

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

—The Messenger—

MARCH 2025

ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS - MARCH 25

Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis (Proistamenos) Fr. John Stefero (Associate Priest) Fr. Stratton Dorozenski (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: Orthos 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Parish Priest		Bookstore	670 464 4022	Maraquet Edquid	813-422-8963
Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-876-8830 (Office) 813-394-1038 (Cell) frstav@gmail.com		Presbytera Denise Stefero Bible Study-Tuesday Night	678-464-4833	Junior Olympics Dwight Forde	561-310-5034
Associate Priest			678-637-4425	-	501-510-5054
Rev. Fr. John Stefero	0= 440= (G II)	Buildings & Grounds Tony Magos	813-957-3206	Men's Fellowship Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis	813-394-1038
1 813-876-8830 (Office) 678-6 1 jwstefero50@hotmail.com	37-4425 (Cell)	Choir		Parish Nursing Ministry	
Retired Priest in Residence		Tara Swartzbaugh, Director Ruth Losovitz, Organist	813-313-0439 727-688-2782	Marcelle Triantafilou	612-396-5026
Rev. Fr. Stratton Dorozenski813-87	76-8830 (Office)	Maria Xenick, Chanter	813-765-3587	Oratorical Festival	727-244-1374
Ministry Coordinator/Chanter Maria Xenick		College Student Program Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis	813-394-1038	Peggy Bradshaw	(21-2 41 -1314
Mariapxenick@stjohntpa.org 813-7	765-3587(Cell)		010-094-1000	Photography Ministry Karina Findlay	813-476-9632
Parish Council	012 002 1500	Community Outreach Greg Melton	813-967-2074	Philoptochos	
George Ameres, Vice President	813-892-1599 941-720-3494	Connect Through Christ -		Katherine Sakkis	813-309-1073
George Chagaris, Treasurer	813-760-6289 727-420-1920	Special Needs Ministry for Children	012 5/5 0524	Stewardship	010 =10 =222
Peter George	813-727-5587 781-910-9971	Dante and Lindsey Skourellos	813-765-9534	George Mitseas	813-748-1220
• , ,	813-957-3206 813-244-5855	Dance Groups Η ΧΑΡΑ ΜΑΣ,		Sunday School Vickie Peckham	813-758-3102
Marcelle Triantafilou	612-396-5026	Alexandra De Maio Maraquet Edquid	813-340-9668 813-422-8963		010 100 0102
John Zelatis	813-376-9196 813-727-2271	ПАРЕА, Marina Choundas	813-877-6136	Usher Pete Trakas	813-505-2193
Arise & Build Expansion Project		ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙ,	813-340-9668	Veterans/1st Responders	
	813-340-8737 813-352-3972	Alexandra De Maio	019-940-9000		813-876-8830
Office Staff		Daughters of Penelope Ourania Stephanides	813-546-4711	Website / Social Media / APP VOLUNTEER NEEDED!	
Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper debbie@stjohntpa.org 813-4	443-4899(fax)	Festival			
Elli Kehagias, Administrative		Mike Xenick	813-340-8737	Welcoming Ministry Maria Xenick	813-765-3587
Assistant, office@stjohntpa.org	813-876-8830	Finance Committee Gary Ward	813-846-3898	Women's Bible Study	
Adopt a College Student Kathy Kaburis	813-240-6513	·		Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis	813-394-1038
i	010 210 0010	Food Pantry Sandra Pappas	813-785-3747	Young Adult Aris Rogers	813-309-5525
Adult Greek School Magda Myer	813-523-5771	Gasparilla Parking		C	010 007 0040
I AHEPA		Fady Hakim	678-294-7732	Young at Heart Dora Morgan	813-613-3738
James Sakaris, President	301-529-8857	GOYA Michael & Bessie Palios	813-523-0346	Youth Protection	
Altar Angels Kalliana Chagaria	813-789-4134		013-343-0340	Suzanne Pileggi	813-244-5855
i i	019-403-4194	Hope/Joy George & Zackie Ameres	813-245-3813	12 Disciples	240 967 2607
Altar Boys Fr Stavros Akrotirianakis	813-394-1038	-		Theo Panopoulos	248-867-3697
; !		Joy Tweens			

A Message from our Priest

~Focus on the Process and You Are More Likely to Get the Outcome~

The book "Don't Tell Me I Can't" tells the story of Jamie Moyer, a former Major League baseball pitcher who found himself out of baseball at the age of 29 because he didn't throw hard and gave up too many home runs. He went to see a sports psychologist named Harvey Dorfman. In their many sessions, Moyer talked about how much he worried on the mound that he was going to give up a home run, and inevitably, that is what would happen, and often. He was so worried about the outcome being bad that it paralyzed his process of pitching and colored his preparation to pitch. Through many sessions over many months, Harvey was able to help Jamie learn to focus on the preparation process—his mechanics, mindset—and not worry about the outcome. startling transformation happened. Jamie got back into baseball, pitched until he was 49 (one of the oldest players ever to be in Major League Baseball), won 269 games (which puts him as a borderline Hall of Famer), and never threw 90 miles an hour. His outcome became amazing because his process was consistent. And when there was a setback (he still gave up homers, not as many though), he went back and focused on the process. He came to understand that he could not control the outcome, only the process. And when he learned to control the process, and not worry so much about the outcome, the outcome became outstanding.

The Arise & Build Capital Campaign

By the time you receive this issue of The Messenger, we will have had the kick-off of the Arise & Build Capital Campaign. For well over the past year, a committee of people has been working steadily to develop a plan to expand our church sanctuary, create a ministry building, update the Kourmolis Center and do an overall updating to our grounds. We have followed a process that is first of all **Christ-centered**. The whole purpose of this project is to bring people to Christ and Christ to people. There isn't enough room in the church to accommodate everyone who needs a seat. We haven't been able to have ministries during the day because of a tenant. We haven't been able to have dedicated ministry space because just about all of our space is shared. And we haven't been able to do some needed updates to our facilities because our tenant puts heavy use on During this past year, we have been intentional in soliciting outside advice from professionals, hearing about the experience of capital campaigns and building projects in other churches, and getting experts to give us estimates

and renderings of what this project could look like and a ballpark figure of what it will cost. We also did a survey in our community to gauge interest and potential involvement of the people and the results were overwhelmingly positive.



St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Churc

The Quiet Phase of the Capital Campaign

In October 2024, we began the quiet phase of a capital campaign. Why quiet? Because if we announced to the community that we were trying to raise \$7.8M, people would have probably balked. That's why in most successful capital campaigns, there is a quiet phase that tries to raise 50-60 percent of the money needed, so that when the project is revealed publicly, people can take heart that most of the money has already been pledged. They are not climbing up a mountain, but have already reached the top and are trying to get down the other side.

As of February 20, THE QUIET PHASE OF OUR CAPITAL CAMPAIGN HAS BROUGHT IN \$4,619,511 IN PLEDGES, OR 59% OF THE \$7.8M WE ARE TRYING TO RAISE.

This quiet phase was done following a process that does not involve high pressure fundraising or targeted asks. To the contrary actually, every person who was asked to consider a pledge was asked to prayerfully consider what they would offer.

My Personal View and Involvement in This and the Process I Chose to Use

Now writing very personally, there has been a great committee working behind the scenes on this project. Graphic design and marketing people put out the materials. Finance people set up accounts. Project managers are overseeing the different aspects of the project. And a small steering committee oversees the whole thing. However, the

actual asks for the project, so far, have fallen to me. Over my twenty years of ministry at St. John, I have made a point to not talk about money often or do any fundraising. I actually have a great disdain for these things. I have never wanted to be thought of as the priest who carries a cross in one hand and a tray in the other. I never want people to think that I look at anyone as a dollar sign.

When it became apparent from the outside experts we consulted for this project that the priest would be material in the project asks, I decided that I would attempt to do some fundraising but only within certain parameters, following a certain process. And that process involves no targeted asks, prayer at every step of the process, and no disappointments in whatever people decide to offer, only gratitude, respect, joy and prayer. That is the process. While I obviously care about the overall outcome, I want to see us complete this project and we need \$7.8M to do it, I am not hung up on individual contributions. I have told every person I have met in this process, "whether you give \$1 or \$1M, your gift will be received with joy, with respect, with gratitude and with prayer." And this is because the most important relationship we have is as priest and parishioner, not priest and contributor. When I meet you over the Holy Chalice at Holy Communion, when it is me, you and Christ, there is nothing else that will be on my mind, certainly not what you gave to this project. I just want people to participate, to whatever degree they choose.



This is the process we pray will lead to our desired outcome.

- ◆ The goal of this project is to raise \$7.8M.
- ♦ We would like all of that to be collected by the end of 2027, so a three-year campaign.
- We'd like people to consider a three-year pledge, so that they can give a larger amount, but spread it out over three years.

- The pledge to the capital campaign is above your stewardship pledge. Stewardship is what pays the bills of our church on a day-to-day basis. We still need income from stewardship to operate our parish.
- This project is a once-in-a-generation project. We are not coming back in a few years and saying "we missed something." This project will give an overall facelift to our entire physical plant. Fundraising and building aren't going to become a new way of life at St. John. This project ideally will take 30 months, with building commencing in summer of 2025 and ending by the end of 2027.
- We would like all pledges to be made by Palm Sunday. We want you to take this period of Great Lent and prayerfully consider your pledge to this project and turn in your form no later than Palm Sunday.
- ◆ Anything that is given involves sacrifice. And love is marked by sacrifice. The greatest expression of love is the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Our giving, whether to stewardship, this project, or anything else we give to should be sacrificial. If you are not sacrificing something, are you really giving? So your pledge to this project should feel like a sacrifice. Just like any goal you achieve in life involves some sacrifice, this one should as well.
- We are all going to benefit from this project. There will be more seats in church, better ministry space for our ministries, dedicated classrooms for our children. This is our gift to ourselves and those coming after us. Christ gave each of us a Great Commission to spread the Gospel. Even if you don't have kids in Sunday school, even if you are the first one here and always have a seat, this project will help YOU and me and everyone to fulfill the Great Commission. Anything we do that helps spread the message not only helps the community, it actually helps us individually.
- Don't offer a gift without thought. Many times, I receive a solicitation for funds from a non-profit organization and quickly write a check for a nominal amount just to contribute. This project should not be handled like that. The average time between when I met with a family and when they offered their pledge was a month. People thought about their gift and I appreciated that they took time to think. Please take time and pray about your contribution, think about it, talk about it, discuss it with your family, and then make your pledge.
- Most of all, we want you to contribute. We want everyone affiliated with St. John to contribute something. Large or small, the amount is not what is material. What is material

is that something of you, and your family went into this project.

- has been receiving the pledge forms. I have received every single one of them in front of the icon of Christ in the church with a prayer over each donor. I do not look at your cards in front of you. I do look at them later as I key them into our project spreadsheet. The reason I don't look at the cards in front of the donors is that the amount is not what is material. It is the offering of the gift that is material. When you are ready to make your offering, please bring it to the church and let me pray for you and your family as you give your pledge.
- In the prayer I offer, I use the word "sustenance". Sustenance literally means "what sustains us." Our assets sustain us from a financial perspective. We all have a finite amount of assets, and when we choose to offer our assets, we are giving away a piece of the something that sustains us. That involves faith and trust. The prayer that is offered asks for the donor to always have sustenance, to always be able to sustain themselves, especially as they part with some of their sustenance, that God multiples it back on them in some way. This is the most integral part of the process, receiving the gifts with prayer. And these moments have been among the most humbling in my life, praying with people as they make a gift to this project.

This is the process that we are following. The outcome so far has been amazing. We invite you to join in the process, and to be part of the outcome.



Am I worried that we won't succeed? No. Am I worried we won't raise enough money? No. My family has offered a pledge. Am I worried that we are going to run out of money because of it? No. Why am I not worried? Because when you follow a process, you are more likely to get the outcome. You can't always control the outcome, but you can control the process. Thus, I am concerned more

about the process and less about the outcome. And in this case, the more faithful we have been to the process and the less we have considered the outcome, the better the outcome has been.

One last thought about giving. I've ministered to hundreds of people who have come to the end of their life. NOT ONE OF THEM EVER SAID "YOU KNOW, I SHOULD HAVE GIVEN LESS, I SHOULD HAVE BEEN LESS GENEROUS, I SHOULD HAVE KEPT MORE FOR MYSELF." No one has ever said "I wish I didn't give that money away because now I find myself short." To the contrary, many have said "I wish I gave more, I wish I did more, I should have been more generous."

I am asking that everyone in our parish offer the following prayer each day from <u>February 23-Pascha</u>, so that we are praying over this project as we each consider our commitment to it.

~We praise You, we bless You, we give thanks to You and we pray to You, O Lord, our God. Guide the Arise & Build Capital Campaign by Your Holy Spirit, so that through our work, we may bring You to others and others to You. Sanctify our community, all those who serve in it, and all those who are served by it. We ask your blessings on those who have contributed to it and those who are considering doing so. Bless our church leadership, our priests, our Parish Council, our ministry leaders and the Arise & Build committees. Through the intercessions of the Holy Theotokos, of St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of our parish and all Your saints. For You are He who blesses and sanctifies all things, O Christ our God, and to You we send up glory, with Your Father Who is from everlasting and Your all-Holy, Good, and Life-giving Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.~

Please consider your pledge for the **Arise & Build Capital Campaign** and bring your form to church no later than Palm Sunday. I will be available after every service, or by appointment to receive every form with prayer.

~Process and Outcome This Lent~

It is providential that our campaign is going to happen during the period of Great Lent, because this is a period of heightened worship, prayer and thought in the church. And certainly, we do not want Great Lent to be lost in the enthusiasm for this project. When I wrote that "process" leads to "outcome," that is true not only for the Arise & Build project, but for our Lenten journey. The outcome at least on the schedule for Great Lent is known. Our journey will culminate in the Holy

Week experience that ends at the empty tomb of Christ on Pascha. We know that outcome on the calendar. We know the process on the calendar as well—multiple services each week, a Wednesday night presentation/discussion series, retreats for GOYA and young adults (following the ones we had for our men's group and Philoptochos), etc.

Each church community provides a framework to encourage each individual parishioner to follow an individual process that will lead to an individual outcome. What do I mean by that? The goal each Lent, the outcome we should all strive for, is personally growing closer to Christ, growing in our faith. The process is personal to each of us—how much we will worship, to what degree we will fast, whether we will go for confession, what habits we will change, etc.

Prayer starts with being still

My encouragement to you this Lent is to focus on a process that will get you closer to Christ. For instance, if you don't really pray, set aside time to pray this Lent. If you don't know what to say in prayer, don't worry about that, first focus on being still. Sit in front of an icon of Christ for ten minutes a day. No phone, no noise, no interruption. Just sit ten minutes a day with Christ. You can even set an alarm on your phone and then leave your phone on the other side of the room. If you stay committed to this process, ten minutes of quiet a day, at some point you will open your mouth and say something to Christ, and that will begin your prayer. If you are not used to praying, just sit with Him, and the words will come.



Read ONE of the Gospels

If you aren't used to reading the Bible, open up to the Gospel of Matthew, and read the Gospel, one chapter a day. It should take no more than five minutes. Use an annotated Bible like the Orthodox Study Bible, and read the notes, so you can understand the Gospel better. When you finish reading the Gospel, you don't have to plow on to another book, read the Gospel again. Read it three or four times, and each time you read it, you will take away something different from it. When you've made it through the Gospel of Matthew a few times, then move to the Gospel of Mark, then Luke, then John.

Don't Forget the Time Element in Fasting

Most people think of fasting first when they think of Great Lent. And fasting usually is thought of in a negative way. It's not something many of us look forward to. What has gotten totally lost in fasting is the time element. In the ancient world, people spent most of their day trying to find food, kill food, get food back home, cook food and eat food. It was a very food-centered existence. During Lent, when people weren't eating meat, they saved a lot of time, and that time was spent in worship and prayer. The time element has almost completely disappeared from Great Lent. We can fast by going to a restaurant and ordering shrimp instead of steak. We meet the letter of the law but there is no time element here. In modern times, I would argue that a fast from screen time on the phone would be more beneficial than a fast from food. Take time away from the phone and spend it with God, that will get us a lot farther than switching our order at the restaurant.

And on the subject of time, Great Lent is a time when we should spend more time worshipping. There are many services on the Lenten calendar. spend an evening each Why not worshipping—Tuesday (Compline), Wednesday (Pre-Sanctified Liturgy), or Friday (Salutations) and for those who do not like coming out at night, there is a Friday morning Pre-Sanctified Liturgy. The key ingredient to worship is showing up. Not every worship experience is profound. But there will never be a profound experience if you are not there. Again, come and worship and spend time with Christ. The words, the thoughts and the prayers will come.

A process of giving time will lead to an outcome of greater closeness with Christ.

~The Final Judgment—He Wants Us to Pass, but There is a Test~

In today's politically correct world, many people don't allow for the idea that there is a judgment before the awesome judgment seat of Christ. This idea is not just from the Divine Liturgy (we pray for a "good defense before the awesome judgment seat of Christ", in other words, a defense that will lead to Him opening the doors to Paradise to us), it is scriptural. Many times in Scripture, especially in Matthew 25, Christ tells us that between each of us and the Kingdom of Heaven is a judgment, where some will be judged worthy to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, and some will not be judged worthy of that, they will be condemned.

If this concept is alarming, think of the judgment like a final exam in a college class. The "professor" is Christ. He WANTS you to pass the final. He's rooting for you to pass the exam. He has given us the syllabus for the class. He has told us what is expected. He provides extra study groups. There is no curve, everyone has the chance to get an A. However, you have to go to class, you have to study, you have to prepare. In a college class, if you never go to class, if you never study, and if you show up to the final without having prepared at all, you probably won't get a great outcome. And it's the same with the Christian life. If you never do anything and you show up at the judgment having not prepared at all, it stands to reason that you probably won't get a great outcome. +Fr. Stavros

On the other hand, if you are working, trying, struggling in the faith, if you are following a process that involves faith and trust and effort, then we shouldn't fear the outcome, because we are following a process that points towards a good outcome. Christ will ultimately be the judge who grants the outcome. We can't claim our own outcome, any more than we can claim our grade before we take the final exam. But we can prepare for the exam, and feel good about the potential outcome. And in the Christian life, we can prepare for the judgment, we can follow the process and anticipate the outcome.

Great Lent is a time to examine our process, maybe change it. The services, fasting, confession and other things are tools to help our process. So just like the baseball pitcher that lost his way because he was so worried about outcome, but recovered his way when he focused on process, use this *Lenten period to focus on process and don't focus on the* outcome. There should be an overall understanding of the outcome we hope for, salvation. But there should be a better effort in the process, and that will lead us to the outcome. This issue of The Messenger is filled with ways to get more out of the Lenten journey, which begins March 3. I wish all of you a Kali Sarakosti, a blessed journey of Great Lent, in anticipation of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

With love in the Lord,

Altar Boy Schedule For Lent					
<u>CAPTAINS</u>	St. Matthew	St. Mark		St. Luke	St. John
Nicholas Akrotirianakis	Gabriel Gonzales	Michael Snyde	r	Teddy Kafentaris	Christos Nenos
George Xenick	Michael Galin	Zachary Carter		Andreas Stefanou	Constantine Ameres
Nicholas Magos	Philip Kane	Dorian Setzer-	Torres	Kris Christopher	Zachary George
Nicholas Carter PJ Zelatis	Vangeli Laliotis Kenny Kane	Niko Kyrus Aristotle Kyrus		Nathaniel Molina Andrew Fellios	Louis Mantzanas Gianni Matassini
Leo Lenardos	Peter Konstas	Michael Kwasny		Theodore Edquid	Nathan Moran
Vasilios Panos	Sam Lenardos Nikolas Massey	Michael Svintsi Zach Zaharis Michael Kwasn	•	Demetri Roussos Nathaniel Molina	Michael Meadows Dimitri Ameres
Wednesday, March 5	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	5:30 p.m.		s Panos and St. Matthew	ı
Friday, March 7	Salutations	6:30 p.m.	Ū	e Xenick and St. Mark	
Wednesday, March 12	-	5:30 p.m.		as Magos and St. Luke	
Friday, March 14	Salutations	6:30 p.m.		as Carter and St. John	
Wednesday, March 19	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	5:30 p.m.	Nichol	as Akrotirianakis and St.	Mark
Friday, March 21	Salutations	6:30 p.m.	Leo Le	nardos and St. Matthew	
Wednesday, March 26	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	5:30 p.m.	PJ Zela	itis and St. John	
Friday, March 28	Salutations	6:30 p.m.	Nichol	as Magos and St. Luke	
Wednesday, April 2	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	5:30 p.m.	Leo Le	nardos and St. Matthew	
Friday, April 4	Akathist Hymn	6:30 p.m.	George	e Xenick and St. Mark	
Wednesday, April 9	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	5:30 p.m.	Nichol	as Carter, PJ Zelatis and	St. Luke

A Message from our Ministry Coordinator

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 continue to break down these beautiful verses from St. Peter's Epistle one phrase at a time. This month, let's consider the middle part of verse 11 of St. Peter's writing "... whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies ..."

What a perfect time to be looking at this part of verse 11. Great Lent is a time when service should be at the forefront of our hearts and mind. St. Peter highlights service - *diakoni* - for the second time in two verses back-to-back. We have discussed the meaning of the word "serve" previously, and how it is used interchangeably in many translations as "minister." Here in verse 11 though, Peter makes a strong distinction.

Perhaps, having heard with his own ears from Jesus Himself, as recorded by his fellow disciple Matthew, "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve," Matthew 20:28, Peter realized, goodness this is hard what He is asking us! Let's face it, serving others is hard. Ministering to the needs of others is tiring. And sometimes, I have to admit it, I just want to be served.

How can we combat this human tendency to want to be served rather than to serve? As hard as it may seem, the answer is quite simple. We can only serve by the strength that God supplies. You, and I, can only do so much serving on our own. There is no way that we could possibly do all that we should do on our own. We must acknowledge that we are totally and completely dependent on God and His empowerment.

Consider our cell phones. When they are fully charged, they have the potential to be a million things – phone, calculator, map, camera, weight tracker, bank, weather guide, library, radio, TV, information hub, etc. When the power goes out and the battery dies, and you don't have a charger to plug it back in, you know what it is?

A rectangular piece of glass and metal. Unless we are "plugged into" God's endless source of strength and power, we too are rendered powerless and unable to be useful to our potential.

Is consistently serving others easy? Simple, yes. Easy, no. The nature of Christian serving others, REALLY ministering to others, is hard work, especially given the hectic pace of life for the modern Christian.

How do we serve others? We visit the lonely, help a neighbor with yardwork, write an encouraging note, deliver a meal to a new family in the neighborhood, simply listen to someone who is hurting. Writing out this list makes it seem easy, and yet just listing them here also reminds me there are countless times I have failed to serve someone else. Here's the thing though. Jesus doesn't expect us to serve without Him. Bring Christ into everything that you do, and He will give you rest, patience, comfort and will show you countless ways to serve others you otherwise would never have thought of.

St. Peter encourages us to serve others with the strength that God supplies. Serving others is hard work. Serving others is good work. Serving others is noble work. Serve others enough and pray that the Lord will reveal that serving is fun, invigorating, and rewarding.

May we serve others with the strength that God supplies individually and as a church. When we do this, hold on! The strength of God will be unstoppable!

Good strength - and God's strength - to all of us during this season of Great Lent!

Maria



LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR MARCH

SECOND SATURDAY OF SOULS Orthros Saturday, March 1 9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00a.m. Sunday, March 2 FOURTH SUNDAY OF TRIODION-FORGIVENESS SUNDAY Divine Liturgy 10:00a.m. 8:30a.m. Forgiveness Vespers 6:00p.m. Monday, March 3 CLEAN MONDAY-KATHARA DEFTERA-BEGINNING OF GREAT LENT Canon of St. Andrew Sacrament of Holy Unction 10:00a.m. 6:00p.m. Tuesday, March 4 Great Compline 5:30p.m. Wednesday, March 5 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00p.m. Friday, March 7 9th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00a.m. Salutations to the Virgin Mary-1st Stanza 6:30 p.m. 3RD SATURDAY OF SOULS Orthros 9:00 a.m. Saturday, March 8 Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Memorial Service at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy Sunday, March 9 1st Sunday of Great Lent—Sunday of Orthodoxy Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Procession with icons at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy Great Compline Tuesday, March 11 5:30p.m. 9th Hour Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, March 12 5:30 p.m. Friday, March 14 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations to the Virgin Mary-2nd Stanza 6:30 p.m. 2nd Sunday of Great Lent—St. Gregory Palamas Sunday, March 16 9:45 a.m. 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy Great Compline Tuesday, March 18 5:30p.m. Wednesday, March 19 9th Hour Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. 5:30 p.m. Friday, March 21 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. 9th Hour Salutations to the Virgin Mary-3rd Stanza 6:30 p.m. 3rd Sunday of Great Lent—Veneration of the Holy Cross Sunday, March 23 Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Procession of the Holy Cross at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy Tuesday, March 25 ANNUNCIATION TO THE VIRGIN MARY Orthros Great Compline 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. 5:30p.m. Wednesday, March 26 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Friday, March 28 Salutations to the Virgin Mary-4th Stanza 6:30 p.m. Sunday, March 30 4TH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT—ST. JOHN OF THE LADDER Orthros Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, April 1 Great Compline 5:30p.m. Wednesday, April 2 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. 9th Hour Vigil of the Akathist Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Friday, April 4 9:30 a.m. Akathist Hymn 6:30p.m. Divine Liturgy 8:15p.m. 5th Sunday of Great Lent-Sunday, April 6 -St. Mary of Egypt Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Orthros 8:30 a.m.

LITURGICAL NOTES FOR MARCH

<u>Divine Liturgy to begin at 9:45 a.m. on the Sundays of Great Lent</u>
Since the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is offered on each Sunday of Lent, and this Divine Liturgy is slightly longer than the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the Divine Liturgy will begin at 9:45 a.m. from March 9-April 13. The Choir will begin the Doxology at 9:35 a.m.

<u>Tuesdays of Lent - Great Compline</u>
The service of the Great Compline will be read on the following Tuesdays of Lent – March 4, March 11, March 18, March 25, April 1 and April 8. This service lasts about an hour and consists of Psalms and hymns of repentance. Service Books for this service will be available.

Wednesdays of Lent - 9th Hour and Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
The Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts (also called Pre-Sanctified Liturgy) will be held on the Wednesdays during Great Lent. This service consists of Vespers with Holy Communion that was "Pre-Sanctified" the previous Sunday. It is an opportunity to receive Holy Communion frequently during the season of fasting. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy is preceded by the reading of the 9th Hour, a short service with penitential prayers as well as the recitation of the Creed, a pre-requisite for the reception of Holy Communion. Service books for this service will be available. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy will be celebrated on the following Wednesdays of Great Lent: Wednesday, March 5; Wednesday, March 12; Wednesday, March 19; Wednesday, March 26; Wednesday, April 2 and Wednesday and April 9.

Fridays of Lent - 9th Hour and Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy has Traditionally been celebrated on Wednesdays AND Fridays of Great Lent.
The 9th Hour will begin at 9:30 a.m., with the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy from 10:00-11:15 a.m. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy will be held on the Fridays of Lent as follows: Friday, March 7; Friday, March 14; Friday, March 21; Friday, March 28; Friday, April 4 and Friday, April 11.

Fridays of Lent - The Salutations to the Virgin Mary (Heretismoi)
This service also lasts about an hour and is a series of prayers and devotions that invoke the intercessions of the Virgin Mary for our salvation. It will be held on March 7, March 14, March 21, March 28 and April 4.

Sunday, March 9 - Sunday of Orthodoxy
A grand procession with icons took place on March 11, 843 A.D. (which was the first Sunday of Great Lent that year), marking the permanent triumph of icons and their return to the churches after a 150-year absence. From this time, icons were defined as objects to be venerated and not worshipped. They are spiritual mirrors through which we see the heavenly saints. Their restoration in our churches is a true victory for Orthodoxy. Thus, on the first Sunday of Lent each year, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Triumph of Orthodoxy with a procession of icons, together with the reading of a Synodal Statement, authored in 843, marking their return to the church. If ANYONE HAS NEW ICONS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN BLESSED, PLEASE BRING THEM TO CHURCH ON SUNDAY, MARCH 9, THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY, AND PLACE THEM IN THE WINDOWS OF THE CHURCH. They will be blessed with Holy Water during the service.

Sunday, March 16 - Second Sunday of Lent - St. Gregory Palamas
On the 2nd Sunday of Great Lent, which is called the "Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas," we commemorate the memory of St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Salonica. He dedicated his life to Christ, even though he was raised in the royal palace of Constantinople. He withdrew to Mount Athos, where he lived an exemplary life of asceticism and scholarship. He defended the Faith against Garaam the Calabrian (who was against monasticism). He taught that divine grace is not created, but the uncreated energies of God are poured out through creation; otherwise, humanity could never have authentic communication with God. He was appointed Archbishop in 1349 and served with distinction; he died at the age of 63 and his relies rest in was appointed Archbishop in 1349 and served with distinction; he died at the age of 63 and his relics rest in Salonica.

Sunday, March 23 - Third Sunday of Lent - Veneration of the Holy Cross. On the 3rd Sunday of Great Lent we celebrate the Veneration of the Cross; the Cross helps us to prepare for the Crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are not just witnessing from afar the passions of our Lord, but we participate in them. In the Synaxarion we read, "Through the forty-day fast, we too are in a way crucified, dying to the passions." Our efforts to keep up with the Fast, through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, might take a toll over our bodies; we need help and encouragement, and the help and encouragement comes from the power of the Cross. In the middle of Great Lent, the Church gives its faithful a sign of victory, one that can bring strength to them in this time of fasting. The Sunday of the Holy Cross is one that brings everything into perspective, especially with the Gospel reading (Mark 8:34-9:1), the Lord saying to all His disciples: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" A special procession of the Holy Cross, on a tray covered with flowers, will be held at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

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

The Angel Gabriel came directly to the Virgin Mary and told her that she was going to have a child.

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

Sunday, March 30 - Fourth Sunday of Lent - St. John Climacus
St. John of the Ladder was only 16 years old when he left Palestine and went to St. Catherine's monastery (at Mt. Sinai, Egypt). He lived there for 50 years, where he wrote his famous book, The Ladder of Divine Ascent. This is a spiritual ladder. Christians follow certain rules so that they can get closer to God, and symbolically climb to heaven. He had struggles, like any person does, but he won over those struggles that the Devil put for him. That's why we celebrate his memory on this Sunday of Lent. St. John is a perfect example of how a person could be faithful all of their life, and be together with God in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Friday, April 4 - Vigil of the Akathist — It is the tradition of the Orthodox Church (practiced in monasteries and in a few parishes) that the Akathist Hymn is celebrated as part of an all-night vigil, culminating in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. A Vigil is when more than one service is held in sequence. We will begin the Akathist Hymn at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, April 4, followed by the Divine Liturgy at 8:15 p.m., with both services concluding by 9:30 p.m. This will afford us the opportunity to pray the Divine Liturgy together in a more subdued atmosphere (and how often do we get to celebrate Liturgy at night in our church?) and to receive Holy Communion on this very special feast day. For those who wish to receive Holy Communion, please abstain from food after 2:00 p.m. on that Friday.

Sunday, April 6– Fifth Sunday of Lent - St. Mary of Egypt —St. Mary of Egypt was anything but a Saint throughout the first part of her life. From a very young age, she was a prostitute. Being from Egypt, she decided that she wanted to see the Holy Land and the Tomb of Christ (also known as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre). As she went to enter the Church, a force kept her from entering. She was unable to enter, while so many others did. She realized that God had done this to have her stop her sinning. She promised to God that day she would stop. She repented with a pure heart, and she was allowed to enter. She went for Confession, received Holy Communion, and then went to the desert to live for years in repentance. Years later, she was visited by a Priest-monk, Zosimos (later a Saint in our Church). He gave her Holy Communion, and they discussed her trials and tribulations. Although she suffered much, she was so happy to be with Christ. Later that same day, she fell asleep in the Lord. Her example of repentance is SO great, we commemorate her life many centuries later.

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

Sacrament of Confession
Many people have already made appointments for their confessions to be heard, many for the first time in their lives. It is confidential. It helps you reconnect with God and unburden yourself of guilt. It helps you to make a new start in your spiritual journey and is an integral part of any successful Lenten journey. If you have questions about confession, please ask. There is no better way to prepare for Pascha than to receive this sacrament. Confessions will be heard up to April 11, and then again after Pascha. Please make your appointment as soon as possible with Fr. Stavros or Fr. John, because our priests like to give people whatever time they need. As it gets closer to Holy Week and more and more people are coming, they must go quicker, and it is very important not to be rushed in this Sacrament.



OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2025

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD

SUNDAYS

THEMES / GOSPEL READING

HOW TO PARTICIPATE:

Fast - Free Week
FEBRUARY 9th



TRIODION WEEKS
Publican and the Pharisee

Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15
Gospel: Luke 18:10-14

Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.

Normal Fast Week
FEBRUARY 16th



The Prodigal Son Returns!

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Gospel: Luke 15:11-32

Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble."
Use up/freeze meats this week.

Meatfare



FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY

The Last Judgement

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46 Pray facing East this week.

Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him!

Use up/freeze dairy this week.

Cheesefare

MARCH 2nd
FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY



Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise!

FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21 Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.

1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 9th



GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS

SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY

Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2

Gospel: John 1:43-51

2nd Sunday of Lent
MARCH 16th



ST GREGORY PALAMAS

Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12 Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer

each day this week.

Bring an icon to church

for a procession.

3rd Sunday of Lent

MARCH 23rd



VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

HALF WAY TO PASCHA!

Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1 Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!

4th Sunday of Lent

MARCH 30th



ST JOHN of the LADDER

Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31 Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!

5th Sunday of Lent APRIL 6th



ST MARY of EGYPT

Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45 Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.

FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAYI

APRIL 13th

GREAT WEEK BEGINS

GREAT AND HOLY WEEK

ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM

Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18 Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!

GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY

APRIL 18th



GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY

JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS
CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR
ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE

Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.

FEAST OF FEASTS!





BRIGHT WEEK

HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!)

Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17

Greet everyone with
"CHRIST IS RISEN!"
& say it before
good morning and goodnight!

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IN PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION

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

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

You shall not make for yourself a graven image in order to worship it. Have I valued anyone or anything above God? Have I given to anyone or anything the love, honor and worship that belongs to God alone? Have I made and idol of any person, idea, occupation, or thing?

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

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

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

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

Honor your father and mother

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

Thou shall not kill.

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

You shall not commit adultery.

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

You shall not steal.

Have I taken anything that was not mine from anyone or from anywhere? Have I cheated anyone? Have I caused others to steal or cheat? Have I tried to find the owners of lost things I have found? Have I

or destroyed anything that belonged to another? Have I defrauded anyone of rightful wages? Have I paid my debts? Have I given to the poor and to philanthropic causes in proportion to my means?

You shall not bear false witness.

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

You shall not covet.

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

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

IMPORTANT LENTEN PRAYERS

TRISAGION PRAYERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

PSALM 50 (51) – A PSALM OF REPENTANCE

Have mercy on me, 0 God, according to your great mercy, and according to the multitude of your compassions, blot out my offense. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I am aware of my iniquity, and my sin is continually before me. Against you only have I sinned and done evil before you, that you might be justified in your words, and emerge victorious when you are judged. For behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother carry and bear me. For behold, you have loved the truth; you revealed to me the hidden and secret parts of your wisdom. You shall sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be cleansed; you shall wash me and I will be whiter than snow. You shall make me hear joy and gladness; the afflicted bones shall rejoice. Turn away your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit, in the depths of me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take away your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and strengthen me with a guiding spirit. I will teach transgressors your ways, and the ungodly shall return to you. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, 0 God, the God of my salvation; and my tongue will joyfully sing your justice. 0 Lord, you shall open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise. For if you desired sacrifice, I would have offered it; you will not be pleased with whole; burnt offerings. Sacrifice to God is a con-trite spirit; a contrite and humbled heart God will not despise. Do good, Lord, to Zion in your good pleasure, that the walls of Jerusalem may be built. Then you will be pleased with a sacrifice of justice, offering and whole-burnt sacrifices. Then shall they offer calves upon your altar.

<u>Prayer of Manasseh, King of Judah (from</u> the Great Compline Service)

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

Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim

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

LORD OF THE POWERS – LENTEN HYMN

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



DONATIONS NEEDED FOR GREAT LENT AND HOLY WEEK

Great Lent begins March 3. We have many special celebrations during these weeks. We know that many of you would like to contribute to the decorating of our church and icons during this period. For your convenience, below is a list of items needed for the celebration of the Sacred Services of Lent and Holy Week. Please contact the church office to reserve your desired offering for the health of your loved ones or in memory of a deceased loved one.

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

Lent	Wireless Microphones in the Church	Duracell or Energizer AA Batteries	Many
March 7	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 1st Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$130
March 17	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 2nd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$130
March 21	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 3rd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$130
March 23	Veneration of the Holy Cross	Flowers for Tray for Procession	\$500
March 28	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 4th Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$130
April 5	Akathist Hymn	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$130
April 13 Holy Week	Palm Sunday	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex Palms Strips & Branches Pillar Candles for Windows (20)	\$130 \$300 total \$20 each
April 13	Palm Sunday Bridegroom Service	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom on Solea(2)	\$130 \$125 each
April 16	Holy Wednesday Holy Unction	Flowers for Icon of Last Supper Olive Oil, Flour, Prosphora(2)	\$130 Donations
April 17	Holy Thursday	Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion Wreaths for Bottom of Cross(2) Wreath for Top of Cross Scattered flowers at base of cross Candles for Top of Cross(3)	\$130 \$200 each \$300 \$75 \$20 each
April 18	Good Friday	16 Bags of Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers Flowers for Epitaphios Candles for Top of Cross (3) -Apokathelosis Candles for Top of Cross (3) -Lamentations Icon of Extreme Humility	\$130 Several \$20 each \$20 each \$130April
20 Pasch	a	Flowers for Icon of Resurrection Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb Silk Flower for Royal Doors Easter Lilies	\$130 \$130 \$150 \$35 per Lily

"How many Saturdays of Souls are there?"

Clearing up some misconceptions...

Mourning for, remembering, and praying for the deceased does not stop when an Orthodox funeral service ends, but those who pass are commemorated through a series of memorials (40 days, six months, annually, etc.).

Yet many Orthodox are not aware that each day of the week carries a specific commemoration, and every Saturday is the day in which we are called to remember all those who have passed before us. Additionally, there are specific Saturdays in which the Church calls ALL the faithful together in specific commemoration of the memory and eternal repose of all who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrec® on and for the forgiveness of all their sins.

There are known as the Saturdays of the Souls and are offered on TWO occasions:

Saturday before Judgment Sunday (this year: February 22, 2025) **Saturday before Pentecost Sunday** (this year: June 7, 2025) in which the Divine services are structured in a specific way to pray for the deceased.

"But aren't there FOUR Saturdays of the Souls?"

This is a common misconception because it has become custom to off er the Memorial Prayers on the two Saturdays as the "2nd and 3rd" Saturdays of Souls" when, in actuality:

The Saturday of Cheesefare (this year: March 1, 2025) is a day the church commemorates the Memory of all the God-bearing Ascetics.

The 1st Saturday of Great Lent (this year: March 8, 2025)

is the Commemoration on of the Miracle of Kolyva wrought by Saint Theodore.

So, while these other two Saturday's are not structured as proper "Saturday of Souls," seeing that they are still days that our parishes come together for liturgical worship, and that Saturday is the day of the week in which we are called to pray for the deceased, the Memorial Prayers can still be, and often are, offered on these two Saturdays as well.

"With the Saints give rest, O Christ, to the souls Your servants where there is no pain, nor sorrow, nor suffering, but life everlasting." Kontakion of the Saturday of Souls

PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE SATURDAY OF THE SOULS MEMORIAL SERVICES: February 22, March 1 and March 8.

†	In Memory of	†	

^{**}You only need to write the first name of each person. Please mail to the church office by Tuesday, February 18 .
You may also email the names to office@stjohntpa.org

COMMUNITY NEWS

<u>Tuesday night Bible study with Fr. John</u> — Will continue meeting at 6:30 p.m. on most Tuesday evenings. Join us in person or via zoom for some very informative, lively and interactive discussions on how we apply Biblical principles in our everyday lives. See the Sunday bulletin for specific topics. For March, the dates are Tuesday March 4, Tuesday March 11, Tuesday March 18 & Tuesday March 25.

<u>Women's Bible Study</u> — Women's Bible Study meets on most Tuesday mornings with Fr. Stavros from 10:00 -11:30 a.m. either in person or on zoom. We are studying the Epistle of First and Second Peter. For March the dates are Tuesday March 4, Tuesday March 11 & Monday March 24.

<u>Young Adults</u>- Our young adult group meets once a month for dinner/discussion (and other times for fellowship and service). The meeting for March be on Monday, March 10, from 7:00-9:00 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. All young adults, ages 18-40, are invited to participate. The Topic for March will be "Lenten Traditions and Practices in the Orthodox Church". 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.

<u>Men's Group</u>- Our men's group will meet on Sunday, March 23 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Any men of our community are welcome to join us for dinner, discussion. We meet at 5:00 p.m., walk to a local restaurant and get some food, then bring it back to the hall where we eat and have a discussion. Our topic for March be "Getting the most out of Holy Week". Please mark down our dates for men's group for this academic year—"Sunday, March 23; and Sunday, May 4.

<u>Welcome Back Fr. John Stefero</u>-After filling in at our sister parish of St. Barbara in Sarasota for the past ten months, Fr. John is returning to our parish on Sunday, March 2. We are thankful that during his extra assignment that Fr. John kept up with Bible study, Veteran's ministry, Young at Heart and pastoral work in our parish. Now he will be back with us every Sunday and for many of the Lenten services. He will also be available for confession and pastoral care. Because our community has gotten so large, and we are blessed with both Fr. Stavros and Fr. John, if you request a priest, one of them will come, probably the one who can get there the quickest. Remember that the grace of the Holy Spirit works equally through all the priests. Welcome back Fr. John!

<u>Fr. Stavros to be out of town</u>-Fr. Stavros has been invited to be the retreat leader for the National Archon Retreats that are being held the last weekend of March and the first weekend of April. Fr. Stavros will be out of town March 27-30 and again April 3-6. Fr. John will preside over the services in his absence.

PARISH REGISTRY

<u>BAPTISM</u>— Leo Michael Vega, son of Aleny Vega and Anna Maria Kolilias, was baptized on Sunday, February 9. Amalia Kolilias was the godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

<u>BAPTISM</u>— George Alexander Malatin, son of Michael Malatin and Gabrielle George, was baptized on February 23. Michael and Stacy Striegle were the godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

CHRISMATION — Adriana Sanchez Laliotis, was chrismated on Sunday, January 26, 2025.

Marina Choundas was the sponsor. Congratulations!

<u>CHRISMATION</u>— Garey Austen (Simeon) Wood was chrismated on Sunday, February 2 2025. George Ameres was the sponsor. Congratulations!

<u>WEDDING</u>— Franco Augusto Di Gennaro and Aziela Diaz were married on Sunday, February 16. Markos Mangarides was the Koumbaro. Congratulations!

<u>WEDDING</u>— Daniel William Holland and Laura Marie Holland, were married on Saturday, February 21. Rose Marie Bates was the Koumbara. Congratulations!

<u>ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE</u>—Alexander Limberatos was ordained to the Holy Diaconate of the Greek Orthodox Church by His Eminence Metropolitan Sevastianos of Atlanta on Saturday, February 15. Axios!

<u>ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD</u>—Deacon Alexander Limberatos was ordained to the Holy Priesthood of the Greek Orthodox Church by His Eminence Metropolitan Sevastianos of Atlanta on Sunday, February 16. Axios!

<u>FUNERAL</u>— Marios Stephanides passed away on Tuesday, February 4. His funeral was held on Tuesday, February 11. May his memory be eternal!

<u>Funeral</u>— Evangeline Xeroteres passed away on Tuesday, February 4. Her funeral was held on Friday, February 14. May her memory be eternal!

<u>FUNERAL</u>— Pete Kabougeris passed away on Friday, February 13. His funeral was held on Tuesday, February 18. May his memory be eternal!

INSPIRATION

God Is Talking To You My Child...

I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live... **Acts 17:26**

You are fearfully and wonderfully made... **Psalm 139:14**

I knit you together in your mother's womb...**Psalm** 139:13

And brought you forth on the day you were born... **Psalm 71:6**

I have been misrepresented by those who don't know me...St. John 8:41-44

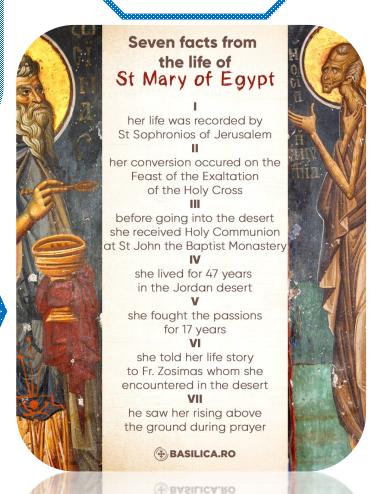
To be continued...

If we lose a generation of young people in the church, it won't be because we didn't entertain them. It will be because we didn't dare them to do something meaningful with the Gospel in light of the world we live in.

HUSBANDS: If you are going to ignore your wife, speak harshly to her, never help her or tell her you love and appreciate her, then don't act surprised when she's not really interested in being intimate with you.

WIVES: If you're going to constantly criticize your husband, treat him like he's one of the children and give him very little appreciation, then don't act surprised when he's not really interested in spending time with you.

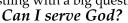
~from treyandlea.com



Fr. Alex's Ordination Speeches

Speech For Ordination To The Deaconate

Your Eminence, I stand here with fear and awe before the awesome calling to serve Christ and His Holy Church. To stand here today was a result of a long process of discernment and wrestling with a big question:





Around the age of 8 years old, I was told to go serve in the holy altar as an acolyte. I say I was told rather than given the blessing. I was told because our beloved priest, Fr. Ted Trifon, expected us when we entered the second grade to begin serving in the altar.

At that age, I did not want to go and serve in the altar. I was content to stay back in the pews while my older brother served in the church. I was more comfortable observing the Divine Liturgy than having anything to do with processions and vestments. Even more, knowing how intentional Fr. Ted was about the beauty and order of the services, I was afraid of messing something up. I was also afraid of stepping into such a holy and important place: the holy altar. But I knew I had to be obedient. I had to serve. I had to learn.

My first day in the altar, I was a nervous wreck. My older brother, Evan, guided me, mentored me, made me feel not so alone in this awesome privilege. I was his shadow, and I owe it to him for having the courage to serve. Becoming comfortable serving in the altar took years. But eventually, not only did it become more natural to serve in the altar, it felt right to be there. It was an honor to be there, and it still is. Fearful as I still was to serve in the altar, I began finding a sense of awe in serving and watching our priest.

I had been serving in the altar for only a few years when I found myself really paying attention to what Fr. Ted was devoting his attention to. What I observed in him was a reverence for the Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ. I observed in Fr. Ted a passion for worship, a love for God. And after the liturgy, he showed just as much love and intention to us...caring for us, mentoring us, and teaching us, his flock and his church. When we altar boys we argue about silly things, Fr. Ted reminded us the most important thing was our Orthodox Christian faith and our service to God. When we were about to do memorials in our church, Fr. Ted taught me the importance of pastoral love for those grieving. And as orderly as he wanted each of us to be serving in the altar, I could see it all came for his love for what he was doing: serving God through the Divine Liturgy.

Fr. Ted's example directed my attention to God. His example directed my attention to the glory of God and to the mercy and love that Jesus Christ has for each one of us through the perpetual sacrifice in the Divine Liturgy. Fr. Ted's example also filled me with awe in pastoral work, seeing a Christ-like love for each one of us.

As I meditated on these things and watched Fr. Ted's priestly work, I found myself asking a question time from time in my youth:

"Can I do what he does? Can I serve God as he does?"

This thought took root in my mind but did not flourish in my youth. It was kept secret and choked out with doubts and with fear. I believe the same fear that made me want to stay in the pews overshadowed this seed from flourishing.

But, the seed, the question, grew unconsciously in many ways over the years to come. I felt a tug at my heart to deepen my relationship with God; I looked to our church's fathers and teachings on prayer, specifically on the Jesus prayer. I took special interest in the topics of religion, philosophy, and apologetics just before seminary. Above all, I felt pulled towards being a confidant to others. I think on many conversations wherein a friend, a coworker, even a stranger confided in me on faith or on their personal struggles in life. These conversations would carry on for hours as they poured out their heart and soul about their doubts, pains, and experiences. Exhausting as these lengthy conversations could be, I found deep meaning in them and honor to be trusted with such hard talks.

All these experience returned me to that thought as a child, that thought I kept quiet while observing Fr. Ted serve our community: "Can I serve God as he does?"

I went to Fr. Ted with this question who blessed me to go to seminary. I was ecstatic. Going to Holy Cross was a pivotal and life changing decision in my life. It was also as terrifying as it was awesome. For having the courage to go, I had my mom and dad to thank.

Both of them trusted me in this bold move, and supported me throughout my journey and continue to support me in all ways. Leaving home and beginning such a fretful yet awesome chapter of my life was a leap of faith, for which I'm grateful for both of them putting wind beneath me in this leap. And it was through their foundation that they had instilled in me that helped me through my studies at seminary.

At Holy Cross, I found the seed of vocation was nurtured, the passion to serve kindled. There at seminary, I met so many brilliant teachers. Among them, I met my confessor and spiritual father, Fr. Luke Veronis, who continued what Fr. Ted had instilled in me: a love for the divine services and passion for pastoral ministry. It was also through Fr. Luke I developed a passion for outreach and ministry across all backgrounds and a deeper understanding of pastoral care.

It was also at our sacred school I also met so many of my spiritual brothers, who by their example and counsel edified my spiritual maturation and continue to do so today. I am honored and humbled by their presence today.

Finally, at seminary, I met my wife, Aleksandra, who nurtures this seed of vocation every day in our marriage. She was and is the answer to years of prayer, asking God for someone who would better me and companion with me in both ministry and in life. I am ever thankful to

God for answering those prayers, and for St. Luke's intercession, to provide me with a tender-hearted, faithful, caring, and ever-loving wife who sharpens me and inspires me to be a better man and husband each day. I am privileged and blessed to have her as my wife and to parent three priceless and incredible children with her: Anastasia, Lukas, and Constantine. These three beautiful souls and their beautiful mother are my daily teachers, coaches, and encouragement, and continually teach me about humility and service.

Aleksandra has especially nurtured the question from my youth: "Can I serve God?" She has listened to me ask that question and the thousands of questions, concerns, and doubts that have come after it. She has been at my side to celebrate with me the peaks of ministry and lament with me the hardships of ministry. She has inspired me faithfully as I wrestle with this question: "Can I serve God?"

Each community I served in and worshiped in built layers of wisdom and edification upon that question. My home parish of Sts. Constantine and Helen laid a foundation for me of what ministry is and supported me throughout my childhood and journey in seminary. After seminary, my first work assignment, St. George, sharpened my knowledge of youth ministry and parish work, and I was supported in this learning by Fr. Gregory who counseled and encouraged me. And finally, I was honored by Fr. Stavros and Fr. Kyriakos to be offered the opportunity to serve here as a Pastoral Assistant years ago. Thanks to Fr. Stavros, Fr. Kyriakos, Fr. John, and Fr. Stratton—and thanks this warm and loving community of St. John – I was able to deepen my knowledge of ministry and become even more connected in worship. My family is richly blessed to have been nourished by this spiritual family of St. John who has loved us, supported us, prayed for us, even watched our kids for us. I am especially grateful for Fr. Stavros' and Fr. John's mentoring, guidance, and counsel, both clergymen whom had played an incredible part in leading me here today. And of course, Your Eminence, I thank you for your encouragement, your prayers, and your blessing that I may stand here today before you, before this church, and before Christ's holy altar for the awesome and dreadful sacrament of ordination. Thank you, Your Eminence, for this blessing.

I am ever grateful for each individual God has put in my life and my family's life, For Each Individual who has contributed in prayer, in experience, in love to who I am today and fanned the flame of the burning question that I've kept since 8 years old: Can I serve God?

As a hospital chaplain, I am privileged with the opportunity to respond to Christ in Matthew 25, "when I was sick, you visited me." From my first day of visiting with a stranger in a hospital bed, and standing with an anxious family member, I felt a lifelong vocation placed on my heart. Sad, frustrating, and painful as the work can be, I rise to it eagerly with a sense of wonder for what divine appointments God will place before me. For my growth in this pastoral work, I owe my chaplain peers much gratitude.

Your Eminence, you know I love chaplaincy. It is a holy honor to be trusted with the story of a child of God, and minister to them in their grief and in their pain. My role and vocation as a chaplain has begun to answer that question from my youth.

As I serve in my hospital as a chaplain, I have found myself wondering these years what other ways God may be inviting me to wrestle with that question with my youth: "Can I serve God?" And more than that, "How can I be worthy of such a rich blessing?"

The uncomfortable answer to that question, I believe, comes from the prayer at the Cherubic Hymn: No one who is bound with the desires and pleasures of the flesh is worthy to approach or draw nigh or to serve You, O King of Glory: for to serve You is a great and terrible thing even to the Heavenly Powers. Your Eminence, my heart is inclined to serve. My heart bends low when I see suffering of others. My heart soars for the beauty of the services of the church. But the prayer I have mentioned also brings fear into my heart because of the uncomfortable question it raises: "Who is worthy of this awesome privilege to serve God? Am I really worthy to serve God before His Holy Altar?"

No amount of accomplishments or repentance feels sufficient to answer the question of if I am worthy. Knowing that it is a great and terrible thing for the holy angels to serve God only humbles me further before the sacrament of ordination. So how can I be worthy of it? Who can be worthy of it?

My thoughts return again to Fr. Ted's example, to the seriousness and focus he showed when praying and bowing low before the altar: I come before You with my head bowed, and I implore You: Turn not Your face away from me, nor reject me from among Your children, but make me, Your sinful and unworthy servant, worthy to offer these gifts to You. I believe, Your Eminence, that only through humility may I ask the question and that only God—out of His infinite mercy and grace—might allow me to be made worthy of ordination and serve Him and His Church.

So I stand here, Your Eminence, humbled by the angels, saints, and clergy in service to Christ and His Church. I come with bowed head and heartfelt and earnest request to be of service to Christ's ecclesiastical hospital, to His Holy Church, and to be made worthy of this sacred service and made worthy for ordination.

Speech For Ordination To The Priesthood

Your Eminence,

As I stand here, requesting the blessing and privilege of ordination to the priesthood, I think on a parable that has been on my mind: It is the parable of the Talents.



In Matthew's Gospel, we hear of a nobleman who calls upon three servants. He gives five talents to the first, two to the second, and one talent to the third. The master could just as easily invested these treasures,

managed them on His own. Instead, He trusts His servants with his treasure.

I stand here in this church, surrounded by many treasures. I stand here thankful for the people and opportunities in my life which are as precious as talents. The parable of the talents reminds me that it is God alone who bestows such treasures.

God has been very generous to me through the people and experiences in my life.

From my parents who gave me a foundation to begin this learning, to my brother who instilled courage and was the first peer I looked up to. From all my beloved family near and far, to my friends in each stage of my schooling. From the clergy who have poured into me through their mentorship, and the parishioners who have taught me as I served them. From my peer chaplains who I work alongside, and the patients who impart their wisdom to me as I offer pastoral care to them. And of course my daily teachers at home: my wife Aleksandra and my children-Anastasia, Lukas, and Constantine—who daily teach me and inspire me to be a better man, a better father, a better husband, and a better servant of the Lord. God has been so generous to me with so many rich, loving, and patient teachers. Through these teachers and individuals who have embodied and shown me Christ-like love, I am richly blessed.

To even stand here today is through the treasured experience of going through seminary, and through the individuals and experiences I mentioned yesterday that inspired me to go to our sacred school and those who inspired me after seminary. Again, I say, I am richly blessed. Each person and each experience has chiseled me into who I am today, prepared me to stand here today.

But treasure is not meant to be held onto only for our own enjoyment. As we know in the parable of the talents, the treasure is meant to be multiplied. The Master does not give these as a gift for His stewards to be idle with. Through the treasure, through the talents, He expects a return.

Your Eminence, God has richly blessed me with incredible teachers—many of whom are standing here today, and many also who are here in spirit. And He has blessed me with several teaching moments. I am humbled by the learning and for the patience and love of these teachers. And, I also cannot help but feel a little dread as I hold onto this treasure.

For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required (Luke 12:48)

I stand humbled by the love and generosity I have been given. I stand grateful for all these treasures I have been given.

A wise priest had once told me his interpretation of the parable of the talents through his own eyes, "What would it be like to go before the dread judgment seat of Christ and say, "Here, Lord, are two talents more." Only for the Lord to respond, "But Alex, I gave you five."

I believe, Your Eminence, each of us are all called to multiply what God has given to us, to give back to God for that which He entrusts us. I believe I have begun doing that in my Christian walk and in my work as a chaplain. And, my heart is inclined to give more still, to make sure each talent, each treasure that God has given me is multiplied and given back to Him and His glory.

There is one last treasure that I dare not forget to mention: and that is the redemptive grace and salvation that comes through Our Lord Jesus Christ, the blameless sacrifice He offers and allows us to celebrate every Divine Liturgy. God has been gracious to me a prodigal, been ever gracious to me with these treasures despite my short comings. He is a patient Father, a generous Savior, my Chief Comforter who has given peace in many storms.

The treasures He has bestowed are endless, and I like to think that when He gives those talents, those treasures, that He does so happily. Grateful I am to receive these treasures, I long to multiply goodness, not only in my Christian walk and in the hospital, but in His Holy Church as a priest.

Your Eminence, I stand here with the hope to multiply the gifts and treasures God has given. I hope, through the priesthood, to multiply the love and empathy so generously poured out on me, to multiply the gifts and talents God has given me. I hope to multiply His grace to me through being a humble participant and priest administering the Lord's sacraments on the Orthodox faithful. This is no small task, a vocation NOT to take lightly. It is a task that with its excitement comes also sobering fear. But only through your prayers, Your Eminence, through the prayers of those gathered, the prayers of those who could not be here, and through the prayers of the holy saints...I hope to endeavor such a mysterious and awesome thing.

And above all, by the grace and mercy of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ may I hope to multiply and give back to Him in the priesthood all that He so generously has poured out on me.



The Lenten Covenant

Check as many as apply under each topic. You should (but need not) answer every topic. This is a matter of your own conscience and areas where you want to grow spiritually.	4. Concerning reading the Bible, I'll commit to: Reading one chapter a day from some book Reading the four Gospels Reading the Psalms		
1. Concerning my prayer life, each day I will commit to: One five-minute period of un-interrupted prayer One five-minute period every morning of un-interrupted prayer One five-minute period every evening of un-interrupted prayer One five-minute period each morning AND evening of un-interrupted prayer Other: Write in here	Other: Write in here		
Concerning Worship	6. Concerning Holy Communion, I will try to be prepared to receive Every Sunday Every Sunday and at Wednesday Pre-Sanctified At least every other Sunday		
the Souls I'll commit to attending the Forgiveness Vespers March 2 I'll commit to preparing and receiving Holy Communion at least once a week during Lent.	7. Concerning bad habits, here are one or two or a few bad habits I'll watch and change this Lent: Gossip Self-aggrandizement Impatience Greed		
Concerning Holy Week, I'll commit to: Every Service Every Evening Service One service each Day Specifically Holy Thursday—the Passion of Christ Other: Write in here	Lust Disobedience Wasting time Self-pitying Not giving good effort at work/school/marriage /children		
3. Concerning Fasting, I'll commit to: Level One: Fast from meat on Wednesday and Fridays and during Holy Week Level Two: Fast from meat and fish on Wednesdays and Friday and during Holy Week	Other: Write in here		
Level Three: Fast from meat the entirety of Lent and Holy Week Level Four: Fast from meat and fish the entirety of Lent and Holy Week Level Five: Level Four and eliminate dairy products during Holy Week.	Wednesdays of Great Lent. 9. One spiritual goal I want to commit to once Pascha has passed is:		
Level Six: Level Four and eliminate dairy products on Wednesdays and Fridays and during Holy Week Level Seven: Level Four plus eliminate dairy products during all of Lent and Holy Week Level Eight: Level Seven plus eliminate oil and wine during Holy Week Level Nine: The Strict Fast-no meat, fish, dairy products, wine or oil during the entirety of Lent I can't fast from food for health reasons. I will give up the following:	Lenten Covenant Prayer. Lord help me to be successful in this task I am about to undertake. May it be for the growth of my soul and the improvement of my spiritual life. Help me to keep all the commitments I have made. Amen.		
**Note-alcohol should be consumed at a very minimum during Lent, and abstained from totally if possible. Also, activities should be curtailed, socializing a little more sedate, no dancing and loud music. During Holy Week, all unnecessary activities aside from work and children should be curtailed, so that we can focus on the Holy Days of the Passion of Christ.			



A SIX-WEEK LENTEN STUDY JOIN US WEDNESDAY EVENINGS DURING GREAT LENT

MARCH 5 "LET US"

"O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker."

Psalm 95:6

DINNER SPONSORED BY THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

MARCH 12 "ARISE"

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you."

Isaiah 60:1

DINNER SPONSORED BY THE CHOIR

MARCH 19 "BUILD"

"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain."

Psalm 127:1

DINNER SPONSORED BY THE BIBLE STUDIES, NURSING MINISTRY AND THE WELCOME MINISTRY

MARCH 26 "STRENGTHEN"

"But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from evil."

2 Thessalonians 3:3

DINNER SPONSORED BY THE PHILOPTOCHOS

APRIL 2 "THEIR HANDS"

"All these rely upon their hands, and each is skillful in his own work."

Sirach 38:3

DINNER SPONSORED BYAHEPA/DAUGHTERS

APRIL 9 "GOOD WORK"

"Comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word."

2 Thessalonians 2:17

DINNER SPONSORED BY THE YOUNG ADULTS AND THE YOUNG AT HEART

EACH WEDNESDAY EVENING SCHEDULE:

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



GREAT LENT 2025 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Tampa, FL

JOY TWEENS

Welcome to the **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..

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 2025

Sunday, March 23: JOY Tweens - Meeting with Father Stavros(12:15pm)

Friday, April 18: HOPE/JOY - Good Friday Retreat

Friday, May 2: JOY Tweens - Movie Night (6:00pm)

Sunday, May 18: All Youth - End of Year Party

Our JOY Tweens Ministry is having an amazing year so far! On January 26, we held our second annual Parent-Tween Retreat where our JOY Tweens and their parents enjoyed small group discussions on topics of prayer, positive thinking and the impacts of smartphones and social media on our youth. Thank you to all those who joined us and a special thanks to Father Stavros, Mary Ann Konstas and Maria Xenick for leading our discussions! On February 23, our tweens had fun together defying gravity at Altitude Trampoline Park Tampa.

We're looking forward to more exciting activities this year!
Stay tuned for more details by email and/or text messages, as well as
our weekly church bulletins and Sunday school flyers.

Sign-Up for Text Updates!
To get updates and other messages for JOY Tweens,
text @783gc6 to 81010
on your mobile phone.

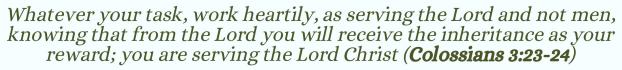




The Philoptohos Society of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is sponsoring a Women's Retreat







Balancing Family, Work and Faith

Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis - Retreat Leader

Saturday, March 1- The Holy Righteous Martyr Eudocia the Samaritan 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

All women are welcome, Orthodox or not

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

Donations Accepted

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

2418 W. Swann Ave. Tampa, FL 33609

Kindly RSVP to Pres. Denise Stefero at denises54@hotmail.com



I was hungry and you fed Me. Matthew 25:35

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH 2418 SWANN AVE TAMPA, FL

SATURDAY MARCH 15 9:00 AM - 9:00 PM

JOIN US FOR SPIRTUAL
RENEWAL WITH YOUR FRIENDS
ORTHROS, BREAKOUT
SESSIONS, MEALS, AND THE
MELI TRUCK!

REGISTRATION \$50

COVERS DONATION TO RISE
AGAINST HUNGER AND EXPENSES

WE ARE PARTNERING
WITH "RISE AGAINST
HUNGER" TO MAKE
MEALS FOR FAMILIES
IN NEED



PLEASE REGISTER BY
MARCH 10
VIA MEMBER PLANET
USE THE QR CODE OR
THE LINK IN EMAIL



Please Join Us For Our 3rd Annual YOUNG ADULT LENTEN RETREAT

Saturday, March 22 10:00a.m.-4:00p.m.

Theme: Repentance and Renewal: Controlling our Thoughts and Actions as We Work to Keep Christ at the Center.

Presenter: Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis, Priest of St. John Greek Orthodox Church in Tampa, FL



\$20.00(lunch included)

Retreat to be held at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, 2418 Swann Avenue, Tampa FL

Please RSVP to office@stjohntpa.org by Monday, March 17



ANNOUNCING THE AHEPA FAMILY 2025 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The *AHEPA Scholarship* is intended to promote, encourage, and advance education at the high school, college, university and graduate school level. Scholarships in the amount of \$500 or higher each will be awarded, based on the funds available in the AHEPA/DOP Scholarship funds in the current year.

2. ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants must demonstrate that:

- They are currently seniors in high school and have been accepted at an accredited college or university as degree seeking students for an associate or bachelor's degree. Those not accepted at an institution may be eligible to receive an award by providing evidence of acceptance prior to the award being granted.
- 2. They are currently enrolled in an accredited college or university seeking an associates, bachelors, masters or doctoral degree.
- 3. They are in good academic standing.
- 4. They have no criminal record.
- 5. The applicant OR his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) are stewards in good standing at St. John's Greek Orthodox Church (Tampa, Florida) and are current members in good standing of the AHEPA/DOP Tampa chapters.
- 6. The applicant must also be a current paid up member of the Maids of Athena or Sons of Pericles

3. FILING

Applications are available via email from the AHEPA scholarship committee at AHEPA Vice President, Jerry Galovic, jgalovic.ahepa@gmail.com, DOP President, Ourania Stephanides stephanides.ourania@gmail.com, the Scholarship Chairpersons, Gus Paras and Edie Kavouklis at edie.kavouklis@gmail.com.

All applications must be filed as directed in the application and postmarked no later than April 30th, 2025. Please obtain a copy of the Application for more information.

Join today - Become a member of AHEPA or the Daughters of Penelope

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS!

March Calendar!



3/1 - Women's Retreat-10AM-4PM

3/13 - Board Meeting/Zoom-7PM

3/16 - Bags of Love for the Homeless. Collaboration with Sunday School. (After Liturgy)

3/26 - Wednesday, Lenten Dinner (After Liturgy)



Thank you

Thank you to all of our ladies who contributed the delicious soup and to everyone who participated and donated to SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY!
We raised \$500 for Hope Children's Home. Thank you for the opportunity to partner with Joy and Hope.

Thank You to those who donated supplies for the Hillsborough County Education Foundation! We appreciate your generosity.



It's time to join Philoptochos! Click Here!
We need you to be part of the
Army of Agape that is not only the right hand of the church,
but the friend and champion of the poor.
See Presvytera Denise for additional info.

SCHOOL OF GREEK LANGUAGE & CULTURE

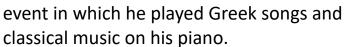
VISIT TO SYKES CHAPEL AT UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA

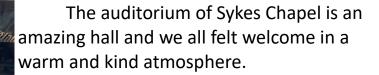


On Saturday, February 8th the teachers, students, and parents had an amazing musical experience!

The Music Professor of University of Tampa Mr. Grigorios Zambaras invited our school to

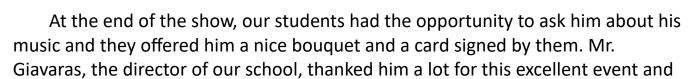
an amazing





Mr. Zambaras is an excellent musician with an international career and he has performed classical music in several concerts in nine countries all over the world. He has

released seven albums with his performance on piano.



he offered him a book with his lyrics and two CDs with his songs.

The new Consul of Greece in Tampa, Mr. Konstantinos Danassis honored us with his presence and kindly responded to our invitation.





SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

We are thankful to be updating you with the activities of our Sunday School for February. Our topics for January were **THE**

PRESENTATION OF CHRIST, THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE, THE PRODIGAL SON, and THE LAST JUDGEMENT.

CONGRATULATIONS TO FR. ALEXANDER LIMBERATOS, who was ordained on **Sunday February 16th**. It was an honor for our students to witness this special sacrament. **Fr. Alexander, Axios!!!**

One of the best ways to prepare for Pascha is to participate in the Sacrament of Confession. Each Sunday School class had, or will have an opportunity to participate in this important Sacrament. On January 19th our 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Graders participated in the Sacrament of Confession. On February 9th our 4th, 5th and 6th Graders had the same opportunity. Our 7th - 12th graders will go to Confession during their upcoming GOYAN Lenten Retreat. We would like to thank Father Stavros for hearing the confessions of these children. It is a wonderful thing to see our children go to Confession year after year.

Congratulations to Maddie Anton (Kindergarten) and Ana Limberatos (Pre-K4) for memorizing The Lord's Prayer. They have been inducted into our Sunday School Hall of Faith.

MARCH CALENDAR:

March 2nd: TOPIC: Forgiveness Sunday - Pre-Lent Retreat during class. YOUTH SUNDAY

March 5th (Wednesday): Sunday School sponsored Pre-Sanctified

Dinner

March 9th: TOPIC: Sunday of Orthodoxy

March 16th: TOPIC: St. Being a Good Friend (The Paralytic)

March 23rd: TOPIC: Holy Cross

(All 9th - 12th boys should stay in church.)

March 30th: TOPIC: St. John of the Ladder - Faith

SUNDAY SCHOOL PHOTOS



This is a photo of our first through third graders receiving the prayer of absolution after their confessions were heard last Sunday.



This is a photo of our 7th and 8th graders. They illustrated some of the Orthodox Holy Sacraments.





Our 6th graders are playing a game about St. Basil the Great. Their teacher, Mia Lenardos, made this sweet game.











ANTHONY GARCIA with his VASILOPITA COIN!



Our Pre-K4 students are so proud of sharing their class project.

Confession with Sunday School students on Sunday, February 9.

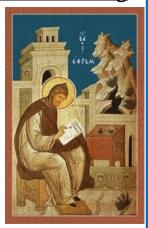
YOUNG AT HEART

Young At Heart March Gathering

Saturday, March 29th 1pm-3pm

Lenten Potluck Luncheon

Presentation: The Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian



Contact Presvytera Denise no later than March 23rd with number attending and dish you will bring to share at the potluck.

BOOKSTORE

Throughout Great Lent our bookstore is offering a wide selection of books focused on the many ways we can grow spiritually during the Lenten period. Daily meditations, prayer books, Lives of the Saints, guides to preparation for



Confession, Holy Week service books, and Lenten cookbooks are just some of those featured. Our bookstore is open Sundays following Divine Liturgy. Stop in and see the many items available.

STEWARDSHIP

"You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God" 2 Corinthians 11

We are off to a good start in 2025. As of January 31, 208 families have returned their Stewardship forms, or have contributed without turning in a form. That is \$393,471 committed in the first month of our Stewardship drive. Thanks to all who have responded so quickly. Please let us hear from you today, if you haven't submitted your pledge form.

It is always best to include a Stewardship form along with your gift to our church. It is required every year per our current bylaws to be considered "a member in good standing". They are available in the church office, church narthex, or online.

Please take the time to reflect on what you and your families can offer in Time, Talent and Treasure. All of us together make a huge impact on our church and community.

If you are new to our church, or have any questions regarding the Stewardship Program here at St. John's, please call, text or email George Mitseas at 813-748-1220, gmitseas@mail.com.

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.

College Student Contact Information

Please scan the QR code to go directly to a google form!



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.

TWELVE DISCIPLES PROJECT

I had rather speak five words with my understanding... than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. (I 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 it 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: 3/15

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

<u>To Volunteer:</u> <u>Click Here</u>, (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

<u>Time:</u> 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

<u>Questions on Arrival</u>: 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

DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE

Daughters of Penelope Alcmaeon #167 Tampa

The Daughters of Penelope have been sad for the passing of Marios Stephanides, the beloved husband of our president Ourania Stephanides.

Marios fell asleep in the Lord on February 4.

Our condolences go out to the entire Stephanides family. May his memory be eternal!

Last month the Daughters teamed with Philoptochos and collected school items to "ERASE THE NEED" in Hillsborough County. We are grateful to all who contributed needed school items. All donated items are delivered to the Hillsborough Education Foundation which distributes them to the students. School items can be donated directly to the Hillsborough Education Foundation year-round. For details, please check https://educationfoundation.com.

Upcoming events:

In addition to the scheduled meetings, the Daughters are marching in the **Greek Independence Day Parade in Tarpon** on Sunday **March 23** and going out
afterwards to share a festive meal together.



To join the Daughters please contact Maria Zabetakis, Vice President and Membership Chair at maria1106@live.com or Ourania Stephanides, President at stephanides.ourania@gmail.com.

Pease visit the national site for information regarding the Daughters of Penelope organization www.DaughtersofPenelope.org.

NURSING MINISTRY

MARCH IS COLON CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Colon Cancer Screening: A Lifesaving Step Towards Prevention

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, a time to focus on raising awareness about one of the most preventable and treatable cancers when caught early—colon cancer. Colon cancer, or colorectal cancer (CRC), develops in the large intestine (colon) or rectum, often starting from precancerous growths called polyps. While colon cancer affects both men and women, it is most commonly diagnosed in people aged 50 and older. However, due to rising rates in younger populations, screening recommendations have expanded.

The Importance of Screening

Colon cancer screening is a crucial tool in the fight against the disease. Regular screening can detect abnormal growths before they become cancerous and can catch cancer in its early stages when it is most treatable. Early detection has been shown to reduce mortality rates significantly.

In fact, studies suggest that colon cancer rates are decreasing in countries where screening programs are in place. By identifying and removing precancerous polyps during screening, healthcare providers can help prevent the development of cancer altogether.

Who Should Be Screened?

The general recommendation is that individuals at average risk of colon cancer begin screening at age 45. People who are at increased risk—due to family history, genetic factors, inflammatory bowel disease, or certain lifestyle factors—may need to start screening earlier or undergo more frequent screenings.

High-risk individuals include:

- **People with a family history** of colon cancer or polyps, particularly if a first-degree relative (parent, sibling, or child) was diagnosed before age 50.
- Those with genetic conditions, such as Lynch syndrome or familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP), which increase the likelihood of developing colon cancer.
- Individuals with inflammatory bowel disease, like Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, which can increase the risk of colon cancer.

For most people, screening should continue until age 75, but the need for screening beyond this age should be evaluated based on health and individual risk factors.

Screening Methods

Several methods are available for colon cancer screening, and individuals should discuss the best option with their healthcare provider. Some of the most common screening tests include:

Colonoscopy

A colonoscopy is considered the gold standard for colon cancer screening. During the procedure, a long, flexible tube with a camera is inserted into the rectum to examine the colon. If polyps are found, they can often be removed during the procedure. Colonoscopies are typically recommended every 10 years for people at average risk.

Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)

This non-invasive test checks for blood in the stool, which can be a sign of colon cancer or polyps. It is typically done annually and is a good option for those who are not ready for a colonoscopy.

Stool DNA Test

This test looks for specific genetic markers in stool that are linked to colon cancer. It is typically done every three years and is another non-invasive option, although it requires a follow-up colonoscopy if results are positive.

Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

This is similar to a colonoscopy but only examines the lower part of the colon. It is generally done every 5 years and may be an option for some people, especially if they are at average risk.

• CT Colonography (Virtual Colonoscopy)

This is a non-invasive imaging test that uses CT scans to examine the colon and rectum for signs of cancer. It is typically done every 5 years, and like other tests, if abnormalities are found, a follow-up colonoscopy is needed.

Risk Factors and Prevention

While some risk factors, such as age and family history, cannot be changed, others are related to lifestyle choices. Modifying these factors can lower the risk of developing colon cancer:

- **Diet**: A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and low in red and processed meats, can reduce the risk. Fiber-rich foods may also help in preventing colon cancer.
- **Physical Activity**: Regular exercise has been shown to lower the risk of colon cancer. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate activity most days of the week.
- **Weight Management**: Maintaining a healthy weight is important, as obesity is a known risk factor for colon cancer.
- Avoid Smoking and Limit Alcohol: Smoking and heavy alcohol consumption can increase the risk of developing colon cancer.
- Manage Underlying Health Conditions: Managing conditions such as diabetes and inflammatory bowel disease may help in reducing cancer risk.

Take Action Today: Talk to Your Doctor

If you are 45 or older (or have other risk factors), speak to your healthcare provider about when and how to begin colon cancer screening. It's a proactive step that can save lives. And for those already undergoing screenings, it's important to stay up to date on your recommended screenings based on your age and risk factors.

Colorectal cancer is largely preventable, and through early detection and lifestyle changes, we can make great strides in reducing the impact of this disease. As we observe Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month this March, remember that screening can not only save your life but the lives of those you care about.

Conclusion

Colon cancer screening is one of the most effective ways to detect and prevent colorectal cancer. It is a simple, routine part of healthcare that has life-saving potential. Early detection through screening can catch cancer before it spreads, making treatment more successful. With March being **Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month**, it's the perfect time to start a conversation about the importance of screening, reducing risk, and encouraging loved ones to take action.

Remember, the best protection against colon cancer is prevention, and screening is a powerful tool in the fight against this disease.



FOOD PANTRY

Thank YOU for YOUR ongoing support of the St. John Food Pantry. The year is off to a great start with donations provided to Tampa Hope & Metropolitan Ministries. Everything was well received and quickly distributed!

Jesus said, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.' Matthew 14:16

This verse is part of the story of the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus directs His disciples to meet the physical needs of the crowd, showing us the importance of taking action, when people are hungry and in need. It's a great reminder of the call to serve others through acts of compassion.

In our St. John Food Pantry, 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.

Your support makes all the difference. 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 –

If you have ideas to share, please don't hesitate to reach out!



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

- 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)
- Rice
- Soup—Cans or Ready to Go (just add water)
- Spaghetti Sauce (no glass)
- Dry goods
- Paper Towels / Toilet Paper

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 books that are

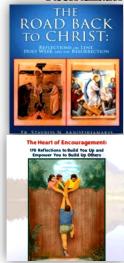
AVAILABLE BOTH IN THE BOOKSTORE AND ONLINE.



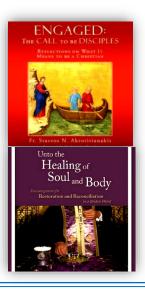
Let All Creation Rejoice: Reflections on Advent, the Nativity and Epiphany The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection Let us Be Attentive: Reflections on the Sunday and Feastday Scripture Readings of the Orthodox Church Engaged: The Call To Be Disciples, Reflections 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









EDISTHE ED

of St. John Chrysostom

R. STAVROS N. AKROTIRIANAKIS

PARISH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church together with BayCare Behavioral Health, 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.

Help is available for life issues including:

1)Stress

2)Anxiety

3)Depression

4)Family discord

5)Marital problems

6)Substance abuse issues

7)Behavioral issues



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



Our mission partners at Love In the Name of Christ have chosen the word "courageous" for 2025. St. John's partners with Love INC to see lives transformed through Christ's love and the collective strength of the parish volunteers that serve with them. Visit LoveINCTampa.org/Volunteer to learn how you may courageously serve in 2025.

A Word for the Year: Courageous Romans 8:31

"What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Dear Friends,

I've completed my first full year as Love INC's Executive Director—from start to finish. From January to December 2024, I was responsible for all milestones, set-backs and successes. The time was marked with challenges, new beginnings and a great hope for the future. As we step boldly into 2025, I am reminded of the timeless words of Romans 8:31, confident that "If God is for us, who can be against us?" This verse resonates deeply as I embrace my word for the year: **Courageous**. It serves as a powerful reminder that with God's unwavering support, we are empowered to face every challenge and opportunity with boldness and faith.

In 2024, we re-launched REACH, our Transformational Ministry course, upgraded our Help Center software, added four new church partners to our network and added new volunteers and staff to our dynamic team. Over 30 volunteers served over 3200 hours to equip and empower 312 families and over 400 children utilizing our principles of Redemptive Compassion® and connecting Guests to our Church Partners and Gap Ministries.

In 2025, our mission remains clear: encourage individuals and families to break their cycles of need and to transform lives through Christ's love. We will continue to integrate our core principles to not only address immediate material needs but also foster long-term transformation through mentorship, spiritual guidance, and holistic support. Together, we will:

- Expand programs like REACH to provide financial coaching and personal management skills.
- Deepen partnerships with local churches and community organizations to maximize our impact.
- Strengthen our network of volunteers and allies to walk alongside our Guests with compassion and care.

We know the road ahead will not be without its trials, but we are confident that, as Paul assures us in Romans, nothing can stand against us when we walk in faith and unity. Let's lean into the courage that comes from knowing we serve a God who is always for us.

Thank you for your continued prayers, generosity, and service. Together, we are building a community where hope and transformation flourishes. Here's to a courageous year ahead, filled with God's blessings and remarkable impact.

Chalette Davis
Executive Director
Love INC of Metro Tamp

PHOTO GALLERY

ALEX DEACON ORDINATION- SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15 2025

























Alex's Ordination To The Priesthood-Sunday, February 16 2025











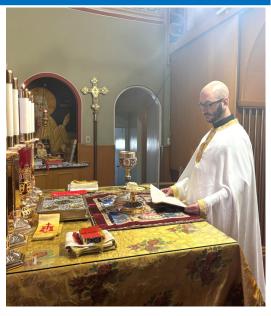




FR. ALEX'S FIRST LITURGY—MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17 2025







For 10 years now. 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 topic of "Arise & Build: Strengthening our hands for good work" and on Saturday-Sunday, Father is writing on the Scripture passages of each Sunday. There are 4,677 people on the Prayer Team.

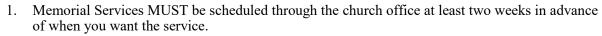
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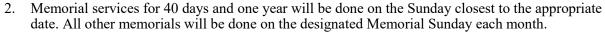
Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 4,677 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





- 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, the family will be responsible for scooping the Kolyva 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.

In our effort to support efforts for improved mental health, our parish is proud to support the 988 suicide hotline. Spread the word and you might help save a life!



Have questions?

Just need to talk? Worried? Sad? Happy?



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.



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.

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



Youth Protection Program





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 par-ish 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:

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	me a Friend of St. John				
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2418 W. Swann Ave Tampa, FL 33609.

▲ February 2025			March 2025			April 2025 ▼
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
All month— philoptochos toiletries	**Fast Day					1** 2nd Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Philoptochos Retreat 10-4 Adult Greek School Children's Greek School
2 **Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Sunday School Pre-Lent Retreat Forgiveness Vespers 6:00	3 ** Clean Monday Canon of St. Andrew 10:00 a.m. Holy Unction 6:00 p.m.	4** Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	5** 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner/ Discussion- (Sunday school)	6 ** Choir 7:15 p.m.	7** 9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations 6:30 p.m.	8** 3ª Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Adult Greek School Children's Greek School
9 **Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. GOYA Senior Luncheon 12:15pm	10 **Young Adult Discussion 7:00 p.m.	11** Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	12** 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner/ Discussion- choir	13 **Philoptochos Board zoom Choir 7:15 p.m.	14 ** 9th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations 6:30 p.m.	15 ** GOYA Lenten retreat 9:00 a.m9:00 p.m. Community Outreach Adult Greek School Children's Greek School
16 **Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m Oratorical Festival	17**	18** Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	19** 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner/ Discussion (Bible Studies/Nursing Ministry/ Welcome Ministry)	20** Choir 7:15 p.m.	21** 9th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations 6:30 p.m.	22 **Young Adult Retreat 10:00 a.m4:00 p.m. Adult Greek School Children's Greek School
23** Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Tarpon Parade Tweens Session with Fr. Stavros Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	24 ** Women's Bible Study 10:00am	25** Annunciation Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	26** 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner/ Discussion (Philoptochos)	27** Choir 7:15 p.m. Fr. Stavros out of town 3/27—3/30	28** 9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations 6:30 p.m.	29** Adult Greek School Children's Greek School Young at Heart 1-3
30** Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Greek Independence Day Program	31**					

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH 2418 W. SWANN AVENUE

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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