

THE MESSENGER

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

April 2018

VISION:

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

MISSION:

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

CORE VALUES:

Love, Worship, Community, Learning, Service

Father Stavros' Message Be Part of an Awesome Opportunity

By the time you receive this issue of *The Messenger* we will have begun our Holy Week journey. Lots of Holy Week information was presented in the March *Messenger*. This issue will include some extra Holy Week notes, an awesome Holy Week opportunity, as well as reflections on the Resurrection.

Here is the AWESOME OPPORTUNITY Be Part of a 24 Hour Vigil

Most of us are familiar with the all-night vigil at the Holy Cross. This vigil consists of people signing up to read from the book of Psalms from 10:30 p.m. (when the Holy Thursday evening service ends) until 9:00 a.m., when the service of the Royal Hours begins. Why the Psalms? First, because it is a tradition at vigils in the Orthodox Church to read from the Psalms. Second, because the Psalms read as prayers. They capture every human emotion. Rather than challenging people to come and make up their own prayers for many hours, the Church Tradition is that we pray the Psalms, offering supplications to God on behalf of all the people by praying the Psalms that represent the emotions and the needs of all people.

We're adding to the Vigil this year—we're going to strive for 28 hours of continuous prayer in our church. We are going to continue the vigil all day on Good Friday. The schedule of prayer will be as follows:

Thursday, April 5

6:30 - 10:00 p.m. Service of the Passion of Christ
10:00 p.m. - 9:00 a.m. Friday Morning

Friday, April 6

9:00 - 11:00 a.m. Royal Hours of Good Friday
11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Vigil continues
3:00 - 4:30 p.m. Vespers of the Descent from the Cross
4:30 - 7:00 p.m. Vigil continues at the Tomb of Christ
7:00 - 10:30 p.m. Service of the Lamentations

If you'd like to participate in the vigil, you may sign up on the sheets in the church, contact the church office, or email Charlie Hambos at Charlie.hambos@gmail.com.

By doing the Vigil during the day as well as the night, everyone can come, even those who work or who do not want to come out late at night. There are many people who cannot come out late at night to be part of an all-night vigil. By extending the vigil, it is hoped that many of our people will choose to participate.

From 11:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. on Good Friday, the GOYAns will primarily be standing watch. From 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. and from 4:30 - 7:00 p.m. we are asking for people to come and pray, as well as stand watch with the Lord, on the Cross and later at the tomb. We know that at the crucifixion, all but one of the Disciples fled. Only John stayed at the foot of the cross. In our world today, many people are abandoning

Christ, Christianity, and any sense of Godliness. If Christ gave His life on the cross and did not abandon us, this is one chance, on this special day, to say thank you to Christ and remember what He did by not abandoning Him.

Our Faith is a Faith of Action

Someone recently commented to me how moving it was to go to the Forgiveness Vespers this year, especially at the end when we did the forgiveness circle. Even little children who were in attendance went and asked for forgiveness from the adults and the adults asked forgiveness from the children. This experience brought to mind that our faith is a faith of action, not of passivity. There are lots of people, to be sure, who sit passively in the pews of our churches. Some come late, some only come a few times per year. They are not living out what our faith is and what it calls us to be. Our faith calls on us to be active.

We are called to be active in worship—we are supposed to sing, to bow, to commune, and the other things we are directed to do in worship.

We are called upon to pray, to develop a relationship with Christ through prayer. As everyone knows, relationships don't just happen on their own, they are cultivated with work, with action.

We are called upon to study. Again, this involves action. The Scriptures don't open themselves by themselves. And our study of Scripture has to be more than what we hear in the Gospel on Sundays. Imagine you miss church for a few weeks. If you only hear the Gospel in church but never read it on your own, you'll be starving your soul by only feeding it the Word of God so sporadically. Open the Scriptures daily and absorb God's Holy Word.

A big thank you to all those who were involved in our Wednesday night dinners and in the *With Confidence and Without Fear of Condemnation: Called to Be Disciples* program. The food was great, the presentations were well received and the discussions after each one were simply awesome. If you missed out on this series, you can watch all of the videos in our "View Liturgy" archives on our website. Thank you to all the ministries who provided the material food, and to all those who came to partake of the spiritual food.

The invitation to be Disciples is an invitation to "Come and See" but more important, to "come and be" something. Coming and seeing is passive; coming and BEING, coming and doing, these things are active. When we come to BE with Christ and Christ commands us to go and DO, we realize that our call doesn't end with coming and seeing or being but going and doing.

We are called upon to serve. We read in Ephesians 4:11-12, "And His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." This means that God has provided a unique way for each person to contribute to the church, to the build-

ing up of the Body of Christ, the Church. Do you know your gifts? Are you using them in the church to further the message of the Gospel?

As We Approach Holy Week, Who is Going to Step Forward?

For Thy name's sake do not give us up utterly, and do not break Thy covenant, and do not withdraw Thy mercy from us, for the sake of Abraham Thy beloved and for the sake of Isaac Thy servant and Israel Thy holy one, to whom Thou didst promise to make their descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the sand on the shore of the sea. For we, O Lord, have become fewer than any nation, and are brought low this day in all the world because of our sins. And at this time there is no prince, or prophet, or leader, no burnt offering, or sacrifice, or oblation, or incense, no place to make an offering before Thee or to find mercy. Yet with a contrite heart and a humble spirit may we be accepted, as though it were with burnt offerings of rams and bulls, and with tens of thousands of fat lambs; such may our sacrifice be in Thy sight this day, and may we wholly follow Thee, for there will be no shame for those who trust in Thee. And now with all our heart we follow Thee, we fear Thee and seek Thy face.

Do not put us to shame, but deal with us in Thy forbearance and in Thy abundant mercy. Deliver us in accordance with thy marvelous works, and give glory to Thy name, O Lord! Let all who do harm to Thy servants be put to shame; let them be disgraced and deprived of all power and dominion, and let their strength be broken. Let them know that Thou art the Lord, the only God, glorious over the whole world."

(This text appears in two places in Scripture. It appears in the Septuagint translation of the Book of Daniel, Chapter 3:35-45; and in the Revised Standard Version as an Apocryphal Book called "Song of the Three Young Men," which consists of one chapter, of which these are verses 11-22)

On Holy Saturday morning, as we await the first announcement of the Resurrection of Christ, we hear three prophecy readings. The first is from the book of Genesis, and is about the Creation of the world. The Church takes us all the way back to the beginning, as the world was when it was created by God. Because through the Cross and Resurrection, the world has been re-created by God. God created the world perfect. The world fell through the sin of mankind. The world is re-created and redeemed through the death and Resurrection of Christ.

The second prophecy is from the book of Jonah. Jonah was asked by God to go to Nineveh and he refused. So he boarded a ship and journeyed in a different direction. When the seas became rough and threatened to sink his ship, Jonah told the men on board that he was the cause of the wind and waves. He was then thrown overboard. A giant fish (sometimes depicted as a whale) swallowed Jonah. He spent three days in the belly of the fish. The fish spit him out and then he went to Nineveh as he was asked. Though he didn't go without complaint. The journey of Jonah is the journey of the human race. Told by God what His hope was for us, we

nonetheless headed in a different direction (the Fall). In the stormy seas that ensued, one man had to be cast overboard (Christ). Swallowed by the fish, He remained for three days in its belly (prefigures the three days in the tomb). Coming out of the fish (the Resurrection), He went to preach to Nineveh (all those who do not know God). While the church continues to preach, it is certainly not without complaints, just like Jonah.

The third prophecy is from the book of Daniel. It is the story of three youths who refused to bow down to a golden statue set up by King Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was so angry with these three young men—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—that he ordered them cast into a fiery furnace. (Their original Hebrew names were Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael). In the midst of the flames, Azariah opened his mouth and offered the prayer quoted above. After offering this prayer, the Lord drove the fire out of the furnace, sending dew upon the flames, so that the three men were untouched by the fire.

This prophecy is the final step of the Christian journey. If the first step is seeing the signs and the second step is committing to them, then the third step is spreading the good news. Nebuchadnezzar represents all those who hate Christianity, all those who are ignorant of the truth. The fire is our world—its struggles, temptations, and even the persecution of Christians we are seeing today. Who is Azarias? The one who stands up for Christ.

So, the questions are: Who is going to stand up for Christ? Who is going bring the hope of Christ in the midst of the flames? We know that Christ will protect us from the world, as he protected the three holy children from the fire. We need people to stand up with confidence, to those who build the golden statues, and not bow down to them. The golden statue is fame and fortune, gold and riches, the things that our world seems to bow down to, the things in our world that run counter to the message of Christ. Will we bow down as well? Or will we be different.

The prayer reminds us that there is “no prince, or prophet, or leader, no burnt offering or sacrifice, or oblation or incense, no place to make an offering before Thee or to find mercy.” The only place we can go for deliverance is CHRIST. So, we need to resist the temptation to bow down at the golden statues that our secular world has set up. We need to not be afraid of being cast into the furnace of ridicule if we stand up for Christ. Many people, ourselves included, stand up in anger every day—on the roads, at the mall, on television. One cannot seem to find success unless he causes another to fail. Our world has made it all about ourselves. The journey of the Christian is to make it all about God. Heaven will be all about the Lord. In heaven we will behold God’s glory, all the time. It will be *all* about Him. We need people to share this message because this is the message of hope and love, which will endure all things, including life’s hardships, so that one day, when we enter our earthly tomb, we can emerge in a heavenly Resurrection.

We’ve made the preparations. Now is the time to begin the journey of Holy Week. Make this journey with an idea of

what you’ll do after Pascha. Will you stay committed? Will you help others find Christ? Will you allow this experience to renew you? Will you allow it to change you? Will you step forward? By God’s grace, I hope we, myself included, will answer yes.

Blessed are You, O Lord, the God of our fathers; the most praised and most exalted to all ages; and blessed is the Name of Your Glory, the Holy and most praised, and exalted above all, to the ages. Blessed are You in the Holy Temple of Your Glory; the most praised, and exalted above all, forever. Blessed are You, Who looks over the depths, and are seated on the Cherubim; the most praised and exalted above all forever. Blessed are you on the Throne of Your Kingdom, the most praised and exalted above all, forever. Blessed are You in the firmament of Heaven, and praised and gloried to all ages. (The Hymn of the Three Youths, from Vespertine Liturgy on Holy Saturday Morning, Trans. by Fr. George Papadeas, found in Daniel 3:52-26 of the Septuagint, and in the Song of the Three Young Men 1:29-34)

The Icon of the Resurrection



Peter said, “Brethren, I may say to you confidently of the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Acts 2:29-32

Starting on Pascha, the icon of the Resurrection will be displayed in our churches for 40 days. The icon of the Resurrection depicts not what happened on Easter Sunday. It actually reflects what happened on Holy Saturday. It does not show Christ coming out of the tomb, like a superhero, carrying a banner that says “I cheated death.” It shows our most Merciful Lord, descending into Hades, and raising all those who had fallen through death.



The icon depicts Christ wearing all white garments, because He is the Light of the world. The wounds in His hands and feet are visible. Christ is often shown carrying His cross, because only through the cross is the Resurrection possible. Sometimes instead of showing a Cross, the icon depicts Christ holding a scroll. In either case, the cross or the scroll, both represent the message that Christ preached to the captives He found in hell when He descended there. Christ is standing on two doors, which are the brass gates of Hades, now broken down because of the Resurrection. They are in the shape of a cross. Scattered near the gates are the locks and keys that bound humanity to Hades.

The most prominent figures in the icon, after the Lord, are Adam and Eve, the first human beings that God had fashioned, the symbols of a human race created in God's image and likeness, who distorted that image through sin. Adam and Eve are now given a new chance and a restored image. For Christ, who in many places is called "the Second Adam," has come to earth and done what the first Adam could not. He showed that it is possible to live a life in unity with God, demonstrating faith and love, and avoiding temptation. The reward for this life is eternal life, Resurrection from the dead.

The icon depicts many of the righteous figures who preceded Christ. A young man is often depicted in the icon. This is Abel, the first person to die, killed by the hand of his brother Cain, the first person to suffer death as a result of the Fall (Gen. 4). Moses, the one whom God spoke through to give the people the Law is shown. It was Moses who instituted the first Passover. It is very appropriate that he is present for the "new Passover," the Resurrection. David and Solomon, both kings, both ancestors of Christ, are depicted in the icon. John the Baptist, the forerunner and last of the prophets is also usually depicted.

Christ is shown grabbing the wrists of Adam and Eve. This is an important part of the icon. When people greet one another and shake hands, this denotes a position of equality, you might even say that symbolically it means meeting one

another halfway. The depiction of Christ grabbing the wrist of Adam tells us that we are not equal with God. We cannot even meet God halfway, but if we reach out to God, He is ready to grasp us by the wrist to take us with Him to Paradise. This is the most hopeful part of the icon. It reminds us that we have to reach out to God in faith, and let Him take care of the rest.

In some icons of the Resurrection, Eve is depicted behind Christ, waiting her turn for her Resurrection. In some depictions her wrists are covered. In the icons where Christ is grabbing only the hand of Adam, with the other hand, Adam is gesturing toward Eve, as if asking Christ to take care of his helpmate and to save her as well.

The Resurrection was made possible only because of the crucifixion. An earthly death was required in order for the Resurrection to occur. In our lives, an earthly death is required in order to inherit eternal life and enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. The depiction in the icon assures us that those who fall through death will be raised to eternal life because of the Resurrection of the Lord. The righteous figures of the Old Testament died with faith that something greater was coming. They did not immediately go to heaven, because Jesus had not yet come and died for them, as He did for us. Through the Resurrection, when we fall through death, we are raised to Paradise by the power and the mercy of Christ.

Jesus did not "cheat" death—He destroyed the power of death. We will not cheat death either. Each of us will eventually die an earthly death, but because the Resurrection destroyed the power of death over us, when we die on this earth, we will be resurrected with Christ. The power "death" has over us will indeed be destroyed.

The service celebrated Holy Saturday morning is affectionately known as the "proti-Anastasis," the First Resurrection. This is not a correct sentiment. There was only one Resurrection, and it occurred after the Sabbath passed. The event of Holy Saturday morning is the "First Announcement of the Resurrection," which came to those in hell. What an announcement it must have been! A hymn from the Matins (Orthros) of each Sunday (also chanted on Good Friday) says:

The assembly of the Angels was amazed beholding You numbered among the dead, O Savior, destroying the power of Death; with Yourself You raised up Adam, and freed everyone from Hades. (Evlogetaria of Sunday Orthros, and of the Orthros of Holy Saturday, Trans. by Fr. George Papadeas)

May we be so fortunate to hear this announcement when we pass away from our earthly life.

Today Hades cried out groaning: "My power has been trampled on; the Shepherd has been crucified, and Adam He raised up. I have been deprived of those, over whom I ruled; and all those, I had the power to swallow, I have disgorged. He, who was crucified has cleared the tombs. The dominion of death is no more." Glory O Lord, to Your Cross and Resurrection. (From the Vespertal Liturgy on Holy Saturday Morning, Trans. by Fr. George Papadeas)

May we one day be raised from the dead by the Lord!

The Most Joyful Hymn

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel, the gospel for which I am suffering and wearing fetters like a criminal. But the word of God is not fettered. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory. The saying is sure: If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him.

2 Timothy 2:8-12

The marquee hymn of the Orthodox Church, is the hymn of the Resurrection, known as “Christos Anesti” or “Christ is Risen.” This hymn is about twenty words in length, and yet it encapsulates what we believe about the Resurrection and its significance for our lives. The hymn provides history from the past, theology for the present and direction for the future:

Christ is Risen from the dead, by death trampling down death and to those in the tombs He has granted life. (Translation by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, 2013)

We will sing this hymn multiple times at every divine service until the Feast of the Ascension. If an Orthodox Christian knows only one hymn, this is the hymn. More important than knowing how to sing it, however, is knowing what it means:

Christ is Risen from the dead—This is a statement of triumph and one of faith. None of us was there at the Resurrection. We put our faith in the writings of the scriptures, the eye-witness accounts recorded for us in Scripture and Tradition, and we put our faith in the history of a church that for 2,000 years has spread this message of hope.

By death trampling down upon death—Through His death and Resurrection, Christ destroyed the power of death. He proved that God can have dominion even over death.

To those in the tombs He has granted life—To the one who has died, the death is only of a body. The soul inside of that body leaves from the body and goes back to God for judgment, and if the soul has lived in faith, then it goes into everlasting joy, heaven.

This beautiful hymn neither praises God, nor asks God for anything. Rather it states for us in very encouraging language, the whole goal of life, which is to live as a person of faith, so that we can conquer death and attain eternal LIFE. We sing it hundreds of times during the Paschal season, so that we can retain its important message. If anyone asks you why the Resurrection is necessary or important, you can answer this complicated question in twenty-one words, the words of this hymn.

It is not only this hymn that is front and center to our Paschal observance. We are also supposed to greet one another with the words “Christ is Risen,” and the response is “Truly He is Risen!” In Greek, we say “Christos Anesti,” with the response being “Alithos Anesti!”

Why greet one another with these words? First, because it’s good news! On Christmas, everyone wishes each other “Merry Christmas!” When it’s someone’s birthday, we wish them “Happy Birthday!” Well, the most significant thing that has ever happened in the history of the world and in our lives is that Christ is Risen from the dead. So, we should greet each other with these words and with great JOY. This statement is one of triumph and also one of encouragement. Many times when we are down in the dumps and someone says, “Well, think of it this way, it could be worse.” Well, when you are down in the dumps, remember “Christ is Risen” and this is cause for hope even in the worst of times. Because Christ is Risen, there is eternal hope for me. There may not be hope on a given day or in a given circumstance, but speaking in God’s eternal terms, there is always eternal hope and this is so because Christ is Risen!

Finally, these words serve as a good conversation starter. We all have caller ID on our phones. I challenge you to answer your phone with these words “Christ is Risen” for 40 days. Even if the person calling is not Orthodox, it will be a great way to witness your faith. You don’t have to stand on a street corner holding a sign, or go to a third world country to tell others about Christ. It can be as simple as answering your phone! Begin all correspondence with this greeting as well!

Let us greet one another with these words, and let us sing this hymn with joy and with purpose. Christ is Risen! There is hope for me to be risen with Him.

Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ, let us worship the Holy Lord Jesus, Who alone is without sin. We venerate Your Cross, O Christ, and we praise and glorify Your Holy Resurrection. For You are our God, and we know no other, except You, and we call on Your Name. Come, all you faithful, let us worship Christ’s Holy Resurrection; for lo, through the Cross, joy has come to the whole world. For, at all times, blessing the Lord, we praise His Resurrection. Having endured the Cross for us, He destroyed Death by death. Having risen from the grave, as He foretold, He has given us Eternal life and the Great Mercy. (Resurrection Ode at the Resurrection Service, Trans. by Fr. George Papadeas)

Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen!

With love in the Risen Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

Christ is Risen from the dead, by death trampling down death and to those in the tombs He has granted life.

HOLY WEEK AND PASCHA SCHEDULE FOR 2018 ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΟΣ

2018

March 31 **Saturday of Lazarus**

Commemoration of the raising of Lazarus from the dead

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Proskomide 9:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00-11:30 a.m.

GOYA and Sunday School students are requested to attend to help in preparing the crosses for Palm Sunday, after Liturgy.

Σαββατο, 31 Μαρτίου

Σαββατο του Λαζαρου

Ορθρος 8:30-9:30 π.μ.

Ακολουθια τη Θεια Προσκομιδη 9:30-10:00 π.μ.

Θεια Λειτουργια 10:00-11:15 π.μ.

April 1 **Palm Sunday-The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

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

Service of the Bridegroom 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Procession of the Icon of the Nymphios

Theme: Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church; watchfulness

Κυριακη, 1 Απριλιου

Κυριακη των Βαιων

Ορθρος 8:30 π.μ. Θεια Λειτουργια 9:45 π.μ.

Ακολουθια Νυμφιου 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

April 2 **Holy Monday**

9th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Service of the Bridegroom 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Theme: The Parable of the Talents

Δευτερα, 2 Απριλιου

Μεγαλη Δευτερα

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

Θεια Λειτουργια των Προηγιασμενων Δωρων 9:30-11:00 π.μ.

Ακολουθια Νυμφιου 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

April 3 **Holy Tuesday**

9th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Service of the Bridegroom 6:30-8:30 p.m.

The Choir will sing the Hymn of Kassiane

Theme: Repentance of the harlot vs. the Betrayal by Judas

Τριτη, 3 Απριλιου

Μεγαλη Τριτη

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

Θεια Λειτουργια των Προηγιασμενων Δωρων 9:30-11:00 π.μ.

Ακολουθια Νυμφιου 6:30-8:30 μ.μ.

April 4 **Holy Wednesday**

9th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Holy Unction for Children 3:00-4:00 p.m.

Matins of Holy Thursday

Reading of the Gospel of Last Supper 5:45 p.m.

Holy Unction for Adults 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Theme: washing away of sin; healing of soul and body

Τεταρτη, 4 Απριλιου

Μεγαλη Τεταρτη

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.

Θεια Λειτουργια των Προηγιασμενων Δωρων 9:30-11:00 π.μ.

Ακολουθια Ευχελαιονγια τα παιδια 3:00-4:00 μ.μ

Ακολουθια Νυμφιου 5:45-6:30 μ.μ.

Ακολουθια Ευχελαιον 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

April 5 **Holy Thursday**

Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 9:15-11:00 a.m.

Service of the Holy Passion 6:30-10:00 p.m.

Reading of the 12 Gospels, Procession of the Crucified Christ

Themes: The Betrayal, Trial and Death of Christ, the Passion

All-Night Vigil will follow the service

Πεμπτη, 5 Απριλιου

Μεγαλη Πεμπτη

Θεια Λειτουργια του Αγιου Βασιλειου 9:15-11:00 π.μ.

Ακολουθια Σταυρωσεως 6:30-10:00 μ.μ.

April 6 **Good Friday**

Reading of the Royal Hours 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Standing vigil at the Cross of Christ

Decorating the Epitaphios 11:00 a.m. (all are invited to help)

Apokathelosis 3:00-4:15 p.m. The Unnailing/Burial of Christ

Lamentations 7:00-10:30 p.m.

Singing of the Funeral Lamentations and

Procession with the Epitaphios

Παρασκευη, 6 Απριλιου

Μεγαλη Παρασκευη

Οι Βασιλικες Ωρες 9:00-11:00 π.μ.

Αποκαθηλωσις 3:00-4:15 μ.μ.

Επιταφιος Θρηνος 7:00-10:30 μ.μ.

April 7 **Holy Saturday**

Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 8:30-11:00 a.m.

Reading of Prophecies foretelling the Resurrection of Christ

Great Canon 11:00 p.m.

Σαββατο, 7 Απριλιου

Μεγαλο Σαββατο

Θεια Λειτουργια του Αγιου Βασιλειου 8:30-11:00 π.μ.

Ο Κανων 11:00 μ.μ.

Ακολουθια της Αναστασεως Μεσανυχτα

Θεια Λειτουργια της Αναστασεως 12:30-2:15 π.μ.

April 8 **PASCHA**

The Service of the Resurrection of Christ-Midnight

Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom 12:30-2:00 a.m.

Following Liturgy, all are invited to a reception in the

Kourmolis Center

Κυριακη, 8 Απριλιου

Αγιον Πασχα

Μεγας Εσπερινος της Αγαπης 11:00 π.μ.

AGAPE Vespers 11:00 a.m.-Noon

The Gospel is read in numerous languages to indicate the universal character of the Christian message

Easter Egg Hunt for Children at Noon



Liturgical Schedule for April 2018

Sunday April 1 - Sunday, April 8 Please refer to special Holy Week Schedule

Friday, April 13

Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain - Ζωοδόχος Πηγή
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, April 15

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

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke

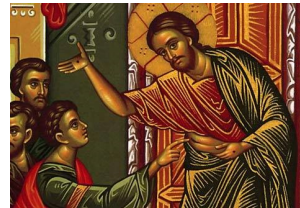
Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas

Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Lisa Alsina, Genie Carter; Ambassador: Helen Cauthorn

Caller: Christene Worley

Coffee Hour: Join us for the Annual Parish Picnic at Ballast Point.

Bookstore: Closed due to Parish Picnic



Sunday, April 22

Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. John

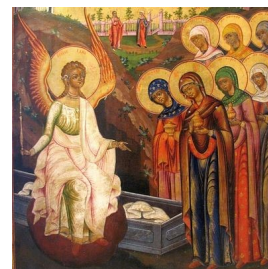
Ushers: John Christ, Byron Nenos, Chris Kavouklis

Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Dwight Forde, Ewana Forde; Ambassador: Kalliope Chagaris

Caller: Maria Karounos

Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Bookstore: Paulina Katsouli and Zhana Temelkova



Monday, April 23

Feast of St. George
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, April 29

Sunday of the Paralytic
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew

Ushers: Tammy Christou, George Mitseas, Florin Patrasciou

Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Carole Fotopoulos, Elaine Halkias;

Ambassador: Donna Hambos; Caller: Betty Katsamakis

Coffee Hour: The AHEPA/DOP Family

Bookstore: Pam Irwin



Wednesday, May 2

Feast of Mid-Pentecost
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 6

Sunday of the Samaritan Woman
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains St. Mark

Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, George Trimikliniotis, Peter Theophanous

Welcoming Ministry: Greeters: Skip Higdon, Debbie Kavouklis; Ambassador: Edie Kavouklis

Caller: Julie Palios; Getting Acquainted: Mike Xenick, Maria Xenick

Coffee Hour: Altar Angels

Bookstore: John and Anetta Alexander



Tuesday, May 8

Feast of St. John the Theologian/St. Arsenios
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Paschal Season 2018 Guidelines

Christ is Risen!

An extensive writing on Holy Week Guidelines was printed in the March Messenger. Please refer to that. Here are some guidelines for Pascha, Bright Week and the Paschal season.

Holy Saturday

Anastasis Service

The service of the Anastasis will begin at 11:00 p.m. on Holy Saturday evening, with the chanting of the Canon. Shortly before midnight, the light of the Resurrected Christ will be given to all the faithful. We will then go outside, weather permitting, to read the Resurrection Gospel and sing the Christ is Risen for the first time. Please proceed outside in an orderly manner so that we can complete this service in a timely manner. We will then proceed back into the church for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. **Please plan to stay for the entirety of the Divine Liturgy on Pascha, the most joyous Liturgy of the year, and to receive Holy Communion. After all, we don't break our fast with meatballs and cheese, but with Holy Communion.** There will be a reception following the Divine Liturgy for all in attendance, in the Kourmolis Center. After making the journey through Holy Week together, what better way to continue our celebration than to sit down as a family and break bread together.

Blessing of Baskets of Food

It is the Orthodox Tradition on Pascha that we not only bless eggs but other types of food that will go on the table for the Paschal Banquet. Therefore, if anyone wishes to bring a basket of food to be blessed on Pascha night, they may come and place it beneath or around the table on the Solea where the basket of Easter eggs will be.

Reading of the Resurrection Gospel at the Agape Vespers

Those interested in participating in the beautiful Vespers of Agape on Pascha on Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. by reading the Gospel of the Resurrection in a foreign language are encouraged to see Fr. Stavros or call the church office, prior to Holy Week. **DON'T JUST SHOW UP EXPECTING TO READ. WE NEED TO CAREFULLY PLAN THE SERVICES SO THEY ARE DONE PROPERLY.** Please come to the Agape service by 10:45 a.m. to find out where you will stand for the reading of the Gospel. The reading is from the Gospel of John 20:19-25. You may read it in any language you wish, the more the better.

Holy Communion to be given only during Divine Liturgy

There are eight opportunities to receive Holy Communion during Holy Week - Saturday of Lazarus, Palm Sunday, Holy Monday morning, Holy Tuesday morning, Holy Wednesday morning, Holy Thursday morning, Holy Saturday morning, and of course, at the Paschal Divine Liturgy. Please plan to receive Holy Communion through prayer and fasting as many of these services as possible. Incidentally, a person may receive Holy Communion each time it is offered. For instance, you can receive Holy Communion on both Holy Saturday morning and at the Anastasis. For those who have kept the entire Lenten fast, you can receive Holy Communion conceivably, all eight times during Holy Week. Since there are so many opportunities to receive Holy Communion during the Divine Liturgies of Holy Week, **Holy Communion will only be given in the context of the Divine Liturgy, not before or after.** (no drive through Communion) Also, even if we receive Holy Communion on Holy Thursday or Holy Saturday, we should not break the fast until the conclusion of the Paschal Liturgy. When receiving Holy Communion, it is important and necessary to have celebrated the entire Liturgy. Please no phone calls about what time is Communion, so you can duck in and out quickly. Come for the entire service. Be there for the invitation to enter the Kingdom, be there for the reading of the Gospel, the reciting of the Creed. And after Communion, don't just take your Communion and run, as many people will do on Holy Saturday morning, stay the re-

Χριστὸς ἀνέστη!

maining minutes of the services and pray the prayers of Thanksgiving in the back of the Liturgy book.

A Note on Kneeling and Sitting

It is the tradition of the church that we kneel or stand for the majority of the services. However, by dispensation, we now have pews in the church and the faithful are allowed to sit at certain points in the services. Because of the long lines for Communion and because the length of the services, **PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO SIT** as you need to during Holy Week, especially during Holy Communion. Also, for those with bad knees, just sit with your head bowed during times we are kneeling, do not attempt to kneel. Our church never seeks our physical hurt in worship, nor do we want people passing out or becoming sick, which will only make us nervous and anxious.

Holy Week Books are available for sale in the church bookstore.

The Holy Week Book contains the words and hymns of all the Holy Week services and will serve not only as an aid to worship but as a complete theology book, for the services of Holy Week contain all the theology of the Orthodox Church.

Pascha versus Easter

In every language except English and German, the feast of the Resurrection is identified with a word whose root is "Pasch." For instance, in Spanish, the word is "Pasqual." "Pascha" comes from the Hebrew for "Passover." The first Passover occurred in the Old Testament book of Exodus. The last of the 10 plagues on the Egyptians was the death of the first born son. The Hebrews were told to slaughter an unblemished lamb outside the city wall on a Friday, to not break any of its bones, and to spread its blood over their doorways. Those who had the blood of the lamb on their homes would be spared. The angel of death then came to the Egyptians and killed the first-born son in each home. Passover was a holiday celebrating the deliverance of the Hebrews from the bondage of Pharaoh and his taskmasters. The Crucifixion occurred at the Passover—the Lamb of God was killed outside the city wall on a Friday, none of His bones were broken, and by His blood we are set free from the bondage of sin and death. "Easter" comes from the word "Oestre" and was actually a Pagan holiday each spring. That's why in the Orthodox Church, and in our personal lives, we try to use the word "Pascha" to describe the feast of the Resurrection, rather than Easter.

No Kneeling until Pentecost

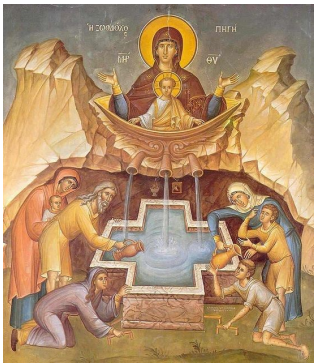
It is actually the Tradition in the Orthodox Church that we not kneel on Sundays in honor of the Resurrection of Christ. Because we do not worship on a daily basis in our church communities, priests have encouraged people to kneel on Sundays, the thought being that if we do not kneel on Sundays, that we'll never kneel in church. It is a Tradition, that for 50 days after Pascha, we do not kneel in honor of the Resurrection. The next time we will kneel after April 8 is on the Feast of Pentecost at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says "Again and again on bended knees let us pray to the Lord."

Fast Free the week after Pascha

Having kept a fast for almost 8 weeks, including the week before Lent, Lent and Holy Week, the church gives us a "week off" from fasting the week after Pascha. During Bright Week, or Renewal Week, as that week is called each day is like a Sunday. Hence, there is no fasting during this celebratory week. Who, then, may receive Communion? Whoever wishes to, providing that they abstain from food the morning they are receiving. So, the Sunday after Pascha, everyone in the congregation may receive. There is no fasting on Wednesday or Friday of renewal week, or any other day of that week either.

Liturgical Notes for April 2018

The Pentecostarion - The 50 Days After Pascha The period of 50 days between Pascha & Pentecost is referred to as the “Pentecostarion.” The period of forty days between Pascha Sunday and the day of the Ascension is known as the period of Pascha (or Easter). It is a period set aside by the Church for the specific celebration of Christ’s glorious resurrection. It is a celebration of “rebirth” . . . The rebirth of God’s creation which surrounds us, and the rebirth of the spirit within each and every one of us! This period is not merely a ritualistic celebration but a celebration which can be seen, felt, heard and talked about. It is a very REAL celebration which CAN make our entire being jump with JOY. It is a celebration which offers us HOPE. It is a celebration which offers us the TRUE FREEDOM found only in Jesus Christ! During the 40 days of Pascha, we are to greet each other with the greeting “Christ is Risen” or “Χριστὸς Ανέστη!,” to which the response is “Truly He is Risen” or “Ἀληθῶς Ανέστη!”



Friday, April 13 - Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain - Friday after Pascha Commemorates the consecration of a Chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which was built over a spring in Constantinople, that emits water with healing powers. Hundreds of miracles and healings have occurred at this spring. This feast day of “Zodochos Peghe,” the Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain, is always celebrated on the Friday of Bright (Renewal) week, the week after Pascha, April 13, this year.

Sunday, April 15 - Sunday of St. Thomas The Church brings to our mind the unbelief of Thomas followed by his belief after seeing the scars of Christ.



Sunday, April 22 - Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women They came to anoint Jesus’ body, but found an EMPTY tomb. We also commemorate Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.



Monday, April 23 - Feast of St. George St. George the “Trophy Bearer” is one of the most famous saints of our church. He lived in the third century. He was a soldier, famously memorialized in icons as slaying a dragon. Symbolically, he “slayed” the “dragons” that opposed Christianity and was martyred for his faith. His relics were placed in the altar of our church when it was consecrated in 1986. St. George’s feast day is celebrated on April 23 (or the Monday after Pascha if Pascha falls on or after April 23). Thus, this year, we will celebrate his feastday on its correct liturgical date, which will be Monday, April 23.

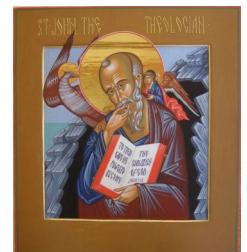
Sunday, April 30 - Sunday of the Paralytic The healing of the paralytic who was afflicted for many years. This event bears witness to Christ’s authority over the human body: He who can overcome death in His own body has power over all human flesh.



Wednesday, May 2 -

Feast of Mid-Pentecost This feastday depicts Christ the teacher, foreshadows the teaching to the Samaritan Woman, celebrated the following Sunday, and it is the feastday of teachers. About the middle of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, He went up again to the Temple and taught. The Jews, marvelling at the wisdom of His words, said, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" But Christ first reproached their unbelief and lawlessness, then proved to them by the Law that they sought to slay Him unjustly, supposedly as a despiser of the Law, since He had healed the paralytic on the Sabbath. This feast is held mid-way between Pascha and Pentecost.

Sunday, May 6 - Sunday of the Samaritan Woman Christ talks about the water of eternal life which will never make us thirst again. The woman here is St. Photini.



Tuesday, May 8 - Feast of St. John the Theologian and St. Arsenios On May 8, we celebrate the feast days of St. John the Theologian, the author of the fourth Gospel, as well as the Epistles of St. John and the book of Revelation, and also celebrate the feast of St. Arsenios, a monk of the 5th Century.

St. John the Baptist Community News

Parish Registry

Double Baptism—Amelia Gabriele Molina and Nathanael Rafael Molina, son and daughter of David Molina and Christie Hartsfield, were baptized on Sunday, February 25. Godparents were Donna Trakas and Debbie Nicklow. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism—Gabriel Michael Gonzalez, son of William Gonzalez and Tasha Sakkis, was baptized on Sunday, February 25. Godparents were Marios and Ourania Stephanides. Na Sas Zisi!

Wedding—Michael Galovic and Melissa Daher were married on Saturday, February 17. Mike Trimis was the Koumbaro. Congratulations!

Chrismation—Mary Brunot was Chrismated on Wednesday, March 7. Maria Xenick was the sponsor. Congratulations!

Funeral—Lou (Elias) Christodoulou passed away on February 23. Funeral services were held at St. John on March 1. May his memory be eternal!

Funeral—Nicholas Sapountsis passed away on February 22. Funeral services were held at St. Nicholas Cathedral on March 2. Fr. Stavros officiated, together with the Cathedral clergy. May his memory be eternal!

Funeral—Effie Christ passed away on March 9. Funeral services were held at St. John on March 14. May her memory be eternal!

Condolences to Margaret Halikoytakos and family on the passing away of her mother, Antonia Quinones, in Puerto Rico, on March 6. May her memory be eternal!

Thank You to Garden of Memories/Myrtle Hill Cemeteries

For the sixth year in a row our community was allowed to use the mausoleum chapel at the Garden of Memories Memorial Park FREE of charge for a Divine Liturgy on 3rd Saturday of the Souls (February 24). Approximately 50 parishioners attended the Liturgy and afterwards accompanied Father Stavros to bless the graves. If you were not able to attend the service this year, plan to attend next year. It was a very meaningful experience to celebrate the Divine Liturgy out at the cemetery not only because many of our loved ones are there but also because it is how the early church celebrated the Divine Liturgy, among the bones of the saints.



Great and Holy Friday Youth Retreat

Friday, April 6, 2018 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Service of Royal Hours - 9:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Our retreat will begin in church at 10:00 a.m. for the last part of the Service of Royal Hours.

Please join us for a day filled with crafts, activities, reflection, and worship with your Sunday School friends.

The retreat will end with The Apokathelosis Service -- Descent from the Cross Service at 3:00 p.m.

All Parents are encouraged to attend!

Lunch and snacks included **Please r.s.v.p. your child by Monday, April 2, 2018** *Parent volunteers are needed*

Call or email Debbie Nicklow at Debbienicklow@hotmail.com or 813-920-0892.

Students should dress appropriately for Church and for comfort during the retreat.

Come spend a wonderful day at Church preparing for the Triumphant Resurrection!

Easter Egg Hunt

The Annual Easter Egg Hunt will take place on Easter Sunday, April 8, following the Agape Vespers. Please plan to attend the Agape Vespers as a family beginning at 11:00 a.m. which will be followed by the Easter Egg Hunt.



Community Outreach - Saturday, April 21

St. John the Baptist's Community Outreach will be serving breakfast to the Homeless at the First Presbyterian Church in Downtown Tampa from 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. The church is located at 412 Zack Street. The entrance is on Polk Street. Grab a cup of coffee and come help us! **We love to see new and old faces!**



GOYA Meeting - Sunday, April 22



The April GOYA Meeting will be Sunday, April 22, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

We held our 14th Annual Lenten Retreat on March 2-4. Eighty-six GOYAns and twenty-five chaperones, and seven priests participated. A special thank you to all of our parents who cooked, and advisors who chaperoned and to Maria Koutroumanis and Kara Kataras, our lead advisors, for working out a lot of the logistics. Special thanks also to Charlie Hambos who ran all the afternoon and evening activities while the priests were hearing over 60 confessions from our teens and adults.

Young Adult Ministry - Sunday, April 29

The YAL fellowship dinner will be on Sunday, March 18, from 5:30-8:00 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Please RSVP to Charlie if you are going to attend.



Get Acquainted Sunday, May 6



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



Philoptochos 2018 Membership Drive!

We are on the MOVE for a Great Year!

We invite all women ages 18 to 118 to join the St. John the Baptist Philoptochos Annunciation Chapter!

Membership Drive: January thru April, Suggested Stewardship is \$35.00. However, we accept whatever you have in your heart to give. Your donation makes you a member of the National, The Metropolis and our Local Chapters of Philoptochos. **Members 80 years of age or older are honorary members- NO DUES NECESSARY.**

Name _____ Date _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell _____

Please circle which number is the preferred contact: **HOME/ CELL**

E-mail address _____

Please return form to: Jeanie Nenos,
14506 Nettle Creek Rd,
Tampa, FL 33624
Or the Philoptochos mailbox in the
church office.

The Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, Inc., is the duly accredited women's philanthropic society of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The mission of the Society shall be:

- *To aid the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the aged, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widowed, the handicapped, the victims of disasters, to undertake the burial of impoverished persons and to offer assistance to anyone who may need the help of the Church through fund raising efforts; and*
- *To promote the charitable, benevolent, and philanthropic purposes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, through instructional programs, presentations, lectures, seminars and other educational resources;*
- *To preserve and perpetuate Orthodox Christian concepts and the Orthodox Christian Family, and through them, to promote the Greek Orthodox Faith and traditions, in accordance with its doctrines, canons, discipline, divine worship, usages and customs;*
- *To promote participation in the activities of the Greek Orthodox community, with the cooperation of the Parish Priest and the Parish Council.*

St. John's PASCHA PICNIC

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

11th Annual Parish Picnic

When: Sunday, April 15, 2018

Following the Divine Liturgy

Where: Ballast Point Park*

5300 Interbay Boulevard

Tampa, Florida 33611

Admission is FREE!

We will have sports, games, and activities on the field for all ages.
Plus hamburgers, cheeseburgers, and hot dogs for all!

*Please carpool since parking is limited.



From the Welcoming Ministry

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,
for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Hebrews 13:2*

The Welcoming Ministry has been busy at work, updating our welcome packets, greeting visitors and guests as they come to our church. Our mission is to practice hospitality to all who enter our doors. We are not just about welcoming people, but about developing relationships – with each other and with Christ. The most important person for a visitor to talk to in order to feel at home in a new church is you. It is not the priest, or the greeter, but a regular attendee. One of the most impressive gestures we can extend to first time visitors is for people with no official position to take the initiative and welcome them.

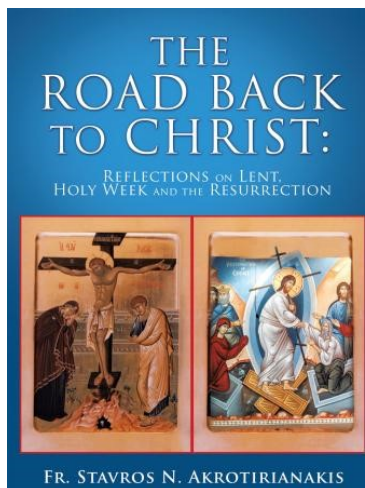
How can you do this?

- Treat first time visitors as guests of God, not strangers.
- Offer a smile or a handshake with a simple “Good Morning!”
- Rather than saying, “Are you new here?” ask “Have we met before?” and offer your name.
- Take the initiative; don’t wait for visitors to initiate conversation.
- Learn people’s names and remember them.
- Invite visitors to join you at something, anything!
- Never let new people sit alone and introduce them to others.
- Invite people to fill out our church’s connection card.
- Tell people you’re glad they are here.
- As visitors are leaving, make sure to smile and thank them for coming.
- Pray for them throughout your week.

You don’t have to travel to a foreign country, to another state, or even get in your car to do the work of a missionary. The Great Commission of Christ can be fulfilled simply by picking up the phone, speaking to a new person you don’t recognize, sitting with someone who is alone. Can you call a parish member you haven’t seen in a while? A personal invitation to attend church is a great way to reintroduce them to the wonderful things we have going on at St. John.

If you are interested in joining the exciting and rewarding work of the Welcoming Ministry, please contact Maria Xenick at mpxenick@gmail.com.

We will see many new faces during the busy weeks ahead. Please make all feel welcome as they join us for worship services!



The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection is now on sale and available in our bookstore and online!

It is a series of daily reflections to be read from the beginning of Triodion, continuing on through Great Lent, Holy Week and the Pascha season, ending on the Sunday of All Saints (This year June 3). If you haven’t picked up your copy, it’s not too late to start. There are still fifty reflections post-Resurrection that are part of this book. This book costs \$18.99 and all monies taken in at the bookstore go to the church.

Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 1200 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 3 years! Over half of our parish receives it daily, as well as many people outside of our parish. Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email Charlie at charlie.hambos@gmail.com and ask him to add you. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email Charlie or follow the link at the bottom of the daily emails to do so. If you want to forward to a friend, please use the “forward to a friend” option rather than simply forwarding from your email. Also, make sure frstav@gmail.com has been added to your contacts so that these emails stay in your Inbox rather than going to the Junk or Spam folders.

Parish Council - FOCUS CORNER

~FOCUS: Fellow Orthodox Christians United to Serve~

The Parish Council has decided to use the word "Focus" as it's word for 2018. Every month a Parish Council member will write an article related to our word.

Focus is an Energy We Need to Harness

By Catherine Mitseas

In January, in response to Father Stavros' ONE WORD Resolution campaign, the SJGOC Parish Council settled on its word of the year, FOCUS, so elegantly defined with a unique acronym: Fellow Orthodox Christians United to Serve. This simple statement summarizes what we as a Parish Council are committed to accomplishing – Becoming singularly united in service to you, to Father Stavros, to our faith, and to the greater community within which we live so that we may lead successfully.

Focus, though, is more than an idea. It is noun. It is energy directed at a particular goal. Yet, we take this precious resource for granted.

Energy, at its' most sublime, is a resource that creates movement, change, progress. Without vitality, it is impossible to meet one's goals

Without energy, focus evaporates like fog across a waterway.

The same principle applies to our Parish Council. We need the energy to focus and follow through on our community's goals and aspirations.. Yet, that vivacity must permeate the entire church. We all must approach our community with the vibrancy and enthusiasm necessary to create change and maintain progress.

How much energy do you have to give? Just a little? Then come to church, focus on the beauty of the Divine Liturgy, listen to our choir and pray for those in need both in our community and around the world. Speak lovingly of and to those around you. Leave the church a happier place.

Do you have some energy? Become active in a ministry, volunteer for a weekend event, read the Messenger, attend a seminar.

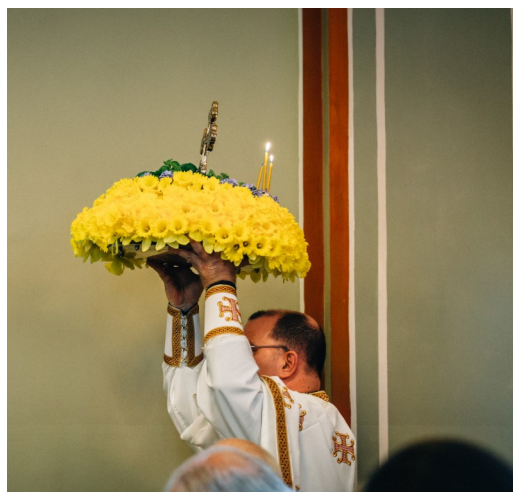
Are you the triathlete of energy – sparkling with an effervescent desire to use your skills and talents wherever possible – then consider starting a ministry, taking one over, reaching out to the P.C., digging deeper into our annual festival.

But whatever you do, don't take your energy or our church leaders' energy for granted. Because it what is required to sustain progress and, most importantly, maintain focus.

Other PC News...

- On March 15, Caldeco completed the approved installation of the new 20 ton Air Conditioning Unit in our church. A big thanks to Chris Kavouklis for leading this major effort for more than 1.5 years.
- A brand new Ricoh MPC4504ex copier was purchased from Ricoh Direct for the Church Office. Many thanks to Sandra Pappas for leading the effort to making sure we got the best package for our needs from more than a handful of local vendors. The previous machine was in the office for over 8 years.
- The church building is being secured thanks to the approved repair of the burglar alarm system.
- Catherine Mitseas represented our community and the Parish Council at the Metropolis of Atlanta, President's Meeting held on March 10 in Atlanta, Georgia.
- An Energy Audit by TECO was conducted for our entire campus on March 13. We hope to learn more ways to be energy efficient, including the continued use of LED throughout our campus.
- The records retention project led by Catherine Mitseas is nearing its completion, laying the groundwork for excellent structure when storing contracts, financials and sacramental information. Well done.

By the Power of Your Cross - 3rd Sunday of Lent



Called to be Disciples: With Confidence and without Fear of Condemnation

We want to thank everyone for participating in our six-week Lenten Study to help us answer the call to be His Disciples held on Wednesday nights. Thank you also to all of the ministries who offered all of the Lenten delicacies for dinner. We were fed, both in body and in spirit.



Photography Ministry We thank our growing Photography Ministry for taking all of these beautiful photos. Olya Clifton is going to head this ministry. If you are interested in participating in this ministry, please contact Olya at 661-243-9352 or email her at olyacliftonphotography@gmail.com.

~ Thank You for your gifts of Stewardship ~

We appreciate the gifts of our loyal parishioners and wish to acknowledge each and every one! Our pledges for the 2018 Stewardship year are \$390,637 with \$140,329 collected from 270 loyal stewards at St. John. We gently remind you to recommit to our church if your name is missing from this list. Please don't wait! Contact our church office or a member of the Stewardship committee with any questions on your commitment or renewal. Pledge forms are also available on line at <http://greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com/2018-stewardship/>

According to the St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Tampa, FL By-Laws, one must have completed a form AND be 'current' in their pledge (for this year and last year) to participate and vote at the Spring General Assembly Meeting (Scheduled for May 6) Fall General Assembly, Parish Council Elections and any Special Assembly Meetings – Dates TBD. If you have sent in a Stewardship Check and are not on the list, please contact the office so we can forward you a 2018 Stewardship Pledge Form.

* Indicates receipt of a Stewardship Check without a completed pledge form. Our office will be happy to forward a pledge package and the form can also be completed on-line. Keep in mind pledges in writing help us adequately plan financially for our church and also bring voting privileges, which are critical to support the mission of our church.

It is our hope the EVERYONE on our mailing list provides gifts of stewardship OR becomes a Friend of St. John the Baptist, for those who do not live in Tampa.

Afloarei, Michael & Mariana, Mr. & Mrs.
Akrotirianakis, Stavros & Lisa, Fr. & Pres.
Alastanos, Jennifer, Ms.
Alexander, John & Anetta, Mr. & Mrs.
Alithinos, Ekaterini, Mrs.
Alsina, Alexa, Ms.
Alsina, Angel & Lisa, Dr. & Mrs.
Anagnost, Constantine, Mr.
Apockotos, James & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.
Armstrong, Jim & Myra, Mr. & Mrs.
Artzibushev, Constantin, Mr.
Artzibushev, Dimitri & Sonya, Mr. & Mrs.*
Assimiadis, Paul, Mr.
Athan, Stephan, Mr.*
Badrane, Denise, Ms.
Bakiridgi, Joan, Ms.
Balasis, Mathew & Suzy, Mr. & Mrs.
Bavaro, Daniel & Anna Maria, Mr. & Mrs.
Beach, Kevin Dr. & Ms. Heidi Borgeas
Bedan, Matt & Christi, Mr. & Mrs.
Bedran, Rita, Ms.
Berdos, Frank & Isabel, Mr. & Mrs.*
Berdos, Niki Pauline, Ms. & Mr. David Silber
Blackburn, Robert T. & Kathryn, Mr. & Dr.
Blankenship, Wayne & Athanasia, Mr. & Mrs.*
Bougas, Constantine & Angela, Mr. & Mrs.
Bradshaw, Harold & Pelagia, Mr. & Mrs.
Burchill, George, Fr.
Cantonis, George & Maria, Mr. & Mrs.
Carter, John & Genie, Dr. & Mrs.
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Dalaklis, Joanne, Ms.

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DeJesus, Roy & Anna, Mr. & Mrs.
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Demas, John, Mr.
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 Zelatis, John P. & Denise M., Mr. & Mrs.

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!



Do you Like our Facebook page?

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



Live Streaming

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

To access this page

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



All of the services are available to watch at anytime.

Pictures

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



For Those Who Don't Come to Church Often Or Who Haven't Been in A While

As there are in all churches, whether they are Orthodox or not, there is a segment of the congregation that doesn't come often.

- Some people come sporadically.
- Some come for the occasional wedding, baptism, funeral or memorial service.
- Some come in time of crisis.
- Some come for Christmas and Easter (in Tampa, we call them "Chreasters").

There are different reasons why people don't come to church.

- Some are angry at other parishioners.
- Some are angry at something that happened in the community in the past.
- Some are angry at God because their lives haven't gone well and they blame Him.
- Some work on Sundays.
- Some don't understand why it is important.
- Some have fallen out of the habit.
- Some choose to do other things.
- And some are just lazy.

Church is important. Why?

- It's not because God needs our praise—He is God, He doesn't need anything.
- It's not so we can brag about how many people come to church—church is about faith, not about counting bodies in the pews.
- It's not a matter of giving God His due, once in a while, or especially at Easter.
- It's not a matter of tradition or pride or culture.

Church is important because

- It helps us slow down the hectic pace of our life so we can reflect on what is really important—our salvation.
- It gives us the opportunity to pray for ourselves and our loved ones.
- It gives us the opportunity to receive the prayers of others

- It gives us the opportunity to enjoy fellowship with people like us.
- It gives us the opportunity to pray in a way that is structured so well, that the Divine Liturgy is a complete prayer that touches on every aspect of our life and our World.
- It gives us an opportunity to touch God and for God to touch us, in the sacrament of Holy Communion.
- It unites us with the saints, the holy ones of God; and also with those in our family who have passed away, since we pray for the departed in our services.

It gives us a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven. Why?

- Because heaven won't be anything like life on earth.
- Heaven will not be a secular experience but a holy, awesome and moving one.
- The central activity in heaven is Communion with God and fellowship with those in God's kingdom.
- If we don't learn how to worship, we won't be ready to enter God's Kingdom, just like those who do not practice their sport don't play well on the field, just like those who don't do well in school do not graduate.

How can you get back in the habit of coming to church?

JUST START COMING!!!

When is a good time to come back?

ANY TIME, BUT ESPECIALLY DURING LENT

But what if I'm mad at someone?

It's a great time to forgive them. After all, if we want God to forgive us, we must forgive one another.

What if I'm totally lost in my faith and don't know how to start over again?

Make an appointment to meet with Fr. Stavros.

SEE YOU IN CHURCH!!! PLEASE COME BACK!

Small Group Bible Study

Our Bible Studies are going in full swing. New people are welcome at any time!

Monday Night Bible Study (for everyone)

We are studying the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans

Location: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in the Administration Building meeting room

Group Leader: Charlie Hambos

Charlie.hambos@gmail.com, 813-843-8471

Meeting time: Monday evenings from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Meeting Dates: April 16, 23 and 30

Women's Group (for adult women of any age)

Location: Meets at the home of Debbie Kavouklis, 3315 Jean Circle, Tampa, FL 33629

Group Leader: Debbie Kavouklis

dkavouklis1@verizon.net, 813-690-0155.

Meeting time: Tuesday mornings from 10:00-

11:30 a.m.(9:30 a.m. for coffee and refreshments)

Meeting Dates: April 10, 17 and 24

South Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults)

Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient for those who live in South Tampa

Location: At the Church in the Library

Group Leader: Bessie Palios & Ellen Karaku

bmp1126@yahoo.com 813-523-0347

ekaraku@verizon.net 813-835-0691

Meeting time: Tuesday evenings from 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Meeting Dates: April 17 and 24

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

-2 Timothy 3:16-17

Oratorical Festival Speeches



The Parish Level Competition of the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival was held on Sunday, March 11. Nine of our young people participated. A special thank you Peggy Bradshaw for organizing this event each year and to the judges and everyone who assisted her.

Congratulations to all the participants – John Palios, Elizabeth Xenick, Angelina Krinos and Antonio Bavaro who were in the junior division. Harry Koutroumanis, Savvas Ferekides, Artemis Xenick, Anna Thomas and Sophia Krinos were in the senior division. Antonio Bavaro, Angelina Krinos, Artemis Xenick and Anna Thomas advanced to the district level of competition which will be held at St. George Greek Orthodox Church in New Port Richey on Saturday, April 28. Thank you to all the adults who helped out—Nicole Mantzanas, David Voykin, and Kenny Kleanthi Henderson were the senior judges. Stavroula Crafa, Tom Georgas, Brett Mourer (Head Judge) were the junior judges. Dory Passalaris was the timekeeper. Over the next couple of months, we will be reprinting the speeches in the *Messenger*, for all to enjoy the inspirational writings of our young people. This month, we are including two of the honorable mention speeches from the Junior Division. In May we will include the three honorable mention speeches from the Senior Division. And in June/July we will include the four speeches of our finalists.



Discuss the importance of friendship in your life.

By Elizabeth Xenick

“Greater love has no one than this, but to lay down one’s life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

These words of Jesus in John’s gospel tell of the ultimate sacrifice for one’s friends. Laying down your life for others means putting them first and making their needs more important than your own. The verse is about being selfless and sacrificial in your actions towards others rather than selfish. Friendships require us to be selfless and loving towards others.

In the Bible, there are many strong and inspiring stories of friendship. One is the story found in the book of Job. Job lost everything he owned, including his children and health, all in the matter of a few days. When he was all alone, his friends came to console him. Job 2:18 proclaims, *“So they sat down with him seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke to him, for they saw that his affliction was terrible and very great.”* His friends didn’t even need to say a word. They just showed up. When you are in a time of need, your true friends will always be

there for you and will always comfort you.

Another lesson on friendship in the Bible is in Proverbs 27:17 where it states, *“Iron sharpens iron, and a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.”* When iron blades are rubbed together, each becomes sharper, making them more effective. Likewise, when friends are involved in one another’s lives, mutual respect follows. The New Testament is filled with other examples of how we are to build each other up and make each other stronger: We are to *“bear each other’s burdens”, forgive each other, encourage each other, pursue peace and build each other up.* Friends who appreciate and help to improve each other, will form the strongest relationships.

In my life, I have many friends that support me and I know that without them, my life would be completely different. GOYA is one place where I have formed some amazing bonds. At our meetings, we laugh, build friendships, and most importantly talk about our faith. The safe space and comfort that is formed when we’re together is indescribable. Recently, we all met together to choose a word that we would focus on for the year. The word we chose was **togetherness**.

In Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 it says, *“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.”* When we’re living in healthy fellowship and friendships, we rely on one another and help one another. When you are with a good group of people the sense of togetherness and unity is empowering. Friendship and togetherness go hand in hand, and are dependent of one another. God created us to be with others, in His image and likeness.

Take a minute to imagine what your life might be like without your friends. Who would you go to needing a shoulder to cry on, and who would you spend hours with laughing at absolutely nothing? The gap in our lives would be prominent and significant.

The best example of deep and true friendship is the relationship that Jesus Christ had with His disciples. He chose them to be with Him, lived with them for three years, and they knew each other intimately. On the night before Jesus was crucified, He spoke to His disciples about love, joy, sacrifice, and friendship. Among the last words that He said to His disciples were these, *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”* (John 15:13-15)

Elizabeth Xenick is the daughter of Mike and Maria Xenick and is currently in 8th grade.



Discuss the Importance of Friendship in your life

By John Palios

Some of the most important people in my life are my friends. To me, they are more than my companions, they are an extension of my family. I love my parents and my sister, and my friends are incredibly important to me, so much that I consider them brothers. Friendship is something Christ tells us that is so important that, *“There is no more love than when a friend lays his life down for another.”*

When I hear this, I envision soldiers in combat. I have heard story after story about soldiers who risked their life for another’s. I also heard stories about soldiers who have died trying to save their friends from oncoming bullets.

One example of friendship that is in the bible is the story of the paralytic. The paralytic’s friends loved him so much that they were willing to fight the crowds, tear down the roof and lower their friend down in order to get him to Jesus. That shows true friendship! We should all be

blessed with friends that are helping us get closer to Christ.

Other examples come from the Old and New Testaments. In John chapter 11 verse 11 Jesus referred to Lazarus as his friend saying, *“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep but I go to awake him out of sleep.”* Jesus and Lazarus were such good friends that in verse 35 we read that, *“Jesus wept.”* Finally, in the Old Testament, Exodus chapter 33 verse 11, we read that the Lord used to talk to Moses as I talk to my friends face to face.

One time, two of my friends got into an argument over a football game that they were on opposite sides. The argument then turned into a physical fight. MY other friends and I thought it wasn’t right, so we pulled them apart and talked things out. Ecclesiastes 4:9 says, *“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor.”* Also in our Divine Liturgy, right before we recite the Lord’s Prayer, our priest says, *“Let us love one another so that in one mind and heart we may confess.”*

My friends and I work together to make our lives better for each other, and at the same time, really do have fun and enjoy each other like brothers.

In Romans 15:5 it says, *“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.”*

I believe that my friends and I are “like-minded.” We all have faith that God, our families and our friendships are the most important thing we have.

I also believe John 15:12-15, sums up what friendship means, it says, *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Great love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friend. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends for everything that I learned from my Father I have made know to you.”*

I know how important friendships are to me, and I believe Jesus wants me to have good friends like the ones I have. I feel like he is watching over us, and I believe that he knows that his word is in all of our hearts.

John Palios is the son of Michael and Bessie Palios and is currently in the 7th Grade.



Church Etiquette by Fr. Stavros

As we are in the Lenten and Paschal seasons, many people will be attending church services. It's always helpful to be reminded of a few basic points of etiquette for our church services. I have expanded on the article I have printed in years past so please reread this one.

Some General Thoughts

At a recent baptism, where the sponsor was chewing gum with his hands in his pockets, made me think that we need some continued commentary on church etiquette. The Orthodox Church is a sacred space. Our society is losing its understanding of sacredness in general, but the Orthodox Church is a sacred place. When you enter the church, you are entering a piece of heaven on earth. There are large icons of the Lord, the Virgin Mary and the Saints, that dominate the church edifice. The smell of incense reminds us of our prayers going to heaven. The Body and Blood of Christ are present at all times in the tabernacle on the Altar Table. So, whether there is a service going on or not, the church is sacred at all times.

When we enter the church for a service, before a service has begun, we should be quiet and reverent. If speaking, it should be in hushed tones. It is frustrating that before a baptism, the volume level in church would be the same as in a restaurant or bar, and that we often have to ask people for their attention to begin the service, or ask them to quiet down. Leaving the church is the same thing—when waiting for Antithoron, please do so quietly, and whisper if you are going to speak.

Cell phones should be turned off during the service. This is a time to disengage from the world and enter into God's world. The only cell phones that should be on are for doctors who are on call who come to church and these should be on vibrate mode. Also, please don't give phones to your kids to play on, or text people while in church. I have heard from several people who have been distracted by others who are texting or children who are playing video games. If you want to take a picture or a video of something in church, that's fine, but other than this, please don't use the phones in church.

Gum belongs at a ballgame, not at church. Our mouth should be praying and singing in church, not chomping on gum.

Lipstick stains have been left on the icons in the narthex or on the special icons that are on the solea. Please be careful that you do not leave lipstick marks on the icons. You should not wear lipstick on Holy Thursday or Good Friday. These are days of extreme humility and sadness. Do not leave lipstick marks on the body of Christ as it hangs on the Cross. Please refrain from wearing lipstick if you plan to receive Holy Communion.

Hands in pockets are too casual. Our hands should be in our laps or at our sides or folded in front of us, a position of reverence and attention.

Don't Cross your legs in church because it is too casual. When standing in church, either have your hands on the pews in front of you, cross them in front of you, or hold a liturgy book in front of you. When sitting, place hands in your lap, not around the person next to you. Have your feet flat on the floor, not crossed legs.

Cocktail dresses are too short for church. Low-cut tops are inappropriate for church and really for anywhere. Dress in a manner that befits an encounter with the living God.

Strapless dresses—in monasteries, women must have their heads covered in church. In our church, we only ask for the shoulders. A three inch wide strap is appropriate. Less than that is not.

We should put on our Sunday best for church. If the best at your disposal is blue jeans, then come in blue jeans. But don't opt for blue jeans if you have other attire. If the best you have is a T-

shirt, then do not stay away. But if you own a polo shirt or a button down shirt, or a coat and tie, then come at your best.

We would never want anyone to stay away from church because of lack of an expensive wardrobe. Merely, put on the "best" that you have in your wardrobe for church, and come to church respectfully, and ready for worship, not like you are ready for a night on the town. As a society, we have become altogether immodest. I do not wish to return to the overly dressed gentlemen and ladies of the middle-ages, but it seems that we have taken it to the other extreme. And outside of church, we should consider what kind of statement our clothing makes about us and the Christian values of modesty that we claim to hold.

Arriving at church

Come on time - The time to arrive at church is before the service starts. If you arrive after the Divine Liturgy begins, try to enter the church quietly and observe what is happening. **If it is the Small Entrance, the Gospel, the Great Entrance, the Creed or the Consecration (kneeling), then do not enter the church.** Wait until these are finished and then quickly find a seat. Do not enter the nave while Father is giving the sermon. Try to not interrupt the Liturgy by your entrance. The best way to avoid this situation is to arrive on time.

Venerating icons - It is customary to venerate icons in the Narthex when you enter into the church. When venerating (kissing) an icon, you are venerating an image of holiness. A Holy Person, or the LORD Himself is depicted in each icon. Pay attention where you kiss. It is not appropriate to kiss one of the saints on the lips. Rather, kiss the hands or feet of the saint, or if the person depicted in the icon is holding a cross, Gospel or scroll, you can venerate that, along with the hand or feet of the person depicted in the icon.

Lighting candles - Lighting candles is an important part of Orthodox worship. We light them along with offering personal prayers. Thus, it is not appropriate to be lighting candles during the Small Entrance, Gospel, Great Entrance, Creed or Consecration.

While in Church

Talk only to the Lord during the services - worship is not an appropriate time to greet your friends and neighbors. Please leave that for the coffee hour.

Leaving the church early - our Sunday School students go to class after Holy Communion, so that they may receive proper instructions. For those who are not in Sunday School, or when there is no Sunday School, it is expected that everyone will remain in church until the end of the service. To receive Holy Communion and immediately leave is to treat the church like a restaurant where we come and go as we please.

When do I make the sign of the cross?

You can make the sign of the cross any time you wish, but please do it in a reverent way. It is not necessary to cross oneself three times in a row. Once, and reverently, is sufficient. Making the cross sloppily many times makes it look like we are strumming a guitar. There are some times when we should cross ourselves.

These include:

- Anytime you hear the name of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- When you hear the name of the Theotokos/Virgin Mary
- Before and after venerating an icon, the cross or the Gospel

- book
- When you enter and exit the church building
- When you cross in front of the altar, from one side of the church to the other.
- As the Holy Gifts pass you during the Great Entrance
- Before and after the Holy Gospel, when saying “Glory to You O Lord, Glory to You.”
- At the phrase “In one, holy, catholic and apostolic church” in the Creed.
- At the words of Institution - “Take, Eat, this is My Body”; and “Drink of this all of you, this is My Blood.”
- Before and after receiving Communion - Make the sign of the cross before it is your turn and after you’ve stepped away so one does not hit the chalice.
- When the priest comes out with Holy Communion and says “With the fear of God, with faith and with love draw near.”
- On any petition or prayer that speaks to your heart.
- When the priest censes you, or blesses you, you can make the sign of the cross, or simply bow your head.

Listen to the words of the service, they tell you what to do!

At the Small Entrance: “Come let us worship and bow down” make a slight bow.

“Let us lift up our hearts:” Look upwards to Christ in the dome and lift up your hands.

“Let us bow our heads to the Lord:” Pretty self-explanatory, bow your head to the Lord.

Sing with the choir and offer the responses of the Divine Liturgy, this is a work of the people, ALL the people. Recite the Creed and Lord’s Prayer as well.

Kneeling

Put the kneelers up and down quietly.

Kissing the hand of the priest

When greeting a priest, you should kiss his hand as a sign of respect that this is the hand that holds the Holy Communion. This goes for in church, and also outside of the church, for instance when greeting a priest in his office or in the hall. Also, when you kiss the priest’s hand (or the bishop’s) you receive a blessing in return, they offer you a blessing in return.

For Holy Communion:

- Pray the Holy Communion Prayers silently as Father prays aloud.
- As you are waiting in line, pray the Jesus Prayer, “Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner,” or the prayer of the repentant thief “Lord, remember me in Your Kingdom” repeatedly.
- Don’t have your hands in your pockets
- Girls, wipe off lipstick before receiving
- When the person before you is receiving, make the sign of the cross.

- When it is your turn to receive, say your Orthodox name to the priest, even if he knows your name.
 - Either take the cloth and hold it under your chin or allow the altar boy to do that for you. Come close to the chalice so that Father doesn’t have to reach.
 - Open your mouth wide
 - Close your mouth on the spoon.
 - Wipe your lips.
 - As you walk away, make the sign of the cross
 - Take a piece of the blessed bread.
 - Pray the post-Communion prayers in the Liturgy book if you are staying in church.

Holy Communion is the Body and Blood of Christ. There has never been a documented case of disease being transmitted through Holy Communion. Every priest in the Orthodox Church, after distributing Holy Communion to all the faithful (and undoubtedly someone is sick in our church each Sunday when over 250 people are receiving) consumes what remains of the Holy Communion. No priest gets sick from doing this. Father chooses to put a lot of Communion on the spoon, so that you can “*taste and see how good the Lord is*” (Psalm 34:8). **So please don’t pull away quickly, because it makes him nervous because we do not want the Body and Blood of Christ to end up on the floor.** Please approach with not only fear of God, with faith and with love, but also with care. This IS THE Body and THE Blood of Christ, “*shed for the life and salvation of the world*” (*Liturgy of St. Basil*) and imparted to us for “*the remission of sins and life everlasting.*”

Bread at the end of church is called Antithoron which means “instead of the Gifts.” Antithoron is not Holy Communion but needs to be treated with respect and reverence. When you approach to receive Antithoron, cup your hands one inside the other, kiss the hand of the priest as he places the bread in your hand, and then eat the bread carefully so that crumbs don’t fall all over the place. This is holy and blessed bread! When waiting for Antithoron at the end of the service, please do so quietly, and whisper if you are going to speak.

Small Children – We love that there are so many children at St. John the Baptist. Please use discretion and common sense when it comes to taking them out when they become fussy. As the Holy Week services are long and run late, for those who bring small children to the services, please sit near either the side door or in the back and if your child becomes fussy, please take them outside for a few minutes. Our nursery is also open and livestreaming of the services is available both there and in the Kourmolis Center

Thank you for your cooperation in honoring the sanctity of our Holy Church. Your cooperation will assure that our services will continue to be celebrated with the proper honor and dignity with which they should be afforded and will make our celebration of Holy Week and Pascha truly memorable. These etiquette practices should be observed all year round.

PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY MEMBERS IN FRONT OF THE EPITAPHIOS (TOMB OF CHRIST) ON GOOD FRIDAY EVENING

****You only need to list the first name of the person you wish to be commemorated. You may list names of people who are Orthodox or non-Orthodox. Please mail to the office or bring to church by April 2.**

APRIL 2018 SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS



March was a very busy month for the Sunday School. Our topics were Being a Good Friend. (Second Sunday of Lent—The Paralytic), the Holy Cross, and the Annunciation.

Our March YOUTH SUNDAY took place on March 4. We need to thank our children who are singing louder and more beautifully than ever under the direction of Maria Xenick. Charlie Hambos was also very busy with our students. He always does a children's sermon on Youth Sundays and he worked with our 3rd graders this month.

One of the best ways to prepare for Pascha is to participate in the Sacrament of Confession. Each Sunday School student in 1st through 6th Grade had the opportunity to participate in this important Sacrament with their classmates. The 1st and 2nd graders went on March 4. During that same weekend there was a GOYA Lenten Retreat. Our 7th-12th graders had the opportunity to experience Confession during this retreat. We would like to thank Father Stavros for hearing the confessions of over 100 of our students.



On March 11, the first step of the 2018 Oratorical Festival took place at our church. Our students participated and spent months working on their presentations under the direction of Peggy Bradshaw. We would like to congratulate all of them. Their speeches were amazing and very inspiring. The Junior Division participants were Antonio Bavaro, Elisabeth Xenick, Angelina Krinos, and John Palios (Antonio and Angelina are moving on to districts). The Senior Division participants were Artemis Xenick, Savvas Ferekides, Anna Thomas, Sophia Krinos, and Harry Koutroumanis (Artemis Xenick and Anna Thomas are moving on to districts). We will keep you posted on how they do.

We would like to thank all the families that brought a lenten dish to the PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY DINNER Sponsored by the Sunday School on March 21. It was a pleasure to offer this delicious meal to our parishioners after such a spiritually motivating service and before the retreat on Discipleship.

Speaking of Lent and Holy Week, our Altar Boys, Myrhh Bearers, and Maiden for the Bridegroom Services are preparing and excited for their roles during this important time in our church. Everyone is also looking forward to our Sunday School Good Friday Retreat on April 6.

+++ May everyone have a blessed Lenten, Holy Week, and a spiritually uplifting Pascha experience.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CALENDAR

Sunday, April 1

Topic: Palm Sunday/Holy Week
Palm Sunday Procession

Friday, April 6

Sunday School
Good Friday Retreat

Sunday, April 8

Christ is Risen!
PASCHA—No Sunday School

Sunday, April 15

Topic: Saint Thomas/
Holy Week Highlights
Parish Pascha Picnic

Sunday, April 22

Youth Sunday
Pre-K - Prospora
Charlie: First Grade
GOYA

Sunday, April 29

Topic: Light of Christ &
Making Faith Personal
Charlie: 4th grade

Sunday, May 6

GOYA

Sunday, May 13

Youth Sunday
Topic: The Great Commission

“As Smoke Vanishes”

By Fr. Constantine Pappademos

Christ is Risen!
Have you ever noticed something unnerving about the Resurrection?

Just after midnight on Pascha, in a darkened church, the Priest joyfully proclaims the Paschal anthem, “Christ is risen from the dead!” It is then repeated two more times and following that, verses from Psalm 67 (68) are proclaimed between additional repetitions of the Christos Anesti hymn.

The verses say this: *“Let God arise and His enemies be scattered; and let those who hate Him flee from His presence. As smoke vanishes, let them vanish; as wax melts before the fire.”* And what happens next? Everybody leaves.

Maybe not everybody and not in every church, but in too many churches it seems that people want to check in that night, just to make sure Christ has risen and when they are satisfied He has, it’s time to go home. At the same time, so many people celebrate Easter without even making an attempt to come to church. To them, it’s like the Fourth of July, only instead of hotdogs, we eat lamb.

It reminds me of our Lord’s words, *“Many are called, but few are chosen.”* (Matthew 22:14)

For me, it’s a sad state of affairs and I suppose we haven’t done enough to explain in ordinary terms, how beautiful and important the resurrection of Christ is. Perhaps we have not placed enough emphasis on the centrality of the Resurrection of Christ, accepted it as reality and, in turn, devoted our life to Christ. The only alternative, unfortunately, is to minimize it and live life as if it never happened.

I came across a sermon of Metropolitan Augustinos of Florina recently that said something profound. He stated that before Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He visited the home of His friends, Lazarus (whom He had just raised from the dead), Martha and Mary in Bethany for the last time. Metropolitan Augustinos then asked this question, “Can you imagine with what feelings of happiness and gratitude Lazarus’ family received Him? Because, after all, where Christ is, there is Paradise. And where He is not, there is Hell. The house of Lazarus became Paradise that day.”

Christ is also present at His Resurrection. He is invisibly present every time the Divine Liturgy is celebrated, teaching, blessing and offering the precious gifts of His Body and Blood. The point is that Christ is in the Church and anywhere Christ is, there is Paradise.

If only every soul could know, appreciate, and live that.

The unnerving irony of so many people doing exactly what Psalm 67 (68) describes is unmistakable. But the good news is that when eyes and ears and hearts are opened, Christ and Paradise are there for all to receive.

Let us, therefore, continue our celebration of this beautiful Paschal season, keeping the light of Christ illumined in our hearts throughout the year, not vanishing from our lives but rather guiding our path toward eternal salvation.

Fr. Constantine Pappademos is the Proistamenos of St. Katherine Greek Orthodox Church in Elk Grove, CA.

Soon-to-be Eagle Scout Helped Make Our Campus Beautiful

Antonio Bavaro and several members of his family and Boy Scout Troop worked very hard for several months to help restore the back deck of the Administration Building. Antonio chose our campus to be the location of his Eagle Scout Project. Please go take a look and when you see Antonio, let him know how much we appreciate his hard work. Nice job, Antonio!

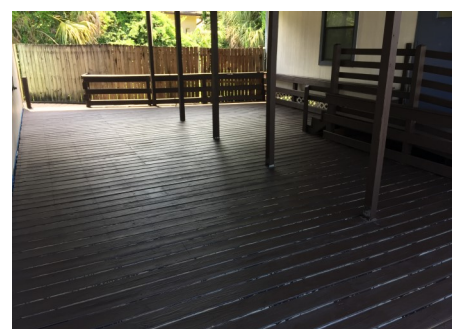
Before



During



After



Donations Needed for Holy Week and Pascha 2018

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

Payment may be sent to the church office. Checks should be made payable to "St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church" with "Lenten Flower Donation" on the memo line.

April 1	Palm Sunday	Flowers for Icon of Palm Sunday	\$75
		Palms Strips & Branches	\$250 total
Holy Week		Pillar Candles for Windows (20)	\$15 each
April 2	Holy Monday	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex	\$75
		Bridegroom Service	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom on Solea (2) \$75 each
April 4	Holy Wednesday	Flowers for Icon of Last Supper	\$75
		Holy Unction	Olive Oil, Flour, Prosphora (2) See Fr. Stavros
April 5	Holy Thursday	Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion	\$75
		Wreath for Top of Cross	\$250
		Wreaths for Bottom of Cross (2)	\$150 each
		Scattered flowers at base of cross	\$50
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)	\$15 each
April 6	Good Friday	8 Bags of Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers	\$50
		Flowers for Epitaphios	Several
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Apokathelosis	\$15 each
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Lamentations	\$15 each
		Icon of Extreme Humility	\$75
April 8	Pascha	Flowers for Icon of Resurrection	\$75
		Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb	\$75
		Silk Flower for Royal Doors	\$100
		Easter Lilies (many)	\$25 per Lily

A Thank You Note from Cindy Xenick

"WHEN EVENING DRAWS IT'S CURTAIN, AND PINS IT WITH A *STAR, I THANK GOD FOR ALL HIS BLESSINGS AND FOR MAKING YOU WHO YOU ARE"

I am so grateful for my Family and my St. John Family & Friends, who prayed continually for me while I went thru my treatments and doctor appointments these past six months! "Prayer changes things, ask what ye will and it shall be done" Praise God!

Love,
Cindy

Membership and Mimosas 2018

Edith Mitchell wants to thank all the ladies that attended the Membership and Mimosas Brunch at her house, making it an extra special event. She appreciates all of the flowers which brightened up her home. Also, mark your calendars for the Philoptochos General Meeting on Sunday, April 29.



We want to thank the Philoptochos for all that they do for our community and beyond. Become a member today!

Featured Book of the St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Bookstore

"Wounded By Love—The Life and the Wisdom of Saint Porphyrios." Saint Porphyrios, a Greek monk and priest who died in 1991, was formally glorified as a saint by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in November 2013. He stands in the long tradition of charismatic spiritual guides in the Eastern Church which continues from the apostolic age down to figures such as Saint Seraphim of Sarov and Staretz Silouan in modern times. In this book, he tells the story of his life and in simple, deeply reflected and profoundly wise words, he expounds the Christian faith for today. Saint Porphyrios understood love on a very deep level and in this book he teaches us that in life the way of Love is the easiest path to take.

This book was compiled after his death from an archive of notes and recordings of his reminiscences, conversations and words of guidance, and was first published in Greek in 2003.

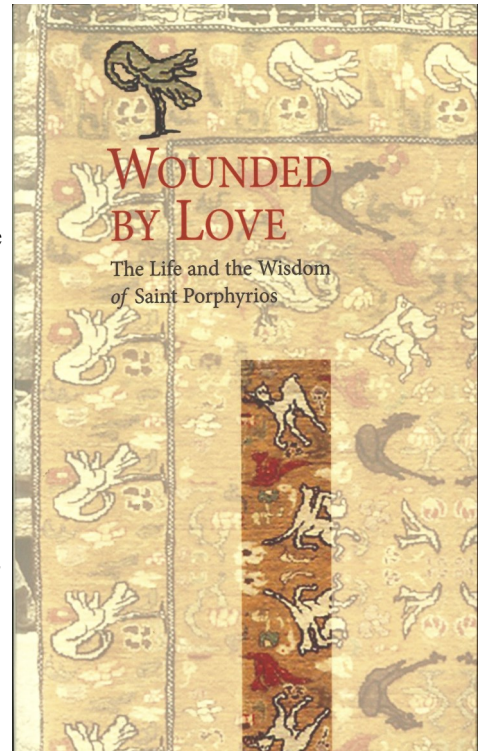
The vibrant personality of Saint Porphyrios at all times shines through his words with great transparency and charm. In his introduction to the Greek edition Bishop Irenaeus of Chania writes: "The words of blessed Elder Porphyrios are the words of a Holy Father, of a man with the gift of clear sight, who was ever retiring, humble, simple and ardent and whose life was a true and authentic witness to Christ, to His truth and to His joy. Through his presence, love, prayer, counsel and guidance he supported an untold number of people in the difficult hours of illness, mourning, pain, loss of faith and death. He is a God-bearing Father of our days, a true priest and teacher who in his ascetic way fell in love with Christ and faithfully served his fellow man. His teaching is deeply impregnated with the ethos and theology of the Orthodox Church and is dominated by the person and image of Christ our Saviour."

This book is available in the bookstore. We would love to hear from you, particularly what you think of the book after reading it.

P.S. If you have an Orthodox book that you have read and would like to share with others, please let us know about it!

P.P.S. If there is any Orthodox religious item that you would like the bookstore to order, please contact us. We are often able to get a 10% or even 15% discount as a bookstore.

-Brett and Ana Mourer



Our Food Pantry is very active helping people near and far in the Tampa Community.

Here are some special requests we have:

- Pasta
- Spaghetti Sauce
- Tomato sauce/chopped tomatoes etc.
- All kinds of white flour
- Canned Tuna
- Canned Chicken
- Canned fruits and vegetables
- Body Wash
- Gluten Free Foods and Flours
- Cereal
- Whole wheat rice and pasta
- Men's and Women's razors and shaving cream (travel size)
- Toothbrushes
- Gift cards in any amount for Publix, Walmart or Save-a-lot



All food items offered are accepted. Thank you for supporting those who need it the most. For more info and questions about our Food Pantry please contact Anetta Alexander at 813-758-2689 or exchange2861@yahoo.com.

Continue Supporting Our Beloved St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church After Your Lifetime

Join the St. John Legacy Society Today!

With a Will, There's a Way

Create Your Vision for the Future with This Important Document

Momentous events like a milestone birthday, the arrival of a grandchild or retirement are times to celebrate and reflect on where your family has been and what the future might hold. It's also a chance to think about the values you hope to pass on to future generations.

One way you can ensure that your values endure is through will planning. Will planning is the highly personal process of deciding how your assets will be distributed after your lifetime.

Start at the Beginning

Create a will. Through this important document, you can direct the division of your property the way you choose. If St. John Greek Orthodox Church has been important in your life, you can also include a gift to support the church's future.

Already have a will? Don't set it and forget it! Review it every couple of years to ensure that it has kept pace with your life. A new marriage, divorce, birth or death of a family member are events that should trigger a review to make sure that your will still protects the people you love.

Go a Step Further

Please be sure to seek advice from your financial and legal advisors, and discuss your charitable plans with your family. If you include the church in your plans, please use the St. John's legal name above and Federal Tax ID # 59-1170684. Additionally, please contact Fr. Stavros at 813-876-8830 ext. 103, (email frstav@gmail.com) so that we may include you as a founding member of the St. John Legacy Society.

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA
William J Camarinos - Alexandria, VA
Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC
Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL
Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL
Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI
Perry & Fay Stamatiades - Asheville, NC
Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI
Wesley & Melissa Thompson - Clearwater, FL
Demitrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH

Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL
Bessie Bliziotes - Palm Cost, FL
Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL
Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL
William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL
Lillan Thomas - Highland, IN
Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL
Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD
Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA

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

Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

Friend of St. John the Baptist:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

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

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

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



AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – APRIL 2018

THE AHEPA FAMILY OF TAMPA WISHES EVERYONE “KALO PASCHA”!

THE SIXTH ANNUAL AHEPA FAMILY TRADITIONAL EASTER FESTIVITIES 2018

FREE TO EVERYONE

EASTER SUNDAY APRIL 8, 2018 MACFARLANE PARK 1700 N. MAC DILL AVE. TAMPA, FLORIDA
1:00 PM TILL SUNDOWN



This event is organized every year by AHEPA AND THE DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE. EVERYONE IS WELCOME INCLUDING, AHEPANS, DAUGHTERS, MAIDS OF ATHENA, SONS OF PERICLES, FOREVER YOUNG MEMBERS, MEMBERS OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY AND THEIR FRIENDS AND GUESTS, IN SHORT, **EVERYONE**. This is our SIXTH year **BUT** it is a continuation of a tradition which stretches back to the early 1900 in the Tampa community. **Come and enjoy Roast Lamb, Greek Roasted Potatoes, Greek Salad, Mixed Vegetables and Delicious Dessert. The Event is Free to Everyone! SEE YOU THERE.**

GREEK AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES VISITS AHEPA IN TAMPA



The Ambassador of Greece to the United States from Washington D.C., Haris Lalacos, along with the Greek Consul General for Tampa, Demetrios Sparos, were both in attendance at the Lycurgus Chapter 12 “Dinner Honoring the Ambassador” on Monday, February 29th at the Floridan Hotel in Tampa. Also, in attendance were AHEPA Chapter 12 President Gus Paras and Chapter 16 President Tim Keffalas. Joining them were, DOP District 2 Governor Ourania Stephanides and D2 DOP PDG Marina Paras, along with AHEPA District 2 Governor Gus Pantelides, D2 Lt. Governor Michael Trimis, D2 PDG Michael Pantel and SOP District 2 Governor Paul Pavlakos.

AHEPA LYCURGUS CHAPTER 12 NAMES NEW HONORARY MEMBERS

Ahepa Lycurgus Chapter 12 was pleased to announce that three honorary members have been named as 2018 Distinguished Members of the Chapter. They include Dimitrios Sparos, the Consul General of Greece in Tampa, Seth D. Pevnick, Chief Curator and Richard E. Perry Curator of Greek and Roman Art of the Tampa Museum of Art and Judge Emiliano Jose (E.J.) Salcines Appellate Judge of the Florida Second District Court of Appeal. “Axios” – “Worthy”

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE TARPON SPRINGS, FL

Ahepans, Daughters of Penelope, Sons of Pericles and Maids of Athena from throughout Florida including members from Tampa joined in celebrating Greek Independence Day by marching in the Independence Parade in Tarpon Springs on March 18, 2018. The parade was a very festive event with representatives from many Greek-American organizations who marched dressed in native costumes. The City of Tarpon Springs was honored to host a Cabinet Minister from the Greek Government and members of the Greek Navy Band. Once again the parade was a great success.

We have a parishioner in need of help!

Her caregivers that come throughout the week, genuinely do love her but do not understand her language, her culture or her Orthodox Christianity. Since she is unable to get to church and needs the interaction with people of the same culture and mind. It is becoming more and more difficult to get her out of house to do some activities. We would like to propose that we help this parishioner by making a schedule of different people to spend some time with her during the week while the caregivers are home. We are looking for about an hour visit of conversation, to keep her company, speak to her about Greek culture, cooking and music. She loves to speak in Greek but, she also speaks very well in English, as well as, Italian, French and Arabic fluently. This is an open invitation to all members of our community. We are simply looking for someone to visit her on a weekly basis. We want to try to brighten her week with a visit so that way she doesn't get so lonely that she gives up the will to live. The visitors can be of any age. We have many people in our community that are in need of visits and assistance. As a part of our community and Body of Christ, it is our responsibility to take care of them and show them some love. If you are interested in fulfilling this need. Please contact the church office at 813-876-8830 and we can get you in contact with this parishioner.



~ April 2018 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1** Palm Sunday Orthros 8:15 a.m. Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Palm Sunday Luncheon Bridegroom 6:30 p.m.	2** Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:00 a.m. Bridegroom 6:30 p.m.	3** Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:00 a.m. Bridegroom 6:30 p.m. NO BASKETBALL	4** Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:00 a.m. Uction 3:00 p.m. Bridegroom 5:45 p.m. Uction 6:30 p.m.	5** Vespertal Liturgy 9:15 a.m. Passion of Christ-12 Gospels 6:30 p.m. Vigil at the Cross	6** Hours 9:00 a.m. Sunday School Retreat Apokathelosis 3:00 p.m. Lamentations 7:00 pm	7** Vespertal Liturgy 8:30 a.m. Canon 11:00 p.m. Resurrection Service 11:45 p.m. Liturgy 12:30 a.m. Paschal Reception
8 Pascha Agape Vespers 11:00 a.m.	9	10 WBS Basketball	11	12 Adult Greek School	13 Life-Giving Fountain Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	14
15 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Parish Picnic	16 Bible Study	17 WBS SBS Basketball	18**	19 Adult Greek School	20**	21 Community Outreach
22 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday GOYA AHEPA/Daughters	23 St. George Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Bible Study	24 WBS SBS Basketball	25**	26 Adult Greek School	27**	28
29 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. YAL Philoptochos Meeting	30 Bible Study					

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

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www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

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St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Timetable of Services

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

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

Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

813-876-8830 (Office) 813-394-1038 (Cell)
firstav@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, VP 813-340-8737
Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898
Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747
George Chagaris 727-420-1920
Amin Hanhan 813-846-2957
Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352
Catherine Mitseas 813-571-0658
Ryan Rindone 704-564-2046
Aris Rogers, II 813-309-5525
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“May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father and the Communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.” From the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.