

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 2015

DOUBLE ISSUE OF THE MESSENGER

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

Mission Statement:

St. John the Baptist 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 member to grow in their faith.

Re-VITAL-izing your Christian Life

By Father Stavros

Whenever you go to visit the doctor, the first thing they do (well, after you pay the co-payment) is take your vital signs. They measure your weight, your blood pressure, your temperature and the oxygen level in your blood, and then the doctor will listen to your heart and lungs. Before treating you for whatever problem you came to see the doctor about, they want to verify that you are indeed “alive”.

In thinking over the vital signs of our Christian life, I have come up with four things we should check ourselves for on a daily basis, to make sure we are spiritually alive.

The first is a sense of **gratitude** - can we find something for which to thank the Lord? This is important, because a sense of gratitude sets in line our thoughts for the rest of the day. Think about your first thoughts of the day - if they are angry

thoughts you are angry before you even meet the first task of the day. If they are grateful thoughts, then you walk through the day feeling thankful, blessed, fortunate, and these feelings are enough to overcome or at least put in perspective, the disappointments and failings that are part of life. When you go to the Lord in prayer, is the first thing you say to Him, a grateful thought, or do you only go to Him when you are in need of something?

The second vital sign is **kindness**. Being kind requires you to DO something. I can sit by myself and be thoughtful, but I can’t be kind by sitting still. Kindness requires that I get up and DO something. And that DO-ing might be saying a kind word, or offering an act of service to someone. Kindness also involves giving without expecting anything in return. In fol-

Rev. Fr. Stavros N Akrotirianakis, Priest
2418 W. Swann Avenue, Tampa, FL 33609-4712
Office: (813) 876-8830 Fax: (813) 443-4899
Email: officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com>

lowing the commandment of the Lord to love our neighbor, we should get in the habit of doing acts of kindness without expecting anything in return.

The third vital sign we need to take on a daily basis is **repentance** - are we growing towards Christ? Wait a minute, I thought repentance was confession and owning up for sins, is it not? Certainly, that is part of repentance. But repentance is growing towards Christ. In that process, we confess sins, we own up for mistakes and we live life more carefully. Repentance also involves using our talents more effectively and in a more Christ-centered way. It means striving to become a better spouse, a better parent, a better Christian, a better person. Evaluate yourself at the end of each week or even each day, and ask, "did I grow closer to Christ in some way this week or today?" The answer might not be yes EVERY day or even every week, but asking yourself this question and striving to sincerely answer it with a "yes" is one of the most beneficial exercises in the Christian life.

The final vital sign is **intimacy** - intimacy is unconditional love. In Greek, we have a word for "intimacy" which is "Agape." Whether you call it "agape" or "intimacy" the practical application is this - am I expressing my love for God through prayer? Do I express my innermost thoughts - be they joys or sorrows or fears or challenges - with the Lord? Do I allow myself to become vulnerable with the Lord? Am I real and truthful and faithful in my relationship with Christ? Or do I keep all "my cards" up, so to speak.

Vitality in our Relationships with Others

These "vital signs" not only work for our relationship with the Lord, but they work in every other relationship that we have. Whether it is towards a spouse, a child, a close friend, doing these four things will help improve every relationship.

Gratitude-Do you realize that it takes more mental energy to say "thank you" than it takes to say "I love you"? Why is that? Because one can say "I love you" or "good morning" as a greeting or a farewell, without much thought at all, but when you say "thank you," you have to actually evaluate what you are thankful for. Take a few moments each day to thank those you love, not only for the significant, but for the mundane. How often do we thank our spouses for working? Or cooking? Or keeping the house or yard clean? How often do we thank our children for bringing us joy? How often do we thank our parents?

Kindness-Kindness, as noted above, involves DOING, not just talking. The best acts of kindness are those that are unexpected. But before we can get to the unexpected, we have to do what IS expected. So, look for opportunities to be kind, both the expected (make the bed, put away the dishes, open a door for someone) and the unexpected.

Repentance, let's call this improvement-Repentance, in the spiritual sense, is about continued growth towards God. If "Theosis", a God-like state, is the target for every life, then the less one focuses on materialism and ego, the more one can focus on becoming like Christ. This is what repentance is, continual growth and improvement in our relationship with Christ.

This same principle works in our relationships. We should make it a goal in our relationships to improve them. And this is done through examination (examine with your friend or your spouse, how is our relationship going); forgiveness (I am willing to overlook and forget past failings in order to have a better future—in fact this is the ONLY way to have a better future, because holding on the past cannot lead to a bright future); humility (I'm open to the possibility that I can do better in this relationship) and work (I'm willing to do what it takes to improve this relationship).

Intimacy-Intimacy is not only accepting someone as they are but loving them as they are. Am I expressing love to my spouse, my children, my parents, my close friends? Have I allowed myself to be vulnerable with anyone today? Have I allowed someone to be vulnerable with me? Have I been real and truthful? Or have I kept "my cards" up?

Stages of a Marriage (or any relationship really)

I read recently about how marriages go through stages. And in one article, I read that it takes 20 YEARS for a couple to achieve true intimacy. That's because marriages go through stages.

The first stage is **infatuation**, where we are enamored with someone and they can do nothing wrong. Next comes **joy**, realizing that this is a relationship that can be a long term relationship. After joy comes **disappointment**, and that's because no one can stay "perfect" forever. In any relationship, even a good relationship, there is bound to be disappointment. In many friendships, this is where the relationship ends. Of course, in marriage, the relationship is supposed to continue - we've made a commitment to work at marriage. Disappointments that are allowed to fester result in feelings of **anger**. This is not only anger at a spouse or friend for what they have or haven't done, but also anger at ourselves for "how did I get myself into this situation?" Anger is resolved by **acceptance**. And acceptance is an understanding that the person to whom I am married or with whom I have a close friendship is not perfect and they are never going to be. Forgiveness is a big part of acceptance. The maturity to overlook or forgive the things that cannot be changed. **Intimacy** is the final stage of a marriage or a relationship, because this is where you learn not only to accept or tolerate someone for who they are but to actually LOVE them for who they are. It's not an "I will accept you in spite of your faults but I will love you because of them. I will love and totally accept you, realizing that there are certain things that I will never change about you but I will celebrate who you ARE and not condemn who you are NOT."

In friendships, these stages work similarly. Infatuation is "excitement" about a new friendship. There is joy as a friendship becomes solid. There is inevitable disappointment and even anger as no friendship is perfect. And while sexual intimacy is not supposed to be part of any friendship besides marriage, there is room for "emotional" intimacy in many relationships, the ability to let down our guard and speak freely, to be ourselves. I think many friendships are not as solid as they could be and many people have a hard time finding meaningful friendships because this element is missing.

When we accept people for who they are, they are free to drop their cards, or check their pride at the door and just be. Of course, this goes both ways - you can't get to a deep friendship without taking the chance and dropping those things. This is where things like trust come in - building it, maintaining it, growing it.

Vitality in our Church

I want to share a quote I read recently from Fr. Harry Linsinbigler, a Ukrainian Orthodox priest:

I have been reading on trends of the Church, with regard to growth and shrinkage. While all of them have many good points, I think that the real problem with the Church is that we have too many people who like to play church and not enough who like to be church. Church is not something that Christians do in their spare time, it is something that they are, beginning their week by participating in the sacrifice that overcame the world, on behalf of the world and for its salvation, and carrying that out into the home, the neighborhood, the workplace and even the store, the restaurant, and touching the lives of others in ever so small ways, with a kind gesture, a kind greeting, a kind word, and above all, giving others better than they deserve, because that is what God has first done and continues to do for us. A primary thing that sets the Christian apart from the world is that we do the right thing even when we don't feel like The Kingdom of God comes by force, and we must force ourselves to do the right thing despite our emotional disposition until it becomes the new natural, for the old natural is fallen. We may not want to go to Nineveh, but if we force ourselves, we become another converted Jonah, giving a chance at eternal life to receptive ears, and thereby gaining it ourselves. The irony of the gospel is that the only way to gain eternal life is to give it away to others who will receive it. Let us press on in the task that God has given us.

Playing church versus being the church - This is a harsh comment because we all want to see ourselves as DO-ers and not merely actors. But when the message of Christ is restricted to an hour on Sunday mornings, or even worse, when it is restricted to only a few times year, we are in a sense "playing" church. My son loves to play games. There are many games we play - Chess, Checkers, Stratego, Uno, Dominos, Battleship, etc. But these are games are just that, games. We take them out, we play them, we put them away, and then we forget about them for a while, until there is the urge to play them again.

This is NOT how the church is supposed to work. The church is something that we ARE. We ARE THE CHURCH in two ways—first it is supposed to be an identity that we wear at all times, not just when others are doing it, not just when it's convenient and not just on Sundays. The Church is who we are, not merely what we do at certain times and on certain days. And secondly, WE are the church. The church is not just a building or a service or a hymn or a prayer. The CHURCH is

the PEOPLE who are doing the work of the church on a consistent basis. If our church community has no members, then it is just a pretty museum with religious artwork on its walls. The Church comes alive through the people. No icon ever converted anyone. People are converted to the Gospel by other people.

Can you imagine if we all wore t-shirts that said "I am the church"? Would we behave differently? When we get baptized, this is essentially what happens. We are given a baptismal garment that says "I am the church" on it, with the prayer that we keep it spotless and pure throughout life but that we also use it as a witness to other people.

Participating in worship on a weekly basis is how the church comes together to strengthen itself, both as individual member and as a whole group. That's why worship is so important. We take strength from the communal prayer and most especially from the Holy Communion. And hopefully we then take inspiration to take the message out to the home, the neighborhood, the workplace, etc. If we hear a message of hope or forgiveness from the church on Sunday, that IS supposed to affect us in our families, our jobs and other roles come Monday or Tuesday.

So, let's look at our vital signs when it comes to our church community. . .

A sense of gratitude - do we come to church, and do we offer our stewardship to the church with a sense of gratitude, or do we do it out of guilt or begrudgingly? The idea is to feel thankful that we have a gift to offer and then to offer it with joy. If God has richly blessed you with material goods, the appropriate demeanor to have is "God has blessed me with more income than most people, therefore I can give more than most people to the church." And this goes also for the one who can teach or sing, or do computer work, or visit the sick, or anything else that the church needs. Our posture towards our stewardship should be this prayer: "Thank you Lord for what you have given me, it is a great joy for me to be able to give back."

Acts of Kindness - In the above quote, we read that we touch the lives of others in ever so small ways—kind gestures, kind greetings, kind words, and above all, giving others better than they deserve. Why better than they deserve? Because God gave US better than we deserve. Eternal condemnation IS DESERVED by every sinful human being. Yet Christ offers us the opportunity for eternal life, which is better than what ANY of us deserve. We should be ready and willing to offer the same to one another. To offer forgiveness even if it isn't deserved, to offer kindness, even if it is not convenient, to look for the opportunity to say or do something kind even to the stranger we do not know.

Repentance/continued improvement - If the goal of our individual lives is repentance, a greater sense of focus on Christ by casting away sins and distractions, then the focus of our church, the collective body of individual seeking repentance, is continual improvement of the church. This includes developing new ministries, seeking and welcoming new members, reaching out and involving all of the members that we have in

our ministries. *Our Parish Assembly meetings should not be merely business gatherings, but discussing for how we can improve our church.* And even in our individual ministries - like the choir or the GOYA or the Bible study - we should discuss how we, both as an individual ministry and as members of the whole community, can see to improve the whole community, move the whole community forward.

Intimacy - In the community context, this involves seeking to grow towards other members so that we can better support one another through life's up's and down's and challenges. No one in a "community" should ever feel alone or isolated. And yet there are people who have struggles and challenges with which we can help - in small ways, perhaps a prayer or a visit, or a note of encouragement. People in this community have helped others find new jobs, new homes, and other practical helps. If we all stand stoically in church each Sunday, confiding in no one and keeping to ourselves, then we will never grow into the community. If we have a poker face and never let anyone know if something is bothering us, we will never reap the benefit of belonging to a community. And if we do not seek to help our brother who needs help, we will never truly be community. So, intimacy on the community level involves listening, sharing and doing.

Father Harry's reference to Nineveh, is a reference to the Old Testament story of Jonah, one of God's prophets, who God asked to go to Nineveh to preach to the people there. Jonah was angry with God and didn't want to go to Nineveh. It was not an attractive city to him. So, Jonah boarded a ship and tried to sail away from Nineveh. But there was a storm, and the boat was threatened to sink. Jonah eventually told the crew that he believed God was angry with him for not doing as God commanded and going to Nineveh, so the crew cast Jonah into the sea, where he was swallowed by a whale. Inside the belly of the whale, Jonah repented and the whale eventually coughed up Jonah on the beach at Nineveh and Jonah went and did as God had commanded him.

Many of us are probably more closely related to Jonah than we know. God has called each of us to something in this life—both in the world and in our church, and we are supposed to obediently and JOYFULLY set about the tasks that God has called us to. Many times, however, we are like Jonah, and we lament what we have or where God wants us to go and we go the other way. If we could learn to go to the "Nineveh" that God has chosen for each of us, we will ultimately find joy because the ultimate joy is doing the work God has called each of us to do, rather than running away from it.

Re-VITAL-ize This Summer

Many of us will be taking vacations this summer, to revitalize our spirits through rest and relaxation. As you revitalize with some relaxation this summer, it is a perfect time to revitalize your relationship with Christ, with the church and with those you love. While the task may seem daunting, if you look at it from the standpoint of taking your vital signs every day, then it is much more manageable.

As you reflect on life, and set new goals for yourself, make it a goal to start taking your vital signs every day - in relation to

the Lord, your spouse, your children, your friends, and our church. Gratitude, kindness, repentance, intimacy—check them every day. Invest a little time in them every day. Watch your life improve a little bit, every day. And the first way to do this is through prayer.

Lord, thank You for the gift of this day. As I go through the day, inspire me to be kind, lead me to repentance and inspire me to love You and those around me today in all that I am doing. Amen.

I hope you feel "alive" today! Have a great summer!

A Word of Thanks to our Sunday School Teachers

On Sunday, May 17, 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 works with Vickie on the administrative and communication sides of 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 17, 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!

Staying Connected and Growing Together on a Daily Basis

Will you join our Prayer Team?

One of our most exciting ministries is our Prayer Team. Initially established as something for Lent, the prayer team is going year round and the number of members presently stands at 160. It was originally thought that this program would end at the end of Lent. However, so many people want the program to continue that I've decided to continue the prayer team on a permanent basis going forward. And thus, I'm inviting anyone who wishes to join the team to do so.

What does a Prayer Team do? Our prayer team will commit to praying for our church, our church leadership and our congregation every day. Father Stavros and Charlie will pray for the members of the prayer team on a daily basis. Father Stavros will also send a spiritual reflection each day to the prayer team.

How do I join our Prayer Team? Just email me at frstav@gmail.com saying "Dear Father Stavros, I'd like to join the Prayer Team" and sign your name. I'll send you a short email back confirming that I've gotten your email and have added you to my prayer list. It's that easy!

Is the Prayer Team going to be published anywhere? NO. I will keep a list of our prayer team so that I can pray for you. If you like, you can tell people that you are part of our prayer team and encourage others to join as well. The list of names will be known only to Fr. Stavros and Charlie.

What should I pray for? Pray for our church. Pray for Fr. Stavros, our priest, and his family. Pray for Charlie, our pastoral assistant, and his family. Pray for each of our ministries and our parish leadership. Pray for guidance, for healing, and for forgiveness, for yourself and our parishioners. Say thank you to God. Whatever you are moved to pray for on any given day, do so, just include our church each day.

I hope you will consider joining our team!

+Fr. Stavros

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

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA
William J Camarinis - Alexandria, VA
Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC
Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL

Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL
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Friend of St. John the Baptist

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

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

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

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

Church Militant Seeking the Church Triumphant

By Charlie Hambos

In the Orthodox Church we believe the Church as a whole is divided into two existing realities: the **Church Militant** and the **Church Triumphant**. Those of us who live our life among God's creation on earth are a part of the Church Militant. It sounds graphic but believe it or not we also wage quite a few Holy Wars within ourselves against temptations and the sinful nature surrounding us in the world. It's called Spiritual Warfare for a reason. In fact, before we are baptized, oil is spread all over our body. An excerpt from the prayer of the oil reads, "Will you now bless this oil through the descent and indwelling power of Your Holy Spirit; that it may be an anointing of incorruption, an armor of righteousness, renewing soul and body, fending of every assault of the Evil One, delivering from all evil who are anointed with it in faith or who partake of it." From the moment we are baptized, we have entered the arena and as in ancient times; the fighters would drench themselves with oil to prevent their opponent from taking hold of them. We do the same and pray that Satan and his demons cannot get ahold of us.

The good news is that we aren't doing this alone because we have help from this second very real entity of the Church called the Church Triumphant. The Church Triumphant is composed of the Saints, who waged the spiritual war on earth by living a Christ-like life and have started to live in the loving presence of God. With that in mind, they are able to help us because they love us and want us to win the war against all evil and achieve a Christ-like life. They are "friends" of God.

So who are the saints and why do they play such an important role in the life of the Orthodox Church and in our individual spiritual lives. First, we must be certain to realize that the only holy one (Agios) is God Himself. "For I am the Lord your God; you shall name yourselves holy and keep yourselves holy, because I am holy (Leviticus 11:44). Therefore, saints are those who have participated in the holiness of God. This holiness is a gift of God to man, through the Holy Spirit. It is incorrect to believe that the Saints were perfect people. They were human beings just like us. Saints are men, women and children who sought life with God and play an important role in our spiritual lives. Dr. George Bebis says, "Man's effort to become a participant in the life of divine holiness is crucial, but sanctification itself is the work of the Holy Trinity, especially through the sanctifying power of Jesus Christ, who was incarnate, suffered crucifixion, and rose from the dead, in order to lead us to the life of holiness, through the communion with the Holy Spirit."

Although, it is possible that we all can be called saints because, as Orthodox Christians, we were baptized in the Holy Trinity and received the Seal of the Holy Spirit in chrismation. In fact, when St. Paul writes to the various churches he addresses them as saints. It is important to note that we are still trying to achieve the sainthood. It was through their deep respect and obedience to God that they became sanctified/set apart/become holy both in soul and body and therefore have been glorified in the world we live in through the manifestation of the grace of

God.

What are the different kinds of saints? The Orthodox Church in its wisdom has made several categories of saints based on what they did in their life or how they died. Many of them are commemorated (Angels, Prophets, Apostles, Great Teachers, Martyrs, Just/Venerable/Rigteous Father, Unmercenaries) during every Divine Liturgy in the Service of Proskomide (Preparation of the Gifts). In general, however, there are six main categories. First are the apostles, because they were the first ones to spread the message of the Incarnation of Word of God and salvation through Christ. The second are the prophets because they predicted and prophesied the coming of the Messiah. The third are the martyrs because they sacrificed their lives and fearlessly confessed Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of mankind. The fourth are the Fathers and Hierarchs of the Church who were superb at explaining and defending the Christian faith by their writings and their actions. The fifth are the monastics who dedicated themselves to deep spiritual exercise and seeking perfection in Christ here in the world. The sixth are the Just or the Righteous who lived in the world, often with families, some clergy and others not who became great examples of the Christian Faith. (These are the main six, see the chart associated with this article for more.)

St. Eleftherios – Childbirth

St. Paraskevi – Eye disease, headaches

Sts. Cosmas, Damian, Nektarios, Panteleimon, Spyridon – Illness of any kind

Sts. Basil, Nicholas, Stelianos – Children in general

St. Demetrios – Crops

Sts. Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom – Education

St. John the Baptist – Godparents

St. Phanourios – Lost Property

St. Basil the Great – Orphans

St. Irene – Peace

Sts. Basil the Great and George – Poor

St. Elias the Prophet – Rain, thunder and lightning

St. Barbara – Roads

St. Nicholas – Sailors

St. Nektarios – Cancer patients

Sts. George, Prokopios, Theodore of Tyron, Theodore Stratilates - Warriors

How can the saints play an important role in our spiritual life? They are a part of the Church Triumphant. They did everything because they loved Jesus Christ so much. They are our role models. However, it is a mistake to believe that saints are the ones who save us. They cannot. They can and do guide us to directly to Jesus Christ, who alone is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. The grace of God has been manifested in the Saints and were able to perform miracles before they died and are able and to this very day, do indeed perform miracles after

their passing from this life. St. Paul asked people to pray for him. We should also ask people to pray for us In every Liturgy, we ask God the Father to accept, on our behalf, "the prayers and the intercession" of all the Saints who now live in heaven. St. John Chrysostom says that we should seek the intercession and the fervent prayers of the saints, because they have special "boldness" before God. We must ask them to intercede for us. We do this in three ways: calling upon their names through prayer and celebrating the Divine Liturgy. We venerate their icons. We venerate their sacred and holy relics. How do we pray to the saints? We do not say to a Saint, "Do this or that for me or save me." We say, "Saint _____, pray for me and ask the Lord to come to my aid." The Saints know our needs because the Holy Spirit makes them known to the Saints. Please also see the chart of patron saints.

Remember, saints are the "friends" of God. Jesus Christ is the ultimate friend of man. Saints are men, women and children that we look for guidance, inspiration and help because they lived with Christ in their hearts and they continue to do so. Find your saint. Pick a saint. Read about the saint. Pray to the saint. Just as they sought after the Church Triumphant, so do we stand in the loving presence of God, still in the Church Militant, seeking the Church Triumphant with the aid of a whole army who are at our fingertips. They are a living breathing and loving reality just waiting for you to realize and explore. May all of the saints intercede for us and come to our aid in all the physical and spiritual struggles we face in our life.

**"Saint _____,
pray for me and ask the Lord to
come to my aid."**

- Confessor:** one who has suffered for the faith but not martyred outright.
- Enlightener:** the saint who first brought the faith to a people or region.
- Equal-to-the-Apostles:** one whose work greatly built up the Church.
- Fool-for-Christ:** a saint known for his apparent, yet holy insanity.
- God-bearing:** title given to one of the Holy Fathers.
- Great-martyr:** one who was martyred for the faith and suffered torture.
- Healer:** a saint who used the power of God to heal maladies and injuries.
- Hieromartyr:** a martyr who is also a clergyman.
- Martyr:** one who has died for the faith.
- Merciful:** one known for charitable work, especially toward the poor.
- Myrrhbearers:** the first witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus.
- Myrrh-streaming:** the relics of the saint exude holy and sweet-smelling oil
- New-martyr:** a recent martyr often bearing the same name as a previous martyr
- Passion-bearer:** one who faced his death in a Christ-like manner
- Protomartyr:** the first martyr in a given region
- Right-believing:** an epithet used for sainted secular rulers
- Unmercenary Healer:** a saint who used the power of God to heal maladies
- Venerable-martyr:** a martyred monastic
- Virgin-martyr:** an unmarried, non-monastic, chaste female martyr
- Wonder-worker:** a saint renowned for performing miracles

Leave the Church in Your Will

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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Liturgical Schedule for June and July 2015

Sunday, June 7

All Saints

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

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (Nicholas Alsina, Antonio Bavaro, Jonah Blankenbaker, Yianni Trimikliniotis, Gabriel Fallon)

Ushers: Brett Mourer, Jason Pill, George Trimikliniotis

Coffee Hour: Philoptochos

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Sandra Pappas, Elaine Halkias; Ambassador: Betty Katherine Katsamakias; Caller: Peggy Bradshaw;

Get Acquainted: Bessie Palios, Michael Palios

Sunday, June 14

2nd Sunday of Matthew Fr. Dean Mendrinis, Celebrant

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

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve

Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas

Coffee Hour: AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Vickie Peckham, Jenny Paloumpis; Ambassador: Katherine Sakkis; Caller: Elaine Halkias

Sunday, June 21

3rd Sunday of Matthew

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

Altar Boys: Captains Only

Ushers: Mike Trimis, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis

Coffee Hour: Junior Olympics Luncheon

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Irene Kostaris, Skip Higdon; Ambassador: Marenca Patrascoiu; Caller: Marisa Panopoulos

Tuesday, June 23

Nativity of St. John the Baptist - Evening Liturgy

Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 28

4th Sunday of Matthew

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

Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve

Ushers: Florin Patrasciou, Kevin Fentress, Tammy Chirstou

Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Marenca Patrasciou, Debbie Kavouklis; Ambassador: Edie Kavouklis; Caller: Martha Kapetan

Monday, June 29

Saints Peter and Paul

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

Sunday, July 5

5th Sunday of Matthew - Fr. John Stefero, Celebrant

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

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke

Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, Perry Katsamakias, Peter Theophanos

Coffee Hour: Paras Family

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Ewana Forde, Dwight Forde; Ambassador: Sandra Pappas; Caller: Jenny Paloumpis;

Get Acquainted: Maria Xenick, Mike Xenick

Sunday, July 12

6th Sunday of Matthew - Fr. Constantine Xanthakis, Celebrant

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

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke

Ushers: Gregory Tisdale, Wayne Blankenship, George Trimikliniotis

Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Skip Higdon, Lisa Alsina; Ambassador: Donna Trakas; Caller: Jeanie Nenos

Sunday, July 19

Sunday of the Holy Fathers

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

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (Nicholas Alsina, Antonio Bavaro, Jonah Blankenbaker, Yianni Trimikliniotis, Gabriel Fallon)

Ushers: Brett Mourer, Demetrios Hailkas, Amin Hanhan

Coffee Hour: AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Megan Rindone, Ryan Rindone; Ambassador: Kalliope Chagaris; Caller: Edie Kavouklis

Sunday, July 26

8th Sunday of Matthew

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

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (Nicholas Alsina, Antonio Bavaro, Jonah Blankenbaker, Yianni Trimikliniotis, Gabriel Fallon)

Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas

Coffee Hour: Visitation Committee

Welcoming Committee: Greeters: Donna Hambos, Vanessa Aviles; Ambassador: Helen Cauthorn; Caller: Julie Palios

Liturgical Notes for June and July

Wednesday, June 24 - Nativity of St. John the Baptist (To Be Celebrated with an Evening Liturgy on June 23) This marks the feastday of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the Forerunner of the Lord and patron saint of our parish.

Monday, June 29 - 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.

All Rising 4th grade boys interested in becoming an Altar Boy - Any young men who are entering fourth grade (or older) who are interested in serving in the altar for next year should contact Charlie Hambos 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. Current altar boys do not need to sign up again. **This is for NEW altar boys.** Please contact Charlie by June 30 to be added to the list for the fall. Also, if for some reason, you do not wish to continue to serve in the altar, please let Charlie 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. 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 to Communion and after church. You can find Tom at Georgas@verizon.net.

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 traveling.

Donation Needed for Sacraments Pew Book - For over a year Fr. Stavros has been working with a small committee to put together a pew book that contains the Sacrament of Baptism, the Sacrament of Marriage and the Funeral Service. This book will provide the text for these services. It is being compiled in one volume, to include all three services. It will be spiral bound and be available for use at all the baptisms, weddings and funerals. I will be a small size paper than the liturgy books, but will be significantly longer. If there is someone or a ministry that would like to donate this publication, please see Fr. Stavros. The cost estimate is between \$1,000 and \$1,500 depending on layout factors that are still working on. It is hoped that we will have these books published and ready for use by September 1. Should the donor wish, there will be an opportunity for a dedication page in the book.

The Witness of the Apostles

As we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Apostles this month, here is a summary of where they took the Gospel and how each died. All but one died as a martyr.

Matthew-Took the Gospel to Ethiopia, where he was killed by a sword wound.

Mark-Took the Gospel to Alexandria, Egypt, and died after being dragged by horses through the streets.

Luke-Preached the Gospel in Greece and was hanged.

John-Took the Gospel to Rome, faced martyrdom when he was boiled in a huge basin of boiling oil but was miraculously delivered from death. John was then sentenced to the mines on the prison Island of Patmos. He wrote his prophetic Book of Revelation on Patmos. The apostle John was later freed and returned to serve as Bishop of Edessa in modern Turkey. He died as an old man, the only apostle to die peacefully.

Peter-Took the Gospel to Rome. He was crucified upside down on an x-shaped cross. According to church tradition it was because he told his tormentors that he felt unworthy to die in the same way that Jesus Christ had died.

James-The leader of the church in Jerusalem, was thrown over a hundred feet down from the southeast pinnacle of the Temple (this was the same pinnacle where Satan had taken Jesus during the Temptation—Matthew 4) when he refused to deny his faith in Christ. When they discovered that he survived the fall, his enemies beat James to death with a fuller's club.

James the Great-Son of Zebedee, was a fisherman by trade when Jesus called him to a lifetime of ministry. As a strong leader of the church, James was ultimately beheaded at Jerusalem. The Roman officer who guarded Jesus' watch amazed as James defended his faith at his trial. Later, the officer walked beside James to the place of execution. Overcome by conviction, he declared his new faith to the judge and knelt beside James to accept beheading as a Christian.

Bartholomew- Also known as Nathaniel, he was a missionary to Asia. He witnessed for our Lord in present day Turkey. Bartholomew was martyred for his preaching in Armenia where he was flayed to death by a whip.

Andrew- He was crucified on an x-shaped cross in Patras, Greece. After being whipped severely by seven soldiers they tied his body to the cross with cords to prolong his agony. His followers reported that, when he was led toward the cross, Andrew saluted it in these words: 'I have long desired and expected this happy hour. The cross has been consecrated by the body of Christ hanging on it.' He continued to preach to his tormentors for two days until he expired.

Thomas-was stabbed with a spear in India during one of his missionary trips to establish the church there.

Jude-was killed with arrows when he refused to deny his faith in Christ.

Matthias-The Apostle chosen to replace Judas, the betrayer, was stoned and then beheaded.

Paul-Not one of the original 12, but the greatest of all the Apostles, was tortured and then beheaded by the evil Emperor Nero at Rome in A.D.67. Paul endured a lengthy imprisonment, which allowed him to write his many epistles to the churches he had formed throughout the Roman Empire. These letters, which taught many of the foundational doctrines of Christianity, form a large portion of the New Testament.

These stories of the Apostles are a reminder to us that our sufferings here are indeed minor compared to the intense persecution and cold cruelty faced by the apostles and disciples during their times for the sake of their Faith in Christ. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 10:22, 'And you shall be hated by all men for My Name's sake. But he that endures to the end shall be saved.'

Faith is BELIEVING that God can, and KNOWING in your heart that God will!

Did You Know...?

Fr. Stavros has a monthly podcast on Orthodox Christian Network (OCN)!

There is a website called www.myocn.net, which features interviews, videos and writings by many Orthodox priests and laypeople on a variety of subjects. Fr. Stavros has a monthly podcast called "Orthodoxy for Every Generation" If you go on the site and search under his name, you'll find all the interviews. There is a wide variety of materials on a wide variety of Orthodox subjects. A great resource center indeed!

Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism - Pavlos Nikolaos Minadakis, son of Nicholas and Frances Minadakis, was baptized on Sunday, May 3. Mike Konstantinides and Dimitri Ieronomahos each participated as a Godfather. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism - The Khashram twins-Many people in our community prayed for the twin children of Elias and Falamina Khashram, who were born VERY premature in March 2014. The older boy, Charbel, was baptized in an emergency baptism in the hospital when he was just days old. Both boys, born weighing less than a pound, are in good health and are now 14 months old. On Saturday, May 9, we Christmated Charbel (Peter). His Godparents were George Khoury and Vera Khoury. We baptized Issa (Paul) and his Godparents were Ziad Khasram and Helen Hannouche. God bless them and their parents for not giving up hope for them. Na Sas Zisi!

Chrismation - Terrence Joseph (Constantine) Young was Chrismated on Thursday, April 23. His sponsors were Telly and Toula Courialis. Congratulations!

Funeral - Kostas Kefalas passed away on Friday, April 10. Funeral was held on Friday, April 17. May his memory be eternal!

Wedding - Nektarios Demetriou and Peggy Sotiropoulos were married on Saturday, April 25. Marianna Katsiadrami was the Koumbara. Congatulations!

Get Acquainted Sunday, June 7 and July 5



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.



Stewardship Welcoming Committee

The Welcoming Committee wants to encourage new people and visitors to learn about Saint John the Baptist 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 Christ 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 have a team of at least three people each Sunday to serve on a rotating basis as greeters and as ambassadors in the church and in the Kourmolis Center during coffee hour. We also have 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. If you are interested in joining this rewarding 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

Choir Conference in St. Petersburg!

Choir members are very excited about the choir conference to be held at St. Stephanos Greek Orthodox Church in St. Petersburg, Florida on July 24, 25, and 26. We will be singing the Liturgy of Peace composed by Christopher Kypros who will also be the guest conductor. St. John the Baptist will be represented in the choir by 22 adult choir members, several of our teenagers, and many children from our youth Sunday school choir along with choir members from our Metropolis.

An area rehearsal will be held in St. Petersburg on June 6 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Anyone interested in singing at the conference may join us at that rehearsal. For registration and hotel information, please see Artie Palios, choir director, or any choir member. Choir rehearsal at St. John the Baptist are Wednesday night at 7:15 p.m. Let Artie know if you are planning to attend so that a book will be available for you.

We welcome all who are interested in joining our wonderful choir. Please contact Artie at jpalios1@tampabay.rr.com with any questions. We look forward to hearing from you.

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 20 and Saturday July 18. For more information or to sign up to serve one Saturday, please contact, Betty Katherine Katsamakias at bettypalios@gmail.com or (813)468-1596.

GOYA

Meeting - The GOYA Meeting for June will be Sunday, June 7 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 19 - Sunday, June 21. Make sure you sign up with Elaine Halkias (813) 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.

Junior Olympics - Volunteers Needed

St. John the Baptist will be hosting our annual Sunshine State Junior Olympics on June 19-21. This event brings over 200 GOYAns (teenagers) from all over Florida to our parish for a weekend of athletics and spirituality. Byron Nenos 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 (813) 789-0729, nenoslaw@aol.com. Thank you!

Ministry of Mothers Sharing (MOMS)

We will meet in the Nursery at 11:00 a.m. on Mondays, June 1, 15, and 29 and Mondays, July 6 and 20. This group is for mothers with wisdom to share and mothers who are searching for answers and meaning in the vocation of motherhood. Our mission is to provide Biblical encouragement and support to women as they begin their journey of motherhood. Please contact Lindsey Skourellos (813) 503-7845 and Mary Ann Konstas (813) 215-9862 with questions.

Men's Basketball

On Tuesday nights at 8:00 p.m. the Kourmolis Center is open for men's basketball pick up games. If you are interesting in joining the games, please contact Perry Katsamakias at perrykatsamakias@gmail.com or Jimmy Konstas at dkonstas@gmail.com or just come to the gym and join a team! **No skills necessary.**

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 on a few Wednesdays and the Young Adult Group. The Bible Study Small Groups will resume in September.

The **Men's Bible Study** will be concluding our study on "The Truth Project" with meetings on Wednesdays June 3, 10 and 17 at 7:30 a.m.

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 Before Amen by Max Lucado and will be meeting 3 times for discussion and fellowship on Thursdays, June 11, June 25, July 9 and July 23. The location will be announced. 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.

St. John the Baptist Youth to Participate in Summer Camp

A large contingent of campers and counselors will be taking part in The Metropolis of Atlanta's St. Stephen's Summer Camp this summer. Fr. Stavros will be serving as the director for sessions 2 and 3. Charlie Hambos will be at camp during session 2. 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.

Sunday School News

We would like thank everyone for a successful Sunday School Year and Graduation Ceremony. Cindy and George Xenick 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 Peter Hanhan, Nicholas Kavouklis, Arianna Krinos, Laura Paloumpis, Christopher Scarfogliero, and Katina Smith the best of luck in college next year.

The following students had **PERFECT ATTENDANCE** for the **ENTIRE YEAR** of Sunday School and were acknowledged at our Graduation Ceremony. +++Congratulations to Santino Bavaro, Gianni Bavaro, Niko Bavaro, Lola Bavaro, Antonio Bavaro, Emily Nicklow, Maria Nicklow, Yanni Trimikliniotis, George Xenick, Elizabeth Xenick, Artemis Xenick

FATHER STAVROS and CHARLIE HAMBOS are such an inspiration to all of us and we appreciate everything that they do for the Sunday School. We are very thankful for their 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: Vickie Peckham

Assistant Director of Administration: Tammy Christou

Assistant Director of Music/Special Programs: Maria Xenick

Music Assistant: Pam Irwin

Pre-K (3 and 4 year olds): Alexis Scarfogliero – Teacher and Bessie Palios - Assistant

Kindergarten: - Debbie Nicklow - Teacher and Tamam Smith - Assistant

Grade 1: Melissa Krinos - Teacher and Arianna Krinos - Assistant

Grade 2: Marina Choundas and Heidi Borgeas - Co-Teachers

Grade 3: Stamie Garcia and Amy Kafantaris - Co-Teachers

Grade 4: Debbie Ferekides

Grade 5 and 6: Vickie Peckham

Grade 7 and 8: Kara and Stefan Kataras - Co-Teachers

High School: Peggy Bradshaw and Isidoros Passalaris – Co-Teachers

We are blessed to have most of our teachers returning next year. Although Tammy Christou and Tamam Smith will not be returning. We can't thank them enough for all that they have done for our Sunday School Program this past year.

Our last day of Sunday School was on May 17th 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 Prospora with each classroom this year and also taught them a lesson about it. We would like to thank our 7th - 12th graders who made the Prospora, during GOYA, for this service. We would also like to thank all the high school students who read the Epistle throughout the year. These Youth Sundays have been a blessing and a wonderful opportunity for our children.

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 contact Vickie Peckham at vickiepeckham@gmail.com, 406-

St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!

Sermons on Youtube Channel Each Sunday



Father's sermons each Sunday are available on our youtube channel. Just go to youtube and type in "St John GOC Tampa" and you'll find them. If you miss a sermon or wish to hear a sermon again, you'll find it there!



Like us on Facebook! Like our page and suggest it to your friends. Announcements are posted frequently so you are up to date with everything going on at St. John the Baptist. You can find our page at [StJohnGOCTampa](https://www.facebook.com/StJohnGOCTampa).

Constant Contact Emails - Our parish utilizes Constant Contact as a way of staying in touch with parishioners, particularly on subjects that are time sensitive. This is an effort not to clog your inbox but to keep you informed of the goings on in our parish. If you are not receiving our Constant Contact emails, please let the office know so we can make sure we have your correct e-mail address.

Live Streaming - If you go to our website, www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com and click on the multimedia tab, then click on View Liturgy, 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. If you have any issues with the live-streaming, please contact Charlie so we can fix the problem.

Class of 2015!



Peter Hanhan is graduating from Bloomingdale High School. He will be attending NYU Shanghai where he will be majoring in International and diplomatic studies. *Peter is the son of Amin and Gloria Hanhan.*



Nicholas Kavouklis is graduating from Berkeley Preparatory School. He is going to Elon University in North Carolina and will be playing college football. Nicholas plans on a pre-med major as he would like to be an orthodontist. *Nicholas is the son of Chris and Debbie Kavouklis.*

Christopher Scarfogliero is graduating from JW Mitchell. He is going to St. Leo University, majoring in business and minoring in multi-media management or hospitality management. *Christopher is the son of Gennaro and Alexis Scarfogliero.*



Arianna Krinos will graduate from Robinson High School in Tampa on June 1. She is the IB valedictorian with an 8.2 GPA. In the fall, Arianna will attend Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA as a Davenport Engineering Scholar and Alumni Presidential Scholar (Honors College) and will major in bio systems engineering. *Arianna is the daughter of Dimitri and Melissa Krinos.*

Katina Smith is graduating from McKeel Academy of Technology. She is going to Fordham University Lincoln Center. Her intended major/course of study is Political Science (Pre-Law). *Katina is the daughter of Charles and Tamam Smith.*



Laura Paloumpis is graduating from Hillsborough High School International Baccalaureate Program. She will be attending Florida State University and plans to study Nursing. *Laura is the daughter of Tom and Jenny Paloumpis.*

Irene Garcia graduated from Florida State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Media Communications and a Minor in Psychology. *Irene is the daughter of Mark and Anastasia Garcia.*

Alyssa Skijus graduated from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Health Promotion and a Minor in Nutrition. *Alyssa is the daughter of Steve and Ellen Skijus.*



Imad Hanhan graduated from the University of Central Florida (UCF) with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. Imad will be attending Purdue University for his graduate studies in Aeronautics and Astronautics. *Imad is the son of Amin and Gloria Hanhan*

Vasilios Nenos graduated from the Jacksonville University with a Bachelor of Science in Biology. *Vasilios is the son of Byron and Jeanie Nenos.*



Aris Rogers II graduated from the University of South Florida with a Master of Business Administration/Master of Science in Sport and Entertainment Management.

Congratulations!

JUST SAY YES!

We will continue with the final part of a monthly series to *The Messenger* to encourage and inspire you to continue to Just Say Yes! The following is an excerpt from the book *Having a Mary Spirit: Allowing God to Change us from the Inside Out*, by Joanna Weaver. The monthly excerpts will come from a chapter of the book titled *A Willing Spirit*. It is a beautiful study on both the Virgin Mary and the concept of saying Yes to God.

TRUSTING HIS HEART

Why do we secretly believe that following Jesus should always be easy? I know we don't say it out loud. Instead, out loud we talk about the price of obedience and the cost of discipleship. But when it gets right down to it and the going gets tough, haven't we all wondered if we somehow misunderstood God's instructions? If perhaps, we missed God's will when, like Bugs Bunny, we took that left at Albuquerque? If we were really walking in obedience to God's plan, we reason, things shouldn't be so difficult.

Mary must have had all those thoughts and others when she heard what was going on with her oldest son early in His ministry. She hadn't seen Jesus very often since He'd left home three years before. She missed Him so much it sometimes took her breath away.

"Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Jesus had told her and Joseph almost twenty years earlier after their frantic search finally let them to their twelve-year-old teaching in the temple (Luke 2:49, NKJV). And it was His Father's business that kept Him away from her now. Most of the time Mary was okay with that. But as news of miracles and healings gave way to reports of Sanhedrin meetings and attempts to capture her Son, she must have wondered if she'd misinterpreted all the events that surrounded His birth.

Maybe she shouldn't have asked Jesus to intervene in the wedding at Cana. After all, He'd said clearly, "My time has not yet come" (John 2:4). She hadn't pressed Him only instructed the servants to "do whatever he tells you" (verse 5). But now, in light of all the controversy swirling around Jesus, Mary couldn't help but wonder. Did I miss something? Did I mess everything up?

Her mother-heart must have hurt as she remembered the day she and Jesus's brothers traveled to where He was speaking in hopes of bringing Him home. There had been threats even then—riots and attempted stonings. The entire family had been concerned about Jesus's health—both mental and physical. But instead of coming to greet them, instead of explaining what He was up to and putting their hearts at ease, Jesus's only response to the news of their coming had been a not-so-veiled rebuke. "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35).

Mary must have been grieved at the turn of events that seemed to be leading her Son toward the Cross rather than a crown. And so are we when all our grand plans to do something important for God go up in smoke and our highflying hopes come crashing down.

At times like these, we need to remind ourselves that God knows what He's doing.

When we can't trace His hand, we must trust His heart.

Fr. Stavros to be out of town for parts of June and July

Fr. Stavros will be taking vacation time as follows this summer: June 8-15, July 20-25, July 27-August 1 (and some additional time in August). Fr. Stavros will also be at summer camp from July 2-18. Fr. Konstantine Mendrinou will celebrate the Liturgy on Sunday, June 14. On July 5, the celebrant will be Fr. John Stefero, and on July 12, the celebrant will be Fr. Constantine Xanthakis. 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 Charlie Hambos in the church office. **Father will not be answering his cell phone or email while on vacation or at summer camp, so please call the office with any pastoral issues.**

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival Speeches

In the May Messenger, we printed the speeches of the Junior Level Speakers and the Essay Participants. In this month's issue, we will print the Senior Level Speeches. **Congratulations to our young people and enjoy the content of what they have written. Very informative and inspirational!**

Using the parable of the poor widow's offering to the Temple (Luke 21:1-4), discuss the Orthodox Christian attitude of offering to the Church's ministries. By Nedi Ferekides

A tithe is merely an offering and an offering is merely an act of gratitude. In today's society, the concept of giving a tithe can bring high anxiety. The economic market is just beginning to pick up again, job searches continue, homelessness is still at a very high rate, and people continue to struggle to pay the bills each month. For many, giving a tithe to the church is the last thing on their mind of constant financial worries.

Tithing began in the Old Testament, in Genesis 14:20, when Abram praised the Lord and gave him a tenth of everything he owned. The tithing ideal continued on into Judaic Law, as seen in Leviticus 27:30-32, in which the Lord commanded Moses for the people of Israel on Mount Sinai. The Lord ordered that "every tenth animal of all that pass under the herdsman's staff, shall be holy to the Lord." Thus, tithing became a religious ideal and spread into multiple religions, such as Catholicism and Presbyterianism.

Our Orthodox faith however has never issued an official decree for a "standard of giving." We instead follow the ideal that all we possess originates from the Lord, thus as a form of our gratitude, we should offer the first and best portion of our treasures to Him. The poor widow's offering seen in Mark 12:41-44, reveals the story of a widow who gave everything she owned: two simple and very small copper coins. This woman's offering overshot the tithe by 90%, and in return, she was eternally blessed by the Lord.

As a member of Saint John's Greek Orthodox Church, I know that stewardship is not the only offering one can give. Churches have many needs that are often neglected. They are as simple as cleaning the floor or changing a lightbulb. Despite their simplicity, they require a greater form of payment than merely a written check on a Sunday morning. They require time. Ancient Greek philosopher Theophrastus once said, "Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend." By placing the Church as a priority in one's busy life, where time is often

a lost commodity, one can give their first and best.

There is a word in the Greek language that embodies a unique concept for a way of life. It is Philotimo. Philotimo comes from the Greek word *filo* and *timi*, which mean friend and honor. Together the word translates to respect of honor; however that is not a complete definition. It is represented by characteristics such as duty, courage, compassion, generosity, human kindness, and love. In Greeks, it is this word that they embody to derive their personal desire to be remembered as an individual who contributed to make a better world. Personally, I have seen this ideal expressed in the actions of my Greek grandparents and father. Their actions demonstrate love and generosity. When I visit my grandparents every summer, they constantly have visitors over. Their hospitality and generosity shines and their kindness is greatly appreciated by those who come seeking companionship. They have always been there to offer me anything I need to become successful in my life.

Almost every evening when I was growing up my father would ask me, "What act of kindness did you do by yourself for another?" Because of my family's example and my religion, I am instilled with a sense of duty to follow the ideals of philotimo. This ideal can be embodied by all and be translated to giving in the Church. A tithe is not needed, as it is simply a form of offering.

Now imagine a church that embodies a "power of giving" mantra. A Church community bound together not just by faith, but with Philotimo; the talent of offering their best to the Lord. A religion characterized by our gratitude for all he has given us, and one that is a beacon of light that shines as an example to all on how to properly live and give thanks to the Lord. Following the words from 1 Chronicles 16:29, "Give unto the LORD the glory due his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."

Nedi Ferekides is the daughter of

Chris & Debbie Ferekides and will be in 12th grade in the fall.

Women apostles, martyrs, and saints have spread the Gospel and advanced the Church from the beginning of Christianity. Discuss the significance of their roles and examples for all Christians today. By Eleni Pessemier

Have you ever thought about how many times Jesus scolds his disciples and male followers, yet he never even once becomes angry at or reprimands a woman? The priest at my former church once pointed this out in a bible study. He said this to emphasize that while women clearly have different roles in the Orthodox Church, that doesn't mean they're any less important or less loved by God. Inaccurate beliefs about women's value in the Orthodox faith are caused by ignorance, mistranslations or misunderstanding of the New Testament.

Many people who don't understand Orthodoxy mistakenly think that it doesn't value females. As a young Orthodox woman, I know that God loves women as much as men and holds a special place for females to be honored in His Church. This is reflected in Orthodox beliefs. While women can't be priests or venture behind the altar, we are still equally valued to men. Many people think that to be equal means that everyone must have exactly the same roles, but that isn't the truth. God chose specific roles for each gender, and He knows what is most fitting for each person. The roles of the two genders are

simply different, not unequal. We know from the countless female saints of the Orthodox Church that many, many women have been very close to God and have helped to spread His holy Church.

When you walk into any Orthodox church, what is the first thing you see? There is always a large icon of the Theotokos at the center of the iconostasis. Why? Because she is considered by the Orthodox faith to be the most holy person besides Jesus Christ Himself. The hymn we sing to the Mother of God every Sunday during the Divine Liturgy calls her more honorable than the cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim. How can we claim that women do not hold an important role in the Orthodox Church when we believe that the Mother of God is holier than even the most holy and powerful angels?

People who say that women aren't held in the same honor as men in the Church forget that Christ first showed himself after His resurrection to women, not men. The story of the three witnesses to the tomb of Christ is one of the most powerful examples of God's love, trust, and value of women. While many of the male disciple were in hiding, these women brazenly approached the tomb of Christ to anoint His body. Because of their faith and bravery, Christians even two thousand years later are still able to hear the good news and witness the resurrection through their eyes as the story is written in the Holy Scriptures.

Have you ever heard of St. Thekla? I had never heard of her until recently, which I think is sad because as I learned more about her, I found out that she was actually very influential to early Christianity. St. Thekla was one of the first apostles and taught the Gospel alongside St. Paul. She went against her parents wishes by becoming a Christian, and devoted her life to

the spread of the Christian faith, even though she was exiled from her home for it. Other saints even visited St. Thekla's shrine to venerate her. This is a perfect example of how important God sees women in our faith. The tragedy is that we all know exactly who St. Paul is, but many people have never even heard of St. Thekla.

It's our responsibility as Orthodox Christians to spread the word of forgotten women in Church history, like St. Thekla, who have been so important to the development of this faith we cherish so much. Holy women like the Theotokos, St. Thekla, and the women at the tomb have been vital to Christianity's growth, and serve as role models to all Christians today. Female saints are responsible for the conversion of tens of thousands of people to Christianity throughout history, and women have been every bit as important as men to the spread of the Gospel and advancement of the faith. Today, women are still very influential in the Orthodox Church. Other than serving in the altar, females are invited to participate in every area of church life. Women can serve on parish council, lead the choir, write icons, teach classes, and read the epistle. We don't need to compare women to men to see who is more holy in God's eyes. We as Orthodox Christians know that God loves and values each of us equally. Women bring many things to Orthodoxy that men do not, as the reverse is true. Holy men and women alike are responsible for the spread of the Christian Church, and for making the teachings of Jesus Christ's life and resurrection known to the world. We need to dispel the myths that women aren't valued in the Orthodox faith and spread the word of the impact women have had on the Church and still do. Countless women have been saints, apostles and martyrs, helping spread the Gospel to people all over the world and keeping Christianity alive, as it is today.

Eleni Pessemier is the daughter of

The Lord said, "I was in prison and you came to me" (Matthew 25:36).

What does this teach us about our attitudes toward those in jails and imprisoned? By Larissa Krinos

We live in a society where having been convicted in the past is a jail sentence all in its self. Where a minute of bad judgment can lead to a lifetime of struggle.

God is forgiving. This is a lesson that has been instilled in my mind since practically the first day of Sunday School when I was only 5 years old. It is a lesson meant to assure us that no human is perfect, and mistakes can happen. So how can we turn our backs on those who could benefit from this very lesson? We isolate those who have lost their way instead of guiding them back to the path of God. The Lord said "I was in prison and you came to me" Matthew 25:36. Have we come to those in prison? Have we attempted "...to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out the prisoners who are bound, and those who sit in the darkness from the prison house." As is said in Isaiah 42:7? Do we take the hands of those consumed by this darkness, and lead them to the light? No, instead we tell them that they are not qualified for jobs, that anything that occurred in their life prior to their arrest is practically meaningless. Even those who are never convicted yet still in the criminal database face a significantly harder job hunting experience. God is for-

giving, but we, as a society, are not.

A new person has joined your congregation, and you soon learn through the church grapevine that this person has a criminal record. He or she was convicted of robbery twenty years ago and spent eight years in prison. Would we welcome this person to the parish with open arms? Or would the donation tray be gripped just a bit harder as it passes their pew? The mention of prison can entirely change our view of a person, how many of us can honestly say we wouldn't instantly judge this person for their past mistakes?

However ignorant we are, there will always be those who persevere. The Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry dedicates time and resources to guiding those who are incarcerated. The OCPM asks for donations in order to purchase bibles, prayer books, icons, and other Orthodox books for those in prison. Before this, I had never heard of this organization, and I'm most likely not alone in this despite the relevance of this issue. We are a community, whether you attend church in Alaska or Florida, we should be assisting those in our community who need aid, even if they got to that point due to their own mistakes.

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, consider yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:1-2) We are all brethren, and we need to assist those in need. Everyone makes mistakes, and while God understands this, I don’t believe he understands why we completely turn our backs against those who we are supposed to be teaching. It is tragically ironic that jail is intended as a way to teach the convicts, but the teachings can never truly be executed due to the isolation brought upon the past prisoners. The most important thing is a person’s faith. Not everyone imprisoned has strong faith, or any faith in God whatsoever. This seems like a perfect opportunity to assist

those in need, as Galatians tells us to do. But you don’t see lines of parishioners bursting from prison doors because many believe that those in prison have been forever lost.

“Do not remember the former things, nor reason about the things of old. Behold, I will do new things, which shall now spring forth, and you shall know them; and I will make a road in the desert and rivers in waterless places.” (Isaiah 43: 18-19) You can move past your mistakes in life. One mistake does not define a person, as society thinks it should.

We are all human, thus liable to mistakes. God understands this, so why can’t we?

Larissa Krinos is the daughter of Demetrios and Melissa Krinos and will be in 11th grade this fall

The St. Nicholas Church at Ground Zero, which was destroyed on September 11, 2001, is soon to be rebuilt. Discuss the ways in which this tiny church building will now become a symbol of the universal themes of victory over evil; healing and hope; and being a beacon of Orthodox Christianity. By Arianna Krinos

In 2001, I was a small, unassuming pre-schooler. I skipped into my tiny, hands-on pre-school the morning of September 11th, and I skipped out similarly, without any measure of awareness of the shattering events that had taken place a couple thousand miles north of me. My pre-school, a little private Montessori school, was adamant that the malleable minds of the four-year-olds not be marred by knowledge of tragedy. Thus, when the disaster of the twin towers materialized, I didn’t genuinely hear about it until I later took part in commemorating it...in kindergarten. This meant that I wasn’t a part of the national rallying: I didn’t experience the American unity that manifested itself in the wake of calamity. As a small, unassuming pre-schooler in 2001, I was privileged enough not to have shed a tear. But my dry eyes didn’t dilute the statistics: I was the exception and not the rule. Scarcely an American wasn’t directly affected by 9/11, and the Greek Orthodox Church was not excluded. The fall of St. Nicholas Church made the cause even more real for the Orthodox community.

In Matthew 18:20, Christ instructs us that, “...where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” Once a small, unassuming church, the fall of St. Nicholas, though tragic, certainly fostered the rise of community. Just as the terrorism of Pearl Harbor ignited a stronger U.S. response to World War II in 1941, the twin tower disaster kindled the American spirit rather than stifling it. This attitude extended to the church. The Orthodox Church turns to community and to God in the search for comfort and safety, not to additional acts of violence or an indefinite abhorrence of the villain at the helm of the disaster. The beginning of the Orthodox response was in the community fundraisers and events in and around churches across the nation. 9/11 spurred the same feelings that St. Nicholas will later elicit, though through the symbol of an act of terror, rather than a building that signifies the opposite.

Now that the church is being rebuilt, more than a decade after the tragedy we are beginning to see closure for the damage done in 2001. In Matthew 5:18, we read, “For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot,

will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” St. Nicholas Church at ground zero was a church body—just like our local churches—and we have to approach the situation in that way. If our churches—our pillars of religious safety and truth—suddenly disappeared, imagine the uproar that would ensue? This is why, as the Bible alludes, the church at Ground Zero could not remain removed. God promises us closure in tragedy: we are not always aware of the form in which we might receive it, but God ensures that His faithful aren’t kept waiting indefinitely. God plants the seeds of something new and beautiful that can mend the sting of destruction. The reconstructed St. Nicholas church will symbolize to Orthodox Christians everywhere that God’s healing is tangible, and that love for God is strong amongst Orthodox Christians.

In the aftermath of 9/11, connection to our Creator was blurred, because the deed seemed too awful to have been possible under the watchful eye of God. As the years pass, however, and the twin towers become a wistful historic memorial rather than a recent disaster, the towers similarly transform into an opportunity for forgiveness and a sense of community. The original church at Ground Zero, a small, seemingly insignificant building next to the vast ones that sprung up around it, is a symbol for the transcendence of God (and faith in God) over anything grandiose built by man. Psalms 28:14 reads, “Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.” St. Nicholas church was demolished, but Orthodox Christians did not let its memory fall by the wayside. Unflinching belief in what the church stood and will stand for is what will raise St. Nicholas from the ground. As Christ intended, when we think of St. Nicholas, we should think of the foundation that each church sets down. Christ came to show us that Christianity can be more resilient than any force of evil. Even more than the 2000 years of Christian history, the little, hardy church at the feet of an American disaster is a reminder that Christ’s vision can be realized.

Arianna Krinos is the daughter of Demetrios and Melissa Krinos and just graduated from high school.

The Lord said, "I was in prison and you came to me" (Matthew 25:36).

What does this teach us about our attitudes toward those in jails and imprisoned? By Katina Smith

Imagine for a moment, you are Paul Politis, the Operations Director of the Orthodox Christian Prison Ministries. This is your account of your first visit to prison. "Two burly men were sitting behind the door I needed to pass through. I was getting anxious and didn't know how they would react to my presence, but once I passed them, I soon got my answer." The inmates saw Father Nick Solak and the group with Mr. Politis and said, "Good afternoon Father! Good to see you all! God Bless!" Do these people seem any different than you or I? They are warmly welcoming the priest into their home, the prison. These men do not seem like the criminals I have seen on television programs, they seem like Orthodox Christians excited to learn more about their faith.

I do not know what it is like to be in prison, or what people go through in the cell. Rather, our Orthodox faith has taught me to pray for those in need. Our beloved Divine Liturgy states "for the suffering, the captives, and for their salvation, let us pray to the Lord" We the people respond "Lord have mercy". Those in prison are captives and suffering for their wrong deeds or unfortunate circumstances. As Christians, we are to pray for them, pray for their healing, pray for their ability to have a better afterlife.

If we as sinners under God's laws, the Ten Commandments, were sent to prison, like people are who break mans laws, we would all be in a cell. I consider myself as a rule follower, I see that the laws are in place for a reason. They are imposed so we can follow them, not break them, yet I do not strictly follow all of God's laws. Am I any better than a man who is behind bars for breaking the law? I break God's laws and through confession, I pray for redemption.

So close to our homes, Ocala, Florida holds two women struggling with their faith. Two of the youngest women on death row. Ms. Cole and Ms. Carr live in "Life Row", as they put it, they are still alive with the ability to repent. They are turning to prayer and God to ease their time of waiting. They are asking for forgiveness, in the hope of a better afterlife. Throughout this lenten period, who are we without the simple five minutes

it will take to write a letter? We shall treat our neighbor as ourself, and write to these women about the love of God, and the teachings of His words.

Those in prisons are receiving punishment in their secular lives. They are receiving three horrid meals, a cold cement floor, and bars keeping them back from being free. Who are we to turn our back on those in the most need? Responding with "lord have mercy" is simply not enough. Our Lord and savior was a prisoner, brought to trial, found guilty and crucified, the capital punishment of the time. Those at his aid were not as abundant as those who claimed to follow Him.

We are taught to help those in need, and aid them in their search for God. In Matthew 25:36, Jesus shares that through helping those in need, and in prison, we are helping him. We shall not abandon someone because they made a mistake under the law, rather help them to find forgiveness by God, so there eternity can be filled with joy rather than their secular life. Helping the lowest person in societies eyes is truly helping God. Through Diane Sawyers "20/20" special, I learned of Tina Hughes. She embodies what Matthew has taught us. She is a volunteer choir director at a female prison in Tennessee. She helps those imprisoned to continue their faith in God. She feels the women have suffered more than anyone else, so, she is there to help them. She is offering them a chance to learn more about God and have momentary relief from the horrors of life in a penitentiary.

We are all imprisoned by our sins, and can only find forgiveness and hope for an afterlife in heaven through prayer and God's grace and mercy. As Orthodox Christians, we need to be doers of God's good works. We shall all pray for those who need it most, and work to be less judgmental towards those behind bars. As no one is without sin but God alone, we are to help those imprisoned to find and learn about God, much like our priests help us in our path of life.

Katina Smith is the daughter of Chuck and Tamam Smith, and just graduated from high school.

Let God Have You

How long has it been since you let God have you? I mean really have you? How long since you gave him a portion of undiluted, uninterrupted time listening for his voice?

Apparently, Jesus did. He made a deliberate effort to spend time with God. Spend much time reading about the listening life of Jesus and a distinct pattern emerges. He spent regular time with God, praying and listening. Mark 1:35 says, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." Luke tells us, "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

Let me ask the obvious. If Jesus, the Son of God, the sinless Savior of humankind, thought it worthwhile to clear his calendar to pray, wouldn't we be wise to do the same?

~A quote from Max Lucado, from his book "Just Like Jesus"

The Oratorical Festival - After the Results

By Peggy Bradshaw, *Oratorical Festival Chair, St. John the Baptist*

After 7 years of chairing the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival at St. John the Baptist I can truly say that I believe in the importance of this ministry for our children now more than ever before.

As you may know, the ages of the participants of this festival range from grades 7-12th. Like every adult we run across, no two children are alike. Not surprising to many parents who have multiple children, I see vast differences not only in age, but many other levels of character, that include maturity, spirituality and opinion.

Every year, I learn something new. Not only do I learn more from the research that we do based on the topics, but about the children themselves. Despite their differences, every child who participates, displays an incredible amount of courage to take on the daunting task of public speaking. To me, this, is stating the obvious.

But what other lessons do our children learn from the Oratorical Festival? When I first started this, my number one goal was to make sure that every child I worked with would eventually be comfortable in a setting that would require them to speak to an audience. I am not an educator, nor do I have any worth while background to take this ministry on. I simply have real world experience as a sales person, that requires me to speak in front of people in groups, audiences or even just one on one in a relaxed and informative matter.

To get the “sale” you have to be genuine and you have to be able to articulate your message so that it is understood and convincing enough for the client to buy the product. In our spiritual world, the client is the audience, the product is the lesson the child brings and the sale is the comprehension and faith that is produced by the speech. The “salesperson” is the Oratorical Participant. Their compensation is something that I believe goes beyond a monetary award. It is a blessing from God that can never be taken from them. I imagine the angels singing with glee when each one of these children stand and affirm their faith with boldness, clarity and enthusiasm! In this secular world we live in, how blessed are we at St. John the Baptist to have these students professing their faith with such confidence. It brings tears to my eyes, because I know that these children will never forget their time doing this and I feel this builds additional spiritual faith that will be with them for years to come, well after graduation from high school when their faith shall TRULY be tested. It is my prayer that this is just one more added spiritual “muscle” that they are building for their future as an adult.

But what other spiritual benefits do these events bring to our children other than the obvious? This is the lesson that I learn every year more and more. Here are some of my reflections:

1) Humility. We know that Christ offered us the ultimate sacrifice of humility when he willingly went to the cross to be crucified. We know that even though it was prophesized in the Old Testament and we know that He knew this fate was to befall Him, He still sweated “blood” before He went to his crucifixion because His human nature understood the real pain He was about to suffer for our sins. How does this compare to our children?

Since we have a growing number of children who continue to

participate in this festival, there is the obvious fact that the majority of the participants will not move on to the District Level. In fact, there is a better chance that they will not.

Think about that for a minute. Bring yourself back to middle or high school. Think about that big project that you worked on for hours and hours and did everything that the teacher told you to do, and then imagine it came out perfect. Then imagine, the teacher gives you an F and you have no idea why!!!! The good news, is that only you and your parents know what happened and you can go to the principal, and maybe fix the situation.

Does that mean that each child who does not move on gets an F? Absolutely not! But deep down inside, we are all competitive and when we do our absolute best and someone else is judged as superior to us (even though it is not supposed to be worded like that) IT REALLY HURTS...A LOT!

2) Loving your Neighbor. Here we are back to real challenge. You now have to support love and pray for the person who “beat you”. Again, if you feel you were wronged by anyone, be it the system of the Oratorical, the chairman (me), and or the judges, Christ teaches us to be happy for the ones who move on and we have to put our self in the back seat. This is a real life lesson that is going to happen as we age, no matter what age we are. I know I have faced this challenge many times in my own professional and personal life as well. When we feel we are wronged, we want to blame someone! We want to let everyone know it was unfair. We certainly do not want to accept that someone else “beat us” in a setting where we spent hours and hours working and we did not see the result we were expecting. Again, I have been in these situations many times myself. It takes a lot of reflection and prayer and sometimes, just common sense to let go of the anger. Eventually, we are happy for the person who beat us out, and maybe there is a reason we did not get our way, and life goes on.

3) Giving thanks. I see that all of these children and their parents do thank me for taking time out to work with them. This is much appreciated by me and I think it is a good thing for a child to recognize when they are truly being cared for and loved. It is truly a good thing to learn how to give thanks to your mentors, because many times, even that little act of kindness and gratitude builds more character and Christ like behavior. Even if they don’t win, the children all realize that at the end of it all, they have learned an invaluable talent of being a speech giver and being comfortable in front of an audience.

4) I am grateful. I am grateful for the lessons that these children have taught an almost 50 year old lady! Love, patience, kindness and all the virtues of Christ are all tested and in the end, win out every year! No matter how difficult it can seem sometimes, Christ and His Message always prevails! Most of all, I truly love each and everyone of these children and will do anything I can to help them within my means.

Thank you for your support of this ministry and our children. Just by sitting in church and listening to the speeches and clapping for them and encouraging them when each one of them receives their awards is something I am truly grateful. Please continue to pray for the growth of this ministry and if you have children or grandchildren, please encourage them to participate.



AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – JUNE/JULY 2015



AHEPA SCHOLARS

The AHEPA FAMILY including AHEPA Lycurgus Chapter 12 and Daughters of Penelope Alcmaeon Chapter 167 have awarded scholarships to deserving students since 2010. The students who have received scholarships are designated as AHEPA Scholars. The following is an update about the accomplishments of the AHEPA Scholars, Maids of Athena and Sons of Pericles.

AHEPA SCHOLAR UPDATE

CONGRATULATIONS to Vasilios Nenos upon his graduation from Jacksonville University. “Billy” the son of Mr. and Mrs. Byron Nenos, graduated from Gaither High School in Tampa, Fl. where he played football and was an outstanding student. He attended Jacksonville University in Jacksonville, Florida and played football there as well. He was a member of the Pikes PKA fraternity in college and participated in many activities of the Pikes including the Canine Companions for Independence. He has been a camp counselor at the Metropolis of Atlanta’s St. Stephen’s Summer Camp and has participated in the Junior Olympics of Saint John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church. He is a member of the AHEPA Family of Tampa and an AHEPA Scholar. We wish him a great future and continued success in his career. The Nenos Family are members of AHEPA, Daughters of Penelope and the Sons of Pericles.



CONGRATULATIONS to Arianna Krinos. She will be attending Virginia Tech this fall. She is President of the Tampa Maids of Athena Chapter 39 and a Tampa AHEPA Scholar. On her Facebook she said: "After several months of contemplation and hearing a multitude of divergent opinions, today, the National Candidates' Reply Date, I am delighted to announce that, after growing up an honorary Hokie, I am now official: I will be a freshman in the Virginia Tech College of Engineering this fall, with Virginia Tech Biological Systems Engineering as my intended primary department." We wish her continued success as she pursues her goals in college. We will miss her as part of our Tampa community and the AHEPA Family.

AHEPAcademy



CONGRATULATIONS to Nedi Ferekides for being accepted to be a participant in the AHEPAcademy this summer. AHEPAcademy is a small, select group of Greek-American high school students selected from throughout the country to participate in an interactive leadership and professional development program to be held at George Mason University outside Washington, DC from June 21 – June 27, 2015. AHEPAcademy is a leadership and professional development program that identifies, educates, inspires, mentors, advances, and networks exceptional Greek-American high school students as they progress through their high school, college, graduate and professional careers. It begins in the summer after a student’s junior year of high school and continues throughout their senior year of high school, their application to and acceptance to college, their academic and pre-professional careers while in college, any post graduate schooling, and eventually their entry into their professional careers. AHEPAcademy promises a 10 year commitment to each student in the program. It is the goal of the program to produce tomorrow’s young leaders of the Greek American community who will not only feel accountable to the Greek American community, but will rise to positions in American society to assist not only each other, but Greek-America as a whole.

The purpose of AHEPAcademy is to create a national network of exceptional Greek-American young adults that identify with and learn to appreciate the value of their Greek-American heritage and the networking opportunities it can provide. By identifying, inspiring and mentoring these students before, during, and after their college and graduate school experience, there is a higher probability of getting and keeping these students involved in the Greek-American community during a time when many young adults drift away from the community as the pressures of school and career-planning mount. The benefits these students receive from AHEPAcademy will also create a sense of responsibility and accountability to the Greek-American community and will encourage these students not only to help each other, but the next generation of Greek-Americans as well.

Nedi is a member of the Tampa Chapter 39 of the Maids of Athena and was sponsored by the AHEPA Lycurgus Chapter 12 of Tampa. We are all proud of Nedi’s accomplishments and wish her continued success in her endeavors.

AHEPA AND DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE CITRUS DISTRICT 2 CONVENTION

The District Convention of Ahepa/DOP Citrus District 2 will be held in Pasco County June 11-13, 2015 at The Marriott Residence Inn Lutz, Fl. As part of the convention, the following events are open to the public.

June 12th - The "Greek Night" Dinner Dance will be held at St. George Greek Orthodox Church New Port Richey, FL.

June 13th - The "Grand Banquet" Dinner Dance will be held at The Spartan Manor New Port Richey, FL.

~Spirit of Stewardship ~

The Young at Heart (YAH) is a small but mighty ministry at St. John started in its present form within the last 3 years. YAH members have a long track record of Stewardship to our church and represent a very dedicated group of members. YAH helping hands raise money (which all goes to the church) with their annual Masquerade Dance in February (not to be missed) and hosting coffee hours in addition to a few other creative efforts over the years!

Carole Fotopoulos- President, Mary Voykin - Treasurer and Bobbie Perry- Secretary round out the officer team. The ministry has about 15 members with a core active group that keep the fun in our Church Community with their monthly outings and efforts. And having attended one of their lunches I can vouch for the love and laughter that surround their adventures!

Carole shared this lovely description of the YAH...”Anne Demas is our "Social Butterfly" who comes up with most of our "outings" which have included trips to the monastery in Ocala, the Plant Museum, many lunches out, dinner theatres, shopping in Mount Dora, Lowry Park's presentation of ‘Zoominations’ and a cruise. There are no pressures in being a member of our group. We have no dues, and no requirements other than a desire to just have a good time. OH, and don't forget the LOVE! We are a loving and caring group and we will help wherever there is need. Whether it is to help another ministry or visit the sick. We are driven by a desire to help our church and the church community in whatever way we can for as long as we can!”

The YAH contributions will have a lasting impact for all of us for years to come, as evidenced by their most recent contributions to upgrade the acoustics & Sound System in the Church and Kourmoulis Hall. They worked on this project with significant help from John Demas (our beloved church member, choir member and musician) who had the musical ear and connections to carry this project through to completion!

They have raised over \$15,800 in the past 3 years alone by sponsoring 3 dances and 22 Coffee Hours and contributed all the funds to various church needs, Stain Glass Window Restoration, Thanksgiving Baskets, Oratorical Festival, St. Basil Fund and most significantly the Sound Systems!

If you're looking for a ministry to join that is always having fun and giving back the Young at Heart is the place to be! Contact Carole Fotopoulos at (813) 982-0947 for more details.

~Stewardship...little of this and that~

THANK YOU for continued support of our Church Mission and Ministries.

As you can see, we are short of our projected goal and still have many parishioners that pledged last year but haven't turned in a form for 2015! With faith and your support we remain optimistic of closing this gap. If you fall into this group please fill out our pledge form TODAY!

If you need a form, please contact the church office and we'll be happy to send one. They are also available in the Church Narthex. Setting up an auto deduct from your bank account is an easy way to manage weekly/monthly pledges.

We listed ‘Pledged Stewards’ in our May Messenger and will print the list again next quarter. This list only includes Families/Parishioners that completed a 2015 Pledge Form. If you have any questions or wish to see a complete list of ‘Pledged Stewards’ please contact our church office.

Please feel free to share your thoughts to the office email - officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com or speak directly with Fr. Stavros, Sandra Pappas or Pete Trakas -Stewardship Co-Chairs. We are here for YOU!

	2015*
Stewardship Goal	\$470,000.00
Pledged	\$358,072.00
Received	\$185,182.00
Pledge Shortfall/Gain (from Goal)	(\$111,928.00)
Average Pledge	\$1,356.00
Median Pledge**	\$750.00
# of Parishioners (Families) Pledged	264

*Based on YTD as of 4/11/15

** Pledge amount in the Middle – ½ of Stewards pledge higher & ½ lower

The Two Simple Words That Are Greatly Improving My Marriage (and, No, They're Not "I'm Sorry")

By Akirah Robinson

Editor's Note: I read through many articles each month on a variety of subjects and share those that I think may be helpful, based on my pastoral experiences. Many of these articles focus on marriage and family, which are two areas that I'm frequently speaking to parishioners about. I hope you enjoy these articles. If you come across interesting articles, please feel free to pass them along

If you're anything like me, just hearing the word "conflict" sends you running to the hills. I'm a people-pleaser to the highest degree, so dealing with folks who aren't pleased with me causes me a lot of anxiety. Giving someone bad news, boldly stating my opinions when I know they differ from others', and having hard conversations aren't really strengths of mine. Usually I just fake it until I make it. Unfortunately, when it comes to marriage, one can only fake it so much.

John Gottman, Ph.D., a world-renowned marriage researcher, theorized three types of conflict styles that people tend to exhibit when in relationships with one another: avoidance, validating, and volatile. Avoiders, like me, resist conflict like the plague. People who are volatile are highly expressive with their emotions and have no problem discussing their differences in opinion with loved ones. Lastly, validators fall somewhere in between, expressing their emotions and opinions in steady and calm ways.

I first learned about these three conflict styles in graduate school during my couples' therapy class. Slowly I began to understand why my husband and I struggle so much during conflict: I'm a conflict avoider, and my husband is volatile, which is a significant mismatch. Any time we disagree, I want to run and hide, while he wants to talk it out—sometimes loudly. I couldn't help but wonder how in the world we'd actually work through this and learn how to productively resolve conflict.

A few months ago, however, I found hope. In a meeting, I was introduced to an exercise called "Ouch and Oops," not knowing it would have any kind of impact on my marriage. Everyone at the meeting was told that if anyone became offended by something someone else said, he/she should say, "Ouch!" Immediately, the person who made the offensive remark was to respond with "Oops!" and apologize for their mishap. The two individuals involved could later discuss the incident further, if appropriate. Instantly I was intrigued and wanted to tell my

husband more about this exercise.

So many times, when I unintentionally say something hurtful, my husband reacts the way most volatile people usually do—loudly and emotionally. Instead of apologizing (as I should, since I did something wrong!), I can be quick to avoid the conversation altogether by being defensive.

Defensiveness is never helpful during a disagreement and as a result, my husband would often feel disregarded by my attempts to deflect his feelings.

"Ouch and Oops" works really well because it gives my husband a way to gently initiate conflict. As soon as I hear him say it, I know to immediately say "Oops!" and tune in to his feelings, rather than disregard them. It starts the conversation on the right foot before it gets out of hand, which also helps me feel less anxious. Honestly, it's been a win/win for the both of us.

I still remember having a quiet yet intense disagreement with my husband a few months ago. As soon as I heard him say "Ouch," I stopped in my tracks, said "Oops," and prepared myself to listen to his perspective. It almost didn't even feel like conflict but rather a really intense conversation. After we worked our way through it, I remember thinking, Wow...I think that helped. Prior to that evening, we had only really used "Ouch and Oops" in a joking manner. During that conversation, however, we actually respected each other's differences and found ourselves on the other side, completely unscathed.

If you and your partner really struggle to initiate conflict, perhaps because of differing conflict styles, I definitely recommend trying the "Ouch and Oops" method. It may sound silly, but in my experience, it works. I'm not going to guarantee that all your arguments will be smooth sailing here on out, but learning how to initiate conflict in a nonconfrontational manner certainly won't make matters worse.

Is your conflict style avoidance, validating, or volatile? What about your partner? Do you think something like "Ouch and Oops" could help you and your spouse argue more effectively?

Akirah Robinson is a writer and breakup coach living in Pittsburgh, Pa.



Do you have the Messengers from the last year and not know what to do with them? Do you read the Messenger and just throw it away? Do you know you can be emailed the Messenger? Do you want to Go Paperless?

You can read it on your computer, tablet, phone everywhere you go! All you have to do is email the office at **officestjohngoetampa@gmail.com** and let us know you want to be emailed the Messenger!

In the Subject Line just type: **Please Email Me the Messenger** and you will be emailed and not mailed the August Messenger!



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

METROPOLIS OF ATLANTA

Reverend Clergy and the Faithful of the Holy and God-protected Metropolis of Atlanta

Beloved in the Lord,

I greet you with love and joy in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

For many years, I have been blessed to travel throughout our Holy Metropolis of Atlanta and speak with our Faithful about our parish communities and our Metropolis. As a result, after prayerful study and reflection, I have directed Mr. Bill Marianes to implement a 6-step Strategic Planning process to systematically guide our Metropolis of Atlanta in the future. Through this process, we will together develop a comprehensive road map to achieve meaningful programs and ministries for the spiritual, educational and social growth of our Faithful and our parish communities. The purpose of this letter is to update you on the excellent progress we have made thus far.

Recently, a dedicated group of nearly 50 clergy and laity from throughout our Metropolis representing many constituencies and viewpoints were invited to meet for three days at a Strategic Planning retreat. The participants brought with them a broad background of service to the Church, reflecting the diverse geography and perspectives of our Metropolis. The discussions were very positive, and all decisions were reached by consensus and with enthusiasm. Preceding this retreat, many clergy and laity from throughout the Metropolis were asked to help identify our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (referred to as a SWOT analysis).

The Metropolis of Atlanta Strategic Planning Team reached a consensus on our SWOT analysis and then developed the following Statement of Why for our Metropolis:

The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta welcomes all people seeking salvation, love, truth and fulfillment.

We then carefully reviewed the Archdiocese's extensive Mission Statement and re-affirmed it for the Metropolis: **The Metropolis of Atlanta's Mission is to energize, cultivate and guide the Faithful in the Southeastern United States by proclaiming the Faith and Gospel of Christ, and teaching and spreading the Orthodox Christian Faith.**

Following this, we discussed and refined the Core Values that will guide the overall work of our Metropolis:

Metropolis of Atlanta Core Values

Christ-centered

Love

Sacred Apostolic tradition

Education, training and leadership development

Outreach and evangelism

Integrity, accountability and transparency

Family

Service and philanthropy

Stewardship

Hospitality, acceptance, welcoming and embracing

Spiritual growth

These Core Values then led to the development of a Vision Statement for our Metropolis, that focuses on both "*What do we want to accomplish?*" and "*Where are we going?*" After thorough and extensive analysis, prayerful reflection and consensus-driven discussions, our Strategic Planning Committee unanimously recommends that our Holy Metropolis embrace the following new Vision:

Metropolis of Atlanta Vision

We will grow the Metropolis of Atlanta, and personally grow in Christ and make disciples, by living as witnesses of our faith through loving, faithful and purposeful Orthodox Christian communities focused on worship, education, stewardship, philanthropy and fellowship.

We believe this Vision is fully consistent with the Mission of our Archdiocese and Ecumenical Patriarchate, our statement of Why, the Core Values we identified as our guiding principles, and the overall calling each of us has to be great stewards of Christ's Church. As we proceed through the next phases of our Strategic Planning process, we will use our Core Values and Vision to help us prioritize our work and the steps we take to attain our goals.

We have now formed the following 11 Task Forces that are developing Strategic Goals and detailed action plans to achieve our Vision. These Task Forces will develop "SMART" Strategic Goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistically written, and with a detailed Timetable.

Metropolis of Atlanta Strategic Objective Task Forces

VISION Task Forces

Clergy
Education
Family
Outreach
Spiritual growth
Stewardship
Youth

OPERATIONAL Task Forces

Administration
Communication
Finance
Technology

It is important to note that these Task Forces (just like our Core Values) are not listed in order of importance, for they are all critical to our work as a Metropolis. Our work will not be complete until we excel in all of our Strategic Goals and achieve our Vision to strengthen our Parishes and parishioners. In addition to the core Strategic Planning Team that has been working so diligently, we are currently reaching out to our communities to identify additional individuals to assist us in accomplishing our critical work. If any parishioner wants to participate in this Strategic Planning process, please contact our Strategic Planning facilitator, Bill Marianes, at Bill@stewardshipcalling.com or bmarianes@mcguirewoods.com and identify on which Task Force you would like to work.

God continues to bless us every day of our lives. He has given us the stewardship responsibility over the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta, and I know that you, as a member of our Metropolis family, take this awesome responsibility very seriously. Of course, there is so much we are doing well, and there are other things we can do better.

Naturally we will keep you informed every step of the way and look forward to the full realization and implementation of our final Strategic Plan. With God's help, there is nothing we cannot achieve if we work together for His greater glory and as faithful stewards of His Holy Orthodox Church: *for with God, all things are possible.*

Praying that you and your families will enjoy a restful and blessed summer, I remain,

With paternal blessings and with much love in our Lord,

+Metropolitan Alexios

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta

55 Maxims for Christian Living

By Fr. Thomas Hopko

1. Be always with Christ.
2. Pray as you can, not as you want.
3. Have a keepable rule of prayer that you do by discipline.
4. Say the Lord's Prayer several times a day.
5. Have a short prayer that you constantly repeat when your mind is not occupied with other things.
6. Make some prostrations when you pray.
7. Eat good foods in moderation.
8. Keep the Church's fasting rules.
9. Spend some time in silence every day.
10. Do acts of mercy in secret.
11. Go to liturgical services regularly
12. Go to confession and communion regularly.
13. Do not engage intrusive thoughts and feelings. Cut them off at the start.
14. Reveal all your thoughts and feelings regularly to a trusted person.
15. Read the scriptures regularly.
16. Read good books a little at a time.
17. Cultivate communion with the saints.
18. Be an ordinary person.
19. Be polite with everyone.
20. Maintain cleanliness and order in your home.
21. Have a healthy, wholesome hobby.
22. Exercise regularly.
23. Live a day, and a part of a day, at a time.
24. Be totally honest, first of all, with yourself.
25. Be faithful in little things.
26. Do your work, and then forget it.
27. Do the most difficult and painful things first.
28. Face reality.
29. Be grateful in all things.
30. Be cheerful.
31. Be simple, hidden, quiet and small.
32. Never bring attention to yourself.
33. Listen when people talk to you.
34. Be awake and be attentive.
35. Think and talk about things no more than necessary.
36. When we speak, speak simply, clearly, firmly and directly.
37. Flee imagination, analysis, figuring things out.
38. Flee carnal, sexual things at their first appearance.
39. Don't complain, mumble, murmur or whine.
40. Don't compare yourself with anyone.
41. Don't seek or expect praise or pity from anyone.
42. We don't judge anyone for anything.
43. Don't try to convince anyone of anything.
44. Don't defend or justify yourself.
45. Be defined and bound by God alone.
46. Accept criticism gratefully but test it critically.
47. Give advice to others only when asked or obligated to do so.
48. Do nothing for anyone that they can and should do for themselves.
49. Have a daily schedule of activities, avoiding whim and caprice.
50. Be merciful with yourself and with others.
51. Have no expectations except to be fiercely tempted to your last breath.
52. Focus exclusively on God and light, not on sin and darkness.
53. Endure the trial of yourself and your own faults and sins peacefully, serenely, because you know that God's mercy is greater than your wretchedness.
54. When we fall, get up immediately and start over.
55. Get help when you need it, without fear and without shame.

Fr. Thomas Hopko was an Orthodox priest, writer, theologian and professor who passed away recently. He wrote dozens of books and articles and was one of the foremost Orthodox writers and theologians of the past half century.

What Really Matters By Max Lucado

A man once went to a minister for counseling.

"I've lost everything," he told the minister.

"Oh I'm so sorry to hear you've lost your faith," the minister responded.

"No," the man corrected him, "I haven't lost my faith."

"Well, then I'm sad to hear you've lost your character."

"I didn't say that," the man corrected. "I still have my character."

"I'm so sorry you've lost your salvation," said the minister.

"That's not what I said," the man objected.

"You have your faith, your character, and your salvation. Seems to me," the minister observed, "that you've lost none of the things that really matter."

You and I could pray like the Puritan. He sat down to a meal of bread and water. He bowed his head and declared, "All this and Jesus, too?" What will you gain with contentment? You may gain joy—and the faith to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want!"

June & July 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Fast Days	June 1 MOMS 11:00 a.m.	2	3 Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m.	4 Young at Heart 11:30 a.m.	5**	6
7 All Saints Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m. Get Acquainted Sunday	8 Beginning of the Apostles Fast	9 Parish Council 7:00 p.m.	10** Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m.	11 Young Adult Book Club	12**	13
14 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	15 MOMS 11:00 a.m.	16	17** Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m.	18	19** Junior Olympics	20** Junior Olympics Community Outreach
21 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Father's Day JR Olympics	22	23 Nativity of St. John the Baptist Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.	24** Men's Bible Study 7:30 a.m. Metropolis Clergy Laity In South Carolina	25 Young Adult Book Club Metropolis Clergy Laity in South Carolina	26** AHEPA/DOP Mtg. Metropolis Clergy Laity in South Carolina	27
28 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. St. Stephens Week 1	29 Ss. Peter and Paul Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. MOMS 11:00 a.m.	30	July 1**	2 Young at Heart 11:30 a.m.	3** Office Closed Father leaves for St. Stephen's Summer Camp	4
5 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Get Acquainted Sunday St. Stephen's Week 2	6 MOMS 11:00 a.m.	7	8**	9 Young Adult Book Club	10**	11
12 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. St. Stephen's Week 3	13	14 Parish Council 7:00 p.m.	15**	16	17**	18 Community Outreach
19 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. St. Stephen's Week 4	20 MOMS 11:00 a.m.	21	22**	23 Choir Conference in St. Petersburg Young Adult Book Club	24** Choir Conference in St. Petersburg	25 Choir Conference in St. Petersburg
26 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. St. Stephen's Week 5	27	28	29**	30	31**	

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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

officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com

www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

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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) 813-394-1038 (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

Mike Xenick, Vice President 813-340-8737

Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747

Ed Gerecke, Treasurer 813-229-4306

George Chagaris 727-420-1920

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947

Skip Higdon 813-831-9021

Catherine Mistseas 813-571-0658

Bryon Nenos 813-789-0729

Despina Sibley 813-758-0520

Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534

Office Staff:

Monica Gjerde, Office Manager 813-876-8830

officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com

Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper

debstjohntpa@gmail.com fax 813-443-4899

Adult Greek School:

Magda Myer 813-909-2327

AHEPA:

Gus Paras 813-254-6980

Altar Angels:

Engie Halkias 813-932-5859

Sia Blankenship

Bible Study:

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Bookstore:

Bill Manilkas 813-716-8185

Chanter: Nick Andreadakis 813-516-6081

Choir: Artie Palios, Director 813-831-1294

Jim Leone, Organist 813-254-7844

Community Outreach:

Betty Katherine Katsamakis 813-468-1596

Dance Groups:

H XAPA ΜΑΣ Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

Marina Choundas 813-877-6136

Glendi Jenna Mingledorff 813-610-7365

Panigyri Vanessa Anviles 813-221-2194

Daughter of Penelope:

Edie Kavouklis 813-758-0305

Finance Committee:

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

Food Pantry:

Mick Scharbach 813-458-1620

Gasparilla Parking:

John Kokkas 727-992-4165

GOYA:

Elaine Halkias 813-629-1843

Hope/Joy:

Amy Kafantaris 727-743-1297

Debbie Nicklow 813-690-0671

Jr. Olympics:

Byron Nenos 813-789-0729

Oratorical Festival:

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

Philoptochos:

JoAnn Hartung 727-432-0228

REAL:

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

Small Groups:

East Donna Hambos 813-843-8412

Men, Fr. Stavros 813-394-1038

South, Bessie Palios 813-523-0347

Womens, Debbie Kavouklis 813-258-5571

Young Adult, Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862

Stewardship:

Pete Trakas 813-505-2193

Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747

Sunday School:

Vickie Peckham 813-406-5626

Tammy Christou 813-957-0835

Ushers:

Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

Welcoming Committee:

Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

Young at Heart:

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947

Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

The Messenger of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is published on monthly basis. Publican 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 through email at officestjohngoctampa@gmail.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.