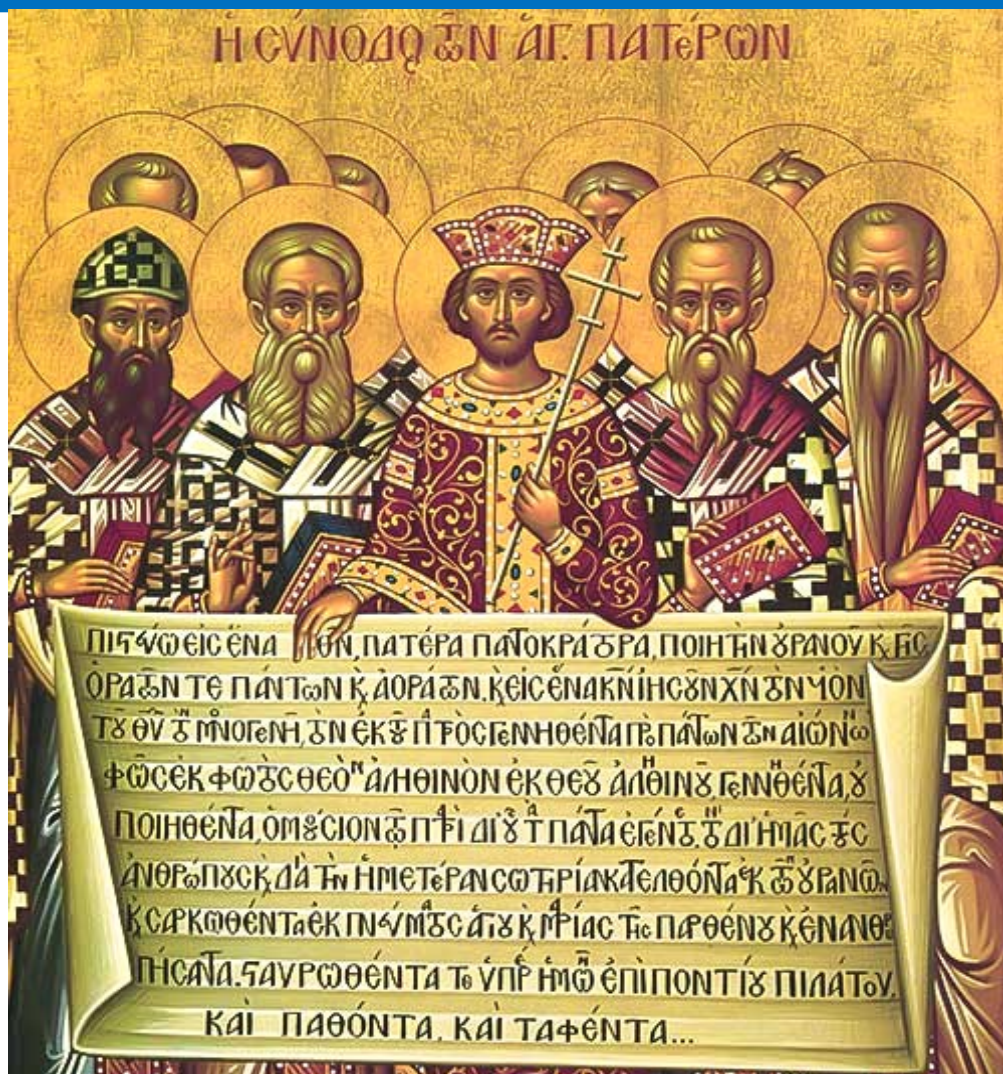




ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

— THE MESSENGER — *JUNE-JULY 2025*



HOLY FATHERS OF THE 1ST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL IN 325AD — JUNE 1, 2025

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 10:00a.m.

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Kalliope Chagaris 813-789-4134

Altar Boys

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Presbytera Denise Stefero 678-464-4833

Bible Study-Tuesday Night

Fr. John Stefero 678-637-4425

Buildings & Grounds

Tony Magos 813-957-3206

Choir

Tara Swartzbaugh, Director 813-313-0439
Ruth Losovitz, Organist 727-688-2782
Maria Xenick, Chanter 813-765-3587

Community Outreach

Greg Melton 813-967-2074

Connect Through Christ - Special Needs Ministry for Children

Dante and Lindsey Skourellos 813-765-9534

Dance Groups

H XAPA MAΣ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963
IIAPEA, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
IIANHIFYPI, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

Daughters of Penelope

Ourania Stephanides 813-546-4711

Festival

Mike Xenick 813-340-8737

Finance Committee

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

Food Pantry

Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747

Gasparilla Parking

Fady Hakim 678-294-7732

GOYA

Michael & Bessie Palios 813-523-0346

Hope/Joy

George & Zackie Ameres 813-245-3813

Joy Tweens

Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963

Junior Olympics

Dwight Forde 561-310-5034

Men's Fellowship

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Oratorical Festival

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Miguel Piniero Jr 305-632-4871

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Skip Higdon 813-391-6915

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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

A VERY SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY

Many professionals do some kind of continuing education. It might be taking a class, going to a seminar, or even something as simple as listening to a podcast or reading a book to try and stay abreast of advances in technology, new trends, or just a better way of doing what one does. I read articles and listen to podcasts, not just about Orthodoxy, but about how churches can function better with things that are not uniquely Orthodox—how to welcome visitors, websites, better preaching techniques, how to improve youth work, etc.

On a recent podcast I heard the moderator and his guest talking about how there is so much pressure in non-denominational churches for pastors to “sell” their own unique brand. There is constant pressure to outdo the church down the street, as everyone seeks to find something that will differentiate them from the rest of the non-denominational world. The guest said *“what we need to get back to in Christianity is more tradition, more structure, and a creed we can agree on.”* As I was listening, I thought to myself *“they are really giving free marketing to the Orthodox Church, they just don’t know it.”*

One of the many things I like about being Orthodox, and serving as an Orthodox priest, is that there is no pressure to come up with a “brand” or do something that makes us unique from the church down the street. We ARE unique. And our “brand” is presented the same all over the world. When it comes to preparing for our recent Lent and Holy Week journey, it is a relief to not have to think of *“how are we going to do the services?”* There is a prescribed order for how everything is to be done. And while people outside of Orthodoxy may think we are not free to express ourselves, that somehow we are captive to our Traditions, I actually look at it the opposite way. We are free to come and pray without having to, from my perspective, think of what to do, and from your perspective, to wonder what will happen on a Sunday.

The Feast of Ascension occurs forty days after the Resurrection and commemorates the day that Christ ascended into heaven forty days after His Resurrection from the dead. Ten days after Ascension, we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, which commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, enabling them to speak in all the languages on earth and thus begin to spread the Gospel to all nations.

On the Sunday in between Ascension and Pentecost, every year, we commemorate the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (which is in Turkey). And THIS year, 2025, is a special year, as we commemorate **1,700 years** since the **First Ecumenical Council**. This year, that Sunday is **June 1**.



WHAT IS AN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL?

Before we talk about the First Ecumenical Council, let’s define this term. There were seven Ecumenical Councils held between **325 and 787 A.D.** An Ecumenical Council is a gathering of the entire church, all the bishops of the entire church gathered in one place seven times, each time preceded by a controversy or disunity in the Church. The purpose of each Ecumenical Council was to clarify theology and restore unity. Each Council promulgated (developed) canons (laws) that are the basis of our theology and practice. These canons have been collected into a book called **“The Rudder”** and this is where we get our Tradition that is called **“Canon Law.”** There are canons about fasting, preparation for Communion, who can be ordained into the priesthood, when marriages can or cannot be held, the use of icons, etc. Just about every Tradition we have is found in the book of Canon Law, **“The Rudder.”**

All the Ecumenical Councils took place before **1054 A.D.** In **1054**, the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople excommunicated one another, an event now known as **“the Great Schism.”** Before 1054, there was one Church. After 1054, the Church of Constantinople became known as the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Church of Rome became known as the Roman Catholic Church. **“Ecumenical”** means **“universal”**. Before 1054, the councils were truly **“ecumenical”**—they had representatives from the entire **“ecumeni,”** the entire **“universe”** of the Church. With the church fractured into two, there could be no more ecumenical councils. The Protestant Reformation in 1517 further fractured the church, as Martin Luther broke away from the Catholic Church and formed the Protestant Church. Now there are 38,000 church groups, including “mainline” Protestants such as the Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists and Episcopalians, and now the largest group of Protestants which are non-denominational. They have no affiliations and essentially operate as independent bodies of Christians, with no **“creed”** or traditions.

Sadly, there is also a lack of unity even in the Orthodox world. There are 15 autocephalous or self-ruling churches in Orthodoxy today. The Ecumenical Patriarch, while he has the title **“First Among**

Equals,” does not have jurisdiction over the other 14 autocephalous churches. The Church of Greece, as an example, is an autocephalous church. They have their own hierarchy, they choose their own head when there is a vacancy. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America is underneath the Ecumenical Patriarch, meaning that when we have a vacancy for any Metropolitan or Archbishop, it is the Ecumenical Patriarchate that chooses who will be our Hierarchs.

Because of the recent election of Pope Leo XIV, there has been a lot of questions asked about our hierarchical structure, i.e. is the Ecumenical Patriarch like our version of the Pope? The answer is that the Ecumenical Patriarch is first among equals, he sits at the head of the table, so to speak, when all the leaders of the autocephalous churches come together. The Pope on the other hand is “first without equals.” He is not only the head of the church, but can speak for the entirety of the church. In the Orthodox Church, there is more collegiality. Even the Ecumenical Patriarch has a Patriarchal Synod over which he presides, but it is the synod that makes decisions collegially for the church.

The highest level of unity in the Orthodox Church (since there cannot be universal unity in the Christian church because there are nearly 40,000 denominations and non-denominations) would be what has been called a **“Holy and Great Council.”** This would be where all the heads of the Orthodox Churches would come together. There was an attempt made at this in 2016, when a Holy and Great Council was held in Crete. The problem at that point was that not all of the Orthodox Churches were represented. The Patriarchate of Moscow, which represents the most Orthodox Christians in the world, did not attend. Currently, the Patriarchate of Moscow has excommunicated the Patriarchate of Constantinople, so sadly there is not unity even among the Orthodox today.

Simply put, there cannot be an Ecumenical Council because of the state of Christianity in the world today.

HOW DID THE FIRST ONE COME ABOUT?

In the first three centuries after Christ, the early church was persecuted. Church communities were established and grew in secret, literally below ground, in the catacombs (sewers) of the cities. When a Christian community was discovered, members were martyred. Despite the threat of death, Christianity grew by more than 40 percent per decade. These early Christians were very serious about the faith, and their devotion was contagious. Ironically, in a country that doesn't persecute Christians (at least not yet), Christianity has been in decline for decades. Because of the persecution of the churches, and also the relative difficulty there was in communicating between communities—no email, transportation, newspapers, etc.—as the church grew, the various

church communities in cities throughout the inhabited world had little communication with each other. There were no uniform standards or traditions for the practice of Christianity. There was no New Testament yet! The Bible is VERY important, but for those Christian groups who say that Bible is EVERYTHING, there was no New Testament Scriptures for the first three centuries of Christianity, the time in Christian history when the Church grew the most!

In 313, the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the legal religion of the Roman Empire, through the Edict of Milan. As the Church emerged from hiding and there was now open

communication between the church communities throughout the empire, it was clear that there was discord in beliefs and practices of the church. Various bishops were teaching things that seemed to contradict the teachings of Christ. For example, a priest named Arias was teaching a doctrine that held Jesus Christ as being created by God, and therefore distinct from God the Father, which contradicted traditional belief in the Holy Trinity. Various fragments of **“scripture”** were being held onto in different communities. And Pascha (Easter, the Resurrection) was celebrated on different dates and in different ways in different communities.

In 325, the Emperor Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Byzantium, thus ending the Roman Empire and beginning the Byzantine Empire. While Byzantium was being rebuilt (a city that Constantine would rename Constantinople, which we Orthodox still call by that name, though now it is called Istanbul by the rest of the world), Constantine set up his interim capital in Nicomedia. And nearby Nicomedia was the city of Nicaea. Constantine desired to gather all the bishops of the world together for an **“Ecumenical Council”** to unify belief and practice in a church that was divided by heresies. Nicaea was chosen because of its proximity to Nicomedia, so that Constantine could be an active participant.

318 bishops from around the inhabited world came to the Council. There were three Apostolic sees that were established in the first century—Rome, Antioch and Alexandria (which is in North Africa). Constantinople would be added in the fourth century and Jerusalem in the fifth century. All had representation at the First Ecumenical Council.

St. Athanasios the Great, St. Nicholas of Myra, St. Spyridon of Trimythous, St. Alexander of Alexandria, and St. Paphnutius of Egypt were all saints that took part in the **First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.** Emperor Constantine, who is responsible for



arranging the Council is also a saint.

THREE THINGS THAT CAME OUT OF THE FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

There were **three** important decisions that were made by the First Ecumenical Council, which form the backbone of the Orthodox Church today. **These are:** **a)** The Canon of the New Testament; **b)** The date of Pascha; and **c)** The Nicene Creed. It would not be a stretch to say that the First Ecumenical Council might be the most important since the time of Christ in terms of its affect on the Church.

— THE NEW TESTAMENT —

Did you know that there were more than four Gospels that were written? We are all familiar with Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but there were also Gospels attributed to Mary Magdalene, Thomas, and Nicodemus, among others. The Protevangelion of St. James contains most of our theology of the Virgin Mary, and while we read it as Tradition and not heresy, it is not included in the New Testament. There were also many “**epistles**,” not only those written by St. Paul. The First Ecumenical Council decided what would and would not be included in the **New Testament Canon of Scripture**.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are called “**the synoptic Gospels**,” because the content of the three is similar. There are certain things that are unique to each Gospel, such as Matthew writing about the Magi while Luke wrote about the shepherds at the Nativity. Each has a slightly different account of the crucifixion, including words that Jesus said from the cross. There is, however, a lot of agreement between the accounts. Much of them are identical. The Council decided that it would be appropriate to include these three Gospels in the New Testament. The Gospel of John also had overlap with the other three, but is called “**the theological Gospel**” as it contains more theology, teachings of Jesus on the Eucharist and the nature of the Holy Trinity. It was the fourth Gospel included in the New Testament. The other Gospels were excluded from the New Testament, as each was told from a unique perspective that was not corroborated by the other Gospel writers.

Next came the Epistles. There were many that were written, and many of those were attributed to St. Paul. There were epistles by St. James, St. Peter and St. John that were also included. There were epistles by others like Barnabas and Diognetus which were excluded. *(These epistles, as an example, have been collected in a group of writings called “The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers.”)* They have some validity, even though they are not included in the New Testament.

The last book accepted in the New Testament was Revelation. This is a vision of St. John the Evangelist of the Apocalypse. It was accepted with the provision that it never be read in the Church. Since in most

places, it was only the clergy who could read, the people never heard the contents of this book, and to this day, the book of Revelation is not read in any of our worship services. Fun fact about Scripture—the books of the New Testament were not divided into chapters and verses until sometime in the Middle Ages. This is why when we introduce the Scripture readings at our divine services, we say “*The Reading is from the Gospel of St. Matthew*,” or “*The reading is from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans*” but we don’t give chapter and verse—they were added much later.

There are some books of the Bible that the Orthodox accept (as well as the Catholics) that are not accepted by the Protestants. These books are commonly referred to as the Deuterocanonical Books or the Apocrypha. You will not find these books in most Bibles you find in the store. They are contained in the full version of the Orthodox Study Bible.

— THE DATE OF PASCHA —



The crucifixion is dated to the **13th of the Jewish month of Nisan**. The Resurrection is dated to the **15th, two days later**. Why two days on the calendar, but we consider the Resurrection on the 3rd day? That’s because in the Jewish/Byzantine way of counting, the day something happens is the first day. So the first day of the crucifixion was the day it happened. The second day was the 14th and the third day was the 15th. (In the Jewish/Byzantine way of counting age, all of us are a year older than we really are. Because this method of counting counts the year of life one is in. So, if I’m 53, I’m in my 54th year of life, but I won’t be counted as 54 until I’ve completed that 54th year of life. In the Jewish/Byzantine way of counting, I would already be considered 54. As a funny aside, that’s cool when you are 20 and want to be 21. (*I don’t want to age now any faster than I am, I’ll take the American way of counting my age.*)

Some of the early churches were celebrating the Resurrection on the 15th of Nisan each year, regardless of what day of the week that fell on. The First Ecumenical Council decided that Pascha would be celebrated on the Sunday after the first full moon that occurred after the vernal equinox. Everyone would celebrate Pascha on the same day, and it would be a Sunday. Where the dates now are different is that we still calculate Pascha according to the Old Calendar, which is 13 days behind, so that the equinox is actually April 3, rather than March 21. *There are many long and elaborate articles on how the date of Pascha is fixed and why there are differing dates in the different churches. This is a VERY basic summary. Also, personally, the dating of Pascha is a minor thing. It doesn’t really affect my faith, as much as the other things that came out of the First Ecumenical Council, namely the New Testament Canon of Scripture, and what follows, the Nicene Creed.*

— THE NICENE CREED —

The most important thing that came out of the First Ecumenical Council is the **Nicene Creed**, our basic

statement of belief. The Creed was drafted in 325 and put into its final form at the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 381, which is why the Creed is formally known as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, but in short, it is called **"The Nicene Creed."** This statement of just over 200 words is a concise statement of what we believe as Orthodox Christians. If someone asks you, "What do you believe?" this is the best answer. *I have written extensively on the Creed for the Prayer Team in May, and will conclude this unit in early June. This article is a summary of the much longer exploration of the Creed.*



I BELIEVE

There is a difference between faith and knowledge, what we believe and what we know. Knowledge is based on extensive information. Faith is based on some knowledge, either personal knowledge or knowledge gleaned from someone else, but this knowledge is limited. Let me give a concrete example that hits close to home. There are 5,917 colleges and universities in the United States of America. Just in the state of Florida, there are over 400 four year colleges, 86 community colleges and 136 trade schools. Our son is going to go to college this fall at the University of South Florida (USF). He applied to five colleges. He visited three colleges. And he decided to go to USF. Is that a decision based on knowledge, or faith? I would say it is more on faith—because five colleges out of five thousand, or even five out of four hundred colleges looked at before making a decision is a negligible amount. There is definitely some faith, but there is also some knowledge, as well as the experience of others who have gone to USF to draw from.

Most people who get married date a handful or less of people before deciding who to marry. That is an infinitesimal sample of people who one could marry. So there is a lot of faith (as opposed to exhaustive knowledge) that goes into getting married.

The point here is that the idea of believing is not just something we ascribe to God, we ascribe belief/faith into other decisions we make where we don't have exhaustive knowledge. On the subject of faith, I've never tried any of the other **"faiths"**—Judaism, Buddhism, etc.—before making the choice to be a Christian. I don't experience in any other faith than this one. So being a Christian is an act of faith. And being an Orthodox Christian, which I also have been my entire life, is an act of faith. Those who enter into Orthodox after being part of another denomination do so with some knowledge, certainly more knowledge than I had when I became Orthodox and so they become Orthodox with more conviction than someone who is born into it, and that's a good thing. It's a good thing that we have people who are entering into our church with knowledge of other denominations.

IN ONE GOD

The idea of a "god" or "higher power" was not unique to the Jews, who followed after God. Many cultures, including the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans had many gods. Even the ancient Hebrews had gods in their homes. This is why the first of the Ten Commandments is **"I am the Lord your God. . . You shall have no other gods before Me."** (Exodus 20:2-3) Our one God is a Trinitarian God, meaning One God, in three persons. The majority of the Creed is dedicated to defining the three persons of the One Triune God, and the majority of that is spent on the person of Jesus Christ.

THE FATHER

The Father is defined as the Creator of heaven and earth, everything visible and invisible. The Son and the Spirit are co-creators, they are uncreated, and pre-eternal along with the Father. Setting the Father as Creator is important, because the first thing one needs to believe in order to be a Christian is that Someone greater than us made us. We are not the center of the universe, nor are we randomly put here. We are the handiwork and intentional creation authored by our Creator, God.

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is best presented in the opening verses of Genesis and the Gospel of John. In **Genesis 1:1-3**, we read, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the waters. And God said "Let there be light"; and there was light.* "God created" refers to God the Father. The "Spirit of God" refers to the Holy Spirit. And "God said," the voice of God refers to the Word of God, who is also Jesus Christ.

The Beginning of the Gospel of John offers some clarity regarding these verses from Genesis. **John 1:1-3** reads: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.*

John 1:14 identifies the **"Word"** as Jesus Christ: *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.*

If we replace the **"Word"** with **"Christ,"** it reads *"In the beginning was Christ, and Christ was with God, and Christ was God. Christ was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Christ, and without Christ was not anything made that was made. . . And Christ became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father."*

THE SON

Most of the controversy which preceded the First Ecumenical Council centered on the person of Jesus Christ. Was He fully God? Fully man? Created? Uncreated? Controversy over the Son would erupt again and cause the Fourth Ecumenical Council to be held at **Chalcedon in 451**. The majority of the Creed focuses on Jesus Christ and includes such phrases as:

Only-Begotten Son of God—This means that Christ is the Son of God, and God is the Father.

True God of true God—Christ is God

Begotten, not created—Christ is not a lesser being to God the Father, He is uncreated

Of one essence with the Father—There are two Greek words that were argued over.

Homoousios meaning of the same essence, and **homoiousios** meaning of similar essence. The word **homoousios** is what ended up in the Creed, that Christ is of the same essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. People have a hard time with the word “**essence**.” The best way to understand this is to consider the sun. We know the sun by its energy, but not by its essence. We can feel the warmth of the sun, we experience the light that the sun provides. But we can’t look at the sun and gaze upon its essence. And even the energy of the sun we have to take in measured amounts so that we do not get burned. We know the Son of God by His energies, but the essence of God will be experienced only in eternal life. Adam and Eve experienced the essence of God in the Garden of Eden when they walked intimately with Him.

Was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man—In order to save us, Christ had to become one of us. God’s plan for salvation had the Son incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and becoming a human being in the same way we enter the world, as a newborn baby.

Crucified for us under Pontius Pilate—There is a reference to Pontius Pilate, and the reason for this is to place Jesus Christ in an historical context. Christ walked the earth at a certain time in history, the time when Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea. Historians will agree that Pontius Pilate did exist, and that the crucifixion happened. It’s the Resurrection that is a matter of faith.

Suffered and was buried—Jesus suffered and died. He had the full human experience of pain and suffering and He met the medical definition of dying. His Body shut down, He stopped breathing, and died. And was buried.

Rose on the third day—What is a matter of faith in all of this is that Jesus rose from the dead on the third

day. The whole Christian message is based on these words, that the Son of God died and was resurrected, and because of this, when we die, we can be resurrected as well.

Ascended into heaven—Forty days after the Resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven and sat back down at the right hand of the Father, where He was since the beginning.

Will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead—Christ was pre-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The end of Creation will be a return of Christ to judge the living and the dead, meaning He will judge those who are still on earth and will judge all those who have ever lived on earth.



THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit was sent down to earth on Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is the Creator of life, meaning that when life is created, a soul is placed into each human being, and that is the Holy Spirit within each of us. In the Church, the Holy Spirit is the One who effects all of our sacraments. The Holy Spirit is the way that we encounter Christ, and Christ is the way we encounter the Father. There was (and still is) controversy over the section on the Holy Spirit. In the Orthodox version of the Nicene Creed, we say “**And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of Life, who proceeds from the Father, and who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified.**” In the year 591, the church of Rome inserted the words “**and the Son**” or in Latin “**Filioque**” to the Creed, so that it reads, “**And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is worshipped and glorified.**” The addition of the Filioque to the Creed changed the confession of faith and drove a wedge between the church of Rome (later known as the Catholic Church) and the church of Constantinople (later known as the Eastern Orthodox Church). While the addition of this word may not mean much to you and I, the fact is that our confessions of faith between the Orthodox and the Catholics are not the same. And what we, the Orthodox, confess, is the Creed as it was written in Nicaea and edited to final form in Constantinople in 381.

THE CHURCH

The “**church**” is mentioned in the Creed. Specifically “**one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.**”

One means unified.

Holy means set apart from all other organizations and groups as the entity whose sole work is to spread the

Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations. Everything we do in the church must have this as the ultimate aim.

Catholic in this case does not mean "Roman Catholic," it means "**universal**." We are a church that is open for anyone to join. We do not have an open Communion, that is, one has to be baptized and chrismated Orthodox in order to commune. We also do not agree with all points of view on every subject.

Apostolic means that we trace our foundations to the time of the Apostles. Our bishops have "apostolic succession," meaning they trace their lineage to the Apostles. One cannot appoint himself a bishop.

We don't "**believe**" in the church per se. We believe in the Holy Trinity. However, we believe that the Church is necessary in the life of each Christian. We exist in community. As the saying goes, one Christian is no Christian. Also, it is only in the context of community where we can receive the Body and Blood of Christ, the Eucharist, as well as the other sacraments. We believe in the oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolic link of the church, as well as the necessity of the Church.

BAPTISM

Since the time of Abraham, when God made the first covenant, there has been a mark made on God's people. In the Old Testament, that mark was circumcision. In the New Testament, the mark is baptism. In the Creed, we "**acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins**." We don't believe in baptism, as in this later part of the Creed, the verb changes from "**pistevo**" (I believe) to "**omologo**" (I confess or acknowledge). We acknowledge that baptism is the way in which we enter into the life of the Church, following the Great Commission of Christ that all are to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. That begins with each of us, and then goes beyond us as we are supposed to go and baptize "**all nations**."

LIFE OF THE AGE TO COME

The verb for the last sentence of the Creed is "**prosdoko**," which means "**I look to**" or "**I look forward to**" and it pertains to the "**life of the age to come**." Again, our belief, the "**pistevo**" (I believe) is in God. But part of why we believe in God is a belief that there is something coming after this life, eternal life. And all the things we believe about God as the path to this eventuality. In order to be accepted into the kingdom of God, there needed to be a creation of the world, a redemption of the world through Jesus Christ, a church that is led by the Holy Spirit, and a baptism to bring us into the life of the church. But the ultimate aim in life is eternal life, the life of the age to come.

We Don't Need Change—We Need Improvement

Things are constantly changing in this world. A new phone becomes obsolete after only a month or two.

There is always something bigger, better and

different. This is true in just about everything except what we have confessed in the Creed. The Holy Trinity has not changed, the salvific work of Christ has not changed, the grace of the Holy Spirit has not changed, the nature of the Trinity has not changed, the work of the church has not changed and the ultimate destination has not changed. The Creed, written in the fourth century, has not changed since the fourth century, and there is no need for it to change, because what we believe does not change. Other denominations are changing basic beliefs, redefining the Trinity, constantly changing the ecclesiology and theology of the church. We don't do any of that. There are a few changes in how we practice our faith—and I'm not talking about the Divine Liturgy, the sacraments, fasting, and the canons of the church, these haven't changed. But we use electronic media, the internet, and technology to spread the faith, and to share it. There are new resources for how to teach the faith, and new ways to get people engaged in the life of the church. What doesn't change is the core purpose of the church (**to make disciples**), the core message of the Church (**which is essentially John 3:16**), or the core belief of the Church (**the Creed**).



A Personal Relationship with Jesus Christ

If any change is needed in the Church, it is not from those who came before us and the theology they shared with us. The Bible, the Divine Liturgy, the Canons, and the Creed do not need improvement. What needs improvement is our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Are the words of the Creed just words on a paper, or things we believe with all our hearts?

We are often quick to judge other Christian denominations. No one has our theology, or history, our services, our canons and our Creed. No one. But what other have that we Orthodox do not have right is zeal and enthusiasm. If we could combine the theology and history of the Orthodox, the administration of the Roman Catholics (no one has more hospitals or schools, or colleges than the Catholics) and the zeal of the Protestants, we'd have one incredible church.

Actions, Not Just Words

And finally, the Creed cannot just be words on a paper. What believe has to translate into action. What we believe has to become who we are and what we do. So it is not only "**I believe**" but "**I do**." "**I do**" based on no belief doesn't lead to everlasting life. Neither does "**I believe**" with no "**I do**." There has to be both.

Conclusion

June 1 will be the only 100 year interval commemoration of the **First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea** on our lifetimes. What an amazing event to pause and remember—the **Creed** (what we believe), the **New Testament** (one of the big ways we learn about what we believe) and the **date of Pascha** (the central event we celebrate each year) all have their foundation in the **First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, in the year 325, 1700 years ago!**

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.**

Well, we made it! This will complete the deep dive into these beautiful verses from St. Peter's Epistle one phrase at a time. This month, we conclude with one just word of **verse 11** of St. Peter's writing: "**Amen.**"

Have you ever paused to consider the simple word "**Amen**"? It's a word we often say without much thought, a reflexive response at the end of a prayer or a blessing. "**Amen**" is a word used so frequently, even casually, that some may think that it simply means, "the end." This word is much more than just the standard thing to say, or the appropriate ending of a prayer. What does it truly mean? And why do we say it?

"**Amen**" is one of the few words of scripture which is written in its original Hebrew form. In fact, it is practically a universal word, having been adopted directly from the Hebrew into Greek, Latin, English, Spanish, and many other languages. Found both in the Old and the New Testaments, the word "**Amen**" affirms what is true or illustrates something said that is of absolute certainty.

When we say "**Amen**" at the end of a prayer, we're essentially asserting the truth of what we've just prayed. We're saying, "Yes, Lord, I believe this. I agree with this. Let it be so." It's deepness even has been explained to mean "I would stake my life on what I believe or what I just said." At church (or where two or three are gathered in his name), "**Amen**" takes on even richer significance. It's not only a personal affirmation; it is a communal one. The word "**Amen**" is said over thirty times in the Divine Liturgy. When a congregation says "**Amen**" together, they're uniting their voices in a powerful declaration of faith and unity.

"**Amen**" was used in Ancient times in a legally binding way. The Gospels record Jesus saying it often, and with the depth to convey spiritual truths about who He is. Whenever it is said by Jesus, He is fundamentally binding Himself under an oath that what He says is true. Further, Jesus is recorded as saying "**Amen**" at the beginning of His own statements, rather than in response to what someone else said; thus, it is not an expression of agreement, but a literary device for

emphasizing what will follow.

For example, in one of the greatest teachings of Christ, Jesus says to the Jewish leadership, "*Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.*" John 8:58 The fact that Jesus started His teaching with a double "**Amen**" would have certainly gotten everyone's attention. According to the Orthodox Study Bible, what follows "**Amen, amen**" was a direct, explicit, and unmistakable claim to perfect equality with God. So shocked and outraged were the listeners, they picked up stones ready to kill Jesus right then.

Jesus introduces His teachings with the word "**Amen**" on nearly seventy occasions in the Gospels (thirty times in Matthew, thirteen in Mark, six in Luke, and twenty in John, where the amen is always doubled). Where the prophets never spoke on their own authority often saying, "Thus says the Lord," Jesus often says, "*Amen I say to you.*" Although some scholars see this merely as a method of giving emphasis to a statement, in actuality it reveals a significant part of Jesus' implicit teaching about Himself. When Jesus says, "*Truly I say to you*" dozens of times, He is asserting that *His* words are true because *He* says them.

The next time you pray, pause for a moment and consider the significance of the word "**Amen.**" It's more than just a customary phrase; it's a powerful spiritual tool that can amplify the impact of your prayers. It can stand alone as a declaration of faith, a seal of approval, and a call for divine action.

Thank you, St. Peter, for these words we have spent so much time with this year.

Thank you, readers, for giving me the opportunity to go deeper into these verses that are meaningful to me.

May your prayers be filled with the power of God's Spirit and the assurance of His love.

Amen!

Maria



ARISE & BUILD

HAVE YOU MADE YOUR COMMITMENT YET?

~Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! Psalm 133:1~



Unity and oneness are themes in our church. In our Divine Services, we pray for **"the unity of all"** and **"having prayed for the unity of the faith."** The entire Divine Liturgy, save for the Nicene Creed, is a communal **"let us"** – let us

pray, let us ask, let us worship, let us lift up our hearts, let us bow our heads, let us love one another, let us give thanks, let us draw near, let us depart in peace. One of the phrases we hear over and over again is **"let us commit"** and in the case of the petitions, we are called to **"let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God."**

~We have demonstrated a need to church expansion – the church does not hold everyone on Sundays and continues to grow.

~We have demonstrated a need to create a ministry building to allow our ministries to thrive in a dedicated space. We have many ministries and lack proper space for them to meet and thrive because we do not have full-time use of our facilities.

~We are choosing not to continue with the present tenant because they have damaged the building significantly; we are not able to use our facilities full-time, including the Kourmolis Center; we are now debt-free and therefore not dependent on a tenant to pay the mortgage we no longer have.

~We have a need to update our facilities. The school building hasn't had any updates since 2003. The Kourmolis Center hasn't been updated since 1981. And much of the church has remained the same since 1956.

*~We have demonstrated due diligence in preparing and presenting the **Arise & Build Capital Campaign** over the course of the last year, and prior to that, we've spent years developing our vision for this expansion program.*

*~We have received to date **\$5.4M** in commitments for the **Arise & Build Capital Campaign** and collected nearly **\$2M** in funds.*

The overall cost of this project is **\$7.8M**. This is a difference from the initial **\$6M** that was budgeted. Why? There are three reasons:

1. The initial wave of fundraising went better than expected.
2. Because of this, it was decided that the front of the church would be done in brick (rather than the initial stucco that is shown in the renderings) in order to match the rest of the building. This increases the cost of the front of the church. However, in making an update that is going to last for generations, this is really the best option. This

is approximately **\$500K**. The Metropolis Architecture Committee also asked us to change a couple of things, which will make our design more cohesive, such as extending the walkway to the entire length of the ministry building, so that it is symmetrical. Do it once, and do it right!

3. We also decided that it would be prudent to build in a 10% contingency for cost overruns, which is **\$780K**.

Work on the ministry building is scheduled to begin this July. We are presently lining up the contractors who will do this job. The church expansion is scheduled to begin right after **2026 Pascha**. We are beginning to interview architects and contractors as well as beginning the permit process for the church expansion.

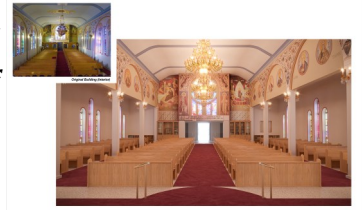


The project is scheduled to commence in July and finish **by the end of 2027**, a 30-month build, after which we can look forward to:

- a. A fully functioning ministry building
- b. An expanded church sanctuary with additional seating, a narthex, a bathroom, accessibility ramps, repaired dome, new HVAC system, and new sound system.
- c. An updated Kourmolis Center
- d. An outdoor Prayer Garden
- e. A covered pavilion
- f. A new playground
- g. Additional parking
- h. Updated landscaping, fencing, paving

*In order for all of this proceed without interruption, we need to meet our goal of **\$7.8M**. We have received commitments from a large percentage of our community, but we are still looking for commitments from everyone.*

This is OUR church, and just like we do everything as a community when we worship, it is time for US to commit to this project, all of us. It's not the amount that matters. What matters is that we all participate. So that when this project is done, we can look at it and celebrate that we all participated in it.



The goal is 100 percent participation from our parishioners. One hundred percent of us will benefit from this and we need 100 percent commitment! The Psalm verse quoted above talks about unity, and how good and pleasant it is when we dwell in unity. This project will help 100 percent of our community when it is completed, both now and for generations to come. Even as the work is being done, it should unite us. Let us work towards that unity by all making our commitment to **Arise & Build**.

Please make your **Arise & Build** commitment today!

~GIVING~

The hardest subject to talk about in church is money and giving. It's like we see all encouragement to give as an attack on what we own. I read this article, which I found very inspirational. It has some challenging thoughts. But this is an area where we need to be challenged, whether it is our stewardship, or our contribution to the Arise & Build Capital Campaign. Please take a few moments to read this and may God speak generosity in our hearts as we reflect on it.

You don't give for God's sake. You give for your sake. "The purpose of tithing is to teach you to always put God first in your lives." (Deuteronomy 14:23TLB). In what ways does tithing teach you? Consider the simple act of writing a check or making an online gift. First you enter the date. Already you are reminded that you are a time-bound creature and every possession you have will rust or burn. Best to give it while you can.

Then you enter the name of the one to whom you are giving the money. If the bank would take it, you'd write "God." But they won't, so you write or type in the name of the church or group that has earned your trust.

Next comes the amount. Ah, this is the moment of truth. You're more than a person with a bank account. You're David, placing the stone in the sling (a reference to David, a shepherd boy, defeating a giant named Goliath). You're Peter, one foot on the boat, one foot on the lake (a reference to Peter stepping out to walk on water). You're a little boy in a big crowd. A picnic lunch is all the Teacher needs, but it's all you have (a reference to someone stepping forward to offer five loaves and two fish when there was no food, and Jesus made a miracle and fed 5,000).

What will you do? Sling the stone? Take the step? Give the meal? Careful now, don't move too quickly. You aren't just entering an amount. . .you are making a confession. A confession that God owns it all anyway.

And then there's the place where you can enter in what your giving is for. Hard to now what to put. It's for the light bills and literature. A little bit of outreach. A little bit of salary.

Better yet, it's partial payment for what the church has done to help you raise your family...keep your own priorities sorted out...tune you in to His ever-nearness.

Or perhaps, best yet, it's for you. It's a moment for you to clip yet another strand from the rope of earth so that when He returns you won't be tied up.

An excerpt from 'When God Whispers Your Name' by Max Lucado



LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR JUNE-JULY

Sunday, June 1	<u>HOLY FATHERS OF THE FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL</u> Orthros 8:45 a.m.	Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, June 7	<u>THE SATURDAY OF SOULS</u> Orthros 7:45 a.m. (Note: We are starting one hour earlier)	Divine Liturgy 9:00 a.m.
Sunday, June 8	<u>HOLY PENTECOST</u> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Kneeling Vespers 11:00a.m.	Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.
Sunday, June 15	<u>ALL SAINTS DAY/FATHER'S DAY</u> Orthros 8:45 a.m.	Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, June 18	Paraklesis 6:00p.m.	
Sunday, June 22	Orthros 8:45 a.m.	Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Tuesday, June 24	<u>NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST</u> Orthros 9:00 a.m.	Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, June 29	<u>STS. PETER AND PAUL</u> Orthros 8:45 a.m.	Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Monday, June 30	<u>HOLY APOSTLES</u> Orthros 9:00 a.m.	Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, July 6	Orthros 8:45 a.m.	Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, July 9	Paraklesis 6:00p.m.	
Saturday, July 12	<u>ST. PAISIOS</u> Orthros 9:00 a.m.	Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, July 13	Orthros 8:45 a.m.	Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Thursday, July 17	<u>ST. MARINA</u> Orthros 9:00 a.m.	Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, July 20	<u>THE PROPHET ELIAS (ELIJAH)</u> Orthros 8:45 a.m.	Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, July 27	<u>ST. PANTELEIMON</u> Orthros 8:45 a.m.	Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Friday, August 1	<u>HOLY CROSS</u> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Paraklesis 6:00p.m.	Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, August 3	Orthros 8:45a.m.	Divine Liturgy 10:00a.m.



LITURGICAL NOTES FOR JUNE-JULY

Sunday, June 1—Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council—We pay homage to the collective triumph of the Church over false doctrine. The first Ecumenical Council authored the Creed. It took place in Nicaea in the year 325. This is why we call the Creed “The Nicene Creed.” This Council also established the date of Pascha and decided on which books would comprise the Bible. This commemoration is always done the Sunday after Ascension.

Saturday, June 7- Saturday of Souls—There are four Saturdays set aside during the year for us to honor our loved ones who have fallen asleep. One of them is the Saturday before Pentecost, this year on June 7. We will have Divine Liturgy and a memorial service that day. Please send the list of names of those whom you would like to have commemorated (separate sheet provided). You may bring kolyva as you wish. We will not be having a communal kolyva (hopefully this will resume next year), so each family will take their own back. We will begin the Liturgy at 9:00am. *(Please note earlier start time)*

Sunday, June 8, Pentecost—This feast commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles fifty days after Pascha, filling them with power, strength, wisdom and courage to spread the GOOD NEWS of Jesus Christ to the entire world. Pentecost is the celebration of the birth of the Christian Church!!! A special Vespers Service will be held after Divine Liturgy on Pentecost (June 8), where three prayers will be offered, asking for the Holy Spirit to descend upon us as we mark this feast day. As a reminder, we do NOT kneel in church until AFTER the Divine Liturgy on Pentecost (we do not kneel at the Divine Liturgy on Pentecost) at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says “Again and again ON BENDED KNEES let us pray to the Lord.” There is no fasting the week after Pentecost. There is a fast for the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul. It begins after All Saints Day, June 16 and ends June 28. The length of the fast period is determined by the date of Pascha each year.

Sunday, June 15, Sunday of All Saints—The period of the Pentecostarion is now complete with the commemoration of “All Saints.” This feast not only honors all the saints who have ever lived, as well as the ones who are unknown. It reminds us that our goal is for all of us to become saints. This day also coincides with the feast of the Holy Apostles.

Wednesday, June 18 and July 9, Paraklesis—We will offer our monthly Paraklesis on Wednesday, June 18, and Wednesday July 9, from 6:00-7:00 p.m. We offer Paraklesis once a month, so we can pray for all of our parishioners by name. You are encouraged to attend this service to pray for any names and needs that you may have.

Tuesday, June 24, Nativity of St. John the Baptist—In most years, we do not celebrate the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Holy Trinity in our parish, instead going to Holy Trinity in Clearwater to celebrate with our neighboring parish. However, this year, the Feast of Holy Trinity (always the day after Pentecost) coincides with the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of our parish. Thus, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy on Tuesday, June 24 in our parish and celebrate both feast days together.

Sunday, June 29, Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, the Paramounts of the Apostles—Sts. Peter and Paul are the two greatest of the Apostles who were at one time two of the greatest sinners. St. Peter denied Christ and St. Paul was persecuting and killing Christians. God used these men for good despite their sins, a lesson for all of us. Their feast day is June 29.

Monday, June 30, Synaxis of the Holy Apostles— On June 30, we honor ALL of the 12 Apostles. Each of the 12 have a separate feastday but on this day we honor all 12 together.

Saturday, July 12 St. Paisios— St. Paisios is one of the newest Orthodox saints, having been canonized in 2015. He lived from 1924-1994, was a monk on Mount Athos and was spiritual father to thousands of people. Miracles have been attributed to him.

Thursday, July 17 St. Marina— St. Marina brought many people to Christ. She was tortured for her faith. And each time she was tortured, she was healed. She was martyred in the third century.

Sunday, July 20-Prophet Elias—Prophet Elias (also called Elijah) lived in the 9th century BC and defended the worship of the God of Abraham over the polytheistic god Baal. Elijah was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot, meaning that he did not die. His story is recounted in the Old Testament book of I Kings. Elias appeared with Moses at the Transfiguration of Christ (celebrated August 6).

Sunday, July 27-St. Panteleimon-St. Panteleimon lived in the late second and early third centuries. He is one of our unmercenary healers, a gifted physician who went place to place healing people for no cost. The Emperor tried to kill him in several different ways and each time he escaped, until eventually he was beheaded.



Names to be Commemorated for Saturday of Souls



Please write the names of all those who you wish to be commemorated
in the Saturday of Souls Service, June 7.
Please mail into the office by June 1st or bring to the church as soon as possible.



_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

CONSIDER PUTTING ST. JOHN IN YOUR WILL

Legacy Program

What is a Legacy Program? It means, simply, to leave the church in your will or estate. Why a legacy? It is a way to leave something of yourself for perpetuating the church. The church is important in all of our lives and what a great gift it would be if each of us left something of ourselves to the church, so that in essence, we are giving in perpetuity.

Whether that is an amount, or a percent of your estate is not what matters. Many parishes have been greatly aided by estate giving. While we have received a few bequests over the years, we haven't received very many. A legacy gift can be left to be used either for general expenses, a building fund, or our endowment. Just specify when you make the gift how you'd like it to be used. For more information, please see Fr. Stavros.

*We started a legacy program here at St. John several years ago, to encourage people to leave a bequest to our parish in their estate. Such "legacies" can be left anonymously, or with a name, so that we can honor that person or family while they are alive. We recently were notified of a large bequest that will eventually come to our parish. **It is for \$100,000.** I asked the party that is offering this bequest to write a short testimonial of what is motivating them to offer this substantial gift. It appears below. We are grateful to this anonymous family for their generous bequest to our church.*

Why Our Legacy Gift? By an Anonymous Steward of St. John

Some would say: Who cares? Others: What legacy! While others: Tell me more.

For my wife and I, it is a matter of giving back for all we have been given. Oh, yeah: Trite.

No not trite! Think about it, we all have a story, and it all begins with: Thanking God. Many have heard me say that when at war, I never found an atheist in a foxhole! It's true, when the chips are down, we are all looking for His Help, Guidance, Love, and Blessings. We (and I could say all of us) have much to be thankful for during our lives. A few examples:

The time when as teenagers we were almost killed in an auto accident.

The time when a father almost succumbed to tuberculosis.

A wife who recovered from cancer that was discovered by accident.

What about a human-wave attack in Vietnam? Wasn't Somebody watching over us?

These, and many more, are examples of when we were NOT in control, but He, yes God, helped and brought us through. So how do we, mere mortals, try to repay His blessings? The answer:

By Being Part of the St. John Legacy Program

Just volunteer to give a gift to the Church as part of our final wishes in a Trust or Will. We are taught that we should be tithing 10% of our goods to the Church. Many can't do that during these trying times. However, we all can give a gift to the Church as part of our "Legacy". The gift may be anonymous or openly given. The key is to give cheerfully.

For our part, we know that all of our treasures, meager as they may be, were provided through God's Grace, and our Legacy gift to St. John says, in a small way: Thank you Lord for all you have given and all that you will give in the future.

May God Bless all who have read this small paragraph of thanks.

~An anonymous Legacy participant

COMMUNITY NEWS

Tuesday morning Bible Study with Fr. Stavros will be on hiatus for the summer. It will resume on September 9.

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 June, the dates are: Tuesday June 3, Tuesday June 10, Tuesday June 17 & Tuesday June 24. For July, the dates are: Tuesday July 1, Tuesday July 8, Tuesday July 15, Tuesday July 22 & Tuesday July 29.**

"ORTHODOXY 201 CLASS" - Father John will conduct a 6-week class beginning Thursday, May 1st at 6:30 pm in the Church Hall. This class is intended for Inquirers who are interested in learning more about the Orthodox Faith and for those interested in being received into the Orthodox Church. It will supplement Father Stavros' "Orthodoxy 101 Classes." Please contact the Church Office to sign up for the class. Materials will be provided for the course. **The classes for June will be on Thursday June 5 & Thursday June 12. The classes will be from 6:30pm-8:00pm.**

GOYA Meeting June 1- The June GOYA meeting will be **Sunday, June 1 from 5:00-7:30pm.** We will welcome our new GOYans and bid farewell to the graduating ones. We will also be planning for the Junior Olympics. The Junior Olympics deadline is June 2, for all of our GOYans who are participating in the Junior Olympics.

Junior Olympics Help Needed- The annual GOYA Sunstate Junior Olympics will be held on **June 6-8**, hosted by our parish. Dwight Forde heads the ministry. We need help from volunteers for the weekend. Please utilize the SignUpGenius connected to this constant contact to volunteer some time that weekend. We need lots of help and you don't need to have a child in GOYA to help out.

Young Adults-Our Young Adult Group will meet for dinner/discussion on **Thursday, June 19 from 7:00-9:00 p.m.** in the Kourmolis Center. The group also meets informally for social events. If you are interested in getting notices via What's App, contact Aris Rogers at 813-309-5525.

Fr. Stavros will be out of the office from **June 11-13**(Clergy Laity Conference in Charleston) , **June 26-July 5** (summer camp), and from **July 21-July 30** .For any pastoral emergencies during this time, please contact Fr. John.



PARISH REGISTRY

BAPTISM— Lourdes Ifigenia Panagakos, daughter of Nicholas Panagakos and Leslie Rodriguez, was baptized on May 4. William Pahiakos was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

BAPTISM— Brooks, daughter of Brandon and Laura, was baptized on May 10. Andreas Paloumpis was the Godparent. Na Sas Zisi!

CHRISMATION— Cecelia Fraser, was Chrismated on May 18. Andrea Tsatalis was the sponsor. Congratulations!

WEDDING— William Steele Fisher and Alexa Alsina were married on Saturday, May 3. John Demitri Kastrenakes was the Koumbaro. Congratulations!

WEDDING— Kiril Khomenko and Yana Bezzub were married on Saturday, May 10. Avsenti Khomenko was the Koumbaro. Congratulations!

WEDDING— Mark and Ione Sophia Wilsmann were married on Friday, May 9. Ourania Stephanides was the Koumbara. Congratulations!

FUNERAL— Konstantinos "Gus" Triantafyllopoulos passed away on Tuesday, April 22. His funeral was held on Friday, May 9. May his memory be eternal!

CONDOLENCES to the Carter and Anton families, on the passing of their mother Vaso Anton on Sunday, April 27. May her memory be eternal!

INSPIRATION

God Is Talking To You My Child...

*And I rejoice over you with
singing...Zephaniah 3:17*

*I will never stop doing good to
you...Jeremiah 32:40*

*For you are my treasured
possession ...Exodus 19:5*

*I desire to establish you with all
my heart and all my soul...
Jeremiah 32:41*

*And I want to show you great and
marvelous things...
Jeremiah 33:3*

To be continued...

~MAKING A CHILD GO TO CHURCH~

Recently, a mother asked me, "Should I make my son go to church?" I answered, "Yes definitely." Then I explained: "What do you say when your son decides that he does not want to go to school? What did you do when he was little and did not want to take a bath? How did you react when he was sick and did not want his medicine?"

Every right-thinking parent recognizes the importance of these matters and gives the child no opportunity to decide for himself. Instead, parents explain the importance of going to school, taking bath, or taking medicine when sick.

So, mom and dad, take time to explain the importance of going to church; then simply say to your son or daughter; "In our family we all go to church and that includes you."

"Train up a child in the way he should go..." (Prove.22:6)

SIX SIGNS YOU'RE MAKING A BAD DECISION

1. You avoid input from people you respect.
2. You don't consult the word of God.
3. You don't pray for God's leading.
4. It doesn't build you spiritually.
5. It undermines your integrity.
6. It leads you to temptation.

THE THIEF WAS NOT SAVED BY BELIEF ALONE.

He repented, confessed Christ publicly, and was united to Him in suffering – before the sacraments were fully revealed.

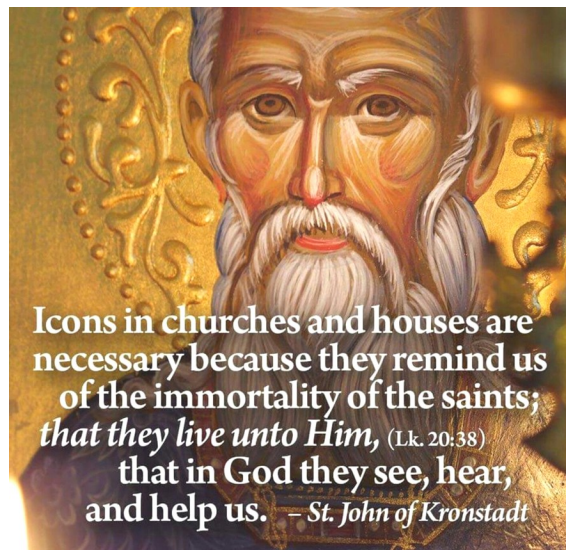
His was an exceptional salvation, granted in a moment of raw humility and divine mercy.

WE ARE NOT THE THIEF.

We have the fullness of the Faith – the Church, the Apostolic foundation, and the Holy Mysteries.

To reject the sacraments now is to reject the very means Christ gave us for salvation.

GOD MADE AN EXCEPTION FOR THE THIEF. WE ARE CALLED TO FOLLOW THE RULE.

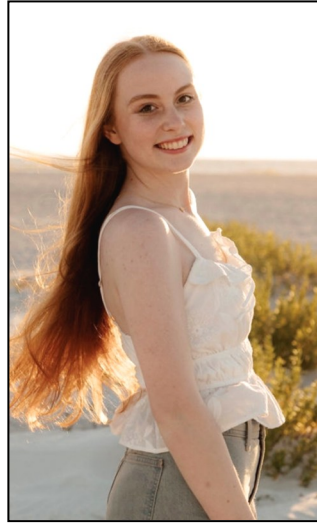


Icons in churches and houses are necessary because they remind us of the immortality of the saints; that they live unto Him, (Lk. 20:38) that in God they see, hear, and help us. – St. John of Kronstadt

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES!



Nicholas Stavros Akrotirianakis is graduating from Seffner Christian Academy. He will attend University of South Florida and plans to study Engineering.



Ariana Choundas Thatcher is graduating from Plant High School. Ariana will be attending the University of Florida to study business.

Elisa Mitseas graduates from Seffner Christian Academy this spring. She plans to study biological sciences at Florida State University.



George Xenick is graduating from HB Plant High School. He plans to study nutritional sciences at University of North Florida.



Maria Palios will be attending Florida State University in the fall and plans to major in Biology. While at H.B. Plant High School, Maria was involved in Yearbook as photo editor and her senior year as Editor-in-Chief. She was on the Plant Cross Country and Track team all four years. She also served as the vice president of the Anchor Service Club and Future Medical Students Club. She was also a member of the Beta Club and National Honor Society. Maria has also been an active member of her church community and GOYA throughout middle school and high school.



Panos "PJ" Zelatis is graduating from Newsome High School and is planning to attend The University of Central Florida for Chemistry.



Emory Brewer graduated from Plant High School in Tampa, Florida. She ran cross country and track and was a member of the National Honor Society. She is attending Pennsylvania State University in the fall, where she'll pursue a business degree.



Nicholas Carter graduated from Plant High School and he will attend Florida State University to major in business.



Emily Nicklow graduated from Steinbrenner High School. She will be attending the University of North Florida to study Kinesiology.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR COLLEGE GRADUATES!



Angelina Krinos

Angelina Patricia Krinos, daughter of Dimitri and Melissa Krinos, graduated with Honors from Stanford University with a B.S. in Electrical Engineering and a Minor in Mechanical Engineering. She will spend the coming year completing two graduate internships—one in fusion energy engineering at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) and another in hardware development engineering at SpaceX—before returning to Stanford to pursue her M.S. in Electrical Engineering.



2025

Congratulations
GRADUATES



Arianna Quinn

Arianna Krinos Quinn
Graduating with a PhD in Biological
Oceanography from MIT & WHOI
Currently Postdoctoral Research Fellow at
Brown University. Arianna is the daughter of
Dimitri and Melissa Krinos.

2025 ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ORATORICAL FESTIVAL

Dear Brothers and Sisters at St. John
Christos Anesti!

Thank you for taking the time to read these beautifully written and presented speeches by 6 of our most faithful, and devout Sunday School Students at the 2025 St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. I have been blessed for the last 16 years to work with our students who have a strong desire to express their devotion to Christ and His Church in this annual event that is held in almost every Greek Orthodox Church in the United States since the 1980's. I hope these speeches inspire you as much as they have inspired me year after year. To me this a positive affirmation of hope born from their own convictions and belief combined with the support they receive from their devoted, loving parents and church community here at St. John through Sunday School and GOYA, Altar participation and this program.

THIS YEAR'S PARTICIPANTS WERE:

Senior Division: Kenny Kane, Vasilios Panos

Junior Division: Aspasia Panos, Steven Garcia, Ava Justice, Phillip Kane

Church Finalists: Kenny Kane, Vasilios Panos, Aspasia Panos and Steven Garcia

Special Congratulations to Aspasia Panos who won the District Division and went to our Metropolis Finals! This is a Very Big Achievement and is Basically Considered "Semi Finals" to the National Competition!

I ask you to invite your children, grandchildren and any other Orthodox child you may know to join them next year at the beginning of the year, when the Oratorical season begins. They are informed during their Sunday School classes of the topics and are given instructions on the requirements of the speeches and on which date they will be delivering them. They gain a unique perspective on Orthodoxy and Christianity that goes hand in hand with their Sunday School lessons, to further their religious education, that hopefully will follow them to adulthood.

With Gratitude,
Peggy Bradshaw

"IN PSALM 4, WE ARE TOLD TO "BE ANGRY, BUT SIN NOT." WHY WOULD WE BE ENCOURAGED TO BE ANGRY? HOW DOES ANGER FIT INTO THE LIFE OF AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN?"
by Philip Kane

Hello, people of God. I am here today to talk about a very common emotion: anger. Anger is a natural emotion; we all feel it. But did you know the Bible says it's okay to be angry? Many people think it is wrong to be angry, but God's word leads us to believe that anger is not the problem, how we handle it, is. Today we will be exploring what it means to be angry without sinning, why this distinction matters, and how you can apply this to your life. In a world that tries to suppress emotions and label them as bad, it's essential to recognize that emotions themselves are

not inherently wrong. It's how we respond that shapes our actions and spirituality.

First, we need to understand righteous versus sinful anger. An example of Jesus exemplifying righteous anger can be seen in the book of Mathew chapter 21 verses 12 and 13, that states: "Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer," but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'" This shows Jesus getting angry for a righteous purpose, this purpose being opposing sin and injustice. On the other hand, sinful anger can be seen when people feel feelings that are or are related to vengeance, pride, fear, jealousy, and frustration. But these emotions, at base form, are not bad, the use of these emotions in troubling ways makes these anger-based emotions terrible. For instance, reacting to jealousy with resentment or acting on frustration with hostility leads to sinful anger, while processing these feelings through prayer and reflection keeps them from becoming destructive.

With this knowledge a common question arises: how can people apply righteous anger to their lives, and stop sinful anger? This can easily be done by understanding simple strategies that help stop anger before it becomes sinful. One strategy is exemplified through the book of proverbs chapter 29 verse 11, which says: "Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end." What this verse is trying to say is that people should think before they act. People can apply this to their lives by realizing the moments that they are feeling most vengeful and pausing before reacting. This stops negative outbursts from happening. Taking deep breaths, praying, or even walking away from a heated situation can all be powerful tools to help us reflect before responding in anger.

Another strategy is exemplified by Colossians chapter 3 verse 13 that states "Bear with each other and forgive one another. Forgive as the Lord forgives you." This verse is telling people to forgive one another and let little fights and arguments go, because when people have sinful anger moments they are ultimately growing further from God and weakening their relationships with others. Letting go of anger and choosing to forgive helps us stay close to God and keep our relationships strong.



Anger itself is not sinful, but when it leads to bitterness, revenge and hatred, it can be very destructive. Next time you feel angry remember, God calls for anger against sin, but not for anger to control us. Instead, let it drive us toward truth, justice and peace. By choosing to channel our anger in ways that align with God's teachings, we can become more

patient, understanding, and compassionate individuals. In the end, people should think twice before they make a decision that could lead to sinful anger.

Phillip Kane will be in 8th grade this fall. He is the son of Lance and Georgia Kane.



"IN PSALM 4, WE ARE TOLD TO 'BE ANGRY, BUT SIN NOT.' WHY WOULD WE BE ENCOURAGED TO BE ANGRY? HOW DOES ANGER FIT INTO THE LIFE OF AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN?"

by Steven Garcia

Honorable judges, fellow speakers, and brothers and sisters in Christ, Good Afternoon!

Have you experienced anger that almost forced you to sin? As Orthodox Christian we HAVE to learn how to control that anger. Like transforming it into prayer and making sure it's not directed towards others.

Anger is a natural emotion, but when left uncontrolled, it becomes destructive. Jesus, being without sin, demonstrated the proper way to respond to provocation, injustice, and betrayal – not with sinful anger, but with patience, mercy, and unwavering love.

Consider how Jesus responded when He was mocked, insulted, and falsely accused during His trial and crucifixion. As described in **First Peter, chapter 2, verse 23**: "*When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly.*" Even in the face of cruelty, He chose silence and entrusted Himself to the Father.

When Peter tried to stop Jesus from fulfilling His mission, Jesus firmly corrected him by saying, "*Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.*" (**Matthew 16:23**). His rebuke was strong but filled with divine purpose, not personal anger.

When a Samaritan village rejected Him, James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven. But Jesus rebuked them, saying, "*You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.*" (**Luke 9:55-56**). Here, He taught mercy over wrath, even when treated unjustly.

When His enemies tried to trap Him with tricky questions, like asking whether to pay taxes to Caesar, Jesus responded with wisdom instead of defensiveness: "*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.*" (**Matthew**

22:21). His words defused their schemes without anger or resentment.

Even during His arrest, when Judas betrayed Him with a kiss, and Peter tried to defend Him by striking with a sword, Jesus said, "*Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and He will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?*" (**Matthew 26:53**). Yet, He chose the path of peace, fulfilling God's will rather than retaliating with violence. And most powerfully, while hanging on the cross, in unbearable pain and surrounded by mockery, Jesus prayed, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*" (**Luke 23:34**). Instead of calling for vengeance, He interceded for His enemies, teaching us that forgiveness and love are far stronger than anger and hate.



This perfect example of Christ's response to anger also inspired the early Christians. We see this especially in the life of **Saint Stephen**, the first martyr. As he was being stoned to death for preaching the truth, Stephen did not respond with anger or hatred toward his attackers. Instead, filled with the Holy Spirit, he echoed the words of Christ, praying, "*Lord, do not hold this sin against them.*" (**Acts 7:60**). Stephen's words were not just spoken; they came from a heart truly transformed by the example of Jesus. His forgiveness was so powerful that it planted seeds of repentance even in the heart of Saul, who would later become the Apostle Paul.

My dear brothers and sisters, the way Jesus handled anger shows us the path of true holiness. Anger itself is not always sinful, but how we respond to it matters deeply. Christ teaches us to use anger only against sin and evil – not against people – and always with a heart of mercy and compassion. The Orthodox Church teaches that instead of allowing anger to consume us, we should transform it into zeal for holiness. Prayer, fasting, and confession help us manage our emotions and respond with love and humility.

Steven Garcia will be in 8th grade this fall. He is the son of David Stuart.



"PHILANTHROPY IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION. IT INVOLVES MORE THAN GIVING MONEY. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT WAYS BESIDES JUST DONATING? IN WHAT WAYS CAN WE OFFER SUPPORT, AND HOW CAN THESE OTHER FORMS OF HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS AND THE COMMUNITY?"

by Aspasia Panos

The first time my mom and dad made me share one of my toys was definitely not a happy day for me. At that time though, I didn't fully comprehend the depth of what I was doing. But now, I understand it so much

better. That simple act was an act of Philanthropy! But wait- what really is philanthropy? Google defines it as "the desire to promote the welfare of others, expressed especially by the generous donation of money to good causes." Well, yes, this definition focuses heavily on financial giving, real philanthropy, particularly within the Greek Orthodox Church, involves much more. Really, the word "philanthropy" comes from the Greek word *philos*, meaning "friend." My parents got me to be a "philos" all those years ago even when I didn't want to be. So, the true act of philanthropy is not just about handing over our wallets—it is about being a friend, it is about offering our time, care, and hearts to those who need support in various ways.

-Christ taught us that to love our neighbors is about being present in their lives and making a difference. For instance, in **Matthew 25:35-40**, Jesus helps to solidify the true definition of philanthropy. He says: "For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you invited Me in; I needed clothes and you clothed Me; I was sick and you looked after Me; I was in prison and you came to visit Me. Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me." This simple, well-known bible passage really provokes a thought on how we react when we see someone who is in need-hand them some money or do more. Don't get me wrong though, doing more- that is not an easy task to simply take on. It is definitely not easy to be so trusting and just say- "hop in the car!". But there are so many other ways to show support and be a "philos" to people.

-Now that we know philanthropy is really about being a friend and offering our time and support to others - We can look at different kinds of real philanthropy and how those kinds are important to people as well as communities. One of many good ways to support others is by volunteering. For example, volunteering at a food kitchen, there we can help people by feeding them and showing care for them. Helping can make a huge difference in somebody's life. Even if the act does not feel as great and as "admired" as giving money- just know it is especially important. Nevertheless, there are endless opportunities for volunteering, to list a few in addition, there are homeless shelters, nursing homes, orphanages, even getting involved in through the church.

Another way is offering emotional support. Many people struggle silently, offering support can be just listening to somebody who needs someone to talk to, mainly just being there. It could make a difference in someone's life, by hopefully uplifting them and making them feel a bit better. We can even offer emotional support through prayer, just praying for someone, even if they don't know you're doing it. The best part is we know God will do the rest. So being there, being supportive, and praying are also great ways to demonstrate philanthropy.

Finally, small acts of kindness, you may not even realize doing it—like a smile, holding the door, or offering a compliment—can go a long way in brightening someone's day. These simple gestures can even create a ripple effect, like turning someone's day

around or encouraging somebody else to go offer a compliment, uplifting a whole community. Even sharing is a part of philanthropy! (which the younger me was not too fond of). All these different examples of Philanthropy really show how giving money is only the least, when there could be so much more.



To conclude, I leave you with this: How can you be a "philos," a friend, to someone today? Jesus didn't just show up when it was easy—He was there when it counted most. Let's follow His example, showing up in the lives of others not just with our wallets, but with our hearts and time.

Thank you.

Aspasia Panos will be in 9th grade this fall. She is the daughter of Rip and Denise Panos.



"IN PSALM 4, WE ARE TOLD TO "BE ANGRY, BUT SIN NOT." WHY WOULD WE BE ENCOURAGED TO BE ANGRY? HOW DOES ANGER FIT INTO THE LIFE OF AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN?"

by Ava Justice

Recently, I learned that someone from my past had been speaking badly of me with someone I know, and instead of becoming upset, I decided to protect my peace. When we think of how anger fits into our life as Orthodox Christians, we tend to think that being angry is the sin while anger can cause sin when left uncontrolled. Psalm 4 tells us to "*be angry, but sin not*" We as Orthodox Christians have most strictly followed Christ's word since it was first taught, with the word "Orthodoxy" stemming from the Greek words "Orthros" meaning right, and true. And "doxas" meaning opinion or praise. As we follow God's teaching of anger, we must consider how, as Orthodox Christians, anger fits into our life. I'm sure we can all think of a time when we were wrongfully angered at God. There are many ways to express anger while keeping the Lord in your heart and not sinning. One example of such is in the book of Job. In this book we read of Job's trials and how he stayed faithful to the Lord. In Job 1:20-22 we read about when Job had just learned of a house falling on his children. To quote exactly "At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship 21 and said: "*Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.*"

22 In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing."

I always found it astonishing when reading the book of Job how faithful he stayed throughout trials. You have you consider how in the moment I'm sure Job likely had a feeling of anger but yet, did not sin through wrongful resentment. And for that, I deeply admire him. I think that Job is a large example of how

we should stay faithful, regardless of how angry we may be at a difficult time. Think of Satan's first sin, when he greets prideful of himself and began to feel resentment against God. Since that moment, we have had a desire for sin. From the instant we were created to the moment we depart from this Earth, we will have the desire to sin against the Lord, whether we want to or not. And while we deny our flesh and carry our cross, we will still feel anger but must be reminded in this same manner as Job did to be angry, but sin not. Yet Another example of expressing love for the LORD while being angry can be found in the book of Nehemiah when Nehemiah learned of wealthy Jews oppressing poor people by charging extremely high interest. But while he could've become angry, he instead thought first and rebuked the others in a calm and righteous way.

Nehemiah 5:6-7 states, to be exact: *"And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles and the rulers, and said to them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brothers. And I set a great assembly against them."* At times, we may become angry with others, but I think it is important that we stay calm and think through issues in a calm and rational way, reminding ourselves that anger is temporary, but regret is eternal and to consider how the LORD does that for us. I relate to this topic heavily. I have always felt that while anger may fill our bodies, there is no life without resistance, no good without bad, and no freedom in the absence of resentment. And while I know I should not feel anger on a personal level towards anyone, as we are all created in the image of God, I still have a hard time not feeling angry, as I'm sure we all do.

For example, I recently learned of 70 Christians being martyred, as the exact definition tells "to be put to death for adhering to a belief, faith, or profession" in the Democratic Republic of Congo, while at church. This is a common issue in our world that occurs in everyday life, and my immediate reaction was true and bitter resentment towards the people who did that, But I then realized that more than anything, I felt pity, that someone's heart was so filled with hatred they felt the desire to commit such an act. I truly feel that we as humans must come to an understanding that God sees us all as his children, and to resent another is to hate your brothers and sisters. And always remember to be angry, but sin not.

Ava Justice will be in 9th grade this fall. She is the daughter of Joseph and Nicole Justice.



**Forgive
as God has
forgiven you**
Colossians 3:13

"THE BIBLE IS FULL OF FIGURES, BOTH GOOD AND BAD, WHO, WHILE NOT TALKED ABOUT FREQUENTLY, CAN BE Hugely helpful in understanding both SALVATION HISTORY AND OUR PLACE IN IT. PICK A LESSER-KNOWN FIGURE FROM THE BIBLE, EXPLAIN WHO THEY ARE, HOW THEY FIT INTO THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE, AND WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THEM."
by Vasilius Panos

I remember the first day I brought home an A+ on a test, I remember because my mom, she hung it up on the fridge, took me out to get my favorite chocolate ice cream and told me how proud of me she was. But I also remember the first time I brought home a D on a test, my mom was not proud of me, she did not take me out to get ice cream and she did not put that test anywhere near the fridge. But that was a while ago, and now of course I know the repercussions of getting a bad grade and I always try to strive for perfection. But is perfection even possible? St. Gregory of Nyssa says, *"The only true perfection is in God, for man is in a constant state of becoming."* So, it makes me think, why is every kid told to be perfect in everything they do even if it's not possible, well let's look at college admission rates, now of course with how the majority of today's youth is trying to be perfect you have to apply for the top college which in the past 5 years the acceptance rate has dropped by... 30 to 50%, yikes. But this is just more of a reason to try to reach this perfection, right? Well let's look how this played out in the bible, take the story of Martha and Mary. In this passage, Jesus visits the home of two sisters, Martha is busy preparing the house, trying to make everything perfect for Jesus, while Mary simply sits at His feet, listening to His teachings. Feeling overwhelmed, Martha becomes frustrated because of all the work she is doing, while Mary is seemingly doing nothing. She finally speaks up, asking Jesus to tell Mary to help her: "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me!" (Luke 10:40) But Jesus gently corrects her: *"Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken away from her."* (Luke 10:41-42) Martha is a great example of what happens when somebody pushes themselves too hard.

Whether it was cleaning up for Jesus, or even just constantly trying to meet the ever-rising expectations of perfection in school today, she was so busy with these "responsibilities" that she lost sight of what truly mattered, being present with Christ. But how does this really compare to performing in your regular life? Academic burnout is no joke. According to various studies, over 55% of students report some degree of burnout, but burnout isn't just giving up and performing worse in school. Burnout is a degree of stress that can't be ignored, Take the story of Kathryn Dewitt, she was an all-star student who would continue to seek perfection. And you could even say it worked after she got into the prestigious University of Penn. Although after she got into UPENN she realized even with 100% effort she could not be the perfect student, so she tried to put in 110% effort. Which lead to her getting burnt out, and with all this excess stress and the fact that Kathryn has truly given up, she went back to her dorm, wrote letters to her family, and later tried to take her own life, now thank goodness Someone was there to help

her, but what if she was alone? But that's the issue with today's world, she was never alone, every Sunday I can go to church, usually spending most time in the altar.

And of course, we pray to God, but God is more than Someone we pray to for something like a good day, He is the only person to truly love us unconditionally. He is a bringer of this hope that we can only receive if we have faith. And most importantly, he is Someone who is always with us, in highs and lows. Take the verse Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." 0 But why do I bring this up? The future is constantly becoming less clear-cut, and it looks like a student would have to have a record breaking SAT score to get into a good college, but this is not what God wants for us, he does not want everyone to try harder than they can handle until they end up crashing. Jesus shows that it is not the goal of life to always be busy, of course hard-work and responsibilities are important, but true peace comes from knowing when to slow down, and put our trust in god focusing on what truly nourishes the soul. Mary chose to rest in Christ, while Martha exhausted herself trying to meet ever rising expectations. Kathryn tried as hard as possible to be perfect but ended up getting burnt out.

What truly matters is not achievement and always chasing a bar that has continued to rise, the true thing that matters is the love of God. God fits into our modern life as a realization that there is more to do than just work, he brings us hope through the unconditional love he has always given.



So, the next time that you are working, or doing an assignment you should not try to reach perfection, instead stride for excellence, work done with peace of mind and prayer is sanctified, when we do our work in a hurry it leads to becoming nervous, it should not be the goal to do many things and be in constant anxiety, this is a demonic condition. Don't get burnt out chasing an unobtainable standard. Because there is only one way to truly understand this chaotic world, and it is by putting your love and trust in christ so he can provide you with hope. So of course, any mistakes I made in this speech are on purpose, because true perfection only comes from God.

Vasilios Panos will be in 11th grade this fall. He is the son of Rip and Denise Panos.



"AS THE WORLD GROWS INCREASINGLY TUMULTUOUS AND FEARFUL, TODAY'S YOUTH APPEAR TO BE MORE ANXIOUS ABOUT THE FUTURE. DISCUSS CHRIST'S ROLE AS THE BRINGER OF HOPE AND HOW THAT FITS INTO MODERN LIFE."
by Kenny Kane

You're a loser, you will never be the same, you will never make the team. You got so much worse, just

give up now. All of these have been said to me after I had knee surgery last year, and I stuck with me. I have been overlooked, not trusted and forgotten in soccer because of my knee, but I have worked every day to get my knee stronger and while all these comments normally make people feel bad about themselves. It just makes me work harder to prove to myself that others may overlook me, but I could not overlook the gifts God gives me to persevere and prove them wrong.



Today, I want to share with you the story of a man who is often overlooked but plays a crucial role in the narrative of salvation history. His name is Bezalel, a master craftsman chosen by God to oversee the construction of the Tabernacle. You can find his story in Exodus 31 and 35. Though Bezalel doesn't appear in many sermons, his life teaches us powerful lessons about purpose, obedience, and the value of God-given skills.

Bezalel was from the tribe of Judah, and the Bible tells us that God filled him with His Spirit, giving him wisdom, understanding, and knowledge in all kinds of craftsmanship. His task was monumental: to construct the Tabernacle, the sacred dwelling place of God among His people, along with its furnishings and intricate designs. God didn't choose a priest or a prophet for this task-He chose an artist, showing us that every calling is significant in His plan. In the grand story of salvation, Bezalel's work points to God's desire to dwell among His people. The Tabernacle was more than a physical structure; it symbolized God's presence, foreshadowing the ultimate dwelling of God with humanity through Christ. Bezalel's faithfulness in following God's detailed instructions reminds us of the importance of obedience, even in tasks that might seem ordinary or behind the scenes.

From Bezalel, we learn that God values creativity and craftsmanship. In a world that often prioritizes more visible roles, Bezalel's story encourages us to see the work of our hands as a form of worship. Whatever skills we possess-whether we're artists, teachers, builders, or caretakers-can be used to glorify God and further His kingdom.

So, as we reflect on Bezalel's life, let us remember that God has uniquely equipped each of us for a purpose. No role is too small in His plan. Like Bezalel, we can use our gifts to bring beauty, order, and holiness into the world, becoming co-creators with God in the ongoing story of redemption. Let us take heart to know that even our quiet acts of faithfulness can leave a lasting impact on the tapestry of salvation history. Thank you.

Kenny Kane will be in 11th grade this fall. He is the son of Lance and Georgia Kane.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS:

CHRISTOS ANESTI! The Sunday School Staff would like to wish all of our families and parishioners a joyful and safe summer with your families.

THANK YOU to the TEACHERS, PARENTS, and especially the CHILDREN for making our Sunday School year so special. Thank you Fr. Stavros for your leadership and guidance.

OUR WONDERFUL TEACHERS ARE:

Director of Sunday School: Vickie Peckham

Incoming Director: Zackie Ameres

Music Program: Donna Trakas

Toddler TWO Program: Jenny Paloumpis

Pre-K THREE: Mary Guirguis and Tia L'Hommedieu

Pre-K FOUR: Denise Panos and Rachel Zaharis

Kindergarten: Debbie Nicklow and Donna Trakas

Grade 1: Maraquet Edquid and Doukissa Moshos

Grade 2: Nicole Mantzanas and Jaime Brewer

Grade 3: Amy Kafantaris and Stamie Garcia

Grade 4: Georgia Kane and Vivian Laliotis Samuel

Grade 5: Vickie Peckham

Grade 6: Katherine Kyrus and Mia Lenardos

7th and 8th Grade: Betty Katherine Katsamakias and Marina Choundas

High School GIRLS: MaryAnn Konstas

High School BOYS: Jimmy Konstas

St. John's is so lucky to have such dedicated teachers who have committed to serve our children next year in this ministry. Mia Lenardos is the only one who is leaving us. We wish her the best as she starts Medical School in the fall. We wish her the best.

Our last day of Sunday School was on **May 18th**. At our Graduation Ceremony each student received a certificate and a small gift. CONGRATULATIONS to our graduating seniors. Each of them received a Orthodox Study Bible from the Sunday School.

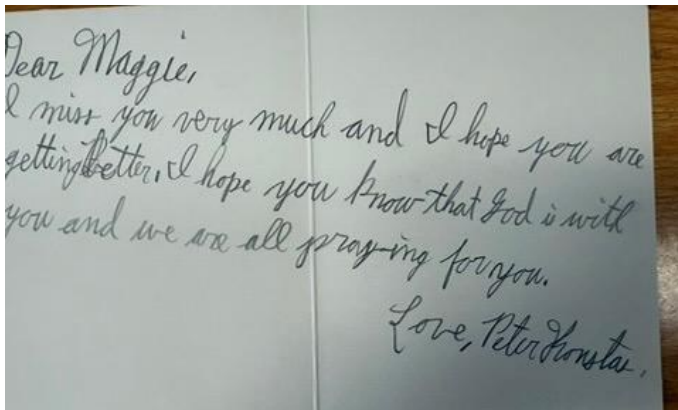
Our Sunday School End of the Year Party was a huge success. The party took place in the hall this year. The theme was a Luau. There were games, a bounce house, two slides, a variety of sandwiches, fruit, snacks, beverages, and of course treats for dessert. The best part about it was the air conditioning. A good time was had by all. Thank you to Zackie Ameres and Tia L'Hommedieu, who took the lead on this party and everyone who helped out on our last day of Sunday School.

We are already starting to plan for the 2025-2026 Sunday School year which will start on **August 17th**. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO TEACH OR ASSIST IN OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM and/or if you have any suggestions on how we can improve our Sunday School Program, please e-mail Vickie Peckham at vickiepeckham@gmail.com or call her at 813-758-3102.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PHOTOS



These first 5 photos are of our PRE-K3 Students. They are so proud of their work.



Our older students wrote cards to Maggie Trakas. This is just one example from one of our 5th graders.



These next 2 photos are of our Middle Schoolers. They are busy writing notes to Maggie. They also made Bags of Love for the homeless.



These first 3 photos are from our Senior Graduation on Sunday, May 11. Congratulations to this special group of graduates.



The photo to the left is our seniors in Kindergarten and the one to the right is when they were in 4th grade.



**Sunday
School
Graduation
2025**



DANCE GROUP

PANIGYRI ADULT DANCE

The adult Panigyri dancers will begin dance practices on a monthly basis for June and July and then more regularly starting in August.

We will have practices on **Wednesday June 25 and Wednesday July 23 both at 7pm-8:15pm** in the Kourmoulis Center.

These will be practices getting us ready for line-ups and our performances at our upcoming Greek festival in November. Dancers should wear comfortable clothing and sneakers or dancing shoes.

C'mon out and get ready to dance! Opa!

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



BOOKSTORE



Summer isn't the time to take a vacation from your faith. Dig into God's Word and find deep refreshment for your heart, mind, and soul

Whether traveling to a vacation destination, relaxing on the beach, or simply lounging on your lanai sipping a glass of iced tea you can renew your spirit in the study of Holy Scripture, our Holy Orthodox Faith, the lives of the Saints, Prayer and Meditation, and many other topics. Set an example for your children and encourage them to choose books that get them away from the tablets and phones and closer to our Lord.

Stop into our bookstore soon and stock up on books for your Summer Reading!!

ALTAR ANGELS

Altar Angels Ministry & Decorating

Χρήστος Ανέστη! Christ is Risen!

What a glorious journey.

Thank you to all the wonderful Ladies who helped decorate our Church for the Lenten Season and Pascha.

From the Sunday of Holy Cross Daffodils tray, Icon of the Virgin Mary, each Icon during Holy Week, the Kovouklion and all the Peace Lillies were decorated and looked beautiful. Special Thanks to Jeanie Nenos, Christos Nenos and Kathy Kaburis who were involved every week in decorating each Icon and the Daffodils tray. I appreciate all your dedication.

Many thanks to all the Altar Angels for graciously cleaning our Church throughout the season and every Sunday yearly.

I appreciate each of you for your time on a weekly basis.

The Church looked Beautiful and Bright.

We appreciate and thank Fr. Stavros for his guidance and support. Special "thanks" to Felix Ramirez for his assistance throughout the Lenten Season, Chris Halkias & Ari Georgiou for the delicious Palm Sunday Luncheon and decorating the Arch so beautifully for Palm Sunday and Easter services. We appreciate your time and talents!

May the True Light of the Resurrection brighten your lives with love, peace and joy.

With love and respect, Kalliope Chagaris

If you are interested in joining the Altar Angels Ministry, we welcome you to join us in keeping St. Johns Church clean every week.

Feel free to call me at **813-789-4134** or email kallliopedchagaris@gmail.com



COLLEGE STUDENT OUTREACH

It has been a pleasure to work with our college students this year. We have worked with **32** students from our community and those students attending college in the Tampa Bay Area. I must say that this group has been very receptive and appreciative. Most of the students from out of town are attending our church weekly.

Care packages were sent out to all students in the fall and Spring semesters. Thank you GOYA and Young Adults for donating and putting these care packages together.

I send out a text message each month with an inspirational quote to each of them. Usually I get very positive responses. They say it means a lot to be thought of and prayed for.

We are so fortunate to have such a great group of students. Our young people are our future and I can tell you that what they were taught at home shows.

College students please keep us updated on new addresses, phone numbers and email addresses. We are here for you!
Thank you all for allowing me the privilege to serve in this capacity.

Kathy Kaburis

Save the Date – Nov 7-8, 2024



The Annual St. John the Baptist Tampa Greek Festival is our largest fundraiser and provides an opportunity to unite as a Parish and Community.

We need your help!

Coming Soon: Details for a summer kickoff meeting!

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: 6/17, 7/19, 8/16 & 9/20.

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



The Daughters celebrated the AHEPA family day on **Sunday May 4**. In addition to hosting the coffee hour, our President Ourania Stephanides baked the five loaves of bread which were used for the Artoklasia.

The Daughters participated in scheduled meetings and held elections on **May 8**. We are excited to announce that our current board has been re-elected, and they will be carrying forward for another year!

We are grateful to all who are leading and participating in this thriving organization. We currently have thirty-five members, and we promote Hellenism, Philanthropy, Education, Civic Responsibility, Family, and Individual Excellence.

We are looking forward to our next event on **June 20th at 6:30 pm** at the Kourmolis Center. After dinner there will be scholarship awards and the installation of the officers.

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.

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 NEWS!

June/July NEWS!



*Thank
you!*

The Annunciation Chapter of the Philoptochos Society would like to thank all of its members for another successful year helping our church and our community. We were blessed to help many people in need, including hurricane and wildfire disaster assistance, the homeless, hungry, and alone.

We especially would like to thank Katherine Sakkis, President; Denise Stefero, Vice President, and Tina Andre, Treasurer; Joanne Dalakis, Recording Secretary and Myra Armstrong Corresponding Secretary for their service and dedication as our officers for the last two years. In addition, special thanks to our board members: Melissa Krinos, Advisor; Lisa Alsina, Vickie Peckham, Georgia Kane, Kalliope Chagaris, Ourania Stephanides, Marina Choundas and Vivian Samuel.

Congratulations to our newly elected 2025-27 board members, we thank them for dedicating their time to serving our Philoptochos:

Melissa Krinos, President

Marina Choundas, Recording Secretary

Myra Armstrong, Corresponding Secretary

Ione Wilsmann, Treasurer

Tina Andre, Assistant Treasurer

Katherine Sakkis, Advisor

Kalliope Chagaris, Board Member

Ourania Stephanides, Board Member

Vickie Peckham, Board Member

We hope to host a welcome back lunch in the fall to kick off the new board year. Please contact any Philoptochos member if you are interested in joining



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.*

SCHOOL OF GREEK LANGUAGE & CULTURE

TARPON SPRINGS FIELD TRIP



On Saturday, May 3rd students, parents and teachers of the School of Greek Language and Culture had an amazing experience going to Anclote River cruise in Tarpon Springs!



The weather, a little bit cloudy with a nice breeze, was ideal for this trip and everyone of the fifty participants enjoyed the day!

Aboard Odyssey Cruise's big boat, through Anclote River they arrived at



Anclote Key Island where they had the chance to admire the natural beauty of the landscape and to collect beautiful shells from the beach! Afterwards, they all visited local Greek restaurants and taverns to enjoy authentic Greek food! It was such a beautiful day for the students, parents, and teachers of the Greek School of Tampa!



CELEBRATING THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR



On Saturday, May 17th students, parents, and teachers of the School of Greek Language and Culture celebrated the end of the school year with a nice party at the yard of the school.

Everybody was there bringing snacks, desserts, and soft drinks, listening to nice Greek music and playing.

The director of the school, Mr. Yannis Giavaras congratulated the students for their nice effort on Greek

language, thanked the parents for their trust and support to the school and the two other teachers, Mrs. Chrisa Kapnogianni and Mrs. Katerina Nakou for their excellent educational skills and the harmonic cooperation they had all together. Also, he mentioned the activities which the school organized during the current school year, such as the Christmas party, the visit to University of Tampa to listen to the Greek Professor Mr. Grigorio Zambara playing Greek and classic music on his piano, and the field trip to Tarpon Springs and the cruise to Anclote River.



Mr. John Zelatis honored the party with his presence and Mr. Giavaras thanked him for his continued support to the Greek school.



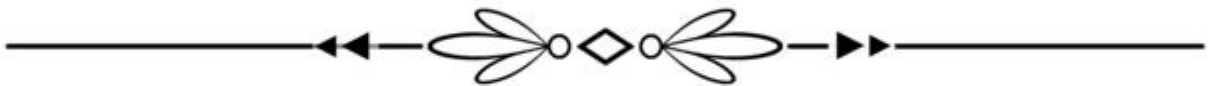
At the beginning of the party, two of our students, Nikos Kyrouris and Christos Marmagiolis were rewarded for their academic achievement from Mrs. Dimitra Nikolaou on behalf of the Lakonian Society and from Mr. Terry Tsafatinos on behalf of Tsafatinos Foundation.



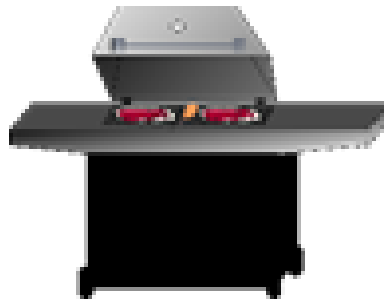
ΚΑΛΟ ΚΑΛΟΚΑΙΠΙ! HAPPY SUMMER HOLIDAYS TO ALL!

YOUNG AT HEART

Our Young at Heart group met on **Saturday, May 17th**. Along with our luncheon and presentation on St. Photini - The Samaritan Woman we had a wonderful surprise. The family of Adis and Peter Choundas joined us with an extra special treat for Adis who turned 90 and Peter who turned 92 in May! Their grandchildren, Andrew Choundas Thatcher and Ariana Choundas Thatcher serenaded them and us with Happy Birthday and a few other beautiful selections. Happy Birthday and Many Years to Peter, Adis, and Michael Trimis - our birthdays for May!!



YOUNG AT HEART JULY EVENT



Escape the heat and join us for an indoor picnic on
Saturday, July 19th 1-pm-3pm

We'll be grilling hamburgers and hotdogs and will ask for your
help with all the trimmings.

Reply to Presvytera Denise if you'd like to attend.

More information to follow in upcoming Sunday bulletins.

STEWARDSHIP

"You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce Thanksgiving to God"

Stewardship continues to grow thanks to all of you. As of **May 10th, 221** families have returned their Stewardship forms, and another 89 have contributed without turning in a form. That's 310 total families and individuals who have answered the call, resulting in **\$555,322** given so far. We appreciate the gifts of our loyal parishioners, and wish to acknowledge and thank each and every one.

Please let us hear from you today, if you haven't submitted your pledge form. If you have been attending St. John's for a while and love what you see, hear and experience, please join our parish. If you have talents that would benefit our church ministries, we would be honored for you to join us. Like I have often heard Father Stavros say, "it's time to be All In".

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, in the bookstore or online.

Please take a moment to reflect on what you and your families can offer in Time, Talent and Treasure. All of us contributing together, to the best of our ability, will provide the means necessary to keep our parish community strong.

Please feel free to contact The Stewardship Committee at 813-748-1220 if you any questions or comments that you would like to share. We return ALL voice messages or texts, promise.



Akrotirianakis,Stavros(Lisa),Rev. Fr.	Balasis,Maria,Ms.	Chiakulas,Gregory,Mr.
Stefero,John(Presbyter Denise),Rev. Fr.	Balasis,Suzu,Mrs.	Choundas,Marina(Thatcher,Greg,Mr.),Ms.
Dorozenski,Stratton(Denise),Rev. Fr.	Bilthouse,Kevin(Carena),Mr. & Mrs.	Christodoulou,Maryann,Mrs.
Limberatos,Alexander(Alexandra),Fr.	Blackburn,Robert T.(Kathryn),Mr. & Dr.	Christopher,Louis(Penny),Mr. & Mrs.
Afloarei,Michael(Mariana), Mr. & Mrs.	Blankenbaker,James(Michelle),Mr. & Mrs.	Chrysakis,Emmanuel,Mr.
Alikakos,Maria,Ms.	Bougas,Constantine(Angela),Mr. & Mrs.	Ciotti,John(Melanie),Dr. & Mrs.
Alithinos,Ekaterini,Mrs.	Bouzinakis,Andrew(Kathryn),Mr. & Mrs.	Colado,David(Alexandria),Mr. & Mrs.
Alsina,Angel(Lisa),Dr. & Mrs.	Bradshaw,Harold(Pelagia),Mr. & Mrs.	Colonis,Sharon,Ms.
Ameres,George(Zackie),Mr. & Mrs.	Brewer,Christopher(Jaime),Mr.	Comminos,William(Margaret),Mr. & Mrs.
Anagnos,Demet(Eleni),Mr. & Mrs.	Calamunci,Alex(Sarah),Mr. & Mrs.	Costas,Antonia,Ms.
Andre,Gregory(Haritini Tina),Mr. & Mrs.	Cantonis,George(Maria),Mr. & Mrs.	Cotterman,Sandra,Ms.
Anghelescu,Mihnea (Damian,Gabriela,Ms.),Mr.	Carter,John(Genie),Dr. & Mrs.	Crassas,Alkis(Aime),Mr. & Mrs.
Antoniou,Constantinos (Fraser,Cecilia,Ms.),Mr.	Catsikopoulos Evanovich,Lauren (Catsikopoulos,John,Mr.),Dr.	Cucuz,Victor(Cynthia),Mr. & Mrs.
Apockotos,James(Maria),Mr. & Mrs.	Cauthorn,Ken(Helen),Mr. & Mrs.	Dalaklis,Joanne,Ms.
Apostolos,George T.(Cheryl),Dr. & Mrs.	Cawley,Ian,Mr.	De Maio,Alexandra,Ms.
Aranyos,Alek(Styliana),Mr. & Mrs.	Chagaris,George(Kalliope),Mr. & Mrs.	Delashaw,Alex(Kim),Mrs.
Armstrong,Jim(Myra),Mr. & Mrs.	Chakonas,Ethel Athena,Mrs.	Demas,Anna K.,Ms.
Assimiadis,Paul,Mr.	Chapman,William(Kanella Jane),Mr. & Mrs.	Demas,John,Mr.
Austin,Kyle(Hali),Mr. & Mrs.	Charalabakis,Terry G.,Mr.	Demetriou,James(Constance),Mr. & Mrs.
Bakirdgi,Joan,Mrs.	Cherpelis,Basil(Alyssa),Dr. & Dr.	Demetriou,Nektarios(Peggy),Dr. & Mrs.
		Demos,Maria(Moran,George,Mr.,III),Ms. & Mr.

DeYoung, John(Jenna), Mr. & Mrs.	Halkias, Demetrios(Camille), Mr. & Mrs.	Kirill, Khomenkko(Bezzub, Yana, Ms.), Mr.
Di Gennaro, Franco(Diaz, Aziela, Ms.), Mr.	Halkias, George(Elaine), Mr. & Mrs.	Kladakis, Manuel(Cynthia), Mr. & Mrs.
Diaz, Brandon(Dorsey, Mikayla, Ms.), Mr.	Hambos, George, Mr., Jr.	Kladis, George(Charlene), Mr. & Mrs.
Dimas, Gregory(Patsavos, Evelyn, Ms.), Dr.	Hambos, George(Donna), Mr. & Mrs.	Klawinski, Ryan (Tataris, Maria, Ms.), Mr.
Dimitrijevič, Stephen(Alina), Mr. & Mrs.	Hanhan, Amin, Mr.	Koch, John(Cathie), Mr. & Mrs.
Diniaco, Peter(Rebecca), Mr. & Mrs.	Hartung, Mark(JoAnn), Mr. & Mrs.	Koklanaris, Dena, Ms.
Doucas, Deborah, Ms.	Heilman, Anthony(Theresa), Mr. & Mrs.	Kolilias, Anna, Ms.
Doxas, Joan, Ms.	Henderson, Kenny(Nickollet), Mr. & Mrs.	Kolilias, Emily, Mrs.
Dzhagriev, Aleksandr, Mr.	Henges, George, Mr.	Konstas, Demetrios(Mary Ann), Dr. & Mrs.
Edmonson, Laura(Brandon), Mrs. & Mr.	Higdon, Skip, Mrs.	Korakis, Alexandros(Louise), Mr. & Mrs.
Edquid, Marc(Maraquet), Mr. & Mrs.	Higgins, Michael, Mr.	Koudouna, Anthony, Mr.
Eggleston, Catherine, Mrs.	Hoff, Eleni, Mrs.	Kouimanis, Alexia, Ms.
Evdemon, Stanley(Mary Ellen), Mr. & Mrs.	Holland, Daniel(Laura), Mr. & Mrs.	Kouimanis, Nicholas(Sonja), Mr. & Mrs.
Fager, Jonathan, Mr.	Horack, Rena, Ms.	Koutroumanis, Dean(Maria), Mr. & Mrs.
Fallieras, Nicholas(Susan), Dr. & Mrs.	Horton, Maria, Mrs.	Krajacic, Joseph(Alyssa), Mr. & Mrs.
Fellios, George(Zeina), Mr. & Mrs.	Hughes, Madisyn, Ms.	Krasias, Yianni, Mr.
Ferekides, Christos(Debbie), Dr. & Mrs.	Iraklianos, Mike, Mr.	Krinos, Dimitri(Melissa), Mr. & Mrs.
Findlay, Karina(Andrew), Dr.	Jacobsen, Paul, Mr.	Krinos, John(Sue), Mr. & Mrs.
Fisher, Steele(Alexa), Mr. & Mrs.	James, Abby, Mrs.	Kwasny, Foti(Fatin), Mr. & Mrs.
Forde, Dwight(Ewana), Mr. & Mrs.	Jewtushenko, Raissa, Ms.	Kyaw, Poe, Ms.
Fortino, Nicholas(Lamos, Cynthia, Ms.), Mr.	Johnson, Aphroditi, Mrs.	Kyrus, Chris(Katherine), Dr. & Dr.
Fotopoulos, Anthony(Carole), Mr. & Mrs.	Johnston, Angela, Ms.	L'Hommedieu, Tim(Tia), Mr. & Mrs.
Fox, Philip, Mr.	Kabougeris, Pete(Voula), Mr. & Mrs.	Labatos-Lostaros, Angelika, Ms.
Frantsvog, Eric(Maria), Mr. & Mrs.	Kaburis, Kathy, Mrs.	Ladas, Suzanna, Ms.
Frey, Carlos(Sorolis-Frey, Sophia, Ms.), Mr.	Kafantaris, Michael(Amy), Mr. & Mrs.	Lagos, Yianni, Mr.
Galin, Mary, Ms.	Kallenekos, Constantine, Mr.	Lakic, Mile(Melanie), Mr. & Mrs.
Garcia, Rick(Stamie), Mr. & Mrs.	Kalogeropoulos, Evangelia, Mrs.	Laliotis, Panagiota, Mrs.
Gavalas, Debbie(Ritchie, Robert, Mr.), Mrs.	Kantaras, Dean(Areti), Mr. & Mrs.	Laliotis, Stavros(Adriana), Mr. & Mrs.
Gemmellaro, Giovanni(Jennifer), Mr. & Mrs.	Kaplanis, Michael, Mr.	Lambrou, James(Michelle), Mr. & Mrs.
Georgas, Thomas(Janet), Mr. & Mrs.	Kastis, Constantino(Gianoula), Mr. & Mrs.	Laskey, Fred(Coleen), Mr. & Mrs.
George, Peter(Olivia), Mr. & Mrs.	Kastrenakes, Michael(Maria), Mr. & Mrs.	LeMay, Daniel(Jamynz), Mr. & Mrs.
Georgiou, Anastasios(Hoff, Cynthia), Mr., II	Katsadourous, Konstantin(Katherine), Mr. & Mrs.	Lenardos, Peter, Mr.
Georgiou, Speros(Eleanor), Mr. & Mrs.	Katsamakis, Perry(Betty Katherine), Mr. & Mrs.	Leontsinis, Nicole, Ms.
Gerecke, Ed(Terri), Mr. & Mrs.	Katzaras, Nick(Helen), Mr. & Mrs.	Liakopoulos, Stephanie, Ms.
Gialamas, John(Lisa), Mr. & Mrs.	Katzaras, Stefan(Kara), Mr. & Mrs.	Loos, Richard(Christina), Mr. & Mrs.
Gorter, Maria, Ms.	Kavouklis, Chris(Debbie), Mr. & Mrs.	Maas, Mary, Ms.
Graham, Troy, Mr.	Kavouklis, Lazarus(Maria), Dr. & Mrs.	Magos, Tony(Mary), Mr. & Mrs.
Grammaticas, Bill, Mr.	Kavouklis, Nicholas(Edie), Dr. & Mrs.	Malacos, John G.(Lucy A.), Mr. & Mrs.
Gregory, Daniel(Alicia), Mr. & Mrs.	Kazanis, Deno(Barbara), Dr. & Dr.	Maltezos, Chris, Mr.
Guarino, Paul(Harriet), Mr. & Mrs.	Kehagias, Elizabeth	Maltezos, Lisa, Ms.
Halikoytakīs, Michael(Edith), Mr. & Mrs.	(Papadimitriou, Nikolaos, Mr.), Mrs.	Mangarides, Markos
Halkias, Chris, Mr.	Kickish, Robert(Rosalia), Dr. & Mrs.	(Petranelis, Ekaterini, Mrs.), Mr.
		Manikas, William(Nancy), Dr. & Mrs.

Mantzanas,Chris(Nicole),Mr. & Mrs.	Paras,Marianne,Mrs.	Stanovich,Katherine,Mrs.
Markowski,Maria,Mrs.	Passavanti,Robert(Debbra),Mr. & Mrs.	Stanovich,Samuel(Carmia),Mr. & Mrs.
Matassini,Nicholas G.(Christina),Mr. & Mrs.	Peckham,Richard(Victoria),Mr. & Mrs.	Stavropoulos,Jane,Ms.
Mellon,Andria,Ms.	Perdicas,Ernest(Nancy),Mr. & Mrs.	Steele,Elliott(Dianne),Mr. & Mrs.
Melton,Greg(Victoria),Mr. & Mrs.	Pierroutsakos,Alex(Valerie),Mr. & Mrs.	Stefanidis,Stavros,Mr.
Menendez,Noah(Sara),Mr. & Mrs.	Pileggi,Suzanne,Ms.	Stefero,Elaina,Ms.
Miaoulis,Maria N.,Ms.	Plakas,Theodore(Kyriakoula),Mr. & Mrs.	Stephanides,Ourania
Milonas-Brock,Stacie,Mrs.	Prodromitis,Amzi(Zinser,Zachary,Mr.),Ms.	Stinson,Christian(Katelin),Mr. & Mrs.
Milonas,Alyssa,Ms.	Prodromitis,Themie (Harvie,Douglas,Mr.),Ms.	Stitt,William(Deborah),Mr. & Mrs.
Milonas,Taso(Thay),Mr. & Mrs.	Psihountas,Debbie,Mrs.	Stratigakos,Louis(Georgia),Mr. & Mrs.
Milonas/Peregoy,Deanna,Mrs.	Raptis / Stavropoulos,Lisa,Ms.	Stuart,David,Mr.
Mitseas,Dean,Mr.	Rivadeneira,Jose(Jackie),Mr. & Mrs.	Tamashiro,Melvin(Violet),Mr. & Mrs.
Mitseas,George(Catherine),Mr. & Mrs.	Rodriguez,Roberto,Mr.	Tedrick,Matthew(Ellen),Mr. & Mrs.
Moran,Andrew(Stefanie),Mr. & Mrs.	Rogers,Aris,Mr.,II	Theophanous,Peter,Mr.
Moran,George,Mr.,III	Roussos,Archie(Eleftheria),Mr. & Mrs.	Thomas,Gregory A.(Virginia A.),Dr. & Dr.
Morgan,Theodora,Ms.	Roussos,Nicholas,Mr.	Tisdale,Greg,Mr.
Murnaghan,Peter(Christina),Mr. & Mrs.	Roy,Perry(Alysa),Mr. & Mrs.	Tohovitis,John(Athanasopoulos, Sarah,Ms.),Mr.
Myer,Magdalini,Mrs.	Sakaris,James(Lorraine),Mr. & Mrs.	Touliatos,Markissa,Ms.
Mylonakis,Nicholas(Nicole), Mr. & Mrs.	Sakaris,Thomas(Barbara),Mr. & Mrs.	Trakas,Andrew(Adrienne),Mr. & Mrs.
Nakos,Nicholas(Amanda),Mr. & Mrs.	Samarkos,Gracie,Ms.	Triantafilou,Marcelle,Ms.
Nassar MacLean,Hend (MacLean,Erik,Mr.),Mrs.	Samuel,Calvin(Vivian),Mr. & Mrs.	Trimis,Michael(Diane),Mr. & Mrs.
Naum,Dean(Sandra),Mr. & Mrs.	Sandborn,Marilyn(Steve),Mr. & Mrs.	Tsambis,Konstantinos(Anna),Mr. & Mrs.
Nenos,Byron(Jeanie),Mr. & Mrs.	Scarfogliero,Alexis,Mrs.	Tsatalis,Andrea,Dr.
Nenos,John(Catherine),Mr. & Mrs.	Serbanos,Michael(Patricia),Mr. & Mrs.	Tsibris,John,Dr.
Nenos,Vasilios,Mr.	Shah,Hadi S.(Psilos,Kelly),Dr.	Vafiadis,Nicholas,Mr.
Nicklow,Tom(Demetra),Mr. & Mrs.	Shanahan,Tyler,Mr.	Valaes,Demetrios(Lynn A.),Mr. & Mrs.
Nicolaou,Christos(Dee),Mr. & Mrs.	Sibley,John Brigham,Mr.	Verras,Spiro(Roman),Mr.
Nolas,George S.(Cheryl),Mr. & Mrs.	Sibley,Russell(Despina),Mr. & Mrs.	Vitou,Jack(Cauthorn,Maria,Ms.),Mr.
Olsen,Scott(Elphida),Mr. & Mrs.	Siedlecki,Alexander,Mr.	Voulgaris,George(Jackie),Mr. & Mrs.
Palios,George(Julie),Mr. & Mrs.	Skijus,Alexander,Mr.	Voykin,David(Amy),Mr. & Mrs.
Palios,Michael(Bessie),Mr. & Mrs.	Skouras,John(Elqeni,Esterina,Mrs.),Mr.	Vukmer,Daniel(Sheila),Mr & Mrs.
Paloumpis,Andreas,Mr.	Skourellos,Dante(Lindsey),Mr. & Mrs.	Ward,Gary(Pappas,Sandra,Ms.),Mr.
Paloumpis,Tom(Jenny),Mr. & Mrs.	Smith,Jonathan Wain(Hartzler/ Smith,Jamie,Mrs.),Mr.	Wenditz,Michael(Amy),Mr. & Mrs.
Panagakos,Nicholas,Mr.	Sotiropoulos,Bill,Mr.	Wilsmann,lone,Mrs.
Panos,Euripides(Denise),Mr. & Mrs.	Sotiropoulos,Paul(Terri),Mr. & Mrs.	Worley,Christene,Ms.
Panson,George(Sherry),Mr. & Mrs.	Soto,Alejandro,Mr.	Xenick,Emanuel(Maria),Mr. & Mrs.
Pantelides Spinelli,Sophie (Spinelli,John,Mr.),Mrs.	Spanos,Michael(Jerry),Mr. & Mrs.	Xenick,George(Cindy),Mr. & Mrs.
Papadakis,Alec(Lauren),Mr. & Mrs.	Speegle,Maria(Gary),Mrs.	Zabetakis, Maria, Ms.
Papaeconomou,Lambros(Deborah),Mr. & Mrs.	Spencer,Wayne(Pauline),Mr. & Mrs.	Zaharis,Constantine(Rachel),Dr. & Dr.
Pappas,Paul(Georgia),Mr. & Mrs.	Spirides,Frances,Ms.	Zaloumes,Giorgio Panos(Gianopulos,Tara Marie),Mr.
Pappou,Ioannis(Perich,Tanya,Dr.),Dr.	Spithoyanis,Michael,Mr.	Zelatis,John P.(Denise M.),Mr. & Mrs.
	Stamas,Nicholas(Taylor),Mr. & Mrs.	



AHEPA LYCURGUS CHAPTER 12
DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE ALCMAEON CHAPTER 167
SONS OF PERICLES CHAPTER 39
MAIDS OF ATHENA NIKKI CHAPTER 39

The AHEPA FAMILY OF TAMPA invites you to its

Scholarship Awards and Installation of Officers Ceremony

Friday , June 20, 2025 @6:30 PM

St John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Kourmolis Center

Dinner will be provided

PLEASE RSVP BY JUNE 12, 2025, to:

Jim Sakaris at panathenikos@gmail.com or

Ourania Stephanides at stephanides.ourania@gmail.com

***Please consider a donation to the AHEPA Family of Tampa Scholarship Fund.**



ST. JOHN FOOD PANTRY UPDATE



Thank YOU for your continued support!

We're off to a fantastic start this year, with donations going to Tampa Hope and Metropolitan Ministries—and thanks to you, everything was quickly received and distributed!

'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.'

Matthew 14:16

This verse, from story of the feeding of the 5000, reminds us that Jesus calls us to meet the needs of others. Our Food Pantry is one way we can answer that call—with action and compassion.

★ How You Can Help (It's as Easy as 1-2-3!)

- 1 Find our drop-off location just past the entrance to the Church Hall.
- 2 Mark your calendar for the First Sunday of each month—our primary collection day. (But donations are always welcome)
- 3 Bring an item when attending any ministry meeting—it all adds up!



Prefer to give a gift card? We gratefully accept grocery store gift cards of \$20 or less in the church office.



Most-Needed Pantry Items:

- Canned Fruits & Vegetables
- Canned or Dried Beans
- Canned Meats (Tuna, Chicken, Spam, Vienna Sausages)
- Cereal & Shelf-stable Milk
- Granola & Snack Bars
- Instant Mashed Potatoes
- Peanut Butter & Jelly (plastic jars only)
- Rice
- Soups (cans or "just add water" options)
- Spaghetti sauce (no glass containers)
- Dry goods
- Paper Towels & toilet Paper

Know someone in need? Want to take a bag of groceries home or share with others? Contact Sandra Pappas at **813-785-3747** we're here to help. Have ideas to improve pantry or get more involved? Let us know!

NURSING MINISTRY

HEALTHY SUMMER HABITS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Summer brings sunshine, freedom from school routines, and opportunities to make memories with those we love. It's also a season when health habits can slip — or flourish! With a little intention, families can use these warmer months to grow stronger together in both body and spirit.

1. Keep Moving Together

Whether it's an evening walk, a bike ride, or playing tag in the yard, movement doesn't have to be complicated. Aim for 30 minutes of activity a day — and make it fun. Invite the whole family to join in and treat it like quality time, not a chore.

2. Choose Fresh, Whole Foods

Summer is a great time to explore farmer's markets, try fresh fruits, and enjoy simple meals that don't require turning on the oven. Involve kids in picking and prepping meals to build excitement about healthy choices.

3. Set Healthy Screen Limits

Without school, screens can quickly take over. Try creating a family "tech window" — agreed-upon times for digital fun — and balance it with outdoor time, board games, or service projects.

4. Make Space for Rest

Vacations are great, but don't forget to rest in daily rhythms too. Prioritize good sleep, peaceful evenings, and time to reflect on God's goodness. Summer Sabbath moments help restore the soul.

5. Stay Spiritually Nourished

Just like physical health, our spiritual health needs attention. Use the longer days to start a family devotion, memorize a verse together, or serve others as a family. These practices keep hearts aligned with Christ.

JOY TWEENS



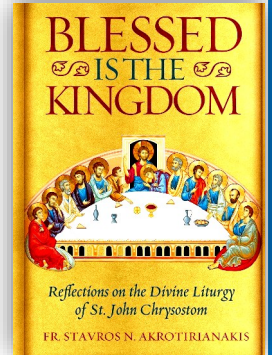
JOY Tweens (4th to 6th grades):

The Tweens had a session with Fr. Stavros, followed by a movie night on May 9.

Thank you for joining us for fun and fellowship this year! Have a wonderful summer and we'll see you in the Fall!

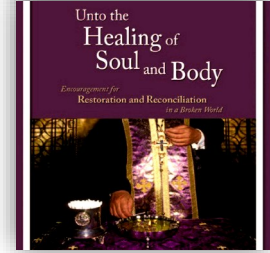
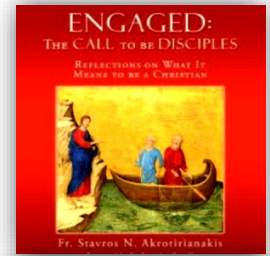
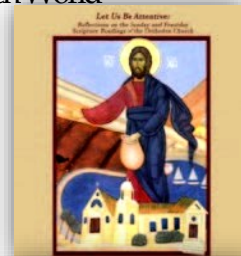
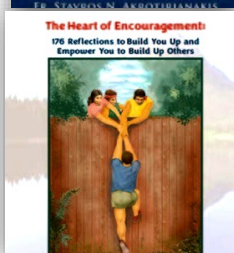
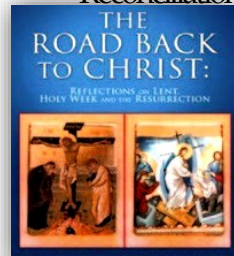
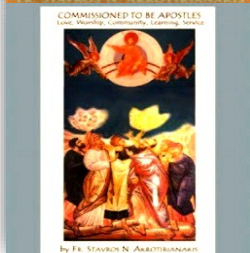
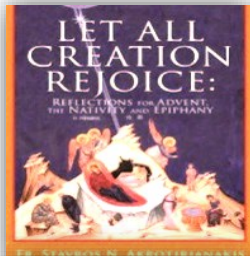
FR. STAVROS NEW BOOK

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



This month's submission for our One Word comes from a person not from St. John. With their submission, also came a copy of this icon. After doing some research on this unusual and beautiful icon, it seems like it is worth sharing. Please enjoy this "one word" bonus

I would like to share how I came to my selection of the word, "stillness." I came across the beautiful Icon of The Theotokos of Stillness this fall.

Our Holy Mother instructs us in wisdom to just be still and quiet holding her finger to her lips. It is my hope to grow in my Faith as I slow down. I know I'm going to pray a lot... particularly The Jesus Prayer. Maybe I will learn more about how to turn loose of trying to fix things myself and also learn to control the words that tend to pour out of my mouth without a lot of thought. Here's our Loving Theotokos Icon.

Virgin Mary of Stillness Icon

*The **Virgin Mary of Stillness** icon was inspired by the writings of the desert monastics. Where their way of life in stillness and quietude helped them become closer to God and internalise the Jesus Prayer. Quiet and especially not talking is imperative to deep inner prayer. I had the idea for this icon in my head for many years from my own experience of struggling with the Jesus Prayer and when the corona virus hit and most of the world's population was forced into self isolation, it gave me the motivation to finally make the icon a reality.*

The icon is a combination of three icons. The Virgin Mary is taken from the Holy Monastery of Amirou in Cyprus. In Cyprus, many traditional icons have a colourful head covering on the Virgin Mary and I found this design very appealing. I wanted the body of Jesus to face towards the viewer but I couldn't find an icon of Him with a head that I liked so I combined two different icons. Once I had a base, I then rearranged and added elements in to suit the hand of the Virgin Mary being inserted which was NOT taken from any other icon. The whole concept and meaning behind the icon is that the Virgin Mary is instructing us to be quiet, be still, she is literally shushing us and as a result Christ will bless us as he is facing us and His hand is blessing the viewer.

The Greek name of the icon is Παναγία Ἡ Ἠσυχάζουσα.



The Virgin Mary of Australia and Oceania ©
OCEANITISSA

Abbess Marianna

Gerontissa Marianna is an experienced nun of 30 plus years living in communal monasteries before taking on the blessed task of renovating the Monastery of St George in Jerusalem. Originally from Cyprus, Gerontissa Marianna is a nun of the Great Schema dedicated to the monastic life of obedience and prayer.

Sister Christina

Sister Christina, born and bred in Australia, came to Jerusalem in 2015 under the supervision of Gerontissa Marianna. Sister Christina's passion for teaching and creativity has led to many projects, with the blessing of the Gerontissa Marianna, that you can access through this website.

We give permission for people to print as they like but not for commercial use. Thank you.

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 **5,235** people on the Prayer Team.

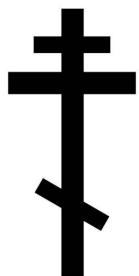


INTERESTED IN JOINING THE PRAYER TEAM?

Over 5,235 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.*

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

Our services are live streamed through our church website.

<https://stjohntpa.org/live/>

Youtube

Subscribe and turn on notifications so you don't miss a sermon, weekly update, or Bible study.

<https://www.youtube.com/@st.johnthebaptistgoc Tampa/5658>



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

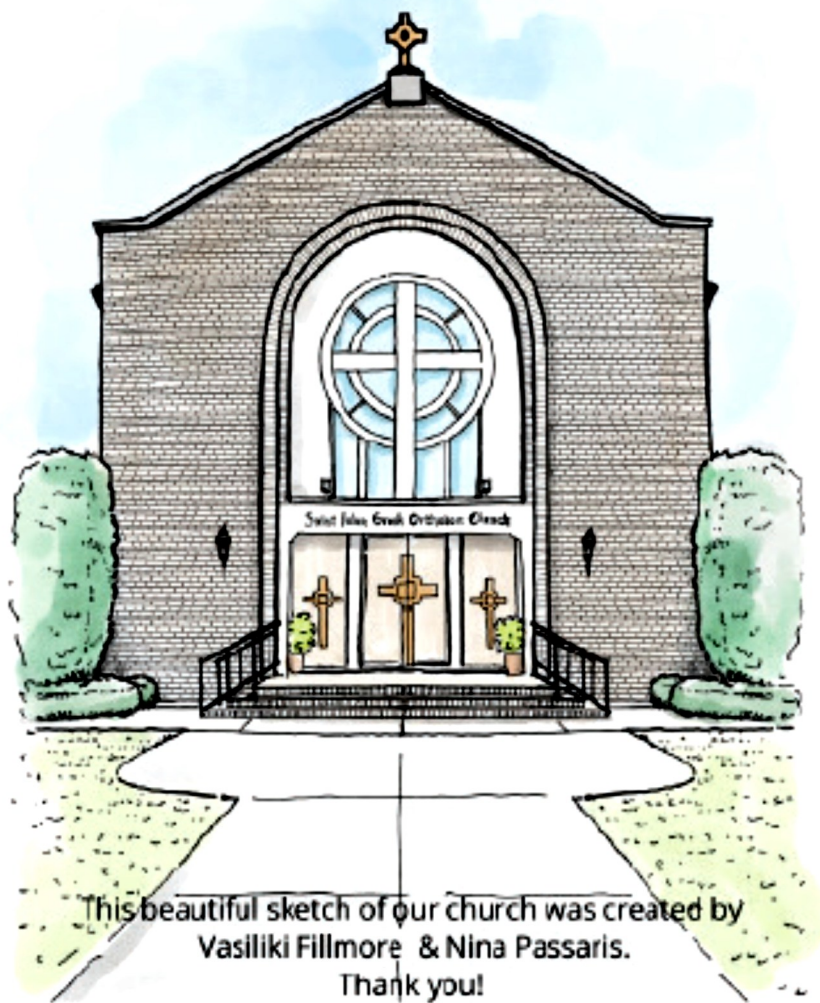
Please mail this form and check to: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
2418 W. Swann Ave Tampa, FL 33609.

June 2025							July 2025▶
◀ May 2025	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Philoctochos End of Year luncheon GOYA 5:00 p.m.	2		3 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	4**	5 Orthodoxy 201 with Fr. John 6:30-8:00pm	6** Junior Olympics	7 <u>Saturday of the Souls</u> Orthros 7:45 a.m. Liturgy 9:00 a.m. Adult Greek School Junior Olympics
8 <u>Pentecost</u> Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Kneeling Vespers 11:00 a.m. Junior Olympics Luncheon	9		10 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	11 Choir 7:15 p.m. Metropolis Clergy Laity Fr. Stavros at Clergy Laity 6/11-6/13	12 Metropolis Clergy Laity Orthodoxy 201 with Fr. John 6:30-8:00pm	13 Metropolis Clergy Laity	14
15 <u>All Saints Day/Father's Day</u> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	16** Beginning of Holy Apostles Fast		17** Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	18** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.	19** Young Adult Discussion 7:00 p.m.	20** AHEPA-DOP 6:00p.m. (Scholarship Awards)	21** Community Outreach
22** Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	23**		24** <u>Nativity of St. John the Baptist</u> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	25** Choir 7:15 p.m. (Tentative) Panigyri Adult Dance 7:00-8:15p.m.	26** Fr. Stavros at St. Stephens summer camp June 26-July 5	27**	28**
29 <u>Sts. Peter and Paul</u> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	30 <u>Holy Apostles</u> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	**Fast Day					

July 2025					
◀ June 2025					
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
**Fast Day		1 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	2 **	3	4 ** Independence Day
					Office Closed
6 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	7	8 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	9 ** Paraklesis 6:00p.m.	10	11 **
					12 <u>St. Paisios</u> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
13 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	14	15 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	16 **	17 <u>St. Marina</u> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	18 **
					19 Community Outreach
20 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	21 Fr. Stavros out of town 7/21-30	22 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	23 ** Panigyri Adult Dance 7:00-8:15p.m.	24	25 **
					26
27 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	28	29 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	30 **	31	

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX
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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*