



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

THE MESSENGER

SEPTEMBER 2024



NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS— SEPTEMBER 8

Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis (Proistamenos)
Fr. Stratton Dorozenski (Retired Priest In Residence)
Fr. John Stefero (Retired Priest In Residence)

*Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople *Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America* Metropolis of Atlanta*



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

ST. JOHN'S DIRECTORY

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) frstav@gmail.com	Bible Study-Tuesday Night Fr. John Stefero 678-637-4425 Buildings & Grounds Euripides Panos 813-352-3972	Junior Olympics Dwight Forde 561-310-5034
Retired Priest in Residence Rev. Fr. Stratton Dorozenski 813-876-8830 (Office)	Choir Tara Swartzbaugh, Director 813-313-0439 Ruth Losovitz, Organist 727-688-2782 Maria Xenick, Chanter 813-765-3587	Men's Fellowship Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038
Retired Priest in Residence Rev. Fr. John Stefero 813-876-8830 (Office) 678-637-4425 (Cell) jwstefero50@hotmail.com	College Student Program Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038	Parish Nursing Ministry Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026
Ministry Coordinator/Chanter Maria Xenick Mariapxenick@stjohntpa.org 813-765-3587(Cell)	Community Outreach Greg Melton 813-967-2074	Oratorical Festival Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374
Parish Council Euripides(Rip) Panos, President 813-352-3972 Zohn Zelatis, Vice President 813-727-2271 Marilyn Sandborn, Secretary 813-760-6289 Alexis Scarfogliero, Treasurer 813-892-1599 George Ameres 941-720-3494 Peggy George 813-727-5587 Peter George 781-910-9971 Amin Hanhan 863-581-2430 Suzanne Pileggi 813-244-5855 Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026	Connect Through Christ - Special Needs Ministry for Children Dante and Lindsey Skourellos 813-765-9534	Photography Ministry Karina Findlay 813-476-9632
Office Staff Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper debbie@stjohntpa.org 813-443-4899(fax)	Dance Groups H XAPA ΜΑΣ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668 Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963 ΠΑΡΕΑ, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136 ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668	Philoptochos Katherine Sakkis 813-309-1073
Elli Kehagias, Administrative Assistant, office@stjohntpa.org 813-876-8830	Daughters of Penelope Ourania Stephanides 813-546-4711	Stewardship Chris Kyrus 757-672-1920 George Mitseas 813-748-1220
Adopt a College Student Kathy Kaburis 813-240-6513	Festival Mike Xenick 813-340-8737	Sunday School Vickie Peckham 813-758-3102
Adult Greek School Magda Myer 813-523-5771	Finance Committee Gary Ward 813-846-3898	Usher Pete Trakas 813-505-2193
AHEPA Bill Zaferos, President 414-737-9103	Food Pantry Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747	Veterans/1st Responders Fr. John Stefero 813-876-8830
Altar Angels Kalliope Chagaris 813-789-4134	Gasparilla Parking Volunteer Needed	Website / Social Media / APP VOLUNTEER NEEDED!
Altar Boys Fr Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038	GOYA Michael & Bessie Palios 813-523-0346	Welcoming Ministry Maria Xenick 813-765-3587
Bookstore Presbyteria Denise Stefero 678-464-4833	Hope/Joy George & Zackie Ameres 813-245-3813	Women's Bible Study Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038
	Joy Tweens Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963	Young Adult Aris Rogers 813-309-5525
		Young at Heart Dora Morgan 813-613-3738
		Youth Protection Suzanne Pileggi 813-244-5855
		12 Disciples VOLUNTEER NEEDED!

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRIEST

~A LOOK BACK AND A LOOK AHEAD— A REFLECTION ON TWENTY YEARS OF MINISTRY AT ST. JOHN~

By God's grace, on September 1, I will have completed twenty years of service as the priest of this parish. I looked back ten years ago, to see what I wrote in the *Messenger* in September 2014, when I hit ten years of service here. In that message, I not only did a comparison of how the church was in 2004 when I arrived, but I set out some goals for the second decade of ministry, and I thought it would be interesting to look at message and those goals and see how we did.

We've had a steady influx of people these past ten years, especially in the last three, so some of you reading this message don't realize I've been here this long, or how we have progressed during these last twenty years. Here is a stewardship comparison, as an example:

	<u>2004</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2024</u>
<u>Number</u>			
<u>Of Stewards</u>	200 families	300 families	400 families
<u>Stewardship</u>			
<u>Income</u>	\$120K	\$400K	\$711K (end of 2023)

My first Sunday in 2004, the church was half-empty. Now most Sundays, there are people worshipping in the hall because we can't all fit in the church. In 2004, there were 2 altar boys my first Sunday. We now have nearly 40.

Looking at the parish registry of sacraments, since September 2004, there have been a total of:

449 Baptisms
202 Weddings
154 Funerals
114 Chrismations

If we add the baptisms and Chrismations, the number of new people entering the faith in Tampa, and minus the funerals, we see an aggregate growth of 409 people. That would more than fill our church. One sad truth is that many of the baptisms and weddings "don't stick," meaning, they just have them to have them, with no plan to be involved in the life of the church. So, while these numbers on one hand are impressive, they also reflect that we've got a long way to go. As I think back on the funerals, (the equivalent of half the seating capacity of our church) I think of the close friends I have laid to rest, pillars of the

community, founders, and ministry heads who I worked closely with. I think especially of the many children whose funerals I did, whose parents will always be heroes in my book because they found a way to keep on going in the wake of tragedy.



This year, for the first time, one young lady from our parish graduated from high school, whose parents I married, saw them bring her into the world, baptized her and watched her entire childhood. Things like that have great meaning to me.

It's awesome to see people I have married over the years now have teenagers in GOYA, to see former GOYAns getting married and getting to do their weddings and baptize their children, and to welcome every year into the altar children that I have baptized.

I remember after a Parish Council meeting, probably in 2006 or 2007, one of the members told me about this "cool phone" he got that let him check the internet on the phone. Wow, think of that! And now we all own one of those. I think how the world has changed in the last 20 years.

In our parish, we celebrate the Divine Liturgy an average of 100 times per year. That's 2,000 liturgies in 20 years. Combine that with the sacraments, Lent and Holy Week services, Paraklesis and all the other services held during the year, all totaled, I have stood at the altar of St. John's over 4,000 times in twenty years.

When we arrived in 2004, Nicholas hadn't been born yet. He was born in December 2006, and now he's a senior in high school. It has been a great blessing for him to grow up in one place, and this town has been a great town in which to raise a child.

In September 2004, I wrote: *Charlie Hambos was a 16-year-old teenager who was in the altar my first Sunday. He's now 26, a graduate of our seminary, and our first pastoral assistant and I couldn't be more proud of him. Sometime in this next decade, I look forward to him taking his place at the altar as a priest.* For seven of the past ten years, Charlie was our pastoral assistant, and although he is no longer assigned here, it is with great joy that he was ordained a priest, now Fr. Kyriakos, in 2022.

Some memories (both in ministry and personal ones) of the past ten years include:

~Starting the Prayer Team in February 2015—I never would have dreamed that I would write a daily message for nearly ten years that is read by nearly 5,000 people, some in other countries. So far, this ministry has yielded nine published books.

~The number of retreats, GOYA meetings, Bible studies, confessions, counseling appointments, hospital visits adds up to a pretty large total. I think back to my first days in this parish, the very first hospital visits, first GOYA meetings, etc. and could never have imagined how many would follow, and continue to this day. We have 3 lock-ins per year for GOYA, which means that I've spent 60 nights of my life sleeping in my office for a couple of hours at each one of these.

~We survived a pandemic in 2020. No one was allowed to attend church. Everything was virtual. Yet, we never missed a service. We actually thrived in that uncertain time. Who had heard of zoom in 2014? Today, we have zoom meetings and people join zoom for Bible Study when they can't make it in person. Our Bible studies all include people who are not from our parish, who wouldn't be reached if we didn't have this platform available.

~My mother passed away in 2021. My father had passed away right before my ten-year anniversary in 2014.

A Report Card on the Last Ten Years

For this next section of my message, I'm going to reprint some things I wrote in September 2014, in italics and then make commentary on them.

Looking Ahead to the Next Ten Years

When I arrived in Tampa, I never gave much thought to how long I'd serve here. Only God knows how long that will be. As I said in a recent sermon, every day is a gift, and today is all we know for certain, actually this moment is all we know for certain. If it is God's will, I hope I'll still be here in September of 2024. That seems so far away when I write it. But in 2004, 2014 felt far away and here we are. Now that we are in September 2024, I wonder if I will be here in September 2034. As I wrote ten years ago, only God knows how long that will be.



Since I am a history person though, as well as a goal-oriented person, I'll go on record putting down a few goals to achieve by 2024 (and if I'm still here in 2024, I'll

reprint this list to see how we did), and let's see how far we get in achieving them. Well, I making good on my word, here is the list reprinted and an evaluation of how we did/how we are doing.

1. Retain a greater percentage of those who get married and baptize children in our parish. *If we had 255 children under age 10 and their families in church—all those who got baptized in the past ten years, we'd need a larger church RIGHT NOW!!! And we'd probably have 450-500 families right now!*

The baptism total now is 449 (some of those are adults). If we had 449 people from the last twenty years, plus everyone that was here before then, plus all the people we've added who moved here and are already baptized, we'd probably have even more than 500 families. We are sitting right around 400 families right now, even without retaining a great percentage of those who get baptized and married here. Retaining those who have baptized children and who have gotten married is a continual challenge and probably always will be.

2. Building an infrastructure—getting everyone involved—*we have lots of people who have talents. All talents are needed to move our church forward. And getting everyone involved in a ministry is a great way to build community and further the message of the Gospel. We've developed new ministries over the past ten years and we hope to develop even more new ones in the next ten. So, if you aren't involved yet, I encourage you to do so.*

This is probably our biggest issue right now, see separate writing below on this. We have lots of people, and we even have lots of people involved in ministries. However, we need more people involved in the leadership of these ministries.

3. Increasing our stewardship—*our giving of not only time and talent but of financial resources has increased and must continue to increase. People are understanding more and more what sacrificial giving is all about, and that there is JOY in giving to Christ's Church in Tampa. If our stewardship went from \$120,000 to \$400,000 in ten years, what if it went up by the same percentage in the next ten years.*

Think about all the possibilities for growth, ministry and outreach that a 200% increase in stewardship could bring!!!

As I mentioned, our stewardship has reached the \$700K mark which is great. There are, however, some "chinks in the armor." About 35 families pledge roughly half of that amount, or about \$10,000 per family. About 35 families pledge \$100K of that amount, or about \$3,000 per family. So, \$450K is coming from roughly 70 families. Which leaves 330 families pledging a total of \$250K, which

comes out to \$750 per family. While the “average” and “mean” of our stewardship has gone up, there is still some work to do in this area, particularly in understanding stewardship, and sacrificial giving. A careful look at discretionary spending (not things like our mortgage, groceries, medical bills, etc.)—the money we spend on travel and entertainment—would probably put stewardship at the bottom of many budgets, and that’s something that each of us need to reflect on and work to improve on. The Biblical standard of stewardship is the “tithe,” or ten percent of one’s annual resources. With very few exceptions, we can all do better in our stewardship.

4. Increasing our ministries, especially Community Outreach—as I said above, there are many new ministries that have been added to the church these past ten years. And the one I’m most proud of is our Community Outreach. Once a month, a large group from our church feeds the homeless at a church downtown. Several times a year, we do parish-wide volunteer events at Metropolitan Ministries. We’ve established a food pantry to feed those who don’t have food. I hope to establish a ministry of giving rides to people, as well as a sustained visitation ministry to care for the sick, and hope that these two things can be achieved in the next year or two. But we want to make outreach to the community central to what we are doing as a parish.

We have done a “good” job in this area. Our overall contributions to charitable causes have increased over the past ten years, culminating in one year that we donated all of our festival proceeds to charitable causes. Sadly, there was some backlash on that, and while we have plateaued on charitable giving at present, we have given an average of \$40,000 per year to charity and that’s a good thing. We also continue to be involved in community outreach and have been for almost 15 years. Our consciousness of charitable community outreach is good but there is still room for improvement.

5. Paying off all of our debts—the church has a sizeable mortgage because of the school building that was never paid off and the debts created by the former school. While the new charter school that rents our space is enabling us to stay current on the mortgage, it would be nice at some point to make a push to retire the mortgage so that income from the school could be revenue and could be put to other projects, not just repaying past debt. This is not the priority THIS year, but hopefully in the next ten, we’ll get it done.

A+ on this one! When I first arrived here in 2004, the church was \$2M in debt, based almost entirely on the irresponsible leadership of our former

school. We have been debt-free since August 2022, so just over two years. Our stewardship allowed us to use the income from our current tenant to pay off additional principal on the loan and pay it off ahead of schedule. At present, we are not using the income from the tenant for operations. We also do not need almost any of the festival income for operations either. Stewardship has funded the overwhelming majority of our budget. Also, we have completely done away with trays and selling candles in the last ten years. This is a big win for our community.

6. Updating our buildings—We continue to make repairs on our buildings, which are good and well used buildings, but which are getting older and in need of repairs. We slowly and steadily are patching up things that are in need of fixing.



Our property is definitely in need of a facelift. Some things, like the administration building, which we have nursed along with “band-aid” solutions, have come to the point where even band-aid solutions aren’t going to work. We had to repair leaks in the roof recently which could not even be put under warranty because of the bad shape that the entire building is in. One of the goals for the immediate future is to convert the school building into a ministry building, housing our offices and ministry facilities—meeting rooms, classrooms, etc. We also need to demo the current administration building, with the plan to replace it with additional parking and green space. Parking has also become an issue with the many additional families that have joined our congregation, something that will be addressed in the upcoming plans for updating and expanding our facilities.

7. Adding a second priest—we’ve taken the big step of hiring a pastoral assistant in 2014. This is going to allow our community to continue to grow both in quantity and in quality. Over the next ten years, we will hopefully see our pastoral assistant become an assistant priest, and going forward, maintain a standard of two full-time clergymen working in this parish.

We maintained the position of a pastoral assistant from 2014-2023, even having two of them at one point. And then the pipeline to the Seminary dried up. We now have a ministry coordinator/chanter in that ministry role once occupied by the Pastoral Assistant. While we do not have a full-time second priest, we do have Fr. John Stefero who does a great deal in our community—Bible study, help with pastoral care, visitations and

confessions, a Veteran's ministry and involvement with Young at Heart. With Fr. John temporarily serving another parish and Fr. Stratton not being here over the summer, we've again returned to what it was like with only one priest serving on Sundays, as it was for my first 17 years here. I think most of us would agree that the Divine Liturgy is better when we have 2-3 priests celebrating on Sundays, and the community is better served with more than just one full-time priest. It remains to be seen how we will look in another ten years, both in the population of the congregation and how many clergymen we will have serving here. It is still a goal to have a full-time second priest serve our parish.

8. Dare I say it?—enlarging our church—*If the next ten years play out the way the last ten years have, if we double our congregation in the next ten the way we did in the last ten, we will need a larger church. Of course, this goal depends on the continued growth of our church, the continued establishment of our infrastructure, the continued growth of stewardship and the retiring of our loan. That's why this goal is last on the list. But goals are not achieved unless they are set—why not set the bar high? This is a goal that God-willing we will move toward in the next ten years—maybe not achieve (but who knows) but move forward towards achieving it.*

Well, I wrote it ten years ago, that we would need a larger church, so this idea of church expansion is not a new one. We have not achieved this goal, but most people realize that this is a goal that needs to be realized. We don't fit in our current sanctuary on a regular Sunday. Our church continues growing (this year, we've had 15 Chrismations and it's still only August), not only are people moving to Tampa, but people who have no affiliation with our church are discovering Orthodoxy in a way they never have in America. Will our church rise to the task of enlarging our sanctuary? We need to. Will we make the sacrifices necessary to do so? That remains to be seen. What will our church sanctuary look like in September 2034? It's really up to you.

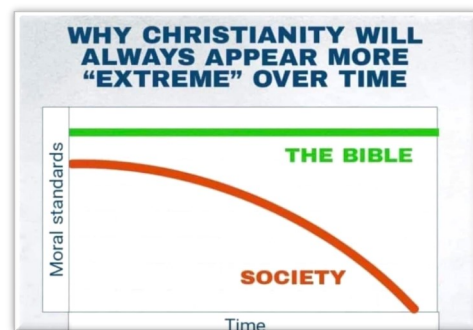
And now I'll make another prediction, and this one is not a positive prediction—in the next ten years, it's going to get harder to be an Orthodox Christian. Ten years ago, there were no I-pads, I-pods or smart phones. We weren't all addicted to our devices.

Well, I'm not Nostradamus but this last prediction sure came true. It is harder to be an Orthodox Christian today than it was ten years ago. While our congregation has grown, the number of baptisms and weddings have declined slightly, and the funerals have increased slightly. However, unlike most Orthodox parishes, our baptisms still exceed our funerals by a large margin. Just about

all of us have multiple "devices" that we are attached to, I dare say addicted to. It seems like we are not as sharp as we were ten years ago, there is a "malaise" that I attribute to the amount of time we spend on our phones and on social media.

There is most definitely an anti-Christian sentiment in our country, and an anti-Christ sentiment. The moral fabric that once wove our society together is in even more tattered shape than it was ten years ago.

There is even more of an anti-Christian sentiment in our country. In many corners, Christians are being presented as bigots, and as "the problem." There is an "anti-Christ" sentiment, even in our churches, where Christ is not the center of our lives or even of our church communities. Rather, He is put in a compartment, taken out on Sundays, and by many people who don't worship on Sundays, only in times of crisis or on holidays. Morality continues to shift away from Christian righteousness. God's righteousness, the things God calls righteous, have not changed. But how our society defines morality continues to shift farther and farther from God's righteousness.



Just in the first week of August, we've been bombarded with news of the Ebola virus outbreak, the ISIS crisis in Iraq, and the apparent suicide of a popular actor.

Ten years ago, I wrote about Ebola. Today we are still recovering from the effects of COVID-19. ISIS is not the only destructive force at work in the world. War in Ukraine and instability in the Middle East are long-term challenges to peace in the world. Even closer to home, there is unsteadiness in our own country as tensions amongst different socio-ethnic-economic groups is coming to a boil. One of my favorite illustrations is about the frogs in the water who didn't jump out when the water came to a boil and died as a result. The lesson of this illustration is that the temperature got hot and the frogs were too complacent to jump out and boiled to death as a result. It certainly feels like the water of society is coming to a boil, and yet there is a complacency that keeps us from jumping to safety. Ironically, what society fails to grasp, is that the actual safe haven where we should be jumping is into the arms

of the Lord. What is refreshing is that there are many people who are flocking to Orthodoxy, specifically to our church, because they are finding spiritual nourishment and refreshment in the Orthodox way, and in what we are doing at St. John.

More people than ever are suffering from depression. And the pace of life just keeps moving quicker and quicker. I often wonder will we still have a cross on our church, or "in God we trust" on our currency.

Going back to what I wrote ten years ago, I mentioned depression being a problem in our world, and it still is. Additionally, we have a lot of anxiety. Despite being so technologically connected, there is ironically more loneliness than ever as people can't seem to find a sufficient amount of meaningful relationships. The pace of life is still moving quicker and quicker, and I dare say it moves quicker than ten years ago. We still have a cross on our church and "in God we trust" on our currency but these things still have the potential to be attacked at any time.

While I believe the world needs the saving message of Jesus Christ more than ever, I do not believe that the world believes that. And the distractions and temptations that increasingly surround us will make it harder to stay faithful to the Christian Faith and how we practice it.



The last two sentences I wrote also ring just as true today as they did back then.

Now for a trip down memory lane. It was a warm late August evening when we arrived in Tampa 20 years ago. You could say that we swept into town like a hurricane and you wouldn't be far off. A hurricane my first weekend in Tampa cancelled my first liturgy and my first scheduled wedding (George and Zackie Ameres, who got married a few weeks later). I remembered being hunkered down at the Tahitian Inn for eight days, as our moving truck wouldn't bring out stuff because of the hurricane. I remember venturing out to McDonalds on a flooded Dale Mabry and getting an egg McMuffin at 3:00 p.m. because that was the only food they had available. That was the last time I had one of those—normally I do not like those things but food supplies were scarce so we gratefully ate whatever we could find.

The church had no electricity for my first liturgy which was actually on Wednesday, September 8,

the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary. There were five people in church that morning (including Leo Sakellaris and Ellen Karaku, both of whom have passed on and I had the honor of presiding at their funerals) and we celebrated the way they did in the old days—no lights, no air conditioning and no microphones. Kind of an inauspicious beginning. Our stuff arrived later that day and we moved into our house and shortly thereafter moved my stuff into the church office. Back then, the church office was in what is presently the bookstore and the priest office was in the small room behind it, what we currently call the money room. On September 26, 2004, there was yet another hurricane and another cancelled liturgy. Interestingly enough, I lived in New England for six years and never missed a Sunday liturgy because of weather (snow), and moving to "sunny Florida" I missed two liturgies in the first month. We missed one other Sunday in 2017 because of Hurricane Irma, so three Sundays in 20 years missed because of hurricanes is actually pretty remarkable.

Two More Milestones Marked on September 1 **There are two more milestones marked on September 1.**

On September 1, 1994, I entered Holy Cross Seminary as a first-year student. While I wasn't ordained a deacon until June 1997 and a priest in May 1998, I took my first concrete steps in this journey as I left my hometown of Whittier, California and moved across the country to Brookline, Massachusetts. I began a four-year course of study. My world became a small campus in New England with 200 students, 20 of whom I would graduate with four years later, most of whom became priests. Two services a day, and in between them, classes and studies, helped change my world view and focus it on preparation for the priesthood, which, as those who are priests can attest, is not just a job, but an identity. It's not what we do, it's who we are. I had every intention thirty years ago to return to my home state and serve as a priest on the West Coast. I had no idea that ten years later, I would be starting my ministry in Tampa, or that from year 11-30 (and counting), I would call Tampa home. There is a saying "We plan and God laughs." Well, God certainly had different plans than I did, and I'm thankful to be where I am today, here in this parish. As we mark September 1, I think back to those first steps 30 years ago.

The other milestone is a community milestone. A priest is matched to a community and hopefully they grow together. The priest in his ministry, the community with the priest in his ministry. How long a community and a priest are matched are tied to the will of God, the Hierarch of a Metropolis, and

how well the priest and the community work at working together. This twenty-year anniversary is not just my milestone, but this community's as well. I didn't come here thinking I would be here this long. My goal has always been to serve as God sees fit, under the direction of the Metropolitan. In my early years, people actually had a "betting pool" for how long I'd last. Most said 5-7 years. Here is the milestone. The priest who previously served the longest in our parish served just under twenty years. With this twenty-year anniversary, I am blessed to say that I have had the longest tenure of a priest in the history of our parish. Very few people can say they've done something that no one else has done. Well, no one else has served here longer, and I am very thankful to have reached this milestone. I hope the time hasn't just passed for you. I hope it has passed well these twenty years that we have been together.

Concluding Thoughts

Twenty years have passed, almost in the blink of an eye. There have been triumphs and mistakes, mountains and valleys. I think of these often. I think of how my life has been enriched by the many people I have met. In fact, one of the best aspects of priestly ministry is some of the amazing people I have met. I think of the really amazing days, and I think of the tragedies. Not one liturgy goes by that I don't pray for each of the children I've laid to rest. I also think of mistakes I've made, people who I've hurt, relationships that got severed along the way. I'm not a saint, that's for sure, but I am also not without a conscience that reflects often on failures more than successes.

As I cross over from a second decade here at St. John and enter a third, my overwhelming feeling is one of gratitude. I'm grateful to God for the many meaningful experiences I have had in the past ten years. I'm grateful for the miracles I have witnessed, as people have turned their lives towards Christ. I'm grateful for every time someone has told me that they pray for me and my family. I'm thankful to have shared your joys—weddings and baptisms—and your sorrows. I'm honored to have shared your burdens in the sacrament of confession. I've enjoyed sharing knowledge at retreats and classes. And I've loved the impromptu conversations, of which there are too many to count, that have happened at the most unlikely times. These are what bring the true richness to my life and ministry. I've spent twenty



namedays, twenty Christmases, and twenty Holy Weeks with the same congregation, at the same altar. I hope and pray that there will be many more.

I wrote back in 2014, that *"if I live to see 100, I will always know that 'a tithe of my life' (and counting) was spent at St. John's as your priest."* So, now in 2024, I can say that I've given a "double tithe" of my life (and counting) here at St. John. I will always be grateful to God for making my path pass through Tampa. With this, I close two decades of ministry and I open the third decade. I thank God and I thank you for twenty (mostly) wonderful and memorable years at St. John. May we, through His Grace and mercy, enjoy many more together, in health and in joy!

With profound gratitude and love,
+Fr. Stavros



LOOKING FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS

We have a lot of wonderful people in our parish of St. John the Baptist. We have a lot of capable people. We have a lot of financially successful people. However, what we don't have is a lot of the wonderful, capable and financially successful people stepping forward in leadership, both leadership by example, and taking a leadership position. We need more Christian leadership in our parish. We are constantly looking for people to serve on the Parish Council, teach Sunday school, sing in the choir, and be involved in the other ministries of the church. But we are not looking for just any people. We are looking for capable Christian leaders.

WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD CHRISTIAN LEADER?

◆ FAITHFUL FOLLOWER OF JESUS CHRIST

Before one can be a leader, one has to know how to be a follower. Before one can be a Christian leader, one has to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. This means that one has to be a firm believer in Jesus Christ, and their life should reflect that belief. This means that one prays daily, reflects on scripture, worships weekly. It also means that one is active in the sacramental life of the church—receives Holy Communion, keeps the fasts, goes for confession once per year. (Years ago, it became a requirement that in order to be on the Parish Council, a candidate needed to have gone to confession in the past year. Why? Because if a person doesn't feel that it is necessary to sit down once a year and talk about their faith and their salvation with a priest, this person is not an appropriate candidate to be on the Parish Council).

The Greek word for "Disciple," is "Mathitis," which means "student." The word "Apostle" comes from the Greek word "Apostello," which means to "send out." Jesus commissioned His disciples to be apostles. He sent the students out as leaders. However, one cannot be a leader if he or she is not first a student. The number one requirement for Christian leadership is to be a good disciple of Jesus Christ, and to express that by being faithful to the Orthodox way of life.

◆ AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

There are lots of faithful Christians, who understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who don't understand the purpose/function of the Church. There are TWO functions of the church—spread the Gospel and help those in need. I've spoken many times about the analogy of the shoe factory—the job of the shoe factory is to make shoes. If the factory is beautiful and the workers are wonderful, but the factory doesn't produce and sell its shoes, then the factory is going to fail. The work of the church, first and foremost, is to make disciples. If the church is beautiful and the people are nice, but no new disciples are being made, then the church is a failure. Every leader needs to have this in mind. Now, someone may step forward to be the treasurer, which has oversight over the church's finances, but he or she must see that job under the umbrella of making disciples and helping those in need. The job of the treasurer is not to be miserly with the church's money, but to help keep the finances on track so that the church can make disciples and be philanthropic. Everything that happens at the church, every ministry, should see itself under this umbrella of growing the church and philanthropy. And if a ministry is not doing one or both of these things, it shouldn't be a

ministry. Because the ministries of the church are all supposed to point to these things.



◆ HAS SKILLS THAT THE CHURCH NEEDS— IS CAPABLE

Not everyone is called to leadership. And no one has every skill. If I were not a priest, and were to serve on the Parish Council, as an example, I might make a capable president, but I wouldn't be a capable treasurer. I don't know much about finances, QuickBooks, and other things related to parish finances. Many years ago, I was offered the position of Chancellor in another Metropolis. I said no for three reasons.

First, I'm happy right where I am. Second, I'm a parish priest. And while someday I may be called to be a priest in another parish, I don't see myself as a priest not serving a parish, serving in an administrative role. And third, I lack the skills to be a Chancellor. I don't think I would do a good job in that role, I recognize that. Sometimes people step up to lead who either lack skill or knowledge and it doesn't put them, or a ministry, in the best position for success. One of the challenges of parish leadership is getting the right people into the right roles at the right times. Sometimes we put a great person into the wrong role. Matching talent to need is a challenge. But we need people. So if you have a talent to offer, let's talk about where it can best be matched.

◆ UNDERSTANDS THAT GIVING IS BOTH A JOY AND A SACRIFICE

A healthy exercise for all of our parishioners is to visit another Orthodox Church on a Sunday. I encourage you to do this when you go on vacation. Several people have done this. There are three comments that I hear most often from people who have had this experience:

1. *Most churches are not full like ours. In fact, in many parts of our country, churches are empty or close to empty.*
2. *Our Sunday worship experience is almost incomparable. We have an amazing choir, a full church, lots of children, lots of altar boys. Most churches do not have what we have.*
3. *Our church needs a facelift. There are other churches that have updated facilities, impeccable landscaping, a better sound system, etc. This is the only complaint I hear when our parish is compared to others.*

We need to expand our church. We need to modify our school building into a ministry building. We need to give our parish a facelift. We have been working with an architect and the cost of all of this is roughly \$6M. We were working with a professional fundraiser in order to figure out if this is feasible. What professional fundraisers do is teach and motivate people to give to a fundraising project. I've spoken to priests who have done fundraising projects and some have utilized outside professionals and some have not. We had someone lined up to do this who has had to pull out of the project, which means we have to go back to the drawing board. Whether we use a professional fundraiser or not, we will need people to step forward and give sacrificially if we are going to make this expansion project a reality.

Another thing we have not had happen in our parish is estate planning. A neighboring parish just received a bequest of \$500K. This happens in many parishes. But it doesn't happen in ours. The largest gift we've received in my twenty years here has been a \$30K bequest. I wrote in my message that well over half of our stewardship is being given by only 70 or our 400 families. Christian giving is meant to be both a joy and a sacrifice. To really give is to give from our means, not our excess. If you are giving from what you don't really need, that's not really giving at all. For instance, if I get a pizza, eat $\frac{3}{4}$ of it, am full, and then I offer you the $\frac{1}{4}$ of pizza that I plan to throw away, that's not really giving. To give would mean before I take a bit of the pizza, I offer some to you. Christian giving finds JOY in giving of one's first fruits, not the leftovers. We need people to step forward in their stewardship.

We are in need of Christian leadership in this parish—if you have a commitment to Jesus Christ, an understanding of the mission of the church, a particular skill that we are in need of, and would like to offer those things in a joyful (and sometimes sacrificial) way, please come and see me. Because we need you!

+Fr. Stavros



CRUSHING IT IN YOUR LANE—OLYMPIC GYMNAST STEPHEN NEDOROSCIK

And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, "Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have two talents more." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master." Matthew 25:22-23

For those who don't know, I write a daily message called the Prayer Team. An inspirational message goes out every morning at 12:30 a.m. EST to every member of the Prayer Team, and this has been going strong since February 2015. If you would like to be on the Prayer Team, just go to www.prayerteam365.com and subscribe. This message was the Prayer Team message on August 2, 2024, and I'm reprinting it because I got a lot of positive feedback on this one and for those who haven't already read it, I think you'll take something positive away from it as well.

I don't know **Stephen Nedoroscik** personally. Until a few days ago, I had never heard his name. I'm not in the know on the sport of gymnastics, but like many people, have tuned in to the Olympics this past week. (I am also not a fan of opening or closing ceremonies, I did not watch the opening ceremony, I won't watch the closing. I watch the "sport" of the Olympics, not the "pageantry" or in this case, foolish controversy.) On Saturday night, during the qualifying for men's gymnastics, I was introduced to the name Stephen Nedoroscik. He is a member of the five-man gymnastics team representing the United States of America. He wears thick glasses when not competing, which I learned have to do with two eye maladies from which he suffers. He is a self-described "nerd" who solves Rubix cubes quickly. When he is in his Olympic uniform, you can tell that he is a lean, trim and fit athlete. In casual clothes, wearing his glasses, he looks like a chemistry student—I believe he works in engineering. He is not the poster child for gymnastics, not only because of how he looks, but because he doesn't compete in all six of the men's gymnastics disciplines. In fact, he only does ONE—the pommel horse.



The story goes that he started doing gymnastics as a young child, learning, as all men's gymnastics students do, the six disciplines—floor exercise, rings, parallel bars, high bar, vault and pommel horse. As he was entering high school, he (and probably his parents, coaches and everyone else) realized that he was not progressing in FIVE of the six disciplines. He was only good at ONE of them. I can imagine the voices around him being discouraging, and I can imagine that there was a lot of self-doubt going on in his mind. Yet, surprisingly, he wasn't thrown out of gymnastics. He didn't quit. Because he realized that he was REALLY GOOD at one of them. In fact, he is among the best gymnasts in the WORLD on the pommel horse. He was selected this year for his first Olympic team. Yet, how can someone who only does one out of six apparatus consider himself part of the team?

On Monday night, during the men's team final, the last rotation for the United States men was the pommel horse. That means that Stephen Nedoroscik sat through five rotations, watching his teammates, congratulating them, cheering them on, and waiting his turn to do the one thing he does better than just about everyone else in the world.

Talk about pressure. But also talk about isolation. This guy is different. In some corners of the gymnastics world, I'm sure there are people who made fun of him in younger years. He looks different. He competes differently. He's different than probably most people who do gymnastics, certainly very different from everyone competing in the Olympics in gymnastics. When it was his turn to compete, the last guy to take his turn on the last rotation, he came through with a near perfect routine. The United States men's gymnastics team walked away with its first medal in 16 years. And Stephen Nedoroscik, the guy with the thick glasses, the guy who does only ONE discipline, walked off the floor as an Olympic medalist.



In the world today, we are obsessed with equality, the idea that we all have to be the same. Even worse, we are obsessed with the idea of equity, that we're all going to get the same outcome, that we are somehow entitled to specific outcomes. Instead of being content "in our lane," metaphorically, we are crisscrossing all the lanes in life (and on the highways), because either we aren't content with the lane we are in, or we aren't even sure in which lane we belong, where we fit.

I don't know if I'll ever meet **Stephen Nedoroscik**. I hope I will. In fact, I will try to correspond with him. Because this is not the guy who has the five talents, in the parable I write so often about. He's not even the guy with the two talents. He's the guy with the one talent, who instead of complaining why he does not have five, has developed his one talent to the point of being an Olympic medalist. And he's just as much of an Olympic champion as anyone else on the team. Because in a team sport, the team wins and loses together. There is room for specialists on teams. Not everyone is going to be a star at everything. Not everyone has to be. Stephen Nedoroscik is living proof of that. But he found his lane, and probably despite doubters out there, maybe even his own doubts, he used his one talent and parlayed that into Olympic glory.

God will not demand a ten talent return from the guy who starts off with one talent. He rewarded the man in the parable of the talents (**Matthew 25: 14-30**) who started with two and ended up with four the same as the man who started with five and ended up with ten. The lesson here is that we can't travel in all the lanes of life, we aren't expected to. If we are so obsessed with being in all the lanes, we will never actually find the lane in which we feel comfortable. And if we find a lane where we fit,

then we need to stay in that lane, and do the best we can in that lane, instead of grieving over the lanes of others.

As I watched the gymnastics event the other night, as the camera panned to Stephen Nedoroscik, there was a moment I actually felt sorry for him, the fact that it seemed like the broadcast was so focused on his isolation rather than his uniqueness. And as he helped bring home a medal, I actually stood up and applauded, "good for you," you aren't angry about your lane, you've stayed in your lane and are among the best in the world at what you do, now going home with an Olympic medal, a big army of fans, and as a living example of what God wants from us—to use what we have to the best of our ability, rather than complaining or mourning what we do not have. **Congratulations Stephen Nedoroscik**, you are an Olympic champion, but more than that, you are a role model for many people, including me.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gifts and talents that I have (list some of them, or if it is one, remember that one talent). Help me to understand what my actual talent is (or are), to do my best to develop my talent, to be grateful for the talent I have been given, and to use my talent in a way that will honor You, help and inspire others and bring joy to me. Help those who feel unsure or isolated because of their lane to take confidence in what they have, and to recognize that all you expect from us is to do the best we can with what we have first been given by You. Amen.

Be content in your lane. Do the best in your lane. Because no one is in your lane but you. And all God's expects from us is to do well in the lane in which we find ourselves, based on the talents with which He has blessed each of us. Remember, each of us has something. We may not have five talents, but we each have at least one.

+Fr. Stavros



A MESSAGE FROM OUR MINISTRY COORDINATOR

SHOW HOSPITALITY TO ONE ANOTHER

1 Peter 4:9-11 ESV

⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

This monthly article will break down these beautiful verses from St. Peter's Epistle one phrase at a time. Chapter 4:9 is clear to us all: Show hospitality to one another. Got it! And then, Peter adds an extra reminder: without grumbling. Ouch...

Could it be that Peter recalled sitting in the room with Jesus's good friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and remembered seeing Martha serve as Mary sat at Jesus feet. After a while, Martha had had enough and asked Jesus why He was just ok with her sitting there while she did all the work. How many of us can relate to Martha?

Martha wasn't wrong - Hospitality is all about serving. As Peter reminds us though, it is to be done without complaining. Hospitality is all about serving with joy.

One of the most important aspects of hospitality is a posture of intentionality. While there is always room for spontaneous hospitality, more often than not it is more ideal to have a plan of some kind. And when we have the attitude and heart of intentional hospitality, we can always be prepared for moments of opportunities to be hospitable.

The word hospitality is a translation from the Greek word *philoxenia*, love of strangers. The early Christian church grew at an exponential rate because of this: all were welcomed into Christian spaces. They were cared for, and many times, they were given food and a place to stay. One has to think that Jesus's message of hospitality from Matthew's gospel was lived out in this particular way:

³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' (Matthew 25:35)

None of these actions are difficult to understand, however they can actually be hard to do. We tend to overthink that hospitality requires a great act or large expense. It doesn't have to! So much of hospitality is simply creating an atmosphere that helps others feel welcome and invites them into the

space we are in.

Perhaps this stirs up the question, where can we show hospitality? Certainly, our own homes are a great place to start. Is the house small? Perhaps there is a porch or backyard. Don't want to invite someone to the house? Consider a public place like a coffee shop or restaurant. How about right here at our church? Simply inviting someone to sit at the same table at coffee hour is an act of hospitality. There is something truly beautiful about sharing food around a table with others. Consider the banquets, feasts, and even the final time the disciples were all together with Jesus, as they sat around the table at the Last Supper.



Though we Greeks often think of hospitality as hosting a meal, it certainly doesn't have to. Entertaining guests and acts of hospitality are two different things. When we slow down, ask questions, and listen we demonstrate the intentionality of hospitably serving others. In many ways, the greatest (and easiest!) act of hospitality is a smile. Here's the good news! To smile is totally free, it takes no extra time, and there are benefits to both the one doing the smiling and the one being smiled to! Hospitality gives US the opportunity to prioritize people, serve others, deepen relationships and it even gives us a way to preach the gospel.

Does all of this sound overwhelming? Just remember, it is also ok to place limits and boundaries on what we can and should "do." Hospitality isn't a performance or a ritual act of constantly overextending ourselves. Even Christ took time to get away from the crowd when He needed alone time.

On a personal note, along with my mother, mother in law, and grandmothers, one of my role models for living a genuinely hospitable life was Mrs. Engie Halkias, of blessed memory. She embodied a welcoming spirit, she was a gifted hostess, and she always, ALWAYS took the time and effort to make other people feel special with her words, smiles, and loving disposition. I often ask myself when I make or do something if it will pass the "Mrs. Halkias test." :)

May we always be mindful of this passage from St. Paul's letter to the Hebrews, as it sums up our mission when it comes to hospitality: Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unaware.

May we strive to always show hospitality!

Maria P Xenick—Ministry Coordinator

*The following article is written by Michelle Moujaes, the Executive Director of Faithtree Resources and is printed with permission. Faithtree creates educational resources that empower churches and transform lives. Living out the Orthodox Christian faith in our modern culture isn't easy. We face the risk being shaped by the world, leading to constant struggle. That's why we create resources at Faithtree to help you practically apply the faith and experience the peace, freedom, and joy in Christ. Explore our programs and resources today to bring your community closer to God and each other. Faithtree provides outstanding Orthodox materials for small groups, Bible studies, and Sunday School classes. The blog post reviews one of my favorite books of the last few years, *Unreasonable Hospitality* by Will Guidara. Though not theological in nature, its lessons can be applied to all areas of life. It's worth a read!*

Book Review: 4 Lessons I Learned from *Unreasonable Hospitality*

Jul 18

At the end of last year, I read what was perhaps the best book I've read in the last five years: Will Guidara's *Unreasonable Hospitality*. Funny, charming, full of leadership wit and wisdom, and chock full of super cool stories about the elite New York restaurant Eleven Madison Park, I was hooked from the first sentence.

The book had caught my eye, as is so often the case, because that one word, hospitality, was all I'd been talking about for months. Way to go, sneaky internet gods—I knew you were listening.

Hospitality has been the focus at Faithtree for a long time now. We have spent months preparing to launch our newest offering to parishes, which is all about—you guessed it—hospitality. Our team has wrestled with the question of how Orthodox parishes can welcome newcomers to the Church really well, especially when there are so many newcomers pouring into our churches so quickly.

Guidara's book offered quips and stories full of insights that seemed particularly poignant for every Christian, who is called to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others.

Here are four lessons the book highlighted beautifully that church members could benefit from applying as we welcome others with an unabandoned, untamed, unreasonable hospitality.



*** Be Present**

Guidara talks about the importance of caring more about the people we're with than any of the other things we need to do. With hospitality, that means slowing down. Listening. Looking people in the eye. Focusing on them and their needs.

The great thing about this in the context of the Church is that that posture of slowing and listening to others is exactly the way Jesus Christ engaged in relationships.

***Takeaway:** When you meet someone new at church, commit to spending at least two minutes getting to know them and hearing about why they came to your parish.*

*** The Way You Make People Feel Matters**

Speaking of meeting newcomers as Christ did, seeing each newcomer as a gift and not a commodity is key to being truly welcoming and hospitable. Too often, we can get caught up in checking off a list of items that we're supposed to and calling it good when, in fact, we've missed seeing the person in front of us.

If Guidara's book hit home on anything, it was this: the way you make people feel matters. If we truly want newcomers to come back to our restaurant or parish (which, let's face it, is the call of the Gospel), we must be interested in how they feel when they are with us.

***Takeaway:** Offer your best effort in making newcomers feel welcome by treating them not only as a welcomed guest but as someone you truly want to be there. As obvious as it is, statements like "I'm glad you're here" go a long way.*

*** Always, Always, Always Overdeliver**

In Guidara's book, he talks about the extraordinary lengths he and his team went to to make sure every guest was treated like royalty. The stories he tells of the over-the-top acts of personalized service are nothing short of extreme.

But the result was always extraordinary.

Overdelivering for newcomers doesn't require huge expenditures of cash or a bunch of overpriced giveaways. It doesn't have to take hours of prep either. Rather, overdelivering only requires intentionality. If we want to over deliver the hospitality of Christ to the newcomers in our parish, we must have a plan.

***Takeaway:** Ask your priest how you might contribute to the hospitality efforts of your parish.*

* Positivity is Key in Relationships

Guidara observes that his former boss, Randy Garutti (former CEO of Shake Shack and general manager of the Indian-French restaurant Tabla), allowed positivity to set the tone for all his relationships.

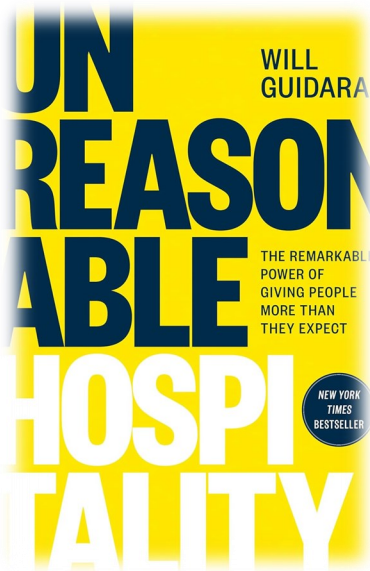
"Ask him how his day was going, and he'd say, 'You know, man, I'm trying to make today the very best day of my life,'" Guidara writes. "I might have rolled my eyes, but that kind of unwavering positivity turned out to be impossible to resist, largely because Randy believed every bit of what he was saying—and before long, so did we."

As Christians, one of the most powerful offerings we can share is joy. Joy! And perhaps it is most important to share joy with seekers coming to the Church, looking for "the peace that surpasses all understanding."

Sometimes we can get bogged down with all that goes on around us. As you welcome newcomers to your church, remember...JOY!

Takeaway: Start with a sincere smile. Put yourself in the shoes of the newcomer by asking how you'd feel when you walked through the church doors.

Guidara's Unreasonable Hospitality is more than just a book about running a successful restaurant—it's a masterclass in human connection and intentionality. The lessons he teaches are incredibly relevant for our parishes as we work to make newcomers feel accepted. By embracing these principles, we can ensure that our churches are not only places of worship but also sanctuaries of warmth and welcome. Let's commit to practicing unreasonable hospitality and make our parishes a reflection of Christ's love for us all.



Accepting the task of hospitality, the patriarch [Abraham] used to sit at the entrance to his tent (cf.

Gen. 18:1), inviting all who passed by, and his table was laden for all comers including the impious and barbarians, without distinction. Hence he was found worthy of that wonderful banquet when he received angels and the Master of all as guests. We too, then, should actively and eagerly cultivate hospitality, so that we may receive not only angels, but also God Himself. **"For inasmuch," says the Lord, "as you have done it to one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me" (Matt. 25:40).** It is good to be generous to all, especially to those who cannot repay you.

St. Theodoros, the Great Ascetic



LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR SEPTEMBER

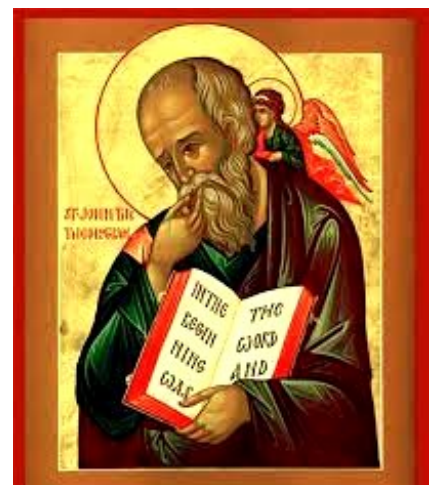
Sunday, September 1	<u>Beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year (Indiction)</u> Orthros 8:45a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00a.m.
Sunday, September 8	<u>Nativity of the Virgin Mary</u> Orthros 8:45a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00a.m.
Wednesday, September 11	<u>9/11 Day of Remembrance</u> Orthros 9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00a.m. Paraklesis 6:00p.m.
Saturday, September 14	<u>Exaltation of the Holy Cross</u> Orthros 8:45a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00a.m. <i>Procession of the Holy Cross at the end of the Divine Liturgy</i>
Sunday, September 15	Orthros 8:45a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00a.m. <i>Procession of the Holy Cross at the end of the Divine Liturgy</i>
Sunday, September 22	Orthros 8:45a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00a.m.
Monday, September 23	Teaching Divine Liturgy 6:30-8:30p.m. <i>(as part of the Orthodoxy 101 class)</i>
Thursday, September 26	<u>St. John the Theologian</u> Orthros 9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00a.m.
Sunday, September 29	Orthros 8:45a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00a.m.
Wednesday, October 2	Paraklesis 6:00p.m.
Sunday, October 6	Orthros 8:45a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00a.m.



Nativity of the Virgin Mary



Exaltation of the Holy Cross



St. John the Theologian

LITURGICAL NOTES FOR SEPTEMBER

Sunday, September 1 - New Ecclesiastical Year/Day of the Environment - His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, declared many years ago that September 1, the day on which we begin the New Ecclesiastical (Church) Year, also be set aside to pray for our environment. Not only do we thank God for His blessings of the past church year, and ask for Him to bless us in the new year, but we also offer prayers for our environment, which are needed more and more in the world where our environment is threatened as time passes.

Sunday, September 8 - Nativity of the Virgin Mary – Placed right after the beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year, this feastday commemorates the birth of the Virgin Mary to her parents, Joachim and Anna. It is one of the 12 Major Feast Days of the Church year.

Wednesday, September 11 – Day of Remembrance – 23 Year Anniversary of 9/11 – This year marks 23 years since the terrorist attack on America on 9/11/01. Every year, we have paused to offer some service in remembrance of this day. On Wednesday, September 11, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy, to call the Holy Spirit down upon not only the Holy Gifts but on all of us, in Tampa and throughout the United States. We will have a memorial service of remembrance at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. You are encouraged to pause and pray on 9/11.

Wednesday, September 11 – Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary – We will offer the Paraklesis service once a month, to pray for all the members of our community, as well as any special prayer requests that you may have. The Paraklesis service for September will be Wednesday, September 11 at 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, September 14 - Exaltation of the Holy Cross – This Major Feast Day commemorates the finding of the Precious Cross of Christ by St. Helen in the year 325. This day is equal in solemnity to Good Friday, as it draws our attention to the supreme sacrifice made by the Lord for us. Connected with September 14 is the Tradition of the Vasiliko. St. Helen went in search of the Precious Cross. In Jerusalem, she found the hill of Golgotha. But she did not know where to search for the cross. Vasiliko (Basil), a sweet scented plant, was found growing on the hillside. She looked beneath the Basil and that's where the cross was found. It is the Tradition of the Church that a Procession is held on September 14, where Basil is placed on a tray along with a cross and it is carried above the heads of the faithful. We will hold this procession on September 14. The Procession will also be repeated at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, September 15.

Thursday, September 26 – St. John the Theologian – St. John was one of the 12 disciples. He was the “beloved” Disciple we read about. He is the author of the Gospel of St. John, the Epistles of St. John and the Book of Revelation. He is the only one of the original 12 disciples to die naturally, reposing on the island of Patmos, where he had lived in exile, in the year 96 A.D. He was the youngest of the disciples and the last one to pass away.

DONATIONS NEEDED FOR VASILIKO FOR THE FEAST OF THE HOLY CROSS

We need Vasiliko (Basil) for the services of the Holy Cross. Please bring Vasiliko for **Saturday, September 14 and Sunday, September 15**. Please bring to the welcome table by 10:00 a.m. on all the days, so we will have time to make up the tray. The Procession for the Holy Cross will be held on Saturday, September 14 and also repeated on Sunday, September 15.



DONATIONS NEEDED FOR FLOWERS FOR FEAST OF THE HOLY CROSS

We need a donation of \$150 for flowers for the tray for the procession of the Holy Cross on September 14, and \$400 for flowers for Sunday, September 15.

Please call the office if you are interested.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Tuesday night Bible Study with Fr. John will continue meeting at **6:30pm** on most Tuesday evenings, except some Monday evenings. Join us in person or via zoom for some informative, lively and interactive discussions on how we apply Biblical Principles in our everyday lives. For September, the dates are; Tuesday September 10, Tuesday September 17 and Tuesday September 24.

Women's Bible Study on Tuesday mornings with Fr. Stavros will begin again on Tuesday, September 10 at 10:00am.

GOYA St. Pete Volleyball Tournament— Our GOYAns will be participating in the volleyball tournament sponsored by St. Stephanos Greek Orthodox Church in St. Pete on September 7.

GOYA— The GOYA Meeting for September will be Sunday, September 15, from 5:00pm-7:30pm. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

Senior Lock-In

On September 21, we will be having our “Senior Lock-in” for GOYAns in 10-12th grade. This event will begin at 5:00 p.m.

Men's Group—The Men's Group will meet on Sunday, September 22, at 5:00pm. We will walk to a nearby restaurant and have dinner and then come back to church for a discussion, concluding by 7:30pm. All men of the community are welcome to participate.

Young Adult Dinner/Discussion—Thursday, September 12

Our young adult group meets once a month for dinner/discussion(and other times for fellowship and service). The meeting for September will be on Thursday, September 12, from 6:30-8:30pm in the Kourmolis Center. All young adults, ages 18-40, are invited to participate. We will be having a monthly discussion based on some set topics. Group members use What's App for communication. Please contact Aris Rogers to be added to our what's app for young adults at 813-309-5525. WE HAD 38 YOUNG ADULTS AT OUR AUGUST DINNER!

Choir

Choir practices will be held on most Wednesdays in the Zaharias Room from 7:15-8:30 p.m. New singers are always welcome. If you are interested in joining our choir, please contact Tara at tswatzbaugh@ut.edu or 813-313-0439.

JOY Tweens Group

Our first JOY Tweens meeting will be on Sunday, September 29, from 12:15-2:00 p.m. We will have lunch, play some games, and have a discussion with Fr. Stavros. Maraquet Edquid is in charge of this ministry and her number is 813-422-8963. This group is open to all 4-6th graders.

Dance Groups

Greek dance practices for **Y Hara Mas (3rd-6th grades)** will start on **September 15 at 12:15pm** in the Kourmoulis Center (during coffee hour). Practices will continue every Sunday from 12:15 to 12:45pm for the remainder of September and October until our Greek Festival on November 1-2, 2024. Please contact **Maraquet Edquid (813-422-8963)** with any questions. **OPA!**

Thank you Mike Xenick—With Maria Xenick now working for our parish as our full-time Ministry Coordinator/Chanter, Mike Xenick has resigned from the Parish Council. We thank Mike for his many years of service on the Parish Council and are thankful that he will be continuing in some of the roles he has had in various ministries going forward. A new Parish Council member will be ratified shortly by the Metropolis of Atlanta to take the seat vacated by Mike.



INSPIRATION

Judas Ate Too

Hours before the death of Jesus, Judas ate too.
Jesus fed Judas too.

Jesus prayer for Judas too.

Jesus washed Judas' feet too.

I struggle to fathom what kind of love this is. . .

A love that would feed the mouth that deceived you.

A love that would wash the feet of the traitor.

A love that could forgive even the vilest of betrayals.

Honestly, I struggle to comprehend it.

And the, suddenly, I realize. . .that I am Judas too!

And in that moment, I'm so thankful and altogether overwhelmed that, Judas ate too.

The true test of Christianity is not about loving Jesus but loving Judas.

Showing love to someone like Jesus is so easy, but loving someone hard to love, a sinner like Judas is difficult.

That's what "following Jesus" is all about.

Peace is not when everyone agrees. It is when we can respect our disagreements and still play in the sandbox together.

SEVEN QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR KIDS BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

What do you think about a lot?

What makes you feel loved?

What do you worry about the most?

How can I be a better parent for you?

What do you love about our family?

When do you feel safe and secure?

What do you want to understand about people or the world?

LOVE: Giving someone the power to destroy you, and trusting them not to.

If you see a married couple still in love through the years, you may think how lucky they are. But in marital relations, there is no such thing as luck. They have made many compromises, they have overlooked each other's faults. They forgave many mistakes and endured many problems. They spent years learning to understand one another. Love has never been a matter of luck. It's mutual giving compromise, shared dreams, care, respect, mercy and patience.

Let's NORMALIZE "I'm willing to work on that," instead of "that's just how I am."

SAY THIS PRAYER QUIETLY

Dear God, I come before You at this moment. Please enlighten what is dark in me, strengthen what is weak in me, mend what is broken in me, heal what is sick in me, and revive whatever peace and love that has died in me.

This prayer is for me, my family, my friends, my enemies, and even those who hate me. Amen.

Fear is "what if?" Faith is "even if."

Yes, I'm a Christian. Yes, I make hypocritical decisions.

Yes, I fail. I stumble. I struggle. I am a mess. But I'm God's mess. And He can turn a mess into a masterpiece.

PARABLE OF A KING AND HIS FOUR WIVES



Once upon a time, there was a King who had four wives.

He loved the fourth wife the most, spoiling her with his deepest affection and providing her with only the finest things life could offer.

He also loved the third wife and proudly displayed her to the neighboring kingdoms.

He relied a lot on his second wife. She was his trusted advisor and companion. Whenever the King faced a problem, he could confide in her, and she would help him get through the difficult times.

However, not much can be said about his first wife. Despite her significant contributions to maintaining his kingdom and her tireless efforts to win his love and admiration, the King barely noticed her existence.

One day, the King fell gravely ill. Despite his efforts to find a cure, he realized that his time was running out.

He reflected on his majestic life and decided to spend everything to prolong it, leading him to consult a mystical sorcerer. The sorcerer said, "I'm sorry, Your Highness, but nothing can be done. Your death is imminent. However, I will grant you the chance to take one wife with you into the afterlife."

Thus, he asked his fourth wife, "I have given you nothing but the best in life. Now that I'm dying, will you accompany me into the afterlife?"

"No way!", replied the fourth wife, and she walked away without saying a word.

The sad King then asked the third wife.

"No!" replied the third wife. "Life is too good here! I'll stay! When you die, I'm going to remarry!"

He then asked his second wife.

"I'm sorry, but I can't go with you," replied the second wife. "I can only see you to the edge of your grave."

The King's heart sank, and he felt a deep sense of despair. He was utterly devastated.

Then he heard a weary, sad voice, speaking softly: "I'll go with you. I'll follow you no matter where you go."

The King looked up and saw his first wife as if for the first time. She appeared aged beyond her years, barely recognizable due to years of neglect. With deep regret, the King said, "I should have taken much better care of you while I had the chance!"

MORAL:

We all have these four wives in our lives.

The **FOURTH** wife is our **BODY**.

We often shower our body with the most affection, spending our lives adorning it with exquisite clothing and ornaments. Yet, in the end, it will abandon us when we die.

Our **THIRD** wife is our **POSSESSIONS**.

We invest much of our time and energy in accumulating wealth, but none of it will accompany us when we die. Instead, it will be divided and passed on to others.

Our **SECOND** wife is our friends, family, and relatives.

We love and trust them, and in return, they offer us comfort and support when we need it. However, no matter how long they remain by our side, they can only accompany us up to the point of our burial.

And our **FIRST** wife is our **SPIRIT**.

We often neglect our spirits in the pursuit of wealth, pleasure, and power, not realizing that it is only our spirit that accompanies us after death. While it's important to take care of our bodies by staying healthy and exercising, and to enjoy time with loved ones, we must also remember to nurture our greatest treasure: our spirit.

To lead a fulfilling life, it's essential to find balance in caring for the four aspects of our existence: our body, our earthly possessions, our relationships, and our spirit. By giving each of these areas the attention they deserve, we create a harmonious life where we are not only prepared for the end but also enriched in the present.

WHAT REAL LOVE IS

My parents were married for 55 years. One morning, my mom was going downstairs to make dad breakfast, she had a heart attack and fell. My father



picked her up as best he could and almost dragged her into the truck. At full speed, without respecting traffic lights, he drove her to the hospital.

When he arrived, unfortunately, she was no longer with us.

During the funeral, my father did not speak; his gaze was lost. He hardly cried.

That night, his children joined him. In an atmosphere of pain and nostalgia, we remembered beautiful anecdotes and he asked my brother, a theologian, to tell him where Mom would be at that moment. My brother began to talk about life after death, and guesses as to how and where she would be.

My father listened carefully. Suddenly he asked us to take him to the cemetery.

Dad!" we replied, "it's 11 at night, we can't go to the cemetery right now!"

He raised his voice, and with a glazed look he said:

"Don't argue with me, please don't argue with the man who just lost his wife of 55 years."

There was a moment of respectful silence, we didn't argue anymore. We went to the cemetery, we asked the night watchman for permission. With a flashlight, we reached the tomb. My father caressed her, prayed, and told his children, who watched the scene moved:

"It was 55 years... you know? No one can talk about true love if they have no idea what it's like to share life with a woman."

He paused and wiped his face. "She and I, we were together in that crisis. I changed jobs ..." he continued. "We packed up when we sold the house and moved out of town. We shared the joy of seeing our children finish their careers, we mourned the departure of loved ones side by side, we prayed together in the waiting room of some hospitals, we support each other in pain, we hug each Christmas, and we forgive our mistakes..."

Children, now it's gone, and I'm happy, do you know why?

Because she left before me. She didn't have to go through the agony and pain of burying me, of being left alone after my departure. I will be the one to go through that, and I thank God. I love her so much that I wouldn't have liked her to suffer..."

When my father finished speaking, my brothers and I had tears streaming down our faces. We hugged him, and he comforted us, "It's okay, we can go home, it's been a good day."

That night I understood what true love is; It is far from romanticism, it does not have much to do with eroticism, or with sex, rather it is linked to work, to complement, to care and, above all, to the true love that two really committed people profess."

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS:

WELCOME BACK TO SUNDAY SCHOOL! We are so glad to have the 2024-2025 Sunday School year off to a great start. Thank you to all the teachers, parents, and children who are committed to our program.

The first day of Sunday School was on **Aug. 18th and on the 17th** the teachers had an inspiring retreat with Fr. Stavros. Thank you to the many families who have registered their children in Sunday School. Please register your child as soon as possible if you have not done so already.

We are very excited about our Weekly Topics that each classroom will include into their program. The topics for the month of AUGUST were **THE THEOTOKOS, and CHURCH ETIQUETTE**. We also took our class photos and the new Sunday School bulletin board will be up soon.

A special thank you to Maria Xenick who has directed our Sunday School music program for many years. She is stepping down to fulfill her full-time responsibilities as Ministry Director for the church. Of course she will help the Sunday School whenever we need it. We are very grateful that Donna Trakas has stepped up to run our music program this year. We would also like to thank Stefanie Moran, who is taking a leave from our Sunday School. She has taught our 6th grade class for many years and she will truly be missed. Thankfully Mia Leonardos has volunteered to teach our 6th graders.

Our YOUTH SUNDAY PROGRAM will continue this year. Students in 1st -6th grade will sing the Liturgical Hymns with the choir under the direction of Donna Trakas. Our high school students will also read the Epistle on Youth Sundays.

We understand that it is very difficult to attend church every week, but PARENTS, please make an effort. Your children's understanding of our faith is essential. It is also important to make it a "habit" of going to church EVERY Sunday morning. When students come to church on a regular basis they feel CONNECTED to our church, to their teachers, and especially to their classmates. What better peers to have, than their Orthodox friends! These friendships could also last a lifetime. Students who do not come regularly may feel uncomfortable and miss so much of our valuable instruction.

Our **HALL of FAITH** program will continue again this year! This program is to encourage our children to memorize and understand the Lord's Prayer and the Creed.

Our Pre-K through 3rd

Grade will be focusing on the Lord's Prayer and our 4th graders on up will do the Creed. Look for our HALL of FAITH poster on our Sunday School bulletin board.

Will your child's name be on it?

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

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR:

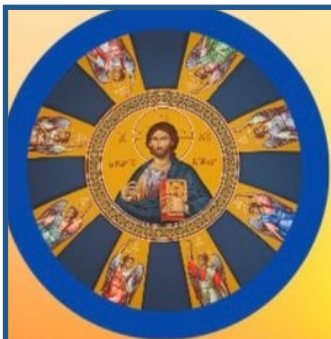
September 8th: Topic: Prayer

**September 15th: Topic: Sign of the Cross
(9th -12th Boys will stay in Altar)**

September 22nd: Topic: The Lord's Prayer

September 29th: Topic: The Creed





St. John's 3rd Annual Young Adult Retreat *FINDING BALANCE: How to Cover All the Bases in a Young Adult Life*

27-29 Sept
2024

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
2418 W. Swann Ave
Tampa, FL 33609

Friday 9/27

- Vespers Service 6:30 pm
- Social at Armature Works 8 pm.

Saturday 9/28:

- Retreat 9:30 - 5 (lunch included)
- Speaker Lectures, Small Group Discussions.

Sat. Night:

- Social Outing & Dinner
- location to be announced.

Sunday 9/28

- Liturgy 9:45 am
- Brunch will follow (location TBD.)

Hotel Suggestion:

Four Points by Sheraton
4400 W Cypress St.
Tampa, FL 33607

\$30/person

***social gatherings/brunch not included.**

RSVP to: STJOHNTPA.YOUNGADULTS@GMAIL.COM by Fri. Sept 6th



EVENTS

SCHEDULE

HOPE & JOY

24/25

10/27

FALL PARTY

After Church This Year

BOXES OF HOPE

Food Drive Benefitting Metropolitan Ministries

11/17-
12/15

12/14

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Following Pageant Rehearsal for the Sun, 12/15 Christmas Pageant

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

Big Game Day Food Drive Benefitting Hope Children's Home

2/9

4/18

HOLY FRIDAY RETREAT

Non-School Day in Hillsborough County

END OF YEAR YOUTH PARTY

5/18



MORE INFO:

ZACKIE AMERES 813.245.3813

JOY TWEENS

Welcome to the **2024-2025 school year!** Our Holy Orthodox Primary Education (HOPE) & Junior Orthodox Youth (JOY) ministries have lots of fun activities planned for this year!

In addition to the HOPE/JOY combined events, we will have meetings and fun activities for our JOY Tweens (4th- 6th grades) at least once per month. Our first welcome meeting is **Sunday, September 29, 2024, at 12:45pm**, following the Divine Liturgy and Y Hara Mas Greek Festival dance practice.

We pray that the JOY Tweens Ministry will give our children, at this pivotal age, an opportunity to develop their faith while also strengthening their bonds with their peers, through age-appropriate activities centered around worship, fellowship, and service. Please mark your calendars and join us. We can't wait to see you!

SAVE THE DATE! JOY Tweens (Grades 4th - 6th) Calendar 2024-2025

Sunday, September 29 (12:45pm)	JOY Tweens - First Welcome Meeting with Father Stavros
Sunday, October 27	HOPE/JOY Fall Festival
Friday, October 25 (6:00pm)	JOY Tweens - Movie Night
Sunday, November 17- December 15	HOPE/JOY – Boxes of Hope (Food drive to provide meals to families in need)
Sunday, November 17 (12:15pm)	JOY Tweens – Meeting with Father Stavros
Saturday, December 14	All Youth - Christmas Party
Sunday, January 26 (12:15pm-2:30pm)	JOY Tweens – Parent/Tweens Retreat
Sunday, February 9	HOPE/JOY – Superbowl of Caring (Donation drive to benefit Children's Home)
Sunday, February 23 (1:00pm)	JOY Tweens - Offsite Activity
Sunday, March 23 (12:15pm)	JOY Tweens - Meeting with Father Stavros
Friday, April 18	HOPE/JOY - Good Friday Retreat
Friday, May 2 (6:00pm)	JOY Tweens – Movie Night
Sunday, May 18	All Youth - End of Year Party

INTERESTED IN LEARNING ABOUT
ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY?
PLEASE JOIN US FOR A FOUR WEEK COURSE

Orthodoxy 101

BEGINS IN SEPTEMBER & OFFERED BY
FR. STAVROS N. AKROTIRIANAKIS, PARISH PRIEST

WHY SHOULD I ATTEND ORTHODOXY 101?

· INTERFAITH COUPLES. THIS WILL HELP THE NON-ORTHODOX PERSON UNDERSTAND MORE ABOUT WHAT IS GOING ON IN OUR CHURCH.

· ANYONE WHO IS CONSIDERING JOINING OUR CHURCH. GOING FORWARD, THIS CLASS WILL BE A REQUIREMENT FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO JOIN OUR ORTHODOX FAITH.

· NEW CONVERTS TO ORTHODOXY. FOR THOSE WHO RECENTLY JOINED OUR CHURCH AND WHO WANT TO KNOW A LITTLE BIT MORE.

· ANYONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE BASICS OF OUR FAITH, OR WHO WANTS A REFRESHER

WHEN WILL THE CLASSES BE HELD?

* MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9
A TOUR OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH: WHAT WE SEE AND WHAT IT MEANS

* MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16
INTRODUCTION TO THE SACRAMENTS- BAPTISM, CHRISTMATON, CONFESSION, MARRIAGE, UNCTION

* MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23
THE DIVINE LITURGY-
A "TEACHING" LITURGY

* MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30
ORTHODOX TRADITIONS-
FASTING, ICONS, PRAYER AND
LIVING AN ORTHODOX
CHRISTIAN LIFE

WHAT FORMAT CAN I EXPECT?

A RELAXED ATMOSPHERE WITH PRESENTATIONS, INTERACTIVE DISCUSSIONS,
AND LOTS OF TIME FOR QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

CLASSES WILL BE HELD FROM 6:30-8:30 P.M. IN THE CHURCH SANCTUARY.

Please sign up with Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com, so he has enough materials for everyone.

There is no charge for this class.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH · 2418 W. SWANN AVENUE · TAMPA, FL · 33609

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS!



*Thank you to our Chairperson
Jeanie Nenos
for another outstanding
Fanouropita event.*

*Thank you to all the ladies
who made delicious cakes and
to all who helped.*

*Thank you to our community for
supporting this sale so generously.*

"All proceeds to go to our Metropolis Youth programs".



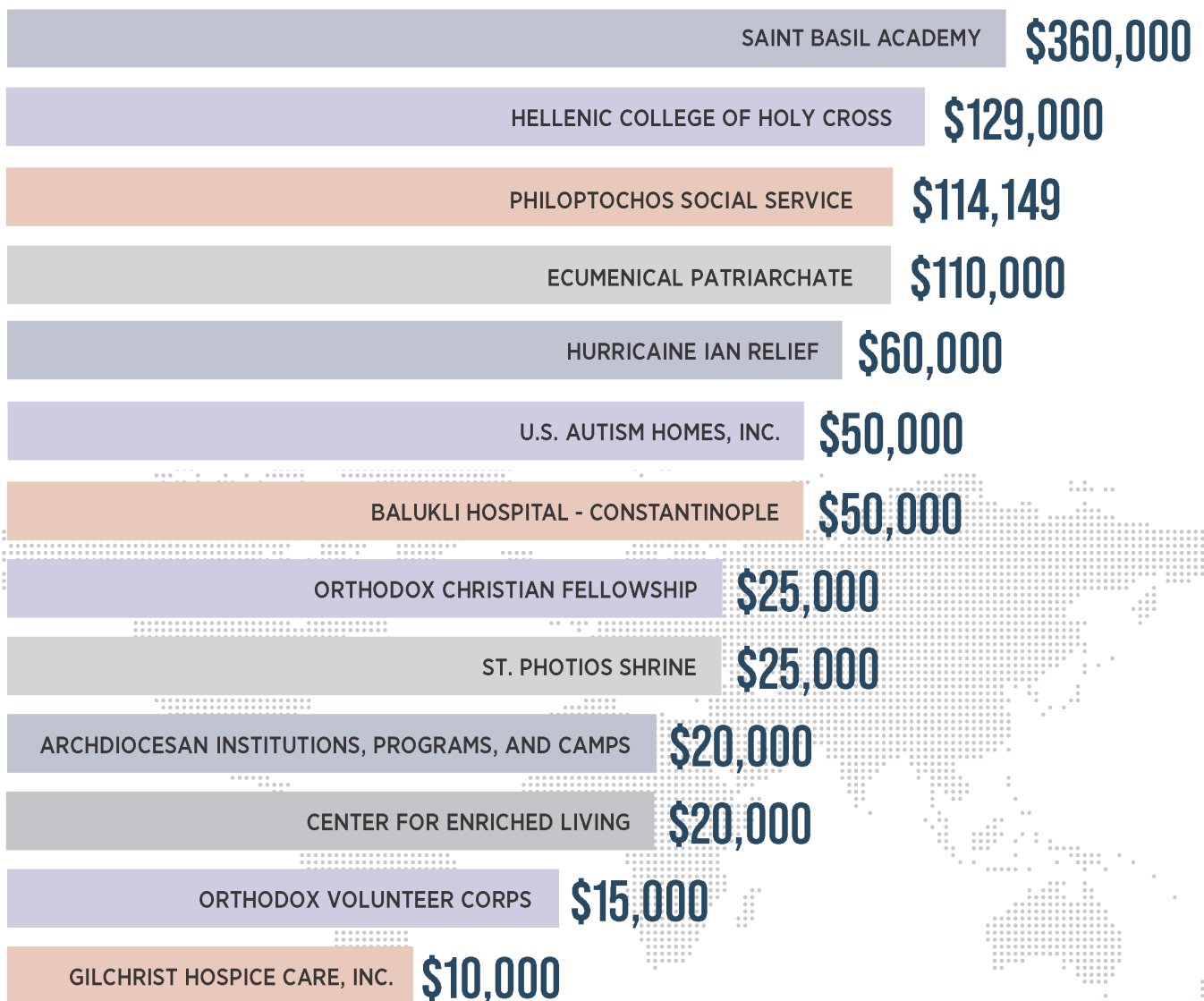
September Calendar!

- a) 9/5 - Board Meeting; 7 PM Zoom, link to follow.
- b) 9/15 - Coffee Hour - for the benefit of Holy Cross and the Retired Clergy & Widowed Presvyteras Fund. Help needed to bring goodies and set up and clean up.
Watch your email for more details!

HOW PHILOPTOCHOS RESPONDS: 2023 BY THE NUMBERS



In 2023, **Philoptochos raised \$2,659,447.20**, and has **allocated \$1,861,159.50*** in funding to organizations both nationally and internationally through our programs and ministry commitments. Here's how the money was distributed.



**Funds are distributed through grant applications and request for proposals (RFP's). See www.philoptochos.org/grant-application-form/*



\$458,799

in grants from the **Children's Medical Fund** were allocated for various purposes including locomotive training for children with paralysis, the Care Cradle Program, air purifiers for three floors of a home, assistance for families of children with cancer, respite care, education, psychosocial support, and the Bladder Exstrophy program aimed at enhancing continence for patients with this condition.

AT HOME AND ABROAD, Philoptochos has allocated **\$414,211 in emergency support** to our partners in Greece, Maui, Ukraine, and Turkey & Syria offering essential relief like food, medicine, and clothing to uphold the dignity of those in need.

GREECE

■ International Orthodox Christian Charities
\$50,000

Addressing the requirements for assistance during summer heat waves, we are committed to providing aid and support for those affected by floods and fires.

■ Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans
\$14,211

Food vouchers for elderly and needy Constantinopolitans in Greece.

MAUI

■ International Orthodox Christian Charities
\$10,000

To address the needs and provide assistance for fire relief.

UKRAINE

■ International Orthodox Christian Charities
\$90,000

Support initiatives for women's economic empowerment in Ukraine.

TURKEY & SYRIA

■ International Orthodox Christian Charities
\$250,000

To address the needs of earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria.

Ladies Philoptochos
was built for this.
It's what we do
every day, creating
a foundation that
serves as a source
of strength during
times of crisis
and times of calm.

DANCE GROUP

PANIGYRI ADULT DANCE

Please join us for our weekly Adult Greek Dance practice at the Kourmolis Hall!
Please wear dance shoes or sneakers and comfortable clothes for dancing.



Starting **July 10th** & on every Wednesday **at 7pm**
except for 8/14/24 & 9/11/24.

Thereafter we will create line-ups for those that commit to performing several times each day for the Festival.

Any questions, please contact Alex DeMaio at
813-340-9668, Alexandra.DeMaio@libertymutual.com

ADULT GREEK SCHOOL

ST. JOHN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH ADULT GREEK SCHOOL **WANT TO LEARN MODERN GREEK?**



Teacher born, raised, and educated in Greece with 25 years of experience teaching the Greek language. Adult classes for beginners taught @ **St. John Greek Orthodox Church (2418 W. Swann Ave, Tampa, FL 33609)**. Classes are held at **12:30-3:00pm on Saturday afternoon, starting on September 14, 2024**. This will be the first of three sessions, with each session lasting three months.

- Speak Greek
- Read Greek
- Write Greek
- Basic Grammar & more.
- Some Greek History
- BOOK INCLUDED IN PRICE

Price per session is \$125 for church members and \$150 for non-members.

*Contact Ms. Magdalini Myer: at (813) 523-5771, aspis69@aol.com
or the church office at (813) 876-8830*

YOUNG AT HEART

YOUNG AT HEART SEPTEMBER GATHERING

Learn more about

The Feast of the Elevation of the Venerable
&
Life-Giving Cross

Saturday, September 7th

Gather - 11:45 am

Lunch - Noon



Enjoy a catered lunch featuring Roast Chicken,
Sides, Salad and Dessert. **Cost is \$10 per person.**

*See Presvytera Denise for reservations no later than **September 1st**.*

DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE

Dear Parishioners,

*As we do each year the Daughters of Penelope with the support of AHEPA are participating in a community service project - **WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S in Tampa.***

*We are pleased to announce that this year we will be partnering with **Philoptochos** for this important service project.*

*The Walk event will be held on **October 19th, 2024 at Amalie Arena at 8 AM.** Everyone is welcome! It provides an opportunity to raise funds by asking your friends and relatives to sponsor you in your walk or just to donate to you to meet the goal you set for yourself this year. We hope you will join us in the fight to find a cure for this disease. Join us or reach out to **Maria Zabetakis at (813) 748-7709** or visit our team site to register or **simply to donate at:***



[2024 Walk to End Alzheimer's - Tampa: Daughters of Penelope | Walk to End Alzheimer's](#)

Here are some facts on why it's so important to find a cure.

Alzheimer's disease is a devastating brain disorder that slowly destroys a person's memory and thinking skills. It's the 6th leading cause of death in the United States¹ and has affected close to 7 million Americans with over 800,000 in the state of Florida. One in three older adults dies with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia—killing more people than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined. The impact of Alzheimer's is felt by everyone who is touched by the disease, including the person with the diagnosis, their family, friends, and caregivers. 11 million caregivers will bear the weight of this disease, facing significant challenges along the way. Witnessing someone you love gradually lose their memory and abilities takes an undeniable emotional and physical toll. This ripple effect of Alzheimer's disease is a reminder that its reach goes far beyond those living with the disease.

FOOD PANTRY UPDATE

Thank YOU for YOUR ongoing support of the St. John Food Pantry.

Did you Know... We compile boxes of food with your generous donations to share with Metropolitan Ministries & Tampa Hope! We also provide bags of food to many local individuals and families.

Every little bit helps! One donation at a time YOU can help us help OTHERS to tackle hunger in our community! It's as easy as 1,2,3 ...

- 1) *Look for our dedicated drop off location just past the entrance area of the Church Hall.*
- 2) *Mark your calendars for the First Sunday of Each Month as our primary collection day
(but donations are welcome anytime).*
- 3) *When you attend a Ministry Meeting bring a food item from the list below.*

Lastly, we accept **grocery store gift cards of \$20** denominations or less in the church office.

Thank you for your support and thinking of the St. John Food Pantry one item at a time. If you know of someone in need or wish to take a bag of groceries to go, we can make that happen! Please contact Sandra Pappas at 813-785-3747



Requested Food Pantry Items (Please be mindful of expiration dates)-

Bolded items of greatest need at this time.

- Canned Fruits and Vegetables
- Canned or Dried Beans
- **Canned Meat (including Vienna sausage, spam, chicken, and tuna)**
- Cereal / Boxes of Milk
- **Granola / Bars**
- Instant Mashed Potatoes
- Jell-O/Pudding
- Macaroni & Cheese
- Oatmeal
- Pasta & Ramen Noodles
- Peanut butter & Jelly (in plastic jars)
- Soup – Cans or Ready to Go, Ravioli, Pasta (just add water) meals
- Spaghetti Sauce – (no glass)
- **Dry Goods**
- Paper Towels/Toilet Paper

SCHOOL OF GREEK LANGUAGE & CULTURE

ΣΧΟΛΕΙΟ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΓΛΩΣΣΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ SCHOOL OF GREEK LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

We are excited to inform you all that
the School of Greek Language and Culture of Tampa will
start again on
Saturday, September 7th.

The lessons will take place
at the building of Bridgeprep Charter School
(behind Saint John's Church)
every Saturday from 1:00 - 3:00 pm.

Our school will have classes from **K-8th Grade.**

Registrations will start at School
on Saturday, September 7th at 12:00 pm.

**Information: Ioannis Giavaras igiavaras@gmail.com
Tel. 718 419 4413**



COLLEGE STUDENT OUTREACH

Kathy Kaburis is once again leading our college Student Outreach Ministry. We want to connect with our college students who are in school away from home as well as those students who attending college here at one of our local schools in Tampa from other areas around the country who are new to our St. John community.

TO OUR COLLEGE STUDENTS—Please join our mailing list to stay connected! Please send your name, current email, mailing address and phone number so you can be placed on our list!

TO OUR COLLEGE PARENTS—Please confirm with your student that we have their contact information!

You can send your information to **Kathy at kkaburis2000@yahoo.com and or (813)240-6513**

NURSING MINISTRY

WHAT IS A STROKE?

What is a stroke? A stroke is your brain's equivalent of a heart attack. A stroke is a life-threatening condition that happens when part of your brain doesn't have enough blood flow. This most commonly happens because of a blocked artery or bleeding in your brain. Without a steady supply of blood, the brain cells in that area start to die from a lack of oxygen.



The Warning Signs of Stroke

- Sudden numbness or weakness in the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking, or difficulty understanding speech.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance, or lack of coordination.
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Treatments that work best are available only if the stroke is recognized and diagnosed within 3 hours of the first symptoms.

Stroke patients may not be eligible for these if they don't arrive at the hospital in time.

If you think someone may be having a stroke, act F.A.S.T. and **do the following test:**

F – Face: Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?

A – Arms: Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

S – Speech: Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is the speech slurred or strange?

T – Time: If you see any of these signs, call 9-1-1 right away.

It is important to Note the time when any symptoms first appear. This information helps health care providers determine the best treatment for each person.

Do not drive to the hospital or let someone else drive you. Call 911 for an ambulance so that medical personnel can begin life-saving treatment on the way to the emergency room.

According to the CDC, four main reasons that increase your chances for having a stroke.

1. **High Blood Pressure:** High blood pressure increases the risk for heart disease and stroke, two leading causes of death for Americans. High blood pressure is also very common. Tens of millions of adults in the United States have high blood pressure, and many do not have it under control. High blood pressure usually has no symptoms, so the only way to know if you have it is to get your blood pressure checked regularly.
2. **Salt:** High sodium consumption can raise blood pressure, and high blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke.
3. **Cholesterol:** Almost 2 in 5 adults in the United States have high cholesterol (total blood cholesterol ≥ 200 mg/dL). Too much cholesterol puts you at risk for heart disease and stroke, two leading causes of death in the United States. High cholesterol has no signs or symptoms, so the only way to know whether you have it is to get your cholesterol checked. Talk to your health care team about how you can manage your cholesterol levels and lower your risk.
4. **Men and Heart Disease:** The term heart disease refers to several types of heart conditions, including coronary artery disease and heart attack. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men in the United States. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men of most racial and ethnic groups in the United States, including African Americans, American Indians or Alaska Natives, Hispanics, and whites. For Asian American or Pacific Islander men, heart disease is second only to cancer.

What are the symptoms of heart disease?

Sometimes heart disease may be “silent” and not diagnosed until a man experiences signs or symptoms of a heart attack, heart failure, or an arrhythmia. When these events happen, symptoms may include;

1. Heart attack: Chest pain or discomfort, upper back or neck pain, indigestion, heartburn, nausea or vomiting, extreme fatigue, upper body discomfort, dizziness, and shortness of breath.
2. Arrhythmia: Fluttering feelings in the chest (palpitations).
3. Heart failure: Shortness of breath, fatigue, or swelling of the feet, ankles, legs, abdomen, or neck veins. Even if you have no symptoms, you may still be at risk for heart disease. Because heart disease may be “silent” and shows no symptoms, preventative healthcare is important and may be how heart disease is initially diagnosed.

Check your blood pressure regularly to reduce your risk for a stroke. Your Nursing Ministry will have two blood pressure clinic in August, please check the bulletin.

Call 911 right away if you or someone else has any of these symptoms.

TWELVE DISCIPLES PROJECT

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



St. John the Baptist's Twelve Disciples Project continues, as dozens of your fellow Orthodox Christians, Prayer Warriors, set aside a few minutes each day to pray for "mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, protection and pardon and remission of the sins for servants of God" all members of the St. John's congregation.

Are you interested???

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

"Prayer is doxology, praise, thanksgiving, confession, supplication, and intercession to God. 'When I prayed I was new,' wrote a great theologian of Christian antiquity, 'but when I stopped praying I became old. Prayer is the way to renewal and spiritual life. Prayer is aliveness to God. Prayer is strength, refreshment, and joy. Through the grace of God and our disciplined efforts prayer lifts us up from our isolation to a conscious, loving communion with God in which everything is experienced in a new light. Prayer becomes a personal dialogue with God, a spiritual breathing of the soul, a foretaste of the bliss of God's kingdom.'" <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-fruits-of-true-prayer?inheritRedirect=true> "Pray for others by name and ask people to pray for you, too. The Church is a praying Body. When we pray for others, we lift them up and embrace them. It connects us in Christ, no matter how far away our loved ones may be from us. Prayer is even more intimate when we offer up specific people, by name, (and their specific needs) to the Lord." (Sam Williams, blogs.goarch.org, Sept. 24, 2015)

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

Mathew Balasis led this ministry since its inception in 2020. With his recent passing, we are looking for someone to direct this ministry and hope to fill this in the next month. **Memory Eternal Mathew!**

~Participation will warm your spiritual heart.~

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Love thy Neighbor through our Monthly Community Outreach

We have the privilege to help serve the needs of our homeless community in East Tampa on the 3rd Saturday of each month. We partner with Matthew 25 (a local Charity), Metropolitan Ministries and USF to serve breakfast, provide clothing and medical needs for our guests.

Our next date is 9/21.

What to expect: A rewarding experience and we welcome new volunteers!

To Volunteer: [Click Here](#), (link below) or scan our QR code to access our Signup Genius - <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F48A5A62DA3F49-community1/8067245#/>

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

Time: 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Questions on Arrival: Look for Matthew 25 founders, Peggy & Mike Kanter or Greg & Victoria Melton, our dedicated parishioners that organize this ministry. They can help answer any questions or if you need direction when you arrive.

You may also call Greg directly at 813-967-2074.



'Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men' Colossians 3:23

**2024 TAMPA GREEK FESTIVAL
SAVE THE DATE!
NOVEMBER 1 - 2**



We are less than 2 months away from this year's Tampa Greek Festival! Please mark your calendars for these dates as well as the week before, October 28 - 31 for set up, November 3rd for Liturgy and Community Celebration and November 4th for clean up.

WE WILL NEED HELP ALL OF THOSE DAYS!!

Last year's Festival was a tremendous success and set records for 2-day attendance and profits, so I know everyone is excited to make the 2024 Festival an even greater event this year!

We are still looking for leadership in the following areas:

- **Kids' Area (90% of this area has or will be set up ahead of time)**
- **50/50 Raffle Coordinator**
- **Roving Bar Carts inside Hall**
- **Pre-Festival Ordering - work with John Zelatis to order and organize paper goods and food**
- **Logistics/Runners - Supporting Takeout, Pastry, Gyro and Taverna areas**

If you would like to lead, co-lead or otherwise assist in any of these areas, please contact Sandra Pappas at spappas11@gmail.com or 813.785.3747 or Mike Xenick at mxenick@gmail.com or 813.340.8737

Please be on the lookout for emails and bulletin notices announcing dates for:

- **General Festival Planning Meetings**
- **Pre-Festival Baking (koulourakia, etc.)**
- **Pre-Festival Cooking (dolmathes, pastitsio, etc.)**

If you have any questions or ideas, please contact Mike Xenick. Thank you for your dedication and service to our Festival, and let the countdown begin! OPA!

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PARISH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is excited to share we will continue to offer the Parish Assistance program together with BayCare Behavioral Health. The program will provide our parishioners access to **free and confidential** counseling services - offering additional support when life's challenges become overwhelming. The PAP utilizes a network of faith-based providers that are sensitive to the values and beliefs of those they serve and provide compassionate care to children, adults, parents, and seniors. Parishioners can confidentially contact BayCare directly to request up to three free counseling sessions from a licensed mental health professional.

The BayCare helpline, 800-878-5470, is answered 24/7 by mental health professionals. Many BayCare therapists are also offering telephonic and virtual counseling sessions to help parishioners maintain their emotional wellbeing during these trying times. You can get more information on the BayCare Behavioral Health Community Services Program on their website at: <https://baycare.org/services/behavioral-health/our-specialties/community-health-services> Help is available for life issues including:

Help is available for life issues including:

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



The service is completely confidential between parishioner and a Baycare Christian Therapist.

For over nine years, Fr. Stavros has been writing a daily reflection called "The Prayer Team." It comes out every morning at 12:30 a.m. via Constant Contact. From Monday-Friday, Father will be writing on the Post-Paschal Gospels and on Saturday-Sunday, Father is writing on the Scripture passages of each Sunday. There are 4,524 people on the Prayer Team.

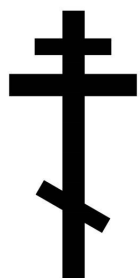


INTERESTED IN JOINING THE PRAYER TEAM?

Over 4,566 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 6 years! Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email our office at office@stjohntpa.org and ask to be added. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email the office or follow the link at the bottom of the daily emails to do so. If you want to forward to a friend, please use the "forward to a friend" option. Also, make sure prayerteam365@gmail.com has been added to your contacts so that these emails stay in your Inbox rather than going to the Junk or Spam folders.

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

MEMORIAL & KOLYVA PROTOCOL



1. Memorial Services **MUST** be scheduled through the church office at least two weeks in advance of when you want the service.
2. Memorial services for 40 days and one year will be done on the Sunday closest to the appropriate date. All other memorials will be done on the designated Memorial Sunday each month.
3. Please let the office know when you call or email whether you will be providing your own kolyva or whether you wish for the Philoptochos to provide. If a family chooses to make their own Kolyva(es), the family will be responsible for scooping the Kolyva(es) in the kitchen after the Memorial Service to share with the entire community.
4. If the Philoptochos does the kolyva, there is a \$100 charge for this service-checks may be made payable to "St. John Philoptochos."
5. Also, please send the church office all of the names you wish to have commemorated at the memorial service, and how many pews, if any, you would like reserved for your family.

PARISH REGISTRY

Baptism — *James Frederick Nassar, was baptized on August 11. Hend Nassar MacLean & Georges Nassar were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!*

Chrismation — *Hernan (David) Roldan was Chrismated on August 1. Markos and Ekaterini Mangarides were the sponsors. Congratulations!*

Have questions?

Just need to talk? Worried? Sad? Happy?

We are here for you!

Fr. Stavros
< 813-394-1038



Fr. John
678-637-4425>



OPT-IN ON THE MESSENGER

In an effort to be more environmentally conscious, we will be mailing The Messenger **ONLY** to those who ask. If you wish to receive The Messenger by mail, you certainly may. We just ask that you indicate on your stewardship form, or let the office know, that you wish to receive The Messenger by mail. We will no longer be mailing The Messenger unless you ask us to.



*Proverbs 16:3—Commit your work to the Lord; and your plans will be established.
Psalm 37:5—Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will act.*

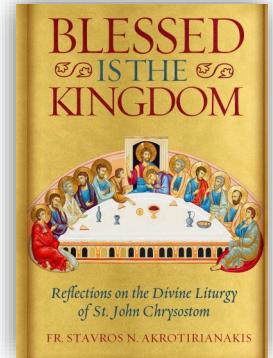


Our word for this year for our parish is the word “Commit.” To commit means to do something. In the Divine Services of our church, we often hear the phrase “Let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.” To commit our whole life, that is a lot of commitment. And it’s not only our lives we are supposed to commit, but the lives of one another. Of course, we can’t make commitments for others people, but we can encourage them to be committed to Christ. And how do we do that? By being an example that others will want to imitate. If one is truly committed to Christ, a peace, reassurance and confidence radiates from them, because they know who they are and what the purpose is for their lives. And when people see this, they want the same peace, reassurance and confidence. Part of the reason people are not flocking to Christ is because these things are absent from many people who call themselves “Christians.” And that is because we haven’t truly committed ourselves to Christ. This commitment is a daily choice. This is why we are reminded of it so often in our services. Every morning, when we open our eyes to a new day, the first thought ideally is a prayer, which commits the day to Christ. If the first thought is a commitment to Christ, then the second thought cannot be a sinful one because it flies in the face of what we’ve just committed to. When we forget to commit, it is easier to sin, because the commitment isn’t in our consciousness. To commit to Christ begins with a daily, and usually a multiple times in a day, choice. It begins with prayer, which motivates thought, which motivates action, (remember to commit means to do something), and then others see the action and want to do that action themselves. To commit our whole life to Christ our God is very daunting. Remember, however, that today is the first day of the rest of your life. If the goal is to commit our whole life to Christ, then the first step is one we take TODAY.

+Fr. Stavros

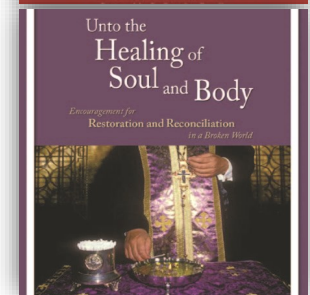
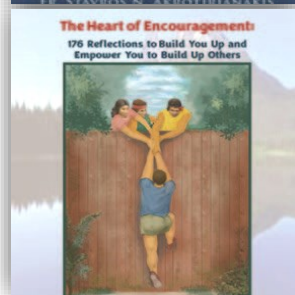
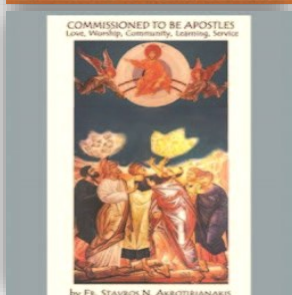
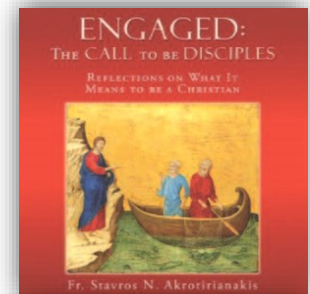
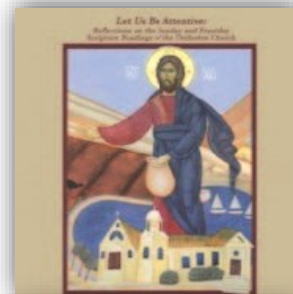
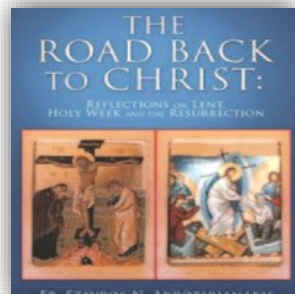
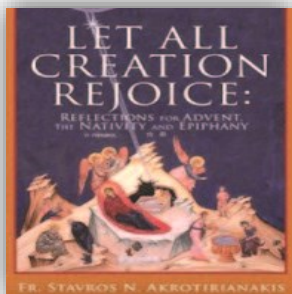
FR. STAVROS NEW BOOK

FR. STAVROS NEW BOOK *"BLESSED IS THE KINGDOM"* REPUBLISHED BY ANCIENT FAITH PUBLISHING—FR. STAVROS RECENTLY HAD HIS BOOK *"BLESSED IS THE KINGDOM: REFLECTIONS ON THE DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM"* REPUBLISHED BY ANCIENT FAITH PUBLISHING. THIS BOOK HAS BEEN EDITED, UPDATED AND IMPROVED AND IS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE THROUGH OUR OWN BOOKSTORE, OR THE ANCIENT FAITH BOOKSTORE. WITH THIS BOOK NOW IN PRINT, FR. STAVROS HAS NINE PUBLISHED BOOKS THAT ARE AVAILABLE BOTH IN THE BOOKSTORE AND ONLINE.



The additional 8 are entitled:

Let All Creation Rejoice: Reflections on Advent, the Nativity and Epiphany
 The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection
 Let us Be Attentive: Reflections on the Sunday and Feastday Scripture Readings of the Orthodox Church
 Engaged: The Call To Be Disciples, Reflections on What it Means to be a Christian
 Commissioned to be Apostles: Love, Worship, Community, Learning, Service
 The Heart of Encouragement: 176 Reflections to Build You Up and Empower You to Build Up Others
 The Greatest Story Ever Sung: Reflections on the Hymns of Holy Week In the Orthodox Church
 Unto the Healing of Soul and Body: Encouragement for Restoration and Reconciliation in a Broken World



ST. JOHN'S BOOKSTORE

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



[This Photo](#) by

- ♦ Under the Laurel Tree – Grieving Infertility with Saints Joachim and Anna
- ♦ Children of My Heart – Finding Christ Through Adoption
- ♦ Fertile Ground – A Pilgrimage through Pregnancy
- ♦ Of Such is the Kingdom – A Practical Theology of Disability
- ♦ Parenting Toward the Kingdom – Orthodox Christian Principles of Child Rearing
- ♦ Preserve Them O Lord – A Guide for developing marital unity for Orthodox Couples

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stjohntpa.org • 2418 W. Swann Avenue Tampa, FL 33609 • (813)876-8830

St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!

Have you downloaded our App?

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

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

We Are Live

We have switched from LiveStream to Vimeo as the streaming platform for our church services You can easily access our Live and Recorded Events from the following **URL link: <https://stjohntpa.org/live/>**

This link will be included in the weekly Constant Contact Bulletin Message and is also accessible from our Church Website and SJGOC App. The sermon portion of services will continue to be shared on YouTube as recordings. Happy Streaming! Please call our Church Office with any questions.



Beware of Emails or Text Messages Asking for Gift Cards



This is a common and very scary thing that is happening. People who are impersonating as Fr. Stavros have been emailing people and asking them to buy gift cards, scratch off the back to reveal the code, take pictures of the code and email them the pictures. Fr. Stavros would never under any circumstances ask for a gift card via email. If you receive an email like this, please call Fr. Stavros immediately. Many people these days are falling victim to scams like these. Please double check and even triple check any emails or phone calls that ask for money even if it looks real.

Any questions? Please contact the office.

PHOTOS



Beach Reach with our GOYAns in Daytona Beach, August 2-4



Dormition of the Theotokos– August 15



Youth Worker training—August 10. On Saturday, August 10, Fr. Stavros led a retreat for 18 youth workers from our area, focusing on how to improve our teaching of the faith to Sunday school students and GOYAns.



Decorations for Dormition of the Theotokos-August 15



Prayer for our College Students on August 4.



Young Adult Gathering on August 15. 38 people participated!

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta
Tampa Bay District Council

"The Roaring Twenties" Golden Gala

Sat. October 19th, 2024

6:30PM



Cash Bar

DRESS IN YOUR BEST 1920's ATTIRE!

St. Nicholas Spanos Pappas Community Center
348 N Pinellas Avenue
Tarpon Springs, FL 34689

To benefit the building of the "Philoxenia House" for
Housing accommodations for the Diakonia Retreat Center

Ticket Cost \$125

Seating is limited. RSVP by October 1st

For more information email OrthodoxGoldenGala@gmail.com
or Call//Text Katerina Damianakis at 727-459-2123

The Roaring "Twenties"

Golden Gala Sponsorship Opportunities

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> DIAMOND LEVEL | \$10,000 | 10 TICKETS TO THE BANQUET
FULL PAGE AD IN BANQUET JOURNAL
ACKNOWLEDGMENT AT THE EVENT
PREFERENTIAL SEATING |
| <input type="radio"/> PLATINUM LEVEL | \$5,000 | 10 TICKETS TO THE BANQUET
FULL PAGE AD IN BANQUET JOURNAL
ACKNOWLEDGMENT AT THE EVENT |
| <input type="radio"/> GOLD LEVEL | \$2,500 | 8 TICKETS TO THE BANQUET
FULL PAGE AD IN BANQUET JOURNAL
ACKNOWLEDGMENT AT THE EVENT |
| <input type="radio"/> SILVER LEVEL | \$1,000 | 4 TICKETS TO THE BANQUET
HALF PAGE AD IN BANQUET JOURNAL |
| <input type="radio"/> BRONZE LEVEL | \$500 | 2 TICKETS TO THE BANQUET
QUARTER PAGE AD IN BANQUET |

All Sponsorships Include:

- Listing on "Supporter wall" at the event
- Recognition in the Banquet Event Program
- Name or Business Logo on Event Website
- Social Media Promotion

Please indicate your selection and return by October 1st
Mail CHECK payable to: "St. Raphael DRC Golden Gala" to
1100 Riviere Rd Palm Harbor FL 34683

NAME _____

COMPANY _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____

PHONE _____

☐ CREDIT ☐ CHECK ☐ CASH

EXP DATE _____

NAME ON CARD _____

CARD NUMBER _____

For additional Sponsorship opportunities email: OrthodoxGoldenGala@gmail.com

WELCOME TO OUR PARISH

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

PLEASE TEXT THE WORD

"WELCOME" TO 813-790-5950

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

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

Youth Protection Program



GREEK ORTHODOX
ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA



Would you like to participate in or help with child/youth programs, events, or activities at our church? If the answer is yes, then you must register, screen, and train through the new Youth Protection platform first.

If you are interested and would like to get started or if you have questions, please contact Suzanne Pileggi at smpileggi1@gmail.com or (813) 244-5855. Thank you!

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

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.

September 2024							Oct 2024 ▶
◀ Aug 2024							
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
1 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	2 Labor Day Office Closed	3 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	4 ** Greek Dance 7:00 p.m. Choir 7:15 p.m.	5 Philoptochos Board Meeting (Zoom) 7:00 pm	6 **	7 Children's Greek School 1:00-3:00pm GOYA Volleyball Tournament St. Pete Young at Heart	
No Sunday School							
8 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	9 Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m.	10 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	11 ** 9/11 Day of Remembrance Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. Choir 7:15 p.m.	12 Young Adult Discussion 6:30p.m.	13 **	14 ** Holy Cross Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Adult Greek School 12:30-3:00pm Children's Greek School 1:00-3:00pm	
15 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m.	16 Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m.	17 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	18 ** Greek Dance 7:00 p.m. Choir 7:15 p.m.	19	20 **	21 Adult Greek School 12:30-3:00pm Children's Greek School 1:00-3:00pm Community Outreach GOYA Senior Lock-in 5:00p.m	
22 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	23 Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m. Teaching Liturgy	24 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	25 ** Greek Dance 7:00 p.m. Choir 7:15 p.m.	26 St. John the Theologian Orthros 9:00 a.m.. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	27 ** Young Adult Retreat	28 Young Adult Retreat Adult Greek School 12:30-3:00pm Children's Greek School 1:00-3:00pm	
29 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Tweens 12:30-2:00p.m.	30 Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m.	**Fast Day					

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX
CHURCH 2418 W. SWANN AVENUE
TAMPA, FL 33609-4712
OFFICE: (813) 876-8830
FAX: (813) 443-4899
OFFICE@STJOHNTPA.ORG
WWW.STJOHNTPA.ORG

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As it is written in Isaiah, "Behold, I send my messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight--"
"Mark 2:3