patience, humility and what it means to truly serve others, we will not understand the suffering of Christ or be able to connect with Christ.*

Which brings us right back to what all these millennial religions lacked: leadership, community, discipline and a sense of a larger mission for their invented sect. It would be unfair to say that millennials do not appreciate discipline or that their actions have consequences; I found many of my students to be smart, industrious and willing to work hard.

The problem, as I see it, is not with the lack of imagination of this new generation, but with religious institutions themselves—many of which

have allowed their leaders to become rock stars, their communities to become clubs of like-minded believers, and their doctrines to become rigid, with an over-emphasis on discipline and damnation for things that millennials see as simply judgmental and unfair. *And herein lies the problem—how do we keep the church relevant in the lives of people who want rock stars, clubs and no rules? But preaching CHRIST—we do not (and we should not) preach condemnation. We should not be condemnatory towards others, though it is perfectly okay, in my opinion, to tell someone that their behavior is wrong. But we must preach Christ as the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE.*

If organized religion can't renew itself from the inside, this new generation will switch to a new platform—even if they have to invent it for themselves.

I'm reminded of the Gospel of the Samaritan Woman, which we read on a recent Sunday. In this Gospel passage, taken from the fourth Chapter of John, Jesus encounters a woman at a well. He asks her for a drink of water. When she challenges Him and asks why would a Jew ask for a drink from a woman of Samaria, with whom the Jews had no dealings, He answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water." (John 4:10) She answers his statement in a self-serving way. "Where can I get this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." She is working on her material convenience. Jesus stated that "everyone who drinks of this water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The problem in our society is that we want what is materially convenient instead of what is spiritually fulfilling.

But here is where I will fundamentally disagree with the college students quoted in this article—where they think that the majority of people want a religion that requires nothing and goes nowhere in particular, I think that many, perhaps most, people seek exactly that. They need a place to go when they are tired and heavy laden with the burdens of life. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus said "Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." THIS is what everyone really wants. And this does not come as a result of self-promotion but as the result of a deep-seeded faith based on divesting of self in service to others. Going back to the story of the Samaritan woman, I conclude with what Jesus says in John 4:35—"I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest." Indeed the field are ripe—for the way, the truth and the life which is the Orthodox Christian faith. And when people see the church as "The Light that shines in the darkness" (John 1), then people who are in darkness because of the stress and disappointments of the world are going to flock to the Light of Christ.



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An Atheist's View On Life Versus A Christian's View On Life (This is amazing—read this from top to bottom to see the view of the atheist, and from bottom to top to see the view of a Christian)

I will live my life according to these beliefs
God does not exist
It is just foolish to think
That there is a God with a cosmic plan
That an all-powerful God brings purpose to the pain and suffering in the world
It's a comforting thought however
Is only wishful thinking
People can do as they please without eternal consequences
The idea that
I am deserving of Hell
Because of sin
Is a lie meant to make me a slave to those in power
The more you have the happier you will be
Our existence has no grand meaning or purpose
In a world with no God
There is freedom to be who I want to be
But with God
Everything is fine
It is ridiculous to think
I am lost and in need of saving

(Now...read from bottom to top to see the Christian view.)

A Miracle in Greenlawn, New York by Fr. Demetrios Moraitis

He was wearing dark glasses and had a walking stick. His wife was also by his side. I introduced myself and he wanted to know if I was the priest at the Greek Church in Greenlawn, and I said I was. He wanted to come by earlier that week to ask permission to walk his new guide dog in our parking lot. The high school next-door had told him that he could no longer walk his dog on their property because he was an insurance liability. So of course I said it wouldn't be a problem. I gave him my card and told him that when he comes to walk his dog to please be sure to come inside so that I could read a prayer over him and anoint him with the holy water from the Shrine of St. Paraskevi. He said he would love to. He emailed me that night and asked if I would be willing to hear his confession as well. I told him that I would. When he came and began telling me about his tragic and sad life, I cried. For those two hours I listened to him so intensely, that I felt as if I was with him, living it with him. It seemed that every evil conceivable that could've come upon this man came upon him from his childhood, to his parents, to his first wife. After he finished his confession I wanted to read some type of prayer over him and he insisted on kneeling. As I put my hand on his head some vibration came through my head into my right hand and on top of his head, causing him to shudder. I've heard hundreds upon hundreds of confessions and this has never happened to me. We cried together knowing that we were both touched by something supernatural. We got up and went down to the shrine, and I read the prayer of healing over him. He began to wash his face with the holy water as if he was in a sink basin. As he got up he began to look to his left and said there is a woman

here as he looked at the icon of St. Paraskevi. He then turned to my face and he look at me in an odd way and he said "you have light brown eyes. I have not seen a color in seven years, I can see your light brown eyes." He then proceeded to tell me everything he was able to see around the grotto shrine and I started crying, he started crying, even his wife was crying. This man had absolutely zero vision in his right eye and could barely see shadows in his left as a result of being exposed to chemicals as a rescue diver for the fire department. That afternoon he emailed me again saying that he was in his backyard, not only able to see the different colors of the cars that were passing by, but able to make out each make of car as well. The next morning he came back to church and placed his glasses on top of the relics of St. Paraskevi. He walked down the stairs to the shrine, this time without a walking stick or his guide dog. He didn't even need to use the handrail, he simply walked down. He has been at church every morning, even staying for every liturgy. I told him, that he has helped open up my spiritual eyes to a vision that I haven't seen in many years. And perhaps in my heart of hearts I think that I've been more healed than he has. He's trying to understand why this miracle happened to him and what he should do now. Every day we talk and every day God reveals His will to us. This happened on November 18, and today his eyesight is better than mine. Glory be to God!

Fr. Demetrios Moraitis is the priest of St. Parakevi Greek Orthodox Church and Shrine in Greenlawn, NY.

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Part of our life's legacy is the inheritance we leave our children. By leaving an inheritance, a part of us lives on through them. When preparing your will, you should consider leaving money to our church—this is the church of your children and part of their future can be positively impacted by leaving some of your inheritance to the church. The ability of the church to spread the Word of God is facilitated by everyone's stewardship. By leaving a portion of your inheritance to the church in your will, you remain a steward in perpetuity, but more importantly, you help cement a solid financial future for the church for your children and your grandchildren. If you are interested in leaving the church in your will, please contact Russell Sibley (church member) at rsibleylaw@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

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James and April Dellas
Mary Hatzikazakis—from Bristol, TN

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CARL (Anonymous)

Carl was a quiet man. He didn't talk much. He would always greet you with a big smile and a firm handshake.

Even after living in our neighborhood for over 50 years, no one could really say they knew him very well.

Before his retirement, he took the bus to work each morning. The lone sight of him walking down the street often worried us.

He had a slight limp from a bullet wound received in WWII.

Watching him, we worried that although he had survived WWII, he may not make it through our changing uptown neighborhood with its ever-increasing random violence, gangs, and drug activity.

When he saw the flyer at our local church asking for volunteers for caring for the gardens behind the minister's residence, he responded in his characteristically unassuming manner. Without fanfare, he just signed up.

He was well into his 87th year when the very thing we had always feared finally happened.

He was just finishing his watering for the day when three gang members approached him.

Ignoring their attempt to intimidate him, he simply asked, "Would you like a drink from the hose?"

The tallest and toughest-looking of the three said, "Yeah, sure," with a malevolent little smile.

As Carl offered the hose to him, the other two grabbed Carl's arm, throwing him down.

As the hose snaked crazily over the ground, dousing everything in its way, Carl's assailants stole his retirement watch and his wallet, and then fled.

Carl tried to get himself up, but he had been thrown down on his bad leg. He lay there trying to gather himself as the minister came running to help him.

Although the minister had witnessed the attack from his window, he couldn't get there fast enough to stop it.

"Carl, are you okay? Are you hurt?" the minister kept asking as he helped Carl to his feet.

Carl just passed a hand over his brow and sighed, shaking his head. "Just some punk kids. I hope they'll wise-up someday."

His wet clothes clung to his slight frame as he bent to pick up the hose. He adjusted the nozzle again and started to water.

Confused and a little concerned, the minister asked, "Carl, what are you doing?"

"I've got to finish my watering. It's been very dry lately," came the calm reply.

Satisfying himself that Carl really was all right, the minister could only marvel. Carl was a man from a different time and place.

A few weeks later the three returned. Just as before their threat was

unchallenged.

Carl again offered them a drink from his hose.

This time they didn't rob him.. They wrenched the hose from his hand and drenched him head to foot in the icy water.

When they had finished their humiliation of him, they sauntered off down the street, throwing catcalls and curses, falling over one another laughing at the hilarity of what they had just done.

Carl just watched them. Then he turned toward the warmth giving sun, picked up his hose, and went on with his watering.

The summer was quickly fading into fall. Carl was doing some tilling when he was startled by the sudden approach of someone behind him. He stumbled and fell into some evergreen branches.

As he struggled to regain his footing, he turned to see the tall leader of his summer tormentors reaching down for him. He braced himself for the expected attack.

"Don't worry old man, I'm not gonna hurt you this time."

The young man spoke softly, still offering the tattooed and scarred hand to Carl. As he helped Carl get up, the man pulled a crumpled bag from his pocket and handed it to Carl.

"What's this?" Carl asked. "It's your stuff," the man explained. "It's your stuff back.

Even the money in your wallet." "I don't understand," Carl said. "Why would you help me now?"

The man shifted his feet, seeming embarrassed and ill at ease. "I learned something from you," he said. "I ran with that gang and hurt people like you. We picked you because you were old and we knew we could do it. But every time we came and did something to you, instead of yelling and fighting back, you tried to give us a drink. You didn't hate us for hating you. You kept showing love against our hate."

He stopped for a moment. "I couldn't sleep after we stole your stuff, so here it is back."

He paused for another awkward moment, not knowing what more there was to say. "That bag's my way of saying thanks for straightening me out, I guess." And with that, he walked off down the street.

Carl looked down at the sack in his hands and gingerly opened it. He took out his retirement watch and put it back on his wrist.. Opening his wallet, he checked for his wedding photo. He gazed for a moment at the young bride that still smiled back at him from all those years ago.

He died one cold day after Christmas that winter. Many people attended his funeral in spite of the weather.

In particular the minister noticed a tall young man that he didn't know sitting quietly in a distant corner of the church.

The minister spoke of Carl's garden as a lesson in life.

In a voice made thick with unshed tears, he said, "Do your best and make

your garden as beautiful as you can. We will never forget Carl and his garden."

The following spring another flyer went up. It read: "Person needed to care for Carl's garden."

The flyer went unnoticed by the busy parishioners until one day when a knock was heard at the minister's office door.

Opening the door, the minister saw a pair of scarred and tattooed hands holding the flyer. "I believe this is my job, if you'll have me," the young man said.

The minister recognized him as the same young man who had returned the stolen watch and wallet to Carl.

He knew that Carl's kindness had turned this man's life around. As the minister handed him the keys to the garden shed, he said, "Yes, go take care of Carl's garden and honor him."

The man went to work and, over the next several years, he tended the flowers and vegetables just as Carl had done.

During that time, he went to college, got married, and became a prominent member of the community. But he never forgot his promise to Carl's memory and kept the garden as beautiful as he thought Carl would have kept it.

One day he approached the new minister and told him that he couldn't care for the garden any longer. He explained with a shy and happy smile, "My wife just had a baby boy last night, and she's bringing him home on Saturday.."

"Well, congratulations!" said the minister, as he was handed the garden shed keys. "That's wonderful! What's the baby's name?"

"Carl," he replied..

The Son

A wealthy man and his son loved to collect rare works of art. They had everything in their collection from Picasso to Raphael. They would often sit together and admire the great works of art.

When the Vietnam conflict broke out, the son went to war. He was very courageous and died in battle while rescuing another soldier. The father was notified and grieved deeply for his only son.

About a month later, just before Christmas, there was a knock at the door. A young man stood at the door with a large package in his hands. He said, "Sir, you don't know me, but I am the soldier for whom your son gave his life. He saved many lives that day, and he was carrying me to safety when a bullet struck him in the heart, and he died instantly. He often talked about you, and your love for art." The young man held out his package. "I know this isn't much. I'm not really a great artist, but I think your son would have wanted you to have this."

The father opened the package. It was a portrait of his son, painted by the young man. He stared in awe at the way the soldier had captured the personality of his son in the painting. The father was so drawn to the eyes that his own eyes welled up with tears. He thanked the young man and offered to pay him for the picture. "Oh, no sir, I could never repay what your son did for me. It's a gift."

The father hung the portrait over his mantle. Every time visitors came to his home, he took them to see the portrait of his son before he showed them any of the other great works he had collected.

The man died a few months later. There was to be a great auction of his paintings. Many influential people gathered, excited over seeing the great paintings and having an opportunity to purchase one for their collection. On the platform sat the painting of the son. The auctioneer pounded his gavel. "We will start the bidding with this picture of the son. Who will bid for this picture?" There was silence. Then a voice in the back of the room shouted, "We want to see the famous paintings. Skip this one." But the auctioneer persisted. "Will someone bid for this painting? Who will start the bidding? \$100, \$200?" Another voice shouted angrily, "We didn't come to see this painting. We came to see the Van Goghs, the Rembrandts. Get on with the real bids!" But still the auctioneer

continued, "The son! The son! Who'll take the son?"

Finally, a voice came from the very back of the room. It was the longtime gardener of the man and his son. "I'll give \$10 for the painting." Being a poor man, it was all he could afford. "We have \$10, who will bid \$20?" "Give it to him for \$10. Let's see the masters." "\$10 is the bid, won't someone bid \$20?" The crowd was becoming angry. They didn't want the picture of the son. They wanted the more worthy investments for their collections. The auctioneer pounded the gavel. "Going once, twice, SOLD FOR \$10!"

A man sitting on the second row shouted, "Now, let's get on with the collection!" The auctioneer laid down his gavel. "I'm sorry, the auction is over." "What about the paintings?" "I am sorry. When I was called to conduct this auction, I was told of a secret stipulation in the will. I was not allowed to reveal that stipulation until this time. Only the painting of the son would be auctioned. Whoever bought that painting would inherit the entire estate, including the paintings. The man who took the son gets everything!"

God gave his Son 2000 years ago to die on a cruel cross. Much like the auctioneer, His message today is, "The Son, the Son, who'll take the Son?" Because you see, whoever takes the Son gets everything.

- AUTHOR UNKNOWN -



June 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	2	3 Young at Heart 11:30 a.m.	4 Fast Day	5	6 Fast Day	7 Saturday of Souls Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Memorial Service
8 Pentecost Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Kneeling Vespers 11:00am GOYA 5:00 p.m.	9 No Fasting this Week	10	11	12	13 Junior Olympics	14 Junior Olympics
15 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	16 Beginning of Apostles' Fast Fr. Stavros out of office this week Fast Day	17	18	19	20	21 Community Outreach Fast Day
22 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fast Day	23 Fast Day	24 Nativity of St. John Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fast Day	25 Fast Day	26 Fast Day	27 Fast Day	28 Fast Day
29 Sts. Peter and Paul Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	30 Holy Apostles Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.					



July 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
			Fr. Stavros out of office 7/3-7/31		Independence Day Office Closed	
		Fast Day	Fast Day	Fast Day	Fast Day	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fr. Michael Soter, Guest Celebrant		Fast Day	Fast Day	Fast Day	Fast Day	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fr. Frank Kirilangitis, Guest Celebrant		Fast Day	Fast Day	Fast Day	Fast Day	Community Outreach
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fr. Stavros, Celebrant		Fast Day	Fast Day	Fast Day	Fast Day	
27	28	29	30	31		
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fr. Frank Kirilangitis, Guest Celebrant		Fast Day	Fast Day	Fast Day		

A Violinist in the Metro

A man sat at a metro station in Washington DC and started to play the violin; it was a cold January morning. He played six Bach pieces for about 45 minutes. During that time, since it was rush hour, it was calculated that thousand of people went through the station, most of them on their way to work.

Three minutes went by and a middle aged man noticed there was musician playing. He slowed his pace and stopped for a few seconds and then hurried up to meet his schedule.

A minute later, the violinist received his first dollar tip: a woman threw the money in the till and without stopping continued to walk.

A few minutes later, someone leaned against the wall to listen to him, but the man looked at his watch and started to walk again. Clearly he was late for work.

The one who paid the most attention was a 3 year old boy. His mother tagged him along, hurried but the kid stopped to look at the violinist. Finally the mother pushed hard and the child continued to walk turning his head all the time. This action was repeated by several other children. All the parents, without exception, forced them to move on.

In the 45 minutes the musician played, only 6 people stopped and stayed for a while. About 20 gave him money but continued to walk their normal pace. He collected \$32. When he finished playing and silence took over, no one noticed it. No one applauded, nor was there any recognition.

No one knew this but the violinist was Joshua Bell, one of the best musicians in the world. He played one of the most intricate pieces ever written with a violin worth 3.5 million dollars.

Two days before his playing in the subway, Joshua Bell sold out at a theater in Boston and the seats average \$100.

This is a real story. Joshua Bell playing incognito in the metro station was organized by the Washington Post as part of an social experiment about perception, taste and priorities of people. The outlines were: in a commonplace environment at an inappropriate hour: Do we perceive beauty? Do we stop to appreciate it? Do we recognize the talent in an unexpected context?

One of the possible conclusions from this experience could be:

If we do not have a moment to stop and listen to one of the best musicians in the world playing the best music ever written, how many other things are we missing?

Analysis: True. For 45 minutes on the morning of January 12, 2007, concert violinist Joshua Bell stood incognito on a Washington, D.C. subway platform and performed classical music for passersby. Video and audio of the performance are available on the Washington Post website.

"No one knew it," explained Washington Post reporter Gene Weingarten several months after the event, "but the fiddler standing against a bare wall outside the Metro in an indoor arcade at the top of the escalators was one of the finest classical musicians in the world, playing some of the most elegant music ever written on one of the most valuable violins ever

made." Weingarten came up with the experiment to see how ordinary people would react.

And how did they react? For the most part, not at all. More than a thousand people entered the Metro station as Bell worked his way through a set list of classical masterpieces, but only a few stopped to listen. Some dropped money in his open violin case (for a total of about \$27), but most never even stopped to look, Weingarten wrote.

The text above, penned by an unidentified author and circulated via blogs and email, poses a philosophical question: "If we do not have a moment to stop and listen to one of the best musicians in the world playing the best music ever written, how many other things are we missing?"

Which is fair to ask. The demands and distractions of our fast-paced workaday world can indeed stand in the way of appreciating truth and beauty and other contemplative delights when we encounter them. But it's equally fair to point out that there's an appropriate time and place for everything, including classical music. Was such an experiment really necessary to determine that a busy subway platform during rush hour might not be conducive to an appreciation of the sublime? Probably not, though it makes for an interesting story just the same.

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ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Timetable of Services

Sundays: Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.
Weekdays: Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

Parish Priest: Rev.Fr.Stavros Akrotirianakis
813-876-8830 (office) 394-1038 (cell)
frstav@gmail.com

Pastoral Assistant: Charlie Hambos
813-876-8830 (office) 813-843-8471 (cell)
charlie.hambos@gmail.com

Parish Council:
Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867
Carole Fotopoulos, Vice-President 813-982-0947
Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-835-3898
Dante Skourellos, Treasurer 813-765-9534
Nick Antonakakis 813-477-6639
Catherine Mitseas 813-571-0685
Ed Gerecke 813-837-6405
Skip Higdon 813-831-9021
Mike Kafantaris 727-821-0193
David Voykin 727-415-5603
Mike Xenick 813-340-8737

Office Staff:
Debbie Bowe-Administrative Assistant 813-876-8830

Office Fax: 813-443-4899

Stewardship Chairperson:
Pete Trakas 813-505-2193
Welcoming Committee:
Maria Xenick 813- 839-9897
Choir: Artie Palios, Director 813-831-1294
Jim Leone, Organist 813-254-7844
Chanter: Nick Andreadakis 813- 516-6081
Sunday Sch.: Victoria Peckham 813-406-5626
Finance Committee: Mike Xenick 813-340-8737
Adult Greek School: Magda Myer 813-909-2327
AHEPA: Mike Trimis 813-968-9038
Community Outreach: Chairperson
Betty Katherine Palios 813-215-9862
Daughters: Diane Trimis 813-220-3389
Food Pantry: Anetta Alexander 863-224-3001
GOYA Adv. Elaine Halkias 813-968-9129
Byron Nenos 813-789-0729
JOY/HOPE: Debbie Nicklow 813-920-0892
Amy Kafantaris 727-743-1297
Young Adults (YAL) Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862
Philoptochos: JoAnn Hartung, Pres. 727-432-0228
Oratorical Festival Chairperson
Peggy Bradshaw: 727-244-1374

Young at Heart: Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947
Mary Nenos 813-935-2096
Jr Olympics: Byron Nenos 813-789-0729
Ushers: Tom Georgas 813-985-0236
Altar Angels:
Engie Halkias & Sia Blankenship. 813-932-5859
Bookstore: Jon & Pamela Irwin 813-679-4113
H XAPA MAΣ Dance Group:
Alex De Maio & 813-340-9668
Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
Glendi Dancers:Jenna Mingleдорff 813-610-7365
Panigyri Dancers: Vanessa Aviles 813-221-2194

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is a parish under the spiritual and ecclesiastical oversight of His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of the Metropolis of Atlanta, of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America in the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

The *Messenger* of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is published on a monthly basis. Publication is the first of each month. Deadline for notices and announcements for the Messenger is the 10th of each month. You may send announcements to the church office or through **email to: stjohngoctampa@gmail.com**

Website: **www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com**

“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