



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

— THE MESSENGER —

APRIL 2025



GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA — APRIL 20

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: Orthros 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

(During GREAT LENT SUNDAY SERVICES begin at 9:45 AM)

Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-876-8830 (Office) frstav@gmail.com	Bookstore Presbytera Denise Stefero 678-464-4833	Joy Tweens Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963
Associate Priest Rev. Fr. John Stefero 813-876-8830 (Office) jwstefero50@hotmail.com	Bible Study-Tuesday Night Fr. John Stefero 678-637-4425	Junior Olympics Dwight Forde 561-310-5034
Retired Priest in Residence Rev. Fr. Stratton Dorozenski 813-876-8830 (Office)	Buildings & Grounds Tony Magos 813-957-3206	Men's Fellowship Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038
Ministry Coordinator/Chanter Maria Xenick Mariapxenick@stjohntpa.org 813-765-3587 (Cell)	Choir Tara Swartzbaugh, Director Ruth Losovitz, Organist Maria Xenick, Chanter 813-313-0439 727-688-2782 813-765-3587	Parish Nursing Ministry Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026
Parish Council Alexis Scarfogliero, President George Ameres, Vice President Marilyn Sandborn, Secretary George Chagaris, Treasurer Peggy George Peter George Tony Magos Suzanne Pileggi Marcelle Triantafilou John Carter John Zelatis	College Student Program Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038	Oratorical Festival Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374
Arise & Build Expansion Project Mike Xenick, Chair Euripides Panos, Vice Chair	Community Outreach Greg Melton 813-967-2074	Photography Ministry Karina Findlay 813-476-9632
Office Staff Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper debbie@stjohntpa.org 813-443-4899 (fax)	Connect Through Christ - Special Needs Ministry for Children Dante and Lindsey Skourellos 813-765-9534	Philoptochos Katherine Sakkis 813-309-1073
Adopt a College Student Kathy Kaburis 813-240-6513	Dance Groups H XAPA MAΣ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668 Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963 ΠΑΡΕΑ, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136 ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668	Stewardship George Mitseas 813-748-1220
Adult Greek School Magda Myer 813-523-5771	Daughters of Penelope Ourania Stephanides 813-546-4711	Sunday School Vickie Peckham 813-758-3102
AHEPA James Sakaris, President 301-529-8857	Festival Mike Xenick 813-340-8737	Usher Pete Trakas 813-505-2193
Altar Angels Kalliope Chagaris 813-789-4134	Finance Committee Gary Ward 813-846-3898	Veterans/1st Responders Fr. John Stefero 813-876-8830
Altar Boys Fr Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038	Food Pantry Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747	Website / Social Media / APP VOLUNTEER NEEDED!
	Gasparilla Parking Fady Hakim 678-294-7732	Welcoming Ministry Maria Xenick 813-765-3587
	GOYA Michael & Bessie Palios 813-523-0346	Women's Bible Study Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038
	Hope/Joy George & Zackie Ameres 813-245-3813	Young Adult Aris Rogers 813-309-5525
		Young at Heart Dora Morgan 813-613-3738
		Youth Protection Suzanne Pileggi 813-244-5855
		12 Disciples Theo Panopoulos 248-867-3697

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRIEST

~Excellence Wins!~

*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. **Philippians 1:9-11***

How often do you meditate on the words “*excel*”, “*excellent*” and “*excellence*.” To *excel* literally means “to be *excellent*.” Most often, “*excel*” is translated as “to do well.” And oftentimes, in today’s world, “to do well” means “good enough.” It doesn’t even mean “good” and it certainly doesn’t mean “*excellent*.” The idea of *excellence* seems to be getting lost in our world today.

There are two big things on the calendar this month at St. John. Both are community events that present us with individual choices in how we will participate in them. They will reach *excellence* based on how the community does, and we can be *excellent* individually in each of them depending on how we approach each.

HOLY WEEK

The most important event is Holy Week. This is the yearly journey we make to the cross and Resurrection of Christ. One week is set aside each year for us to walk with Christ, from the tomb of Lazarus, where He raised His friend from the dead, to the empty tomb of Christ, where Christ defeated death and in so doing, opened the path to Paradise for each one of us. In between these two events, over the span of eight days, we will walk the streets of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, sit and listen to the teachings of the Lord, be washed with Holy Unction, sit at the table of the Last Supper, be in the Garden of Gethsemane, watch the trial of Jesus before Pilate, witness the Crucifixion, take His Body down from the cross and weep as He is laid in the tomb. The roadmap to heaven is paved with the events of Holy Week. Understand these events, and live a life inspired by these events and we are well on our way. The Holy Week book that we will make our way through contains not only Scripture and theology but practical application of both. Other churches have events called “revivals”, where there are services and speeches every night for a week. For the Orthodox Christian, Holy Week is our annual revival. It is an opportunity to revive our spirits, our knowledge, our joy, and our purpose. It is an *excellent* opportunity to make *excellent* strides in our spiritual growth, so that we can live a life of spiritual *excellence* on our way to the ultimate goal, God’s judgment on our life



having been *excellent* according to His standards of *excellence* and thus be admitted into His heavenly Kingdom.

*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. **Philippians 4:8***



Saint Paul calls our attention once again to *excellence*, when he writes in **Philippians 4:8** that truth, honor, justice, purity, love, and graciousness, that we should be meditating on these things if we are aiming for *excellence*. The problem is that in many situations we aren’t aiming for *excellence*. The world doesn’t encourage *excellence*. Sure, there is pressure on students to “*excel*” in school but are they really *excellent*. Many students *excel* at passing tests and doing project but they aren’t prepared to go out into the world and be *excellent*. Many adults have *excellent* job titles and *excellent* salaries to go along with them but they don’t really *excel* at what they are doing, because while *excellent* salary is a goal, the overall drive to *excellent* is not. Our phones and devices offer an *excellent* way to be connected and get information, but they have really crippled *excellence*. A relationship based on texting isn’t *excellent*. And who needs to write or know anything of *excellence* when AI and ChatGPT just take care of it for us?

Christ demonstrated *excellence*. He had *excellent* communication skills. He knew how to speak to the farmer with images of the farm and to the fisherman with images of the sea. He mesmerized people with not only eloquence but with humility at the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5-7**). He demonstrated *excellent* compassion on the downtrodden, the forgotten, and the scorned. He demonstrated *excellence* in forgiveness when anyone came to Him in repentance. He offered an *excellent* example of humility when He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and when He got on His knees to wash the feet of the disciples. And He gave the most *excellent* example of love when He sacrificed His life on the cross.

Holy Week is a week to put down our phones, stop looking at AI, and get back to basics—Who is Christ? Who are we? Why does the *excellent* example of Christ matter? And if we are called to be like Christ and to spread the message of Christ, how can we do so in a manner that is *excellent*? This issue of The Messenger is filled with information on how to have an *excellent* Holy Week experience. Unlike last year, when Holy Week was a month later than everyone else’s, our Pascha coincides with everyone else this year. Many of us have off school and off work on Good Friday.

It is a good chance for us to fully experience the moving services of Holy Thursday evening and Good Friday afternoon, which in my opinion are the most *excellent* services of Holy Week, and to slow life down so we can have an *excellent* experience of spiritual renewal.

ARISE & BUILD CAPITAL CAMPAIGN **COMMITMENT SUNDAY-APRIL 13**



On February 23, we kicked off the public phase of the *Arise & Build Capital Campaign*. This event was years in the making. We've had a vision to expand our church sanctuary

and update our facilities for several years. The plan got more focused in 2024, as we started working on renderings and making plans for the expansion and renovations to begin this summer, upon the vacating of our tenant on June 30. In October 2024, a quiet phase of the campaign began. Why a quiet phase? Because according to capital campaign experts, if the totality of a campaign is given at the outset, people will think that the path to achieving it is insurmountable. Most experts advise getting 50-60 percent of the campaign in a quiet phase, and then when the campaign begins publicly, people will be inspired to know that over half of the funds have already been committed and they are already on the downside of the goal.

Our quiet phase was so successful that we expanded our goal **from \$6M to \$7.8M** and with that, upgraded what we will be able to do, along with building a 10% contingency in our budget. The goal is \$7.8M. As of March 17, **we have raised \$4.89M**, which is 63% of our goal. Nearly \$800K has been collected.

Materials were mailed to homes **on February 24**. If for some reason you did not receive them, you can stop by the office and pick up a packet, you can call the office and one will be mailed to you, or you can stop by the *Arise & Build* table in the hall on any Sunday.

In the *Arise & Build* packet there is a prayer that I asked for you to offer each day until Pascha. If you have not offered that prayer yet, please begin, and continue until after Pascha.

We are only **THREE MONTHS** away from beginning the renovation of the school building which will become our ministry building.

We are only **THIRTEEN MONTHS** away from beginning expansion of our church. This "problem" that we have (and it's a good problem, but a problem nonetheless) that not everyone can fit into the church is only thirteen months away from not being a problem. Because when we relocate to worship in the Kourmolis Center in May 2026, we will all be

together. And then when we go back into the newly remodeled church, we will all be together there. Thirteen months is something we can all wrap our minds around. It's just around the corner.

And if things go according to plan, we are **LESS THAN THREE YEARS** from this project being completed—Expanded Church, new ministry building, additional parking, updated playground, new prayer garden, new outdoor pavilion, themed landscaping, repaved parking lot, new fences, update sidewalks—an **EXCELLENT** campus that will serve us for the next generation and beyond.

What stands in the way of all of this? An *excellent* response to the *Arise & Build Capital Campaign*. What is an *excellent* response? It is how much you give in total? This is what constitutes *excellent* participation in the *Arise & Build Capital Campaign*:

1. You participate. The number goal of this *Arise & Build Capital Campaign* is 100% engagement from everyone associated with our community. What you give is not as important as **THAT YOU GIVE**.
2. You participate in a timely manner. We have set Palm Sunday as a commitment Sunday, with the goal of having all of our *Arise & Build Capital Campaign* commitments by **April 13**.

Why? So that we know that our project is achievable on the timeframe we've mapped out. We have enough funds to begin with the renovation of the ministry building. We've explained that this is going first, so that we have a small fellowship hall and so that all ministries continue without interruption when we expand the church and the Kourmolis Center becomes our "permanent" worship space during construction. We also need to add additional parking to make up for the parking we will lose in the construction zone. We are ready to begin this summer, and once we begin, we would like to continue without interruption and get the entire project done in one uninterrupted sequence between July 2025 and December 2027, the projected completion date of everything.

3. You offer a gift that represents personal *excellence*. An *excellent* gift is not *excellent* because of how much one gives, but how one gives. And there are some things to consider as you decide how you will give.

Grateful Giving—We need to come to a place of understanding that everything we have that is good comes from God. Thus, everything we give to God is done with gratitude for what He first gave us.



Giving as a Percent—If we understand that everything we have is a gift from God, then we realize that we do not have anything really to give, only to give back. The most *excellent* giving is done as a percentage. The Bible teaches us that a tithe of ten percent is an appropriate gift to offer back to God.

Sacrificial Giving—*Excellent* giving involves sacrifice. We must each ask ourselves, do we want our involvement in *Arise & Build* to be “good enough,” “good” or “*excellent*.” If we want to be in the *excellent* category, then we need to approach our commitment in a sacrificial way. Christ made the ultimate sacrifice on the Cross. We are going to relive that this month as we make the annual Holy Week journey. We will remember in hymns, Scripture readings and prayers the degree of sacrifice that Christ made for us. During this period of spiritual renewal, we meditate on how we will meet His sacrifice with our own sacrifice. This of course refers to how we will come to the feast of the Resurrection—with joy, with renewed commitment, with indifference, etc. And how fitting that our commitment Sunday for *Arise & Build* lies at the beginning of Holy Week. It is an opportunity to meet Christ’s gift with our own gift, to meet His sacrifice with our own. Nothing we do in life that has meaning comes without sacrifice—we make sacrifices for our sports teams in youth, in college, for our careers, for our families and most especially we should make them for our faith. Our gift to *Arise & Build* should be sacrificial.

Joyful Giving—One of the most impactful movies on the Crucifixion was *The Passion of the Christ* which came out in 2004. The only criticism I have of this movie was that it only spent the final few seconds on the Resurrection. The movie was about the brutality of the Passion of Christ, and while that was certainly important to understand, the movie didn’t touch on the joy of the Resurrection. In our Orthodox faith, we walk through forty days of Lent, and then eight days of Holy Week, arriving at the empty tomb of Christ on Pascha and kicking off forty days of celebration. We walk away from Holy Week with joy and renewal. Even in our prayers we offer “Through the cross, JOY has come to all the world.” We mentioned how we make sacrifices for our families and in our jobs, but we do these things with joyful purpose. Our *Arise & Build* Capital Campaign should work in the same way. There should be sacrifice, but more than that, there should be joy. **We are doing something special that is going to last for a long time!**

4. Understand that we are investing in something we will enjoy for decades to come—The final comment on *Arise & Build*, as we consider our commitment, is that this project is the culmination of two decades of planning and vision, but the result will last us much longer than that. The project will set up our church for the next generation and beyond. Years ago, we bought a recliner. It cost \$1,000,

which at the time not only seemed like a lot of money, it actually was a lot of money for us. We’ve had the recliner for ten years now. Which means it has cost us \$100 per year to enjoy this recliner. When you spread out the \$1000 over ten years, the cost was actually minimal. The challenge was that it had to be paid on the front end. *Arise & Build* will work in the same way. We are making an investment that we will enjoy for decades. It is payable on the front end, in these next three years. But if we calculate the cost over the rest of our lifetimes, it will be more inspiring as we consider our sacrificial gift over the next three years.

When I started doing fundraising last fall, some people asked me whether there were going to be “targeted asks,” meaning asking for a specific contribution from individuals. I said that there was no way that there was going to be targeted asks, that what each individual decided to give was up to them, following St. Paul’s teaching in **2 Corinthians 9:7**, *Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.* As of this writing, we have \$2.9M to go to reach our goal of \$7.8M. I decided to not include a chart of how many gifts we need at specific ranges, with the hope that we will all give sacrificially, understanding that this amount needs to be generated from our community. Give as you can, but please give thoughtfully, prayerfully, sacrificially and joyfully.

How do YOU want the *Arise & Build* Capital Campaign results to end up? Good enough? Good? Or *Excellent*? Please continue to pray on this, and make your commitment accordingly on Palm Sunday.

Finally, what kind of Holy Week experience do you want to have this year? Good enough? Good? Or *Excellent*? Please review the Holy Week materials in this issue of *The Messenger*. There are a few more days until this journey begins. Make your plans to spend time in worship this Holy Week.

One does not reach an outcome of *Excellence* by being good enough. An *excellent* outcome requires an *excellent* effort. Let’s have an *excellent* *Arise & Build* commitment Sunday followed by an *excellent* Holy Week journey. I look forward to celebrating my 21st Holy Week and Pascha in our parish and I wish you all a blessed journey through Holy Week as we make our way to the Resurrection of Christ. *Kali Anastasi!*

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros



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 continue with more of the middle part of verse 11 of St. Peter's writing "...in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ...."

We all have the same calling: to glorify God in everything we do. 1 It seems a difficult request for us, mere humans, to give glory to "the King of glory." 2 According to holy scripture, glory belongs to God; 3 God reveals His glory; 4 we can observe His glory. 5 So how then do we give Him glory?

Here is an explanation that may prove helpful in its simplicity: To glorify God is not to add to His glory. We couldn't even if we wanted to. Glorifying God is to recognize and acknowledge His glory. The basic meaning of the word *glory* is "heavy in weight." Thus, to glorify God is to recognize God for who He really is and to respond appropriately.

The Bible and our Holy Orthodox tradition give us many examples of ways we can glorify God. Scripture verses are footnoted for your reference. Here are just a few:

• Praise Him with your lips.

The noblest use of our tongues is to give praise to God.⁶ The often-offered Trisagion (thrice holy) prayer comes to mind and can be spoken or even sung. Many of the musical arrangements of this hymn our choir sings each uniquely evokes feelings and emotions remembering Who God really is: **Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us.**

• Pray in Jesus' name.

To pray in Jesus' name is to align our prayers and desires with God's purposes.⁷ This does not mean that we abandon praying to – and through – the Holy Trinity. To the contrary. Praying in the fullness of the Holy Trinity includes Jesus, the incarnate Lord. When we repeatedly pray, "**Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,**" we are giving the three persons of the Trinity glory by invoking the Trinity AND Jesus.

• Produce spiritual fruit.

The fruit that is produced because of our union with and obedience to Christ brings God glory.⁸ When we tend to the gardens of our lives, and we grow the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control⁹ we honor and glorify God. St. Paul even reminded us that there can never be any kind of law that would prohibit these. In other words, it is NEVER wrong to live by these and our good deeds.¹⁰

• Honor God by stewarding our lives, including the gift of your body.

Remembering that the true gift of our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, should give us pause when we mistreat it. Eating healthy foods, exercising, getting plenty of rest, and staying sexually pure, are all told to us very clearly by St. Paul. We only get one body to house our soul and having them in alignment with God is the ultimate way of giving glory to God.¹¹

• Seek the good of others generously.

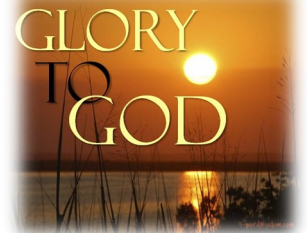
When we seek the good of others, live a life of generosity,¹² and live a life of honor, we are also in fact glorifying God. It is this unity with others, these lifestyle choices, that bring honor and glory to His name better than any speech could.¹³ The context of these teachings is St. Paul's discussion of whether it was right for believers to eat meat offered to idols. He stated

the guiding principle when he taught, "No one is to seek his own good, but the good of the other person." When we make lifestyle choices for the good of others, we glorify God.

Each day, we should be diligent in making sure that what we do, what we say, and how we spend our time and talents bring glory to God the Father. The gospel of Matthew recounts one of Jesus' most descriptive teachings from the Sermon on the Mount by encouraging us to "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."¹⁴

You were put here on this earth to glorify God. In eternity, we will spend eternity glorifying God. So let's live a life practicing and remember St. Peter's words, "in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."¹⁵

Maria



1. **1 Corinthians 10:31** So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
2. **Psalm 24:8** Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle!
3. **John 17:5** And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.
4. **Psalm 19:1** The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork.
5. **John 1:14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
6. **Psalm 63:3** Because Your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise You.
7. **John 14:13** Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
8. **John 15:8** By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.
9. **Galatians 5:22-23** 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law.
10. **Colossians 1:10** to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.
11. **1 Corinthians 6:18-20** 18 Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.
12. **2 Corinthians 9:13** Under the test of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others;
13. **1 Corinthians 10:31** So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
14. **Matthew 5:16** Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.
15. **1 Peter 4:9-11** 9 Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another. 10 As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

~HOLY WEEK SCENES-BY FR. STAVROS~

Holy Week is like a lengthy play. It has several scenes, a plot that runs all the way through, times of conflict and times of reflection, times of sorrow and times of triumph. The road is long but the reward is great. I've had many non-Orthodox friends who have never been to church in between Palm Sunday and Easter. And there are many Orthodox who don't make much of the journey in between either. But the reward of the journey, the glory of the Resurrection, is found in making the Holy Week journey in as complete a way as possible. As one of our prayers says, "Through the cross, joy has come to all the world." And there isn't much joy to be had at the Resurrection, if one hasn't endured the pain of the crucifixion.

In the Holy Week journey, you are there — each event of the week is commemorated in scripture, in hymn and in action. On Holy Wednesday, for example, we pray for healing, we chant about healing, and then we approach to be anointed for physical and spiritual healing. On Holy Thursday, we read about the Passion of Christ, we chant hymns about it, and we experience the procession of the Crucified Christ. This puts us back 2,000 years ago to Jerusalem. We feel the darkness and fear in the troubled city, we stand watch over the crucifixion, we make the midnight journey with the women to the empty tomb and we return to the church to proclaim the good news that Christ is risen from the dead.

What does this do for us? It reminds us what it is we believe. This is a one-week tutorial if you will on why the Crucifixion and Resurrection are important for our lives. It reaffirms our faith — it is a "shot in the arm" so to speak of enthusiasm for being a Christian, because the week ends on a positive note, and because the journey is shared with pilgrims like us. It provides a time of new beginnings — as we will sing on Pascha, "*Let all things be forgiven in the Resurrection.*"



THE SCENES OF HOLY WEEK



SCENE ONE—THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

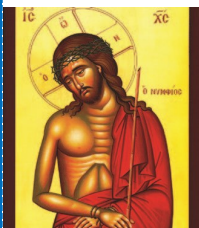
Days: Saturday of Lazarus-Palm Sunday Morning

These two days provide a respite from the austerity and sadness of Great Lent. The Saturday of Lazarus commemorates the miracle of Jesus raising His friend Lazarus from the dead. And it is a foreshadowing of the general resurrection of the dead that is possible for all through Christ's Resurrection. Palm Sunday commemorates the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. Jesus enters the city on a donkey and is met by thousands of people who wave palm branches and sing praises to him.



Observations: The colors for these two days are lighter, generally white on Saturday of Lazarus because of this is a Resurrectional liturgy and green on Palm Sunday. The Divine Liturgy both days is that of St. John Chrysostom. Both days are joyful in tone and nature.

SCENE TWO—THE EARLY DAYS OF HOLY WEEK-THE FINAL TEACHINGS/PLOTTING THE BETRAYAL



Days: Palm Sunday evening through Holy Wednesday morning

As day changes to night on Palm Sunday, the joy of the morning fades to reflective sadness on what lies ahead. The journey of the next three days is a mixture of Christ telling His followers of the end of times and to remain vigilant and narrative of the Chief Priests and the plot against Christ.

Observations: The Icon of the Nymphios/Bridegroom, is carried in procession on Sunday evening and remains in the middle of the church sanctuary until after the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday morning. The Bridegroom service is held on Palm Sunday, Holy

Monday and Holy Tuesday evenings with the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy being held on Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday and Holy Wednesday mornings. The colors worn at these services are traditionally purple and black. The lights are kept dim for these services.

SCENE THREE—THE UPPER ROOM

Days: Holy Wednesday Evening-Holy Thursday morning

The theme now changes to one of healing, as we commemorate the washing of the feet and the institution of the Holy Eucharist. On Holy Wednesday evening, we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Unction and on Holy Thursday morning, the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great.



Observations: The Icon of the Last Supper is displayed at both services. Traditionally crimson or deep red is worn on Holy Thursday, symbolizing the blood of Christ instituted in the New Covenant of Holy Communion and shed for the life and salvation of the world on the Cross. The Divine Liturgy of Holy Thursday morning has a joyful tone to it.

SCENE FOUR—THE PASSION AND DEATH OF CHRIST

Days: Holy Thursday evening, Good Friday morning and Good Friday afternoon

The journey of Holy Week now goes into high gear. We move from the upper room, to the Garden of Gethsemane, to the Betrayal, the Torture, the Trial, the road to Golgotha, the Crucifixion, Death and Burial of the Lord. Between these three services, 17 Gospel passages are read, almost half of the Holy Week total. The first Gospel on Holy Thursday evening is the long discourse and High Priestly Prayer of Christ and is a beautiful passage on love and friendship. The Procession of the Crucified Christ occurs after the fifth Gospel. The faithful have an opportunity to kneel and pray before the Cross. The service of the Hours on Good Friday morning is traditionally not well attended, which almost seems appropriate. Very few followers hung on to witness the Crucifixion of the Lord. Most fled to their homes. The service of the Hours has little fanfare or pageantry, but is a quiet vigil watching over the Lord on the Cross. The Vespers of the Descent of the Cross is a good service to attend particularly if you cannot attend the other two. It summarizes the events of the previous two services adding the burial of Christ in the tomb. The body of Christ is removed from the cross and wrapped in a white linen sheet. It is entombed on the altar table for the remainder of the service and is not put back up on the cross until the Ascension forty days after Pascha.



Observations: The vestments worn at these services are purple and black. Good Friday is the only day of the year when no Divine Liturgy can be held. Also no funeral services can be done on Good Friday—the only funeral is that of the Lord. The Icon displayed is the Icon of the Crucifixion.

SCENE FIVE—THE LAMENTATIONS

Day: Good Friday Evening



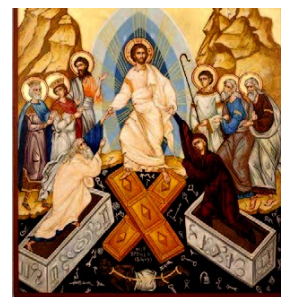
This is a service of transition between the sadness of Holy Thursday and the joy of the Resurrection. The color worn at this service is traditionally gold or red. The lights are turned up again for the first time since Palm Sunday. This service is highlighted by the singing of the Lamentations and the procession around the outside of the church with the tomb of the Lord. In terms of the Holy Week narrative, however, very little is covered. The Gospel is only 4 verses long and is a repeat of the 12th Gospel of Holy Thursday night. The Prophecy of Ezekiel and the Epistle reading from the book of Corinthians are important scriptural references. The icon displayed for this service is the icon of the Extreme Humility. It shows

Christ going into the tomb with the cross in the background. Many people flock to the Good Friday service for the “pageantry”—the Lamentations, the Procession, etc. In my opinion, while this is one of my favorite services in Holy Week to celebrate, it is not one of the most important. Certainly Holy Thursday evening, the Gospel narratives of the Passion and the Procession of the Crucified Christ rank of higher importance. So, while I encourage you to attend as many services of the week as possible, I would actually consider this service not as important as many others.

SCENE SIX—THE EMPTY TOMB

Days: Holy Saturday Morning-Holy Saturday Evening-Easter Sunday

There are two Paschal Liturgies, that is two liturgies that commemorate the Resurrection of Christ. In the ancient church, there was an all-night vigil commemorating the Resurrection with the Vespers and Liturgy of St. Basil being held in the evening hours of Holy Saturday, the Resurrection Service at midnight, and the Orthros and Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom being held on Sunday morning. In recent centuries, this has been changed. The Resurrection service is still held at midnight. The Orthros and Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom follow immediately, from 12:30-2:00 a.m. And the Vespers and Liturgy of St. Basil have been transposed to Holy Saturday morning. Thus, we proclaim the Resurrection with “Arise o God,” “Anasta o Theos,” from the morning of Holy Saturday. The Holy Saturday morning Liturgy commemorates the first announcement of the Resurrection to those who were in Hades. Jesus Christ descended into Hades and bestowed eternal life to those who had been held captive there. The Resurrection Service and the Liturgy which follows commemorate the Resurrection of Christ from the dead.



Observations: The color for Pascha traditionally is White. On Holy Saturday morning, bay leaves are scattered throughout the church as a sign of Christ's victory over Hades and death. Prophecies foretelling the Resurrection are read, including the Prophecy of Jonah and the whale (the three days Jonah spends in the belly of the whale foreshadow the three days of Christ in the tomb) and the Prophecy of Daniel (The three youths saved from the fiery furnace). The Liturgy of St. Basil follows. This is a longer liturgy than that of St. John Chrysostom. The Resurrection service begins with the chanting of the Canon of Good Friday at 11:00 p.m. This is a summary, if you will, of the events of Holy Week. There is an actual closing to the period of the Great Lent, where petitions are said for the well-being of the community as we close the Lenten season and anticipate the Resurrection. The Great and Holy Lent concludes with "Through the Prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us and save us." This is traditionally how we end all the services in our church, except for those services between Easter and Ascension. "Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers. . ." will not be said again in the church until Ascension. The lights in the church are completely extinguished, except for the Vigil Candle on the Altar Table. The priest lights his candle from a solitary light in the altar, the vigil candle that is in front of the tabernacle. He comes through the Royal Doors and chants "Come receive the Light, from the everlasting Light and glorify Christ, who is risen from the dead." The light is then "passed" to all in the church. A procession is made outside to the empty tomb, where the Gospel of the Resurrection is read and we sing "Christos Anesti-Christ is Risen" proclaiming the Resurrection of Christ. We then return to the church and turn all the lights on, and celebrate the Divine Liturgy for the "feast of feasts" the Resurrection of our Lord.

Having celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the early hours of the morning, there is no Liturgy at 10:00 a.m. on Easter Sunday, ironically the only Sunday of the year where that is the case. On Easter Sunday morning, we celebrate the Agape Vespers from 11:00 a.m.-noon. This is a brief service where we chant "Christos Anesti" many times and read the Gospel in many languages. This is a reminder to us that we are to share the good news of the Resurrection of Christ to all peoples in all languages.

THE HOLY WEEK PLAN

Here is an idea to help you get the most out of your Holy Week experience this year. (Obviously it is the ideal to attend as many services as possible each year, because Holy Week is where we re-learn, re-live and recommit to the message of salvation that plays out in the services. For those who are retired or not working, this is a great opportunity to attend all of the Divine Services) Here is a practical guide to celebrating Holy Week this year:

Choose at least one service from each scene, 1-4 and 6. I consider scene five almost "optional."

- ◆ **Scene One**-Pick either Saturday of Lazarus or Palm Sunday, to experience the "joy" and "hope" of these feast days, as well as the temporary break from the austerity of Great Lent.
- ◆ **Scene Two**-Pick at least one of the early services of Holy Week, either an evening Bridegroom service or a morning Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and you'll get a better understanding of the theme of watchfulness.
- ◆ **Scene Three**-Pick either Holy Unction on Holy Wednesday or the Liturgy on Holy Thursday morning to experience healing and the Institution of the Holy Eucharist. Ideally, pick both so you can receive Holy Unction and Holy Communion.
- ◆ **Scene Four**-After the final scene of the Resurrection, SCENE FOUR is the most important. It is very important for us to stand with Christ as He hangs on the cross. Holy Thursday evening, Good Friday morning and Good Friday afternoon afford us this opportunity, so choose at least one of these to attend.
- ◆ **Scene Five** (optional)—While one of the most popular services of Holy Week, Good Friday evening is not even one of the most important or moving. Come to this one only if you've done a good number of the other ones.
- ◆ **Scene Six**—The victory scene—It is obviously most important, after the journey of Great Lent, to experience the joy of the resurrection. Pick either Holy Saturday morning, Holy Saturday evening or the Agape Vespers on Sunday morning.

Make a Holy Week plan for yourself, invest some time in the form, open your heart to the substance, and I guarantee you will have a meaningful Holy Week journey. I'm looking forward to celebrating my 21st Holy Week and Pascha in Tampa and I wish all of you a blessed journey through Holy Week. May our journeys bring each of us spiritual comfort, refreshment and renewal, and may we rejoice in the Resurrection of Christ on Easter night and throughout the year.

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR APRIL

Tuesday, April 1	Great Compline	5:30p.m.		
Wednesday, April 2	9th Hour	5:30 p.m.	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	6:00 p.m.
Friday, April 4	9th Hour Vigil of the Akathist Akathist Hymn Divine Liturgy	9:30 a.m. 6:30p.m. 8:15p.m.	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	10:00 a.m.
Sunday, April 6	5TH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT—ST. MARY OF EGYPT Orthros	8:30 a.m.	Divine Liturgy	9:45 a.m.
Tuesday, April 8	Great Compline	5:30p.m.		
Wednesday, April 9	9th Hour	5:30 p.m.	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	6:00 p.m.
Friday, April 11	9th Hour	9:30 a.m.	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	10:00 a.m.
Saturday, April 12	LAZARUS SATURDAY Orthros 8:30 a.m.	Proskomide 9:30a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00a.m.
Sunday, April 13	PALM SUNDAY Orthros	8:30 a.m.	Divine Liturgy	9:45 a.m.
	Vespers	5:00p.m.	Bridegroom Service	6:30p.m.
Monday, April 14	9th Hour Bridegroom Service	9:00 a.m. 6:30p.m.	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	9:30 a.m.
Tuesday, April 15	9th Hour Bridegroom Service	9:00 a.m. 6:30p.m.	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	9:30 a.m.
Wednesday, April 16	9th Hour Holy Unction Holy Unction	9:00 a.m. 3:00p.m. 7:00p.m.	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Bridegroom Service	9:30 a.m. 5:15p.m.
Holy Thursday, April 17	Vesperal Liturgy All Night Vigil At the Cross	9:15a.m.	Passion Of Christ	6:30p.m.
Good Friday, April 18	Royal Hours Apokathelosis	9:00a.m. 3:00p.m.	Lamentations	7:00p.m.
Holy Saturday, April 19	Vesperal Liturgy Great Canon Resurrection Service Paschal Divine Liturgy	8:30a.m. 11:00p.m. 11:45a.m. 12:30a.m.		
Holy Pascha, April 20	Agape Vespers	11:00a.m.		
Wednesday, April 23	ST. GEORGE Orthros	9:00 a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00 a.m.
Friday, April 25	LIFE GIVING FOUNTAIN- ZODOCHOS PEGHE Orthros	9:00 a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00 a.m.
Sunday, April 27	THOMAS SUNDAY Orthros	8:45 a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, April 30	Paraklesis	6:00p.m.		
Sunday, May 4	SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN Orthros	8:45 a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00 a.m.
Monday, May 5	ST. IRENE ORTHROS	9:00 A.M.	DIVINE LITURGY	10:00 A.M.



HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE 2025

-HOLY WEEK AND PASCHA EASTER SCHEDULE FOR 2025-

April 12 - Saturday of Lazarus-Commemoration of the raising of Lazarus from the dead

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Proskomide 9:30a.m.
Divine Liturgy 10:00-11:15 a.m.

*Fr. Stavros will celebrate the service of the Proskomide, the Preparation of the Holy Communion on the solea at 9:30 a.m. GOYA and Sunday School students are requested to attend to help in preparing the crosses for Palm Sunday, after Liturgy.

April 13 - Palm Sunday-The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.-noon
Vespers 5:00-6:00 p.m.
Service of the Bridegroom 6:30-8:00 p.m.
Procession of the Icon of the Nymphios
Theme: Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church; watchfulness

April 14 - Holy Monday

9th Hour 9:00a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00a.m.
Service of the Bridegroom 6:30-8:00 p.m.
Theme: The Parable of the Talents

April 15 - Holy Tuesday

9th Hour 9:00a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.
Service of the Bridegroom 6:30-8:30 p.m.
The Choir will sing the Hymn of Kassiane
Theme: Repentance of the harlot vs. the Betrayal by Judas

April 16 - Holy Wednesday

9th Hour 9:00a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m.
Sacrament of Holy Unction for Children 3:00-4:00 p.m.
Matins of Holy Thursday-5:15-7:00 p.m.
Sacrament of Holy Unction for Adults 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Theme: washing away of sin; healing of soul and body

April 17 - Holy Thursday

Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 9:15-11:00 a.m.
Service of the Holy Passion 6:30-10:00 p.m.
Reading of the 12 Gospels, Procession of the Crucified Christ
Themes: The Betrayal, Trial and Death of Christ, the Passion
All-Night Vigil will follow the service

April 18 - Good Friday

Reading of the Royal Hours 9:00-11:00 a.m.
Standing vigil at the Cross of Christ
Decorating the Epitaphios 11:00 a.m. (all are invited to help)
Apokathelosis 3:00-4:15 p.m. The Unnailing/Burial of Christ
Lamentations 7:00-10:30 p.m. Singing of the Funeral
Lamentations and Procession with the Epitaphios

April 19 - Holy Saturday

Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 8:30-11:00 a.m.
Reading of Prophecies foretelling the Resurrection of Christ
Great Canon 11:00 p.m.
Resurrection Service 11:45 p.m.
Paschal Divine Liturgy 12:30 a.m.

April 20 - Great and Holy PASCHA

AGAPE Vespers 11:00 a.m.-noon
Easter Vespers of Love-The Gospel is read in numerous languages to indicate the universal character of the Christian message\
Easter Egg Hunt for Children NOON

-ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΟΣ 2025-

Σάββατο, 12 Απριλίου - Σάββατο του Λαζαρου

Ορθος 8:30-9:30 π.μ.
Ακολουθία τη Θεία Προσκομιδή 9:30-10:00 π.μ.
Θεία Λειτουργία 10:00-11:15 π.μ.

Κυριακή, 13 Απριλίου - Κυριακή των Βαίων

Ορθος 8:30 π.μ. Θεία Λειτουργία 9:45 π.μ.
Κατανυκτικό Εσπερινο 5:00-6:00 μ.μ.
Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Δευτέρα, 14 Απριλίου - Μεγάλη Δευτέρα

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.
Θεία Λειτουργία των Προηγιασμένων Δωρων 9:30-11:00 π.μ.

Τρίτη, 15 Απριλίου - Μεγάλη Τρίτη

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.
Θεία Λειτουργία των Προηγιασμένων Δωρων 9:30-11:00 π.μ.
Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 6:30-8:00 μ.μ.

Τετάρτη, 16 Απριλίου - Μεγάλη Τετάρτη

Ενατη Ωρα 9:00-9:30 π.μ.
Θεία Λειτουργία των Προηγιασμένων Δωρων 9:30-11:00 π.μ.
Ακολουθία Ευχελαίων για τα παιδιά 3:00-4:00 μ.μ.
Ακολουθία Νυμφίου 5:15-7:00 μ.μ.
Ακολουθία Ευχελαίων 7:00-8:30 μ.μ.

Πέμπτη, 17 Απριλίου - Μεγάλη Πέμπτη

Θεία Λειτουργία του Αγίου Βασιλείου 9:15-11:00 π.μ.
Ακολουθία Σταυρώσεως 6:30-10:00 μ.μ.

Παρασκευή, 18 Απριλίου - Μεγάλη Παρασκευή

Οι Βασιλικές Ωρες 9:00-11:00 π.μ.
Αποκαθηλώσις 3:00-4:15 μ.μ.
Επιταφίος Θρήνος 7:00-10:30 μ.μ.

Σάββατο, 19 Απριλίου - Μεγάλο Σάββατο

Θεία Λειτουργία του Αγίου Βασιλείου 8:30-11:00 π.μ.
Ο Κανών 11:00 μ.μ.
Ακολουθία της Αναστάσεως Μεσανυχτα
Θεία Λειτουργία της Αναστάσεως 12:30-2:15 π.μ.

Κυριακή, 20 Απριλίου - Αγίων Πασχα

Μεγας Εσπερινος της Αγάπης 11:00 π.μ.

LITURGICAL NOTES FOR APRIL

Divine Liturgy to begin at 9:45 a.m. on the Sundays of Great Lent

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.

Tuesdays of Lent - Great Compline

The service of the Great Compline will be read on the following Tuesdays of Lent – 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, 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, April 4 and Friday, April 11.

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.

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.

Wednesday, April 23 - St. George – St. George the “Trophy Bearer” is one of the most famous saints of our church. He lived in the third century. He was a soldier, famously memorialized in icons as slaying a dragon. Symbolically, he “slayed” the “dragons” that opposed Christianity and was martyred for his faith. His relics were placed in the altar of our church when it was consecrated in 1986. St. George’s feast day is celebrated on the Monday after Pascha when Pascha falls on April 23 or later (when Pascha falls earlier than April 23, we celebrate his feast day on April 23).

Friday, April 25 - Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain – Friday after Pascha Commemorates the consecration of a Chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which was built over a spring in Constantinople, that emits water with healing powers. Hundreds of miracles and healings have occurred at this spring. This feast day of “Zoödochos Peghe - Ζωοδόχος Πηγή” the Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain, is always celebrated on the Friday of Bright (Renewal) week, the week after Pascha, April 25, this year.

Sunday, April 27 - Sunday of St. Thomas – The Church brings to our mind the unbelief of Thomas followed by his belief after seeing the scars of Christ.

Wednesday, April 30 - Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary – We will continue to offer Paraklesis once a month, so that we can pray for all the members of our community by name, out loud. For April, the Paraklesis will be offered on Wednesday Evening, April 30, from 6:00-7:00p.m.



GUIDELINES FOR HOLY WEEK

Saturday of Lazarus- April 12- Father Stavros will do the Proskomide (service of preparation of the Holy Gifts) on the solea at 9:30 a.m. This is an excellent opportunity for those who have never seen this service, especially our children, to learn how the Holy Gifts are prepared before each Liturgy. Father Stavros will offer the service and narrate while he is doing it.

Making Palm Crosses- We will have a free breakfast after the Divine Liturgy on Saturday of Lazarus, April 12, and will make Palm Crosses after the breakfast. Many hands make light work, so please come for Liturgy, breakfast and making Palm Crosses.

Palm Sunday afternoon-The Vespers of Holy Monday- There is a short vespers service of Holy Monday that is generally suppressed in parish usage. We have done this the past three years and will continue this year as well. The Bridegroom Service is done Palm Sunday night. The Vespers of Holy Monday is the transition from the joy of Palm Sunday to the sorrow of Holy Week. The service begins with bright colors, green for Palm Sunday, and in the middle of the service, the colors change to the dark purple of Holy Week. The service will be from 5:00-5:45 p.m., with the Bridegroom Service beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Why are the services at night during Holy Week called Matins Services, even though they are taking place during the evening hours?

Traditionally, the Matins or Orthros is done in the early morning hours, ending with the sunrise, when the Great Doxology is sung or read. The Orthros or Matins Services of Holy Week are VERY long, lasting almost three and a half hours. During the Middle Ages, the services were transposed ahead several hours, from the early morning hours to the evening of the preceding night. Thus, the Orthros of Good Friday was moved to Holy Thursday evening, the 12 Gospels and the Procession of the Crucified Christ. The Lamentations, which is the Orthros of Holy Saturday was moved from Saturday morning to Friday night. The Vespers services, was moved from Holy Thursday evening to Holy Thursday morning. Our services commemorate events about 12 hours before they happened in real time, with the Last Supper Holy Thursday morning, the Crucifixion Holy Thursday evening, etc. The Descent from the Cross on Friday afternoon remains at its proper time, as a Vespers service, but the interval between the Vespers of Friday afternoon and the Orthros of Holy Saturday does not. The Resurrection Service takes place at the proper time. The schedule of transposing services begins Palm Sunday when we celebrate Orthros and Liturgy in the morning and then in the evening, we celebrate Vespers (appropriately in the evening) and immediately after the Orthros (Bridegroom service). From then on, we are approximately 12 hours ahead in what would have been happening during Holy Week. The Vespers of Good Friday afternoon are at the appropriate time. Then the Lamentations (Orthros of Holy Saturday) is celebrated a couple of hours later. We finally catch up with Pascha, celebrated in the middle of the night, the same hour as the Resurrection happened.

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, and Holy Wednesday mornings.

These three Pre-Sanctified Liturgies include important Scripture readings—from Exodus, from Job and from the Gospels. The Gospel readings are the last teachings of Jesus to His disciples on Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday. The Gospel of Holy Wednesday morning is the first act of the Passion, the betrayal by Judas. The Scripture readings of these services are an important part of the Holy Week narrative.

Holy Unction- The Mystery of Holy Unction is established upon the words and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ and is a sacrament of the church. This is a sacrament of healing and

transformation from a bruised and hurt world to the deliverance from sin and corruption. All sacraments of the church are administered by the priests of the church. In fact, the primary role and identity of the priests of the church is to be the celebrant of the sacraments. Because of this, Holy Unction may not be taken home. If you wish to have this sacrament offered, Father Stavros is happy to offer it at the church, on a day and time of your choosing. For those unable to come to church, Father will be happy to bring it to shut-ins who are unable to come to church. For those who are not Orthodox and cannot receive Holy Unction, as it is a sacrament, Fr. Stavros also has oil from the tomb of St. Nektarios, which can be administered to anyone. The oil will be administered also on Holy Wednesday for those who are not Orthodox, so that they can still receive prayer and anointing.

Bridegroom Service for the Last Supper- There is actually a Bridegroom Service which is traditionally celebrated on Holy Wednesday evening. However, this service has been suppressed in most parishes because of the Sacrament of Holy Unction. This service is important because it contains the Gospel lesson of the Last Supper. We will celebrate this service, beginning at 5:15 p.m. The evening Holy Unction service will begin at 7:00 p.m.

Holy Thursday Evening - The Service of the Passion-

The service of the 12 Gospels and procession of the crucified Lord is the longest service of the Church year. On Holy Thursday, light and darkness, joy and sorrow are mixed. At the "upper room" and in Gethsemane the light of the kingdom and the darkness of hell come together. The way of life and the way of death converge. However, one cannot truly celebrate the Resurrection if he/she has not stood at the foot of the cross of Christ. As one prayer of the Sunday Orthros states, "Through the Cross, joy has come to all the world." Without the Crucifixion, there could be no Resurrection. Thus, after the Resurrection Service on Holy Saturday Night, one could argue that Holy Thursday evening is the next most-important service of Holy Week. If you are unable to attend the entire service, then please come from 7:30-8:30 p.m., witness the Procession of the Crucified Lord, venerate His precious Body on the Cross and leave early. But please do not abandon the Lord as He hangs on the Cross. Holy Thursday evening is the most powerful service of Holy Week and the entire church year.

An All-Night/All Day Vigil at the Cross of Christ—For the past eleven years, we have done an All-Night Vigil at the Cross of Christ. Those who participated found it VERY inspiring. The vigil will begin following the service of the 12 Gospels and will continue until the service of the Lamentations on Good Friday Evening. Thus, beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Holy Thursday, there will be 28 continuous hours of prayer in our church. This way, even those who can't come out in the middle of the night can participate by taking a shift during the day. The schedule will be as follows:

Holy Thursday Evening

6:30-10:00 p.m. - Service of the 12 Gospels
10:00 p.m. - 9:00 a.m. (Fri.) - Vigil of Psalm Reading at the Cross

Good Friday

9:00-11:00 a.m. - Service of the Royal Hours
11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. - Vigil of Psalm Reading at the Cross
3:00-4:30 p.m. - The Service of the Un-nailing
4:30-7:00 p.m. - Vigil of Psalm Reading at the foot of the Cross
7:00-10:30 p.m. - Service of the Lamentations

We will have a sign-up sheet for people to sign up for some time to stand at the Cross and read from the book of Psalms. It will be a sign-up genius that will come out via constant contact shortly before Holy Week. The Young Adults will be coordinating this for us. If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Tsatalis at andreatsatalis@gmail.com.

We know that at the Crucifixion, all but one of the Disciples fled. Only John stayed at the foot of the cross. In our world today, many people are abandoning Christ, Christianity, and any sense of Godliness. If Christ gave His life on the cross and did not abandon us, this is one chance, on this special day, to say thank you to Christ and remember what He did by not abandoning Him.

Good Friday

Decoration of the Kouvouklion will be done following the Royal Hours on Good Friday. All are invited to come and help decorate the tomb of Christ. Please, however, work quietly—this job is meant to be solemn not social.

Apokathelosis- The Service of Apokathelosis (the Un-Nailing) re-enacts the narrative of Christ descending from the Cross. The figure of Christ is removed from the cross and wrapped in a new linen cloth, carried into the sanctuary and placed on the altar table. In the same service, a procession with the Epitaphios (embroidery of the dead Christ) is made around the interior of the church, and the Epitaphios is placed in the Kouvouklion (tomb of Christ).

The Lamentations and the Epitaphios Procession - The Lamentations are short, poetic verses lamenting the Passion, Death and Burial of Christ. Interspersed with the Lamentations are Psalm verses from Psalm 119, the same verses we sing at a funeral service, which is appropriate, as the Lamentations are the funeral service for the Lord. The service starts with the Canon, and after the Canon is complete, the priest opens the Royal Doors, the lights are turned up, and the Lamentations begin. Everyone is invited to sing together. Books will be provided for your use. For the past four years, we have held the procession indoors, walking around both the interior of the hall and the church, with everyone having an opportunity to pass under the Epitaphios, symbolizing how one day we hope to pass through death to eternal life.

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

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

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

John 20:19-25. You may read it in any language you wish, the more the better.



Holy Communion to be given only during Divine Liturgy -

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

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

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

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

of sin and death. "Easter" comes from the word "Oestre" and was actually a Pagan holiday each spring. That's why in the Orthodox Church, and in our personal lives, we try to use the word "Pascha" to describe the feast of the Resurrection, rather than Easter.

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

No Kneeling until Pentecost- It is actually the Tradition in the Orthodox Church that we not kneel on Sundays in honor of the Resurrection of Christ. Because we do not worship on a daily basis in our church communities, priests have encouraged people to kneel on Sundays, the thought being that if we do not kneel on Sundays, that we'll never kneel in church. It is a Tradition, that for 50 days after Pascha, we do not kneel in honor of the Resurrection. The next time we

will kneel after April 20 is on the Feast of Pentecost (June 8) at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says "Again and again on bended knees let us pray to the Lord."

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

Doing it all - The experience of attending all of the Holy Week services is rare indeed. But if you are able to do it this is a beautiful experience everyone should try at least once in their life. How often do you have the opportunity to receive Holy Communion 8 times in 9 days, to be within 12 hours of having received or receiving again for a week! How often do you have the opportunity to attend two services a day for a week! For a very uplifting and unique experience, please consider coming to all the services - priests go to all the services - they know the effort, the fatigue, the pain, but also the joy that only comes when you "do them all."

Excused Absences from School for Good Friday—If you would like to have your child/children attend Good Friday Services at St. John the Baptist, please pick up a letter from the baptismery in the front of the church.

DONATIONS NEEDED FOR GREAT LENT AND HOLY WEEK

Great Lent began 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.

April 5	Akathist Hymn	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$130
April 13	Palm Sunday	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex	\$130
Holy Week		Palms Strips & Branches	\$300 total
		Pillar Candles for Windows (20)	\$20 each
April 13	Palm Sunday	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex	\$130
	Bridegroom Service	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom on Solea(2)	\$125 each
April 16	Holy Wednesday	Flowers for Icon of Last Supper	\$130
	Holy Unction	Olive Oil, Flour, Prosphora(2)	Donations
April 17	Holy Thursday	Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion	\$130
		Wreaths for Bottom of Cross(2)	\$200 each
		Wreath for Top of Cross	\$300
		Scattered flowers at base of cross	\$75
		Candles for Top of Cross(3)	\$20 each
April 18	Good Friday	16 Bags of Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers	\$130
		Flowers for Epitaphios	Several
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)	
		-Apokathelosis	\$20 each
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)	
		-Lamentations	\$20 each
		Icon of Extreme Humility	\$130
April 20	Pascha	Flowers for Icon of Resurrection	\$130
		Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb	\$130
		Silk Flower for Royal Doors	\$150
		Easter Lilies	\$35 per Lily

COMMUNITY NEWS

Women's Bible Study— 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 April the dates are:** Tuesday April 1, Tuesday April 8, Tuesday April 22 & Tuesday April 29.

Tuesday night Bible study with Fr. John— 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 April, the dates are:** Monday March 31(*instead of April 1*), Tuesday April 8, Tuesday April 22 & Tuesday April 29.

Fr. Stavros to be out of town—Fr. Stavros has been invited to be the retreat leader for the National Archon Retreat that is being held the first weekend of April. Fr. Stavros will be out of town April 3-6. Fr. John will preside over the services in his absence.

GOYA Meeting for April—The April GOYA Meeting will be Sunday, April 27 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

Young Adults— Our young adult group meets once a month for dinner/discussion (and other times for fellowship and service). The meeting for April be on Thursday, April 24 from 6:30-9:00 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. All young adults, ages 18-40, are invited to participate. The Topic for April will be "**Keeping the joy of the Resurrection throughout the year**". 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.

Meeting of Ministry Heads—We will have a meeting of ministry heads on Monday, April 28, in the Kourmolis Center from 6:30-8:30 p.m.. We ask that each ministry send at least one representative. We meet periodically to check in and to look over the next few months in the life of our parish.

PARISH REGISTRY

BAPTISM— Rhodes Emmanuel Waksman, son of Michael and Kristen Waksman, was baptized on Sunday, March 2. Alberto and Christine Mignogna were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

BAPTISM— Rudy Anthony Zaloumes, daughter of Giorgio Panos Zaloumes and Tara Marie Gianopulos, was baptized on Saturday, March 8. Dimitri A Gianopulos was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

BAPTISM— Roman Gabriel Chwastiak, son of Richard Gregory Chwastiak and Michelle Ann Poirier, was baptized on Saturday, March 8. Nicole Ann Chwastiak was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

BAPTISM— Esterina Elqeni was baptized on Friday, March 14. Anthony Loizides was the sponsor. Congratulations!

BAPTISM— Rudy Anthony Zaloumes, daughter of Giorgio Panos Zaloumes and Tara Marie Gianopulos, was baptized on Saturday, March 8. Dimitri A Gianopulos was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

CHRISMATION— Bryan Christ(Christos) Farah, was chrismated on Wednesday, March 5. Hernan Roldan was the sponsor. Congratulations!

CHRISMATION— Kevin Pio (Nektarios) Farah, was chrismated on Wednesday, March 5. Martina Kostova was the sponsor. Congratulations!

PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY
MEMBERS IN THE MEMORIAL SERVICE ON GOOD FRIDAY— APRIL 18



In Memory of



_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

***You only need to write the first name of each person. Please mail to the church office **by Holy Monday**.
You may also email the names to office@stjohntpa.org*

INSPIRATION

God Is Talking To You My Child...

*I am not distant and angry,
but am the complete
expression of love...
I John 8:41-44*

*And it is my desire to lavish
my love on you...I John 3:1*

*Simply because you are my
child and I am your Father...
I John 3:1*

*I offer you more than your
earthly father ever could...
St. Matthew 7:11*

*For I am the Perfect Father...
St. Matthew 5:48*

To be continued...

*Marriage is like home
maintenance. When the
smoke detector starts
beeping you fix it. You
don't buy a new house.*

Emotions are like children. You
don't want them driving your car
because they will crash it. You
don't want to shove them in the
trunk because they might die. You
want them in the back seat where
they can be seen and heard and
attended to, but they're not in
control of anything.

Modern Jesus

Preaches only on love
Gives you health & wealth
Never says anything negative
Loved and accepted by the
world
Serves your will, not God's will
Hates to offend you or others

Biblical Jesus

Preaches God's righteousness
Gives salvation, hope, peace &
joy
Warns of sin, judgment and
hell
Hated and despised by the
world
Exalts God the Father's will
Offends the world with the
truth





Arise & Build

“LET US ARISE AND BUILD”

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

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

Friday, May 2 (Tentative): 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.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS:

The Sunday School staff prays that your Lenten journey is bringing you closer to Christ.

Our Sunday School topics for the month of March were Forgiveness Sunday, Icons/Sunday of Orthodoxy (1st Sunday of Lent), and Being a Good Friend - The Paralytic (Second Sunday of Lent), The Holy Cross (Third Sunday of Lent), and St. John of the Ladder (Fourth Sunday of Lent).

YOUTH SUNDAY took place on March 2nd. We need to thank our children, who are singing more beautifully than ever and learning more church hymns under the direction of Donna Trakas.

Our Pre-Lenten Retreat also took place on March 2nd. The lessons included Forgiveness Sunday, Holy Unction, and the Lenten Calendar. Our parents met with Fr. Stavros to discuss their family Lenten journey. Afterwards we all gathered in the church for a prayer with Fr. Stavros.

We would like to thank all the families who brought a Lenten meal to share at our **Pre-Sanctified dinner on Wednesday, MARCH 5th.** The food was delicious and our many parishioners in attendance were very grateful. We can always count on our parents when we need them.

On March 16th the Sunday School children filled 100 bags for the homeless. This project was in cooperation with The Philoptochos. The St. John's Oratorical Festival also took place of March 16th. Congratulations to the the students who successfully participated under the direction of Peggy Bradshaw.

Our Altar Boys, Myrrhh Bearers, and Maiden for the Bridegroom Services are preparing and excited for their roles during **HOLY WEEK.** Everyone is also looking forward to our **Sunday School Good Friday Retreat on April 18th.**

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

APRIL CALENDAR:

Sunday, April 6th: TOPIC: Talents/Gifts

Saturday, April 12th: Saturday of Lazarus Service - Making Palm Crosses

Sunday, April 13th: TOPIC: Palm Sunday and Procession

Friday, April 18th: Good Friday Student Retreat

Sunday, April 20th: PASCHA - No Sunday School

Sunday, April 27th: TOPIC: Saints of the Orthodox Church and Doubting Thomas

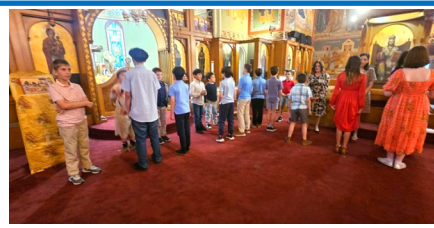
SUNDAY SCHOOL PHOTOS



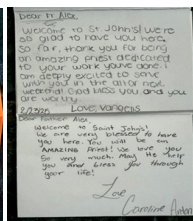
Above is a photo of our 5th and 6th graders. In addition to their lesson on The Last Judgement, they also learned about the meaning of each part of a priest's vestment. We dressed "Fr. Anthony" and connected this lesson to Fr. Alex's ordination.



Our TODDLER TWOS are practicing for The Sunday of Orthodoxy by walking with their icons.



'Forgiveness Sunday'
Each student asked forgiveness from each other in this exercise.



Photos of students practicing receiving Holy Unction, our younger students making crafts, sample cards from our students congratulating Fr. Alex Limberatos for his ordination into the priesthood, and the flyer for the Hope and Joy Tween event this Sunday.

Photos of our Students with their icons during the Sunday of Orthodoxy, March 9 2025.

St. John's Youth Retreat

Holy Friday

April 18, 2025

10:15am-4:15pm

We welcome our Pre-K- 6th Graders to come together for a day of prayer and learning, followed by our participation in the Apokathelosis service at 3:00pm.

- Royal Hours Service prayer at foot of the Cross
- Epitaphio Lesson with Fr. Stavros
- Group Lessons
- Lenten Lunch
- Crafts

*A Time to Pause
and Pray*

Kindly RSVP by 4/12
via SignUpGenius or to
zackiec@yahoo.com



YOUNG AT HEART

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

Having risen from the grave, as He foretold, He has given us Eternal Life and the Great Mercy. (The Resurrection Ode)



Join us for our April Young at Heart Gathering

Saturday, April 26th ,
1pm -3pm

Enjoy a catered meal featuring:

Baked Chicken and Rice

Salad

Vegetable

Dessert

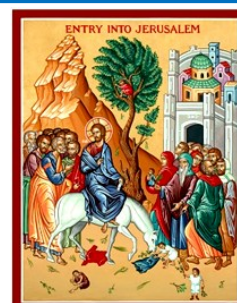
Beverage

\$13.00 per person

*See Presvytera Denise for reservations no later than **Saturday, April 19th.***

BOOKSTORE

Our Bookstore has stocked many of the items you will need in preparation for Pascha. **Available now are:**



- Holy Week Service Books
- Red egg dye imported from Greece
- Books with meditations and readings for Pascha
- Resurrection Icons
- Wooden and glass eggs with display stands
- Greeting cards and Children's books

STEWARDSHIP

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

On behalf of the Stewardship Committee, we wish everyone a blessed Lenten journey. There will be many opportunities for us to worship together this season. Please take these opportunities to experience the beautiful services during this sacred time.

It is our Stewardship Commitment that supports, these beautiful services, as well as our Church's mission and ministries. Just as Christ's resurrection brings renewal and hope, our commitment to St. John's strengthens our ability to serve the community, preserve our traditions and spread our faith.

We are off to a good start in 2025, as of **March 1st, 251 families** have returned their Stewardship forms, or have contributed without turning in a form. That is **\$460,182** committed in the first two months 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 at our church website – **stjohntpa.org/stewardship**

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.**

FOOD PANTRY

FOOD PANTRY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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

The Food Pantry at St. John the Baptist helps support our ministry efforts throughout the year, along with many faith-based organizations in Tampa Bay. On the **3rd Saturday of each month** volunteers gather for our Community Outreach at **Tampa Hope** in support of Matthew 25, the Outreach for First Presbyterian.

Every month we bring bars and other grab and go goodies for the residents. Their gratitude is abundant, and your donations make all the difference! The smiling faces of our volunteers and the residents are contagious, and the Love of God is evident in midst of transition and difficulties.

Please keep our Food Pantry in mind when you come to Church and look for our dedicated drop off just past entrance area of the Church Hall. We also 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) **bolded** items of greatest need at this time.

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



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 dates are: 4/19, 5/17 & 6/21.

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

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

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F48A5A62DA3F49-community1/8067245#/>

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

Time: **8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**

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

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



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

DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE

Daughters of Penelope Alcmaeon #167 Tampa

Ευχές για Καλό Πάσχα και Καλή Ανάσταση - Happy Easter

Please join us on April 2nd at 7:15 following the Wednesday evening Pre-Sanctified Liturgy.
Dinner is sponsored by AHEPA/DAUGHTERS and at 7:45 Father Stavros will present "Their Hands".

We hope that many join us and enjoy this Enriching, Delicious, No charge gathering.

Daughters had partnered with Philoptochos and collected school items to "**ERASE THE NEED**" in Hillsborough County. We are grateful to all who contributed to make this collection of school supplies a great success. Representatives of the Daughters and of Philoptochos delivered the collected school items with a **\$300.00 check** from Philoptochos and a **\$200.00 check** from AHEPA/DAUGHTERS to the Hillsborough Education Foundation.

The Hillsborough Education Foundation is working to "**ERASE THE NEED**" by distributing needed items to the students.



Philoptochos and Daughters of Penelope delivering the collected school items and checks.



The Hillsborough Education Foundation representative accepts the donated items.

To "**ERASE THE NEED**", school items or money may be donated directly to the Hillsborough Education Foundation year-round. For details, please check <https://educationfoundation.com>.

The Daughters annually celebrate the Greek Independence by marching in the **Greek Independence Day Parade in Tarpon**. The parade was held on Sunday **March 23**. Afterwards a festive meal together was enjoyed.

The Daughters also donated eighty pairs of white socks, eighty pairs of black socks, and eighty bottles of water for incorporation in the **Bags of Hope** which are distributed to the homeless.

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.

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

NURSING MINISTRY

APRIL: STRESS AWARENESS MONTH

As we enter April, we celebrate Stress Awareness Month, a time dedicated to recognizing the impact of stress on our lives and well-being. Stress is a natural response to the demands of daily life, but when it becomes overwhelming, it can significantly affect our physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

-The Hidden Dangers of Stress-

While a little stress can motivate us to meet challenges, chronic stress can lead to a host of negative health outcomes:

Physical Health Issues:

- Cardiovascular Problems:** Prolonged stress can raise blood pressure and increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Weakened Immune System:** Stress can impair immune function, making us more susceptible to infections and illnesses.
- Digestive Disorders:** Stress can lead to issues such as stomachaches, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and other gastrointestinal problems.

Mental Health Challenges:

- Anxiety and Depression:** Chronic stress is linked to higher rates of anxiety and depression, impacting our emotional well-being and quality of life.
- Cognitive Impairment:** Stress can affect concentration, memory, and decision-making abilities, making it harder to manage day-to-day tasks.

-Coping with Stress-

Recognizing the signs of stress is the first step towards finding effective coping strategies. Here are a few practical tips to manage stress:

- ♦**Prayer and Meditation:** Spend time in prayer to help center your thoughts and find peace amidst the chaos.
- ♦**Connect with Others:** Reach out to friends, family, or St. John's Church members for support. Sharing your feelings can lighten your emotional burden.
- ♦**Healthy Diet:** Nourishing your body with a balanced diet rich in non-processed food sources i.e., fish, chicken, fresh fruits, and vegetables can improve your mood and energy levels, helping you better cope with stress.
- ♦**Physical Activity:** Regular exercise can reduce stress hormones and release endorphins, promoting overall well-being.
- ♦**Mindfulness Practices:** Engage in mindfulness or relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing exercises, to help calm your mind.

-A Call to Action-

As we recognize Stress Awareness Month, let us take the time to evaluate our stress levels and seek support when needed. Remember that it's okay to ask for help—be it from a trusted friend, a healthcare professional, or your St. John's Greek Orthodox Church community. Together, we can create an environment where we support one another in managing stress and nurturing our health and well-being.

May this month inspire us to prioritize our mental and emotional health, drawing strength from our faith and community.

SAVE THE DATE...JUNE 5 for BLS/AED TRAINING.

Nursing ministry will offer a FREE BLS, basic life support, class and everyone is welcome to attend. You will also learn how to use the AED and potentially save a life. To sign up for the class email **Marcelle at Marcelletrianta@gmail.com**

TWELVE DISCIPLES PROJECT

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

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

Are you interested???

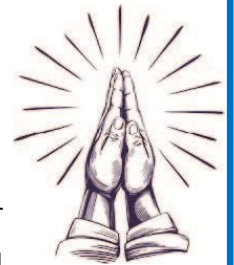
You too may join us in this endeavor that, not only broadens your community awareness with others in our congregation, but also sharpens each of our personal prayer disciplines.

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

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

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

~Participation will warm your spiritual heart.~



PHILOPTOCHOS

April Calendar!



4/12 - Palm Sunday Bake Sale

4/13 - Palm Sunday Bake Sale

4/13 - Palm Sunday Luncheon
(traditional fish luncheon) (After Liturgy)\



Thank you to the Sunday School students for packaging the bags for "Rise Against Hunger", the Daughters of Penelope for donating socks and water and Lisa Alsina for chairing this cause.

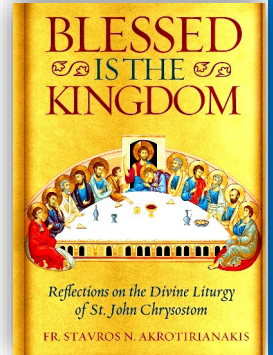


It's time to join Philoptochos! [Click Here!](#)

*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.*

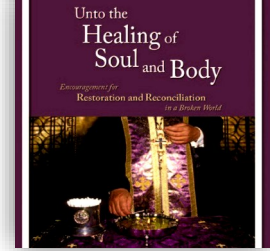
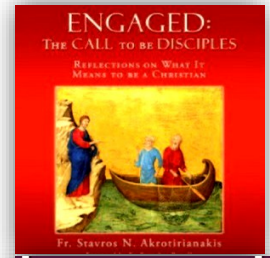
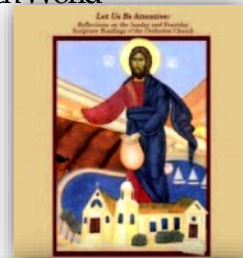
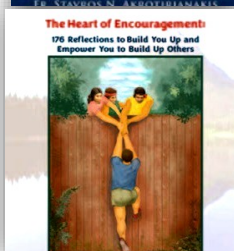
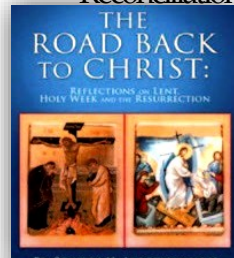
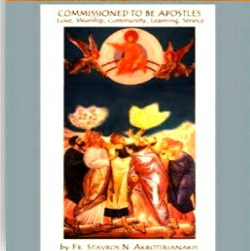
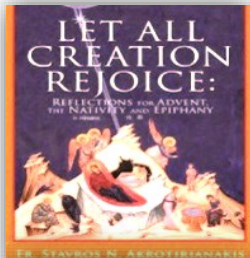
FR. STAVROS NEW BOOK

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



The additional 8 are entitled:

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



PARISH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

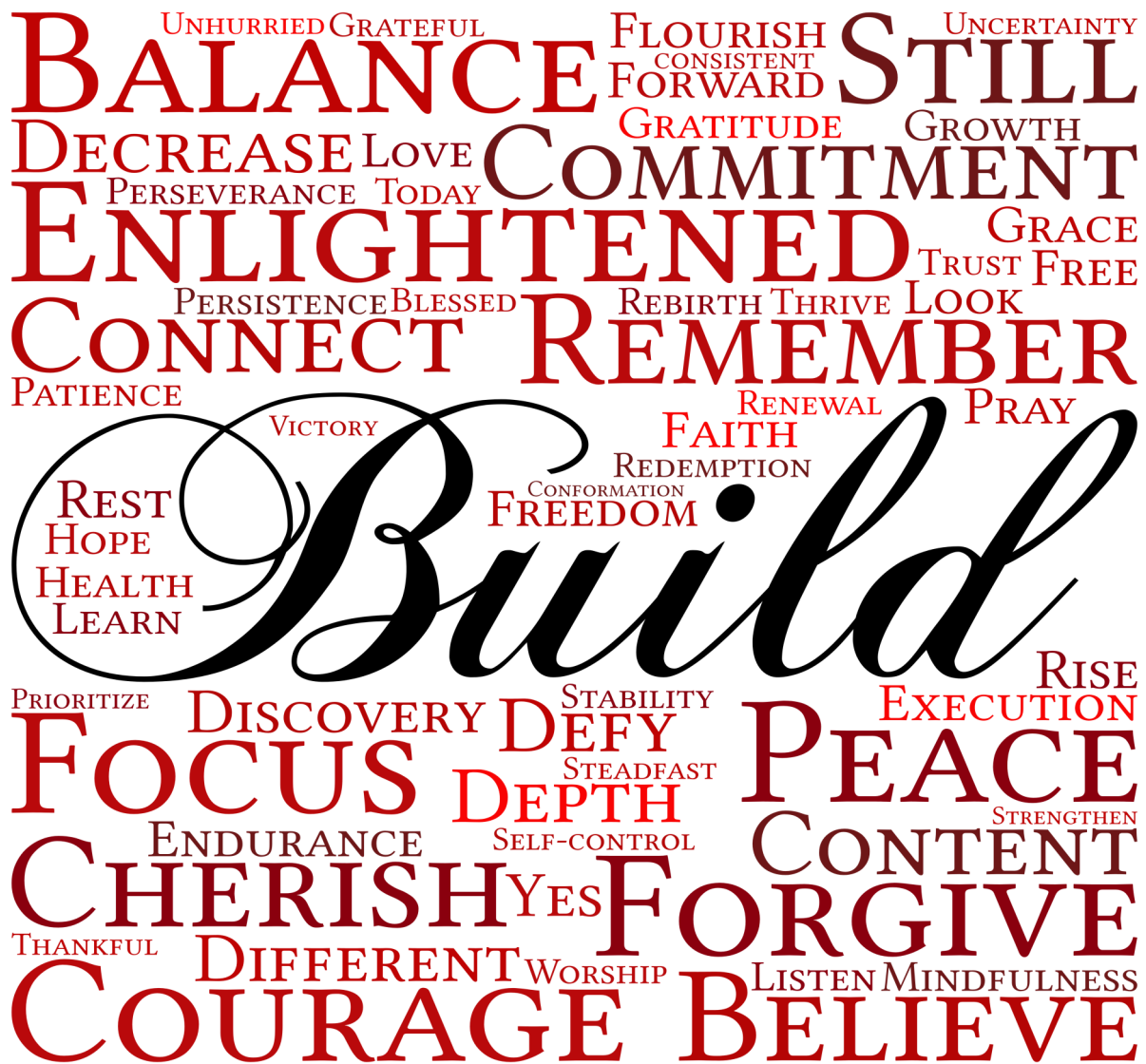
St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church together with BayCare Behavioral Health, will provide our parishioners access to **free and confidential** counseling services - offering additional support when life's challenges become overwhelming. The PAP utilizes a network of faith-based providers that 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



Please read this “**One Word**” reflection and note of encouragement this month from Alex De Maio, one of our ministry heads of our Greek Dance groups:

My word was/is **THRIVE**.

But since the submission of my word sometimes things change along the way. And so I wanted to change my word to **SURVIVE**.....

But just today I thought about it upon receiving your email.

Why can't my word still stay as “**THRIVE**”? Even though we have challenges and hardships that occur that doesn't mean our spirit is not resilient and we can't overcome what is placed in front of us. In fact sometimes the obstacles in front of us shape us and we learn and we experience and we grow and with God's love and prayers we become stronger. It can be a positive lesson and we take a step up and keep going and gather momentumthus my word will remain as **THRIVE**.

Alex De Maio

LADIES' PHILOPTOCHOS AT ST. JOHN'S DONATES OVER \$30,000 TO THOSE IN NEED

*Were you aware that with only 65 members, God has guided us in accomplishing so much?
Just imagine how much more could be done with your help!!*



Throughout the past 15 months, we have helped charities right here in Florida:

Lighthouse for the Blind and Low Vision
Mary and Martha House – rebuilding after Hurricanes
Hope Fund – Helping kids in need with after school programs
A Kid's Place – Housing for abused and neglected kids
Champions for Children – Formerly Child Abuse council
Hope Children's Home – Care for neglected, abandoned and abused kids
Voices for Children – Support for abused and abandoned foster care kids
Metropolitan Ministries – Food, shelter, and financial assistance to those in need
The Spring – Assistance to survivors of domestic violence and their children

And we have helped charities across the United States:

Victims of California Wild Fires
Zoe for Life – Support, education, counseling after unplanned pregnancy
Project Mexico – Orphanage for teenage boys
Tunnel to Towers – Supporting America's Heroes
Orthodox Prison Ministry – Helping those in prison and their families

In addition, we contribute to all the charities supported by the National Philoptochos Society and Philoptochos Society of our Metropolis; a few being:

National Emergency Fund – Assistance during National and International Disasters
St. Basil's Academy – Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan home for kids in need
Autism Assistance Fund
Orthodox Christian Missions
Hellenic College – Holy Cross Theological School
International Orthodox Christian Charities
Orthodox Christian Fellowship – Campus Ministry
Retired Clergy and Widowed Presvyteres Fund

Our small army of women is marching forward but we need your help to do even more.

ENLIST TODAY!!

See Presvytera Denise for more information and to complete your membership form.

Christene Worley of our Ladies' Philoptochos Society presenting a donation check to Bill Chini, Mary and Martha House Director. The facility aids women and children who have suffered domestic violence and homelessness.



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 **5,096** people on the Prayer Team.

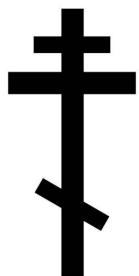


INTERESTED IN JOINING THE PRAYER TEAM?

Over 5,096 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 10 years! Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email our office at **office@stjohntpa.org** and ask to be added. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email the office or follow the link at the bottom of the daily emails to do so. If you want to forward to a friend, please use the "forward to a friend" option. Also, make sure **prayerteam365@gmail.com** has been added to your contacts so that these emails stay in your Inbox rather than going to the Junk or Spam folders.

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

MEMORIAL & KOLYVA PROTOCOL



1. Memorial Services **MUST** be scheduled through the church office at least two weeks in advance of when you want the service.
2. Memorial services for 40 days and one year will be done on the Sunday closest to the appropriate date. All other memorials will be done on the designated Memorial Sunday each month.
3. Please let the office know when you call or email whether you will be providing your own kolyva or whether you wish for the Philoptochos to provide. If a family chooses to make their own Kolyva, 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?

We are here for you!



Fr. Stavros
< 813-394-1038



Fr. John
678-637-4425>

OPT-IN ON THE MESSENGER

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

PHOTO GALLERY



Arise & Build Campaign Kickoff Luncheon—Sunday, February 23



**JOY Tweens
offsite at
Altitude
Trampoline
Park —
Sunday,
March 9.**



Our annual GOYA Lenten retreat was Saturday March 15. The theme was "I was hungry and you fed Me." As part of our retreat we packaged 8,000 meals for "Rise Against Hunger."



Fr. Stavros visited the Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) chapter at the University of South Florida on Monday, February 24.



**Fr. Stavros
hosted a lunch
for our
graduating
Goyans on
Sunday, March 9.
They discussed
the challenges of
college life.**



**The young adults put
together care packages
for our college students
at their monthly
meeting on March 10.**

Follow Us on Social Media



St. John the Baptist



Let's Get Connected for Our Latest News & Updates



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stjohntpa.org

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609

(813)876-8830

St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!

Have you downloaded our App?

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

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

We Are Live

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

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



Beware of Emails or Text Messages Asking for Gift Cards



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

Any questions? Please contact the office.

WELCOME TO OUR PARISH

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

PLEASE TEXT THE WORD

"WELCOME" TO 813-790-5950

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

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

Youth Protection Program



GREEK ORTHODOX
ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA



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

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

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

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

Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

Friend of St. John the Baptist:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

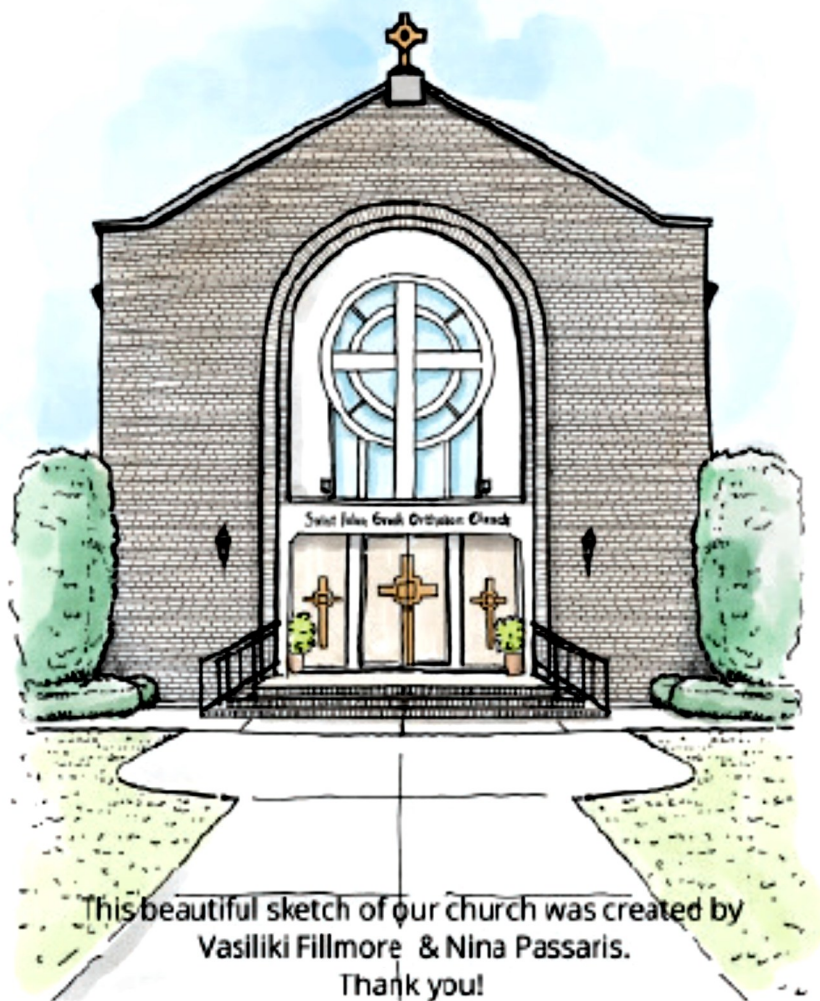
_____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$200 _____ Other

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

◀ March 2025	April 2025					May 2025 ▶
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Fast Day		1 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Choir 7:15 p.m.	2** 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner/Discussion (AHEPA/DOP)	3**	4** 9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Akathist Hymn 6:30 p.m. Divine Liturgy 8:15p.m.	5** Adult Greek School Children's Greek School
6**Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m.	7**	8** Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Great Compline 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	9** 9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner/Discussion (Young Adult/YAH)	10** Choir 7:15 p.m.	11** 9 th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	12** <u>Saturday of Lazarus</u> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Proskomide 9:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Philoctocho's Bake Sale
13** Palm Sunday Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Philoctocho's lunch/bake sale Vespers 5:00 p.m. Bridgroom Service 6:30 p.m.	14** Holy Monday 9 th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Bridgroom Service 6:30 p.m.	15** Holy Tuesday 9 th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Bridgroom Service 6:30 p.m.	16** Holy Wednesday 9 th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Holy Unction 3:00 p.m. Bridgroom Service 5:15 p.m. Holy Unction 7:00 p.m.	17** Holy Thursday Vespers Liturgy 9:15 a.m. Passion of Christ 6:30 p.m. All Night Vigil at the Cross	18** Good Friday Royal Hours 9:00 a.m. Sunday School Retreat 11:00 a.m. Apokathelosis 3:00 p.m. Lamentations 7:00 p.m. <i>Office will remain closed</i>	19** Holy Saturday Community Outreach Vespers Liturgy 8:30 a.m. Great Canon 11:00 p.m. Resurrection Service 11:45 p.m. Paschal Divine Liturgy 12:30 a.m.
20 Pascha Agape Vespers 11:00 a.m. Easter Egg Hunt 12:00p.m.	21 <i>Office will remain closed</i>	22 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	23Administrative Professionals St. George Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Choir 7:15 p.m.	24 Young Adult Discussion 7:00-9:00p.m.	25 Life-Giving Fountain Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	26 Adult Greek School Children's Greek School Young at Heart 11:30am-2:00pm
27 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday GOYA 5:00 p.m.	28 Meeting of ministry heads 6:30 p.m.	29 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	30** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. Choir 7:15 p.m.			

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

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