

THE — MESSENGER —

January - February 2024 Edition

**Theophany of
Our Lord and
Saviour Jesus
Christ
January 6**



**St. John the Baptist
Greek Orthodox
Church**

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



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

Saturdays: Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Sundays: Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

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

Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-876-8830 (Office) frstav@gmail.com 813-394-1038 (Cell)	Choir Tara Swartzbaugh, Director 813-313-0439 Ruth Losovitz, Organist 727-688-2782	Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374 Photography Ministry Karina Findlay 813-476-9632
Retired Priest in Residence Rev. Fr. Stratton Dorozenski 813-876-8830 (Office)	College Student Program Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 414-254-5134	Philoptochos Katherine Sakkis 813-309-1073
Retired Priest in Residence Rev. Fr. John Stefero 813-876-8830 (Office) jwstefero50@hotmail.com 678-637-4425 (Cell)	Community Outreach Greg Melton 813-967-2074 Connect Through Christ - Special Needs Ministry for Children Dante and Lindsey Skourellos 813-765-9534	Stewardship Chris Kyrus 757-672-1920 George Mitseas 813-748-1220 Sunday School Vickie Peckham 813-758-3102
Parish Council John Zelatis, President 813-727-2271 Euripides Panos, Vice President 813-352-3972 Marilyn Sandborn, Secretary 813-760-6289 Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898 Jim Armstrong 954-295-6665 Amin Hanhan 813-846-2957 Nick Katzaras 863-581-2430 Suzanne Pileggi 813-244-5855 Alexis Scarfogliero 813-892-1599 Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026 Mike Xenick 813-340-8737	Dance Groups H XAPA ΜΑΣ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668 Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963 ΠΑΡΕΑ, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136 ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668 Daughters of Penelope Elena Paras Ketchum 813-229-0144 Festival Mike Xenick 813-340-8737 Finance Committee Gary Ward 813-846-3898 Food Pantry Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747 Gasparilla Parking Volunteer Needed 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 Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038 Parish Nursing Ministry Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026 Oratorical Festival	Usher Pete Trakas 813-505-2193 Veterans/1st Responders Fr. John Stefero 813-876-8830 Website / Social Media / APP VOLUNTEER NEEDED! Welcoming Ministry Maria Xenick 813-765-3587 Women's Bible Study Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038 Young Adult Aris Rogers 813-309-5525 Young at Heart Dora Morgan 813-613-3738 Youth Protection Suzanne Pileggi 813-244-5855 12 Disciples Mathew Balasis 727-421-7376
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Buildings & Grounds Euripides Panos 813-352-3972		

Fr. Stavros' Message

This issue of The Messenger will be a double-issue covering the months of January/February. The weekly bulletin, which is available in print at Divine Liturgy each Sunday and is emailed to the community each weekend will have announcements of activities that are not included in this issue. It is our hope to resume the monthly publication of The Messenger beginning in March.



Father Stavros' Message

Who Will You Vote for This Year?

Happy New Year!

The next major election cycle will happen in November 2024. And before that we'll again go through primary season. During the primary stage, we will see many candidates competing for votes. One or two will probably stand out, the rest will get miniscule percentages and eventually drop out.

NOW THIS MESSAGE IS NOT ABOUT POLITICS.

I heard a podcast recently about casting votes as far as where we spend our time this year. A person who spends time working out every day casts a vote in favor of health. A person who tends to their marriage casts a vote for their spouse. A parent who is attentive to their children casts a vote for their kids. An employee who does an exemplary job at work casts their vote for their job. And so on.

We also cast votes against things in our life. When we don't exercise, we cast a vote against our health. When we aren't attentive to our spouse, we cast a vote against our marriage, and so on.

Where does faith figure in your voting? Do we cast votes for God or against God?

If we were really to add up the votes in our lives, the candidates who vie for primacy are probably pretty shocking. Most of us cast a lot of votes for our phones, for social media and for TV. Had you made more time for your phone today or your children? Your spouse? Your health? Your salvation?



Let's put down some of the things people do with their lives and see where your votes might come out.

Salvation—daily prayer, Scripture reading and weekly worship

Spouse

Children

Parents

Family members

Friends

Job

Exercise

Hobbies

Sleep

Phone

Social Media

TV-Entertainment

Volunteer work

Housekeeping (cleaning, cooking, etc.)

Now if we rank these 15 in order of who gets the most votes for your time, most of us would put our jobs—they occupy 40+ hours a week. Sleep would probably be up there as well, if you sleep 6 hours a night, that's 40+ hours a week. That's at least half of our time, and probably significantly more. Let's say that work and sleep add up to 100 hours a week. Where do the rest rank? How are we casting our votes for the other 13 items on the list? Does the phone, social media and TV-Entertainment rank ahead of how much time we spend with our families? Worshipping? Where is God on this list as far as our time goes?



I read a book a few years ago entitled “21 Seconds to Change Your World.” It was about the Lord's Prayer and how it only takes the average person 21 seconds to offer the Lord's Prayer. Many people have said to me over the years “I say the Lord's Prayer once a day.” Which means that a grand total of 21 seconds are going to your prayer life each day. Now, before I come off as judgmental, I do not spend nearly enough time on my prayer life either.

When I audit how much time I spend/waste on things that don't matter, like my phone, it easily eclipses my prayer life.

We not only cast votes with how we spend our time. We cast votes with how we spend our money. Here are some of the main things we spend money on.

Mortgage and everything related to our homes—utilities, insurance, repairs,

Cars and everything related to them—gas, maintenance

Phones and technology

Cable

Food

School for kids

Retirement savings/investment

Entertainment/Eating out

Travel

Hobbies

Clothes

Coffee/Alcohol

Pledge to the church/charitable giving

Yes how we spend our money casts a vote for or against the things that are really important to us. Most of us probably have our mortgage and home expenses as our top vote as far as our money goes. And that's understandable. Cars are up there, we all need one and they cost money to buy, to operate and to fix. If you send your kids to private school, that costs money, or if you help pay for college, that is certainly worthy. We need to eat. Then comes the rest—how do we cast our votes with our discretionary spending.

Continued...

I put coffee and alcohol as a separate category because people choose to spend a lot of money on both outside of the house. There are people who pay \$19 per drink at a football game—yes, that was the price at the recent FSU -UF game I attended, and people weren't have one drink. Imagine that conservatively half of the people at the game (90,000 in attendance so 45,000, that's half) each had two drinks (and many people had way more), that's 90,000 drinks at \$20 each, that's \$1.8M transacted on alcohol alone at a 3 hour football game.

People spend upwards of \$8-10 per coffee at Starbucks. If someone makes that part of their daily routine, that's \$40 per week, or \$2,000 a year on one person's coffee habit.

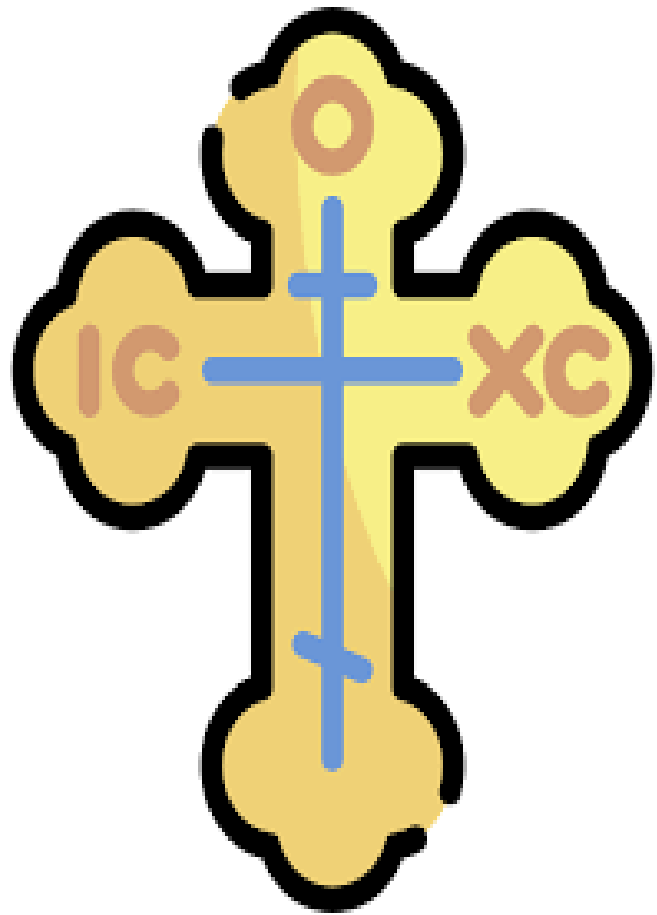
I'm not saying that an occasional Starbucks or a splurge on alcohol at a football game is a sin. But how many votes go there versus how many go to charity? For most people, charity is at the bottom of the list of financial priorities. It comes from what is leftover, if there is anything left over.

A New Year provides us an opportunity for a new start. This is a great time to assess who or what you are casting your votes for, as it relates to your time and your money. As I look at how I cast my votes, I definitely have room for improvement. I need to spend more time sleeping, exercising and praying daily. I also need to spend more time at leisure and with family. I can definitely spend more money on charity and less on eating out. As we begin a new year, I have a good idea of where I'm going to cast my votes this year. How about you? Who and what are you going to vote for?

Have a blessed New Year 2024!

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros



Fr. Stavros, Bishop Of Australia and
Fr. John, during the bishops visit to
St. John's

Child or out!

By His Grace Bishop Emilianos of Meloa

Delivered as a sermon on Wednesday, November 22

At St. John the Baptist

Editor's Note: At the Divine Liturgy on the eve of Thanksgiving, November 22, we were blessed with a visit from His Grace Bishop Emilianos of Meloa, who serves in Australia. His Grace celebrated the Divine Liturgy and offered the following sermon, which was so well received, I have been asked by several people to reprint it in The Messenger for our entire community to enjoy. The sermon is based on Luke 18: 15-17, 26-30, which is also reprinted below.

15 Now they were bringing even infants to Him that He might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them to Him, saying, "Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. 17 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

26 Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" 27 But He said, "What is impossible with men is possible with God." 28 And Peter said, "Lo, we have left our homes and followed You." 29 And He said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."

Luke 18: 15-17, 26-30

Through our Holy Gospel today, Christ reveals to us that "whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child, shall not enter it". A very important concept. **An extremely important concept**, we ignore and forget all the time. We are either like children, **OR**, we cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Basically, if we do not wrap our heads around this meaning, we wasted our lives. **You are a child, or you are out! As simple as that**. This also indicates that the Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of children. It is not a kingdom of wise individuals. All Saints in our Church had the heart and the attitude of a child in a million different ways.

If we wish to enter the Kingdom of God and become a Saint, we must look into the qualities which will make us **children-like**. The qualities which will reverse our adult mentality towards God and towards people and life.

Let's quickly see four "child-like" behaviors which can help us inherit the Kingdom of God. So, if I was to be a child, **being conscious of being a child**, how would me, the bishop should behave?

The first one: If I was six months old, I wouldn't worry too much if I was to break something while playing. Why? Because my parents, my Father, God, loves me. I could accidentally destroy the most precious item in the house, and if I was to look up to my Father with a set of puppy eyes, I would be forgiven automatically. Like nothing ever happened. This is called repentance in our Church. Being a child here doesn't mean I will be irresponsible, but it gives me a unique freedom from the fear of perfectionism. I can now admit my mistakes without fear! No anxiety about who I am whatsoever. I am who I am, but because God, my Father, is Who He is, I wouldn't care less about who I am. I get the opportunity of accepting myself, and I free myself from the constant struggle to prove myself. I am being Myself. **I become who I am supposed to be! Myself.** God knows me, and I get to know God. Being a child gives me the freedom from any anxiety of perfectionism. Gives me the acceptance of myself. Something Adam and Eve did not have, **and**, they missed Paradise.

Second "child-like" quality: If I was one year old, I wouldn't care less for what the future holds. I would have no consciousness of the concept of future. And we might argue that my logic would not yet be fully developed, but trust me, too much logic destroys our faith. All I need to feel again when I am one year old is that my parents, my Father, God, loves me. And, I do not worry about bills. I do not worry about traffic. I do not worry about future.

Continued...

I leave myself in God's, in my Father's Hands. He will provide everything for me. I free myself from the anxiety of the future.

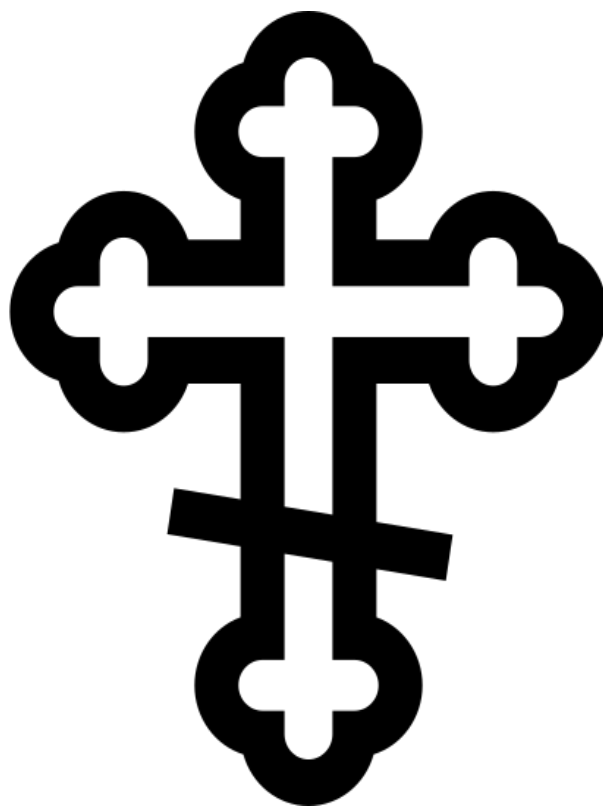
Third “child-like” behavior: if I was eighteen months old, I wouldn't care less about what other people think of me. I would smile to everyone, but only out of the goodness of my heart. I wouldn't smile according to my lengthy agenda. All that would matter to me would have been that my parents, my Father, God, loves me. I wouldn't be man pleasing. Being a child now frees me from every human perception about me. Humans could never fully understand our hearts, but, who cares about it when you are eighteen months old? Right? So being child-like now makes me free from every social anxiety.

A fourth “child-like” quality we could talk about, and which basically summarizes all the above, could be that if I was two years old, in a loving home, I would have developed the feeling of full trust towards my parents. Spiritually this would be translated to full trust towards my Father, God. I would basically not be afraid, full stop! This could indicate the deeper understanding that my parents, my Father, God, Who loves me, is in charge of Everything. Everything visible and everything invisible. He is in charge of the creation and of the history. Who could touch me when I rest in my Father's Hands?

What have we talked about so far? We said that being child-like could firstly free us from the anxiety of ourselves, of who we are, of our perfectionism and of the fear of making mistakes, secondly of the anxiety of the future, and then of any social anxiety. The above can be translated to the priceless installation in our hearts of a full trust in God's, in our Father's in Heaven, Divine Providence.

If there is something I understood in my life is that by fully leaving yourself in God's Hands, you can experience His Eternity from now. You can experience the Kingdom of God from now. Furthermore, in this Kingdom of God you will experience, you will get a deep understanding that God is our Father in Heaven. The thing is, if this is Who our Father is, who or what could ever hurt our souls? This is where all Saints found the Faith they needed to keep them going through all the difficulties in their personal lives, and in the life of our Church.

This is what gave them the security to walk on waves when there was no solid ground under their two own feet, to give them the perspective of stability in life. Faith and logic do not get along very well. Being a child gives you the unexplainable simplicity of faith you need to become Great! To become a Saint! As far as the Kingdom of God goes according to our Holy Gospel today, you are a child. or you are out! As simple as that.



**BUILDING A SPIRITUAL LIFE:
PRAYER, WORSHIP, SCRIPTURE, AND
GENEROSITY.**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10
10:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.**

ALL MEN ARE WELCOME, ORTHODOX OR NOT

\$15 (COVERS LUNCH)

**STARTING WITH DIVINE LITURGY, FOLLOWED BY
PRESENTATIONS AND GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

**FR. STAVROS
AKROTIRIANAKIS**



**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK
ORTHODOX CHURCH**

2418 W. Swann Ave. Tampa, FL 33609

Kindly RSVP by February 5 to frstav@gmail.com

SCHOOL OF GREEK LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

DIPLOMAS OF ELLINOMATHEIA



On Saturday, October 28th four students of our school received their Diplomas for Ellinomatheia.

These students participated in the test for Ellinomatheia last May in the Clearwater Campus of Plato Academy.

This test is sponsored by the Center of Greek Language in Thessaloniki and is following the international standards about the Foreign Languages.

The students who participated and succeed in it for 2023 are the following:

Christos Marmagiolis - Level A1

Vasilios Tsokos - Level A1

Apostolos Marmagiolis - Level A2

Konstantinos Tsokos - Level B1

We are very proud of our students and we congratulate them!

Students who got the A2 level acquire three (3) College credits and those who got B1 level acquire five (5) College credits.

For 2024, the School of Greek Language and Culture will have eight (8) students who will participate in the Test for Ellinomatheia Diploma!

Joy Tweens Ministry

JOY Tweens will meet again on January 21, following the Divine Liturgy. Stay tuned for more details by email and/or text messages, as well as our weekly church bulletins and Sunday school flyers.

We will be planning events for our tweens every month, either in conjunction with HOPE/JOY or separately just for our JOY Tweens. If you have children in 4th to 6th grades, please contact Maraquet Edquid (email: maraquet@gmail.com/cell: 813-422-8963) with any questions.

Sign-Up for Text Updates!

To get updates and other messages for JOY Tweens, text **@783gc6** to 81010 on your mobile phone.

Inspiration

How late can you be for the Liturgy?

How many times do priests hear the question: "Is being late to Liturgy a sin?" Or "Is it possible to go to Communion if you're 10 minutes late?" In such cases, one has to wonder what one should even say...

Think about it: If we are consistently late for work, then we would be out of a job. Be three minutes late for a plane or train, and they will leave without you. But, with church, that's not even the case. It should be known that the Liturgy begins well before its "beginning." Upon entering the church temple, the priest is to pray the Kairos prayers in front of the icon screen. He then prays the Proskomide, where he prepares the offering for the Eucharistic Liturgy. While this is happening, the priest and the chanters are offering the Orthros/Matins service in order to not only commemorate the saint of the day, but to establish the setting of prayer and praise. People are lighting candles and praying silently for their intentions, in preparation to encounter our Lord and Savior in the Eucharist.

All of this reminds us of the eternal choirs of angels singing in praise of our Lord—an eternity that we, as Christians, aspire to attain once we leave this earth. The church temple is meant to reflect heaven, where we meet our Lord and Savior in HIS house surrounded by the sounds, sights, and smells of His dwelling.

In church, God is waiting for us. And if we nurture a relationship of trust and love with our God, then the issue of being late doesn't even arise. After all, going to the Liturgy is not a weekly Sunday obligation. It is something that we freely should choose to do, not to "gain" anything, but because we truly believe in our Lord and Savior, and we want to offer Him praise and spend time with Him in His house. Simply put, the time that we spend in church is meant to be a taste of what eternity in heaven will be like.

Simply put, if we are focused on God, we would find being late for church unacceptable in our lives. We would take every safeguard to be on time for our dream vacation... Going to church is the joy of meeting, the pursuit of union with our Creator—it is our sincere response to His invitation... Let's hurry to God!

On another note, people ask if it is even necessary to go to church? The best and most pragmatic answer I have ever heard to this question is from Tony Evans, an renowned preacher, who said (and I am paraphrasing), that married couples may spend time apart because one is traveling for business, but they always come together in the same house. If a couple is married and never in the same house together, they might be married in name, but it is in name only. The whole point in being married is to spend time together under the same roof. In the sacrament of Baptism, we are married to God. He is the bride, we (the church) are the bridegroom. And just as a married couple resides under the same roof, we should spend time in God's house, often, and with joy. Otherwise, can we really consider ourselves to be the bridegroom of Christ?

Have you ever thought about this?

In 100 years like in 2124 we will all be buried with our relatives and friends.

Strangers will live in our homes we fought so hard to build, and they will own everything we have today. All our possessions will be unknown and unborn, including the car we spent a fortune on, and will probably be scrap, preferably in the hands of an unknown collector.

Our descendants will either not know or hardly know who we were, nor will they remember us. How many of us know our grandfather's father?

After we die, we will be remembered for a few more years, then we are just a portrait on someone's bookshelf, and a few years later our history, photos and deeds disappear in history's oblivion. We won't even be memories.

If we paused one day to analyze these questions, perhaps we would understand how ignorant and weak the dream to achieve it all was.

If we could only think about this, surely our approaches, our thoughts would change, we would be different people.

Always having more, no time for what's really valuable in this life. I'd change all this to live and enjoy the walks I've never taken, these hugs I didn't give, these kisses for our children and our loved ones, these jokes we didn't have time for. Those would certainly be the most beautiful moments to remember, after all they would fill our lives with joy.

And some of us waste it day after day with greed, selfishness and intolerance.

Every minute of life is priceless and will never be repeated, so take time to enjoy, be grateful for, and celebrate your existence.

Flight #2024

Hello, welcome to Flight #2024. We are prepared to take off into a brand new year. Please make sure your Attitude and Blessings are secured and locked in an upright position. All self-destructive devices should be turned off at this time. All negativity, hurt and discouragement should be put away. Should we lose Altitude under pressure, during the flight, reach up and pull down a Prayer. Prayers will automatically be activated by Faith. Once your Faith is activated you can assist other passengers. There will be NO BAGGAGE allowed on this flight. The Captain (GOD) has cleared us for takeoff. Destination GREATNESS.



Take Advantage of the Parish Assistance Program

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

The BayCare helpline, 800-878-5470, is answered 24/7 by mental health professionals.

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

Help is available for life issues including:

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

This service is completely confidential between parishioner and a BayCare Christian Therapist

**St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
is sponsoring a Women's Retreat**



***Many Believed in Him Because of the Woman's
Testimony (John 4:39):
The Important Roles of Women in the Bible***

Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis - Retreat Leader

**Saturday, March 23 - Feast of the Annunciation
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

All women are welcome, Orthodox or not

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

Donations Accepted

**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK
ORTHODOX CHURCH**

2418 W. Swann Ave. Tampa, FL 33609

Kindly RSVP by March 18 to office@stjohntpa.org

Liturgical Schedule for January

Monday, January 1, 2024 **St. Basil**

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

St. Basil– January 1

Thursday, January 4

Royal Hours of Theophany 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Friday, January 5

Vespertal Divine Liturgy 9:00 a.m.
Blessing of the Waters 10:15 a.m.

Saturday, January 6

Theophany
(St. Nicholas Cathedral in Tarpon Springs)
Orthros 8:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m.
Blessing of the Waters in Spring Bayou 12:00 p.m.

Great Vespers for Feast of St. John the Baptist 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, January 7

St. John the Baptist
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.

Wednesday, January 10

Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 14

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

Wednesday, January 17

St. Anthony
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, January 18

Sts. Athanasios and Cyril
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, January 21

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

Thursday, January 25

St. Gregory the Theologian
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, January 28

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

Tuesday, January 30

Three Hierarchs
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

St. Gregory the Theologian– January 25



St. John the Baptist– January 7



Continued...

Liturgical Schedule for February

Friday, February 2 **Presentation of Christ in the Temple**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, February 4 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Monday, February 5 Teaching Liturgy for Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 7 Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 10 **St. Haralambos**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, February 11 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, February 18 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, February 25 **1st Sunday of Triodion—Publican and Pharisee**
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, March 3 **2nd Sunday of Triodion—Prodigal Son**
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

2nd Sunday of Triodion—Prodigal Son March 3



Presentation of Christ in the Temple February 2



St. Haralambos February 10



Liturgical Notes for January & February

Monday, January 1 - The Circumcision of Christ/St. Basil - New Year's Day

Three things are commemorated on the first day of each year. First, the circumcision of Christ, which occurred historically 8 days after His Nativity. He was circumcised according to the rites of the Jewish law and given the name Jesus. Secondly, we commemorate the feast of St. Basil the Great, one of the Great Hierarchs of our church. St. Basil authored one of the Divine Liturgies used in our church, which is celebrated on his feastday. He also helped found monasticism. St. Basil was a friend to the poor, often baking bread with money in it and throwing it through the windows of widows and the poor. Hence the tradition of the Vasilopita, the bread with the coin baked inside, which we cut at the New Year. Finally, we are supposed to pray every day and commemorate all of life's milestones with prayer. So, we open a new year, 2024, with prayer and the Divine Liturgy.

Thursday, January 4 - Royal Hours of Theophany 9:30 - 11:00 a.m.

Like Nativity and Pascha, there is a service of the Royal Hours which is celebrated in anticipation of Theophany. This service consists of prayers, Psalms, hymns and Gospel readings which both foretell and recount this Great Feast of the church year.

Friday, January 5 - The Feast of Theophany

The Feast of Theophany commemorates several things: First, and most well-known, it commemorates the Baptism of Christ. Christ was baptized in the Jordan River by St. John the Baptist. Second, at the moment of His descent into the River, the Jordan River reversed its course, and all of Creation changed its course with the presence of the Christ. Third, the Holy Trinity was made manifest for the first time in human history, as the Son of God was in the water, the Holy Spirit hovered over as a dove, and the voice of God was heard. The feast of the Theophany is the manifestation of God, as well as the Baptism of Christ. The name "Epiphany" refers to the enlightenment of the world. After the Divine Liturgy, there is a service called the Blessing of Waters during which water is blessed and sprinkled over the church and over the people as a way to renew and reconsecrate ourselves on this feastday. There is a beautiful and powerful prayer that is offered only on January 5 and 6, asking God to reconsecrate the world.

Saturday, January 6 - Great Vespers of St. John the Baptist - 6:30 p.m.

The Vespers Service is the service that begins the liturgical day. In our church, the day begins at sundown. Thus the feast of St. John the Baptist, celebrated on January 7, begins with the sunset of January 6. Properly celebrated, all feastdays should begin with the celebration of Great Vespers, including every Sunday which should begin with Great Vespers on Saturday evenings. Because this is not practical in most parishes, Great Vespers is celebrated in most parishes on a limited basis. We will, of course, celebrate the complete cycle of services related to our feastday of St. John, which will begin with Great Vespers.

Sunday, January 7 - St. John the Baptist

The day after a major feastday often commemorates the secondary figure of the Feast. On January 6, we celebrate the Baptism/Epiphany of Christ, who is obviously the major figure. The secondary figure of that feast is St. John the Baptist, whose feastday we commemorate the next day, January 7. St. John is the LAST of the Prophets before Christ and the first of the Saints, those who believed in Christ. Righteous figures who came before Christ are called either "Righteous" or "Prophet." Holy People who came after Christ are called Saints. St. John the Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist, as both titles.

Continued...

Wednesday, January 10 – Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary

We will continue to offer Paraklesis once a month, so that we can pray for all the members of our community by name, out loud. We will alternate some in the evening and some in the morning. For January, the Paraklesis will be offered on Wednesday evening, January 10, from 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, January 17 - St. Anthony

St. Anthony is recognized as one of the fathers of monasticism. He lived in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. He founded a monastery in Egypt which still exists to this day. He authored many of the monastic rules that are still in practice today. He also was a major contributor to the First Ecumenical Council in Nicea in 325, where the Nicene Creed was first authored. He was one of the leaders against the heresies of Arianism.

Thursday, January 18 - St. Athanasios and Cyril

St. Athanasios was born in 297 and was ordained a priest in 319. At the tender age of 28, he was one of the leaders of the First Ecumenical Council in 325 in Nicea, and defended the Faith against the heresies of Arius. He contributed to the development of the Nicene Creed which was authored in 325 and edited in 381 at the second Ecumenical Council. St. Athanasios became a bishop and later Patriarch of Alexandria. St. Cyril was actually born after the death of St. Athanasios, so even though they are depicted together and celebrated together, they never met one another. Saint Cyril was also the Patriarch of Alexandria and presided over the Third Ecumenical Council in 431.

Thursday, January 25 - St. Gregory the Theologian

One of the Three Hierarchs, also lived in the 4th century. He was a friend and contemporary of St. Basil and St. John Chrysostom. He was an accomplished speaker and writer, was the Bishop of Nazianzos and was one of the Bishops who presided at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381, which finalized the Nicene Creed that we recite to this day.

Tuesday, January 30 - The Three Hierarchs

The Three Hierarchs are St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom. Each had his own feastday and all are honored together on January 30, ironically because of a controversy over which was the greatest. (Imagine a church meeting where we debated which saints were the most important!) Each of them lived in the 4th Century, each was an accomplished writer and speaker, each was a Bishop, each authored a Liturgy and each is remembered prominently in the history of our church to this day. The Three Hierarchs are Patron Saints of Teachers and Education.

Friday, February 2 - The Presentation of Our Lord into the Temple

The Presentation of Christ is a major feastday of the church and commemorates the day, 40 days after the Nativity, when Christ was brought to the temple when He was 40 days old. According to the Law of Moses, every male child was brought to the temple on its 40th day, together with a sacrifice of pigeons or turtle doves by the parents, and the child was “consecrated Holy to the Lord.” Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the temple on His 40th day, because it was the law to do so. In the temple was a priest named Simeon, who was an older man, who had been promised by God that he would not die until he saw the Christ. When Simeon saw the baby Jesus, he knew in his heart that this was the Lord’s Messiah. He took the child in his arms and prayed “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation which

Continued...

you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light to enlighten the Gentiles and for glory to Your people Israel.” (Luke 2:29-32) This prayer is recited over every child in the Orthodox Church when they are brought to church for the first time when they are 40 days old. That’s where this beautiful tradition comes from.

Wednesday, February 7– Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary

We will continue to offer Paraklesis once a month, so that we can pray for all the members of our community by name, out loud. We will have some in the evening and some in the morning. For February, the Paraklesis will be offered on Wednesday evening, February 7, from 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 10 - St. Haralambos -

St. Haralambos was a Saint of the first century and lived in Greece. He was a priest who was martyred. Our parish has a special connection to St. Haralambos since his relics were interred in our altar table when the church was consecrated in 1986.

What We Celebrate on the Sundays of Triodion and Lent

Pascha will be celebrated this year on Sunday, May 5. Holy Week will begin with the Saturday of Lazarus on Saturday, April 27. Forty Days prior to that is the start of Great Lent, which is Monday, March 18. And for four Sundays prior to that the Church has the period of the Triodion, or preparation for Great Lent, which will begin on Sunday, February 25.

Sunday, February 25 - Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee

The focus this Sunday is on the Gospel of Luke 18:10-14, in which two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, an externally decent and righteous man of religion, and the other was a publican, a sinful tax-collector who was cheating the people. Though the Pharisee was genuinely righteous under the Law, he boasted before God and was condemned. The publican, although he was truly sinful, begged for mercy, received it, and was justified by God. There is NO fasting this week, in preparation for our great journey.)



St. John's Bookstore



What are your resolutions for the New Year? Do they center on prayer, Scripture reading, and learning more about your Orthodox faith? If so, our bookstore is a great place to begin. From Orthodox study Bibles, Scripture commentaries, books on prayer and spirituality etc., we have what you need to fulfill that resolution. Stop in any Sunday following Divine Liturgy and make this New Year a Christ-centered one!

Young at Heart



Reaching out to one and all with best wishes as we enter this New Year. December's Christmas Gathering was enjoyed by the 30 attending. We began the day with worship and then enjoyed a lovely breakfast followed by Christmas Caroling and a fun gift exchange. As something new and different this year, we collected items for needy seniors and packed those in bags to be taken to local senior facilities and homes. We are planning to expand our ministry and do more things like this in 2024. Please consider joining us. We have attendees from age 50 and on up. No membership dues, no meetings, just fellowship and fun. See you at our next get together.

Dora, Diane, and Presvytera Denise



Continued...

Young At Heart—Pictures



Sunday School News

The Sunday School Staff and children would like to wish everyone in our parish

many blessing in the New Year and we pray that you all had a wonderful

Christmas with your family.

We hope you enjoyed our Christmas Pageant this year. Our students did an

amazing job and we are so proud of them.

Our actors with speaking parts did a

great job memorizing their lines and putting meaning behind their words. All the

shepherds, angels, and animals were so adorable. We would also like to thank all

the people involved in this pageant: The teachers, the clergy, the parents, and the amazing cast of The Gifts of Christmas.

CAST:

Narrators:

1 - Gabriele Molina

2 - Koula Niatsikas

3 - Daphne Setzer-Torres

4 - Ebby Serbanos

Archangel Gabriel - Alaina Roby

Mary - Julie Konstas

Joseph - Dorian Setzer-Torres

Innkeeper - Vangeli Laliotis

Speaking Angels:

Angel of the Lord - Eliana Edquid

Angel 1 - Iliana Matassini

Angel 2 - Caroline Anton

Angel 3 - Paige Meadows

King Herod - Penn Serbanos

Bible Scholar - CJ Georgiou

Shepherd 1 - Theo Edquid

Shepherd 2 - Michael Svintsitskiy

Shepherd 3 - Michael Kwasny

King Gaspar - Peter Konstas

King Melchior - Louis Mantzanas

King Galthazar - Michael Piliaris

A special thank you goes out to Zackie Ameres and all the parents who helped with the Christmas pageant rehearsal and the Hope & Joy/Sunday School

Christmas party on December 16th. Our children prepared so many BOXES OF

HOPE. The students learned about the importance of giving to others not only

this season, but throughout the year. Our students also created a number of

crafts, had a delicious lunch, and played some games. A good time was had by all.

Sunday School News Cont.

In addition to our Pageant, our Sunday School topics covered in December were STEWARDSHIP and THE NATIVITY. Our students are truly great stewards of our church. They gave so much of their TIME and TALENT for the Christmas Pageant.

St. John's is truly blessed.

JANUARY 2024 SUNDAY SCHOOL CALENDAR:

Sun., January 7th : Epiphany - St. John the Baptist

9th - 12th Stay in Church

Sat., January 13th: TEACHERS' RETREAT

Sun., January 14th: Vasilopita - St. Basil

Sun., January 21st: Salvation (Story of Zacchaeus)

YOUTH SUNDAY

Sun., January 28th: Traditions

7th - 12th Stay in Church

CONFESSIONS - 1st - 3rd

FEBRUARY CALENDAR:

Sun. February 4th: Presentation of Christ

YOUTH SUNDAY

Sun., February 11th: The Church Building and Sacred Vessels

7th - 12th Stay in Church

Sun., February 18th: Sacraments of the Church

CONFESSIONS - 4th - 6th

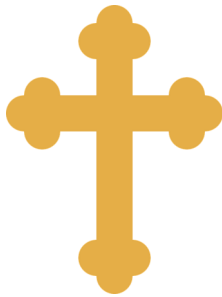
Sun., February 25th: Publican and Pharisee



Continued...



Continued...



Continued...



The above photo is of our children singing during Youth Sunday. The following photos are of our 1st - 6th graders assembling the Bags of Love for the Philoptochos.



Happy 4th Graders sharing their class work!!



Continued...

Sunday School Christmas Party 2023



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

Orthodoxy 101

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

WHY SHOULD I ATTEND ORTHODOXY 101?

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

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

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

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

WHEN WILL THE CLASSES BE HELD?

* MONDAY, JANUARY 22
A TOUR OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH: WHAT WE SEE AND WHAT IT MEANS

* MONDAY, JANUARY 29
INTRODUCTION TO THE SACRAMENTS- BAPTISM, CHRISTMATION, CONFESSION, MARRIAGE, UNCTION

* MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5
THE DIVINE LITURGY – A “TEACHING” LITURGY

* MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12
ORTHODOX TRADITIONS – FASTING, ICONS, PRAYER AND LIVING AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN LIFE

WHAT FORMAT CAN I EXPECT?

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

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

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

There is no charge for this class.

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

Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 4,097 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 6 years! Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email Vasili at Vasili@stjohntpa.org and ask him to add you. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email Vasili 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!**

Father Stavros has authored NINE books that are available both in the bookstore and online. They 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

Blessed is the Kingdom, Now and Forever: Reflections on the Divine Liturgy

Let us Be Attentive: Reflections on the Sunday and Feastday Scripture Readings of the Orthodox Church

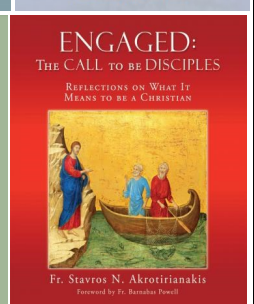
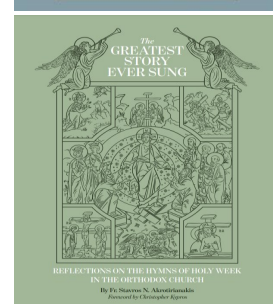
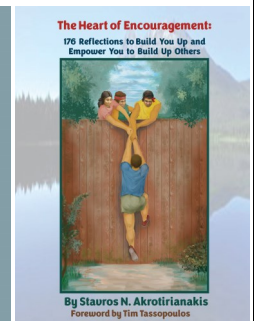
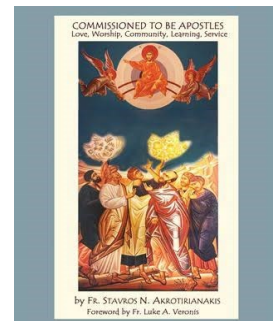
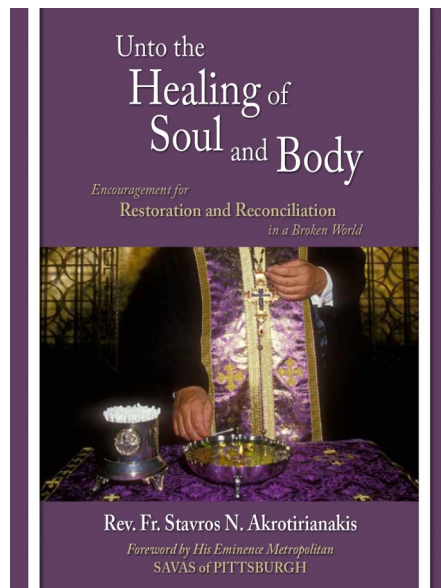
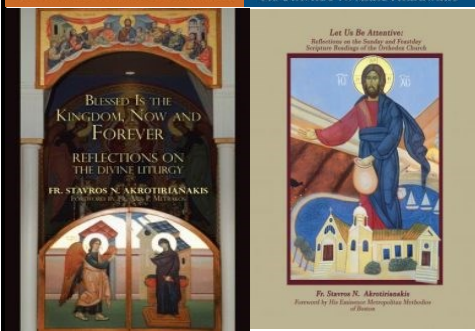
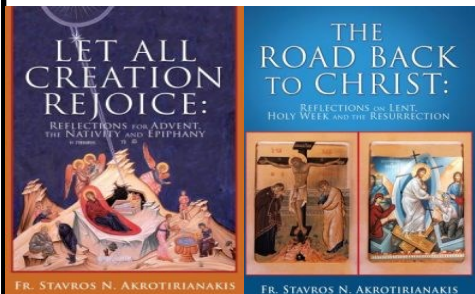
Engaged: The Call To Be Disciples, Reflections on What it Means to be a Christian

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

NEW: Unto the Healing of Soul and Body: Encouragement for Restoration and Reconciliation in a Broken World



Memorial & Kolyva Protocol

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

~Stewardship Update~

"You are the LIGHT of the world" Matthew 5:14

Please give back your Time, Talents and Treasure in 2024!

We wish everyone a Happy New Year and pray your time spent rejoicing in the birth of our Christ Savior brought peace, joy and love to your Christmas Holiday. We thank our many loyal Stewards of 2023 and your support of our church Vision & Mission. Your gifts enable us to spread the word of Christ and support Orthodox and non-Orthodox charities throughout the year.

The month of December can be fulfilling, sad, exhausting and joyous often at the same time. We encourage you to find moments in this New Year to slow down and recharge. Commit your 'Gift of Time' to worship, prayer and study to deepen your Orthodox Christian life.

December was the Kickoff month for Stewardship. Stewardship Forms were mailed to all.

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

A few reminders:

Tax Letters will be compiled in January 2024 to reflect donations received in the 2023 calendar year.

We accept online credit card payments through SubSplash and PayPal. This option is provided for convenience. Consistent donations are a tremendous help for our church operations and easy to set up with Internet Banking or Electronic Funds Transfer directly through your bank. Please visit our website for more detail.

YES - Stewardship Pledge Forms really are required and can now be completed on-line. They not only provide family information on areas of interest and talents but also help us determine how much income the Church can expect to support our operations. **Pledge Forms and current contributions are required to meet the Uniform Parish Regulations (UPR) of our Archdiocese as well as our local by-laws, which enable participation at Parish General Assembly Meetings, Nominations and Voting for Parish Council in December.**

Please feel free to share your thoughts to the office email - office@stjohntpa.org or speak directly with Fr. Stavros, George Mitseas or Chris Kyrus -Stewardship Co-Chairs. We are here for YOU!

VETERANS HONORED FOR THEIR SERVICE

Our parish recognized and honored all our veterans on Sunday, November 12th with a prayer and special presentation. The Veterans/1st Responders Ministry members presented a display case to the parish containing an American flag, the insignias of our military branches, and a plaque that reads “IN HONOR OF THOSE WHO SERVED.” The display case now hangs on the wall near the Bookstore in the church hall. May we always pray for our dedicated men and women and their families who serve in our Armed Forces so that we can continue to enjoy the many freedoms we so dearly cherish.



“TOYS FOR TOTS” – AN OUTPOURING OF LOVE

The members of our Veterans/1st Responders Ministry send out a big THANK YOU to everyone who donated to the US Marines Program, ‘Toys for Tots.’ We were able to fill **SIX BIG boxes with toys** in addition to donating **\$650** in checks that brightened the holiday season for many children. We look forward to sharing our blessings again next year. May our Lord and Savior grant all donors a joyous and safe New Year!





St. John the Baptist Community News

Meeting of Ministry Heads, Tuesday, January 16

On Tuesday, January 16, there will be a meeting of ministry heads from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Each ministry head is requested to attend and other members of each ministry are invited to attend. If the ministry head cannot attend, please ask someone else in your ministry to attend, so that all ministries are represented.

Sunday School Teachers' Seminar, January 13

On Saturday, January 13, from 9:00-12:00, there will be a seminar for all Sunday school teachers.

Prayer for Teachers on Sunday, January 28

On January 28, we celebrate the feast of the Three Hierarchs, who are also the patron saints of teachers. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, we will offer a prayer for all teachers and anyone who works in education in our community.

Philoptochos Vasilopita Sunday January 14

We will cut the Vasilopita for our various ministries at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, January 14. The Philoptochos will also be offering pieces of Vasilopita as part of coffee hour. Any proceeds from this day will be going to St. Basil's Academy in New York.

Parish Council Elections—On Sunday, December 10

We held our elections for the Parish Council. Congratulations to George Ameres, Peggy George, Peter George, Suzanne Pileggi, Marcelle Triantafilou, and Mike Xenick who were elected to the Parish Council. We also want to thank Jim Armstrong, Nicholas Katzaras and Gary Ward, who have all served the Parish Council with distinction for many years as they leave their time on the PC.

Wear Red for Healthy Hearts

On Sunday, February 11, we will have our annual "Wear Red Sunday" and the theme will be healthy hearts. Our Philoptochos is going to have a healthy lunch for everyone following services. So wear red on February 11.

Monday night Bible study with Fr. John

Will continue meeting at 6:30 p.m. on most Monday 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 January, the dates are Mondays, January 8, 15, 22 and 29. For February, the dates will be Tuesday, February 6 and then Mondays, February 12, 19 and 26.

Women's Bible Study

Women's Bible Study meets on most Tuesday mornings with Fr. Stavros from 10:00-11:30 a.m. either in person or on zoom. We are studying the Epistle of First and Second Peter. For January the dates are Tuesday, January 9, 16 and 23; and Monday, January 29. For February, the dates will be Tuesdays, February 6, 13, 20 and 27.

GOYA

The GOYA Meeting for January will be Sunday, January 14 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be served.

Clearwater Event January 26-28-- The GOYA Clearwater Winter Event will be held January 26-28 at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Clearwater. Those in GOYA will be receiving details for how to sign up to attend.

GOYA Lock-In-We will be having our spring lock-in on Saturday, February 10, beginning at 5:00 p.m.

Young Adults- Our young adult group meets once a month for dinner/discussion (and other times for fellowship and service). The meeting for January will be on Thursday, January 11, from 6:30-9:00 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. All young adults, ages 18-40, are invited to participate. We will be having a monthly discussion based on some set topics. The Topic for January will be to be determined” Group Members use What’s App for communication. The February meeting will be on Thursday, February 8, from 6:30-9:00 p.m. The topic for February will be I’ll get this to you as well. Please contact Aris Rogers to be added to our what’s app for young adults at 813-309-5525.

Men’s Group

Our men’s group will meet on Sunday, January 28 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Any men of our community are welcome to join us for dinner, discussion. We meet at 5:00 p.m., walk to a local restaurant and get some food, then bring it back to the hall where we eat and have a discussion. Our topic for January will be “Setting Spiritual Goals for the New Year.” Please mark down our dates for men’s group for this academic year—Sunday, January 28; Sunday, March 3; and Sunday, April 14..

SAVE THE DATE

Women’s Retreat hosted by St. John in Tampa on Saturday, March 23, from 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. The Theme is *Many Believed in Him Because of the Woman’s Testimony (John 4:39): The Important Roles of Women in the Bible*

This retreat is open to any Orthodox women of the Tampa Bay area and any of your friends.

College student monthly lunch-January 14

We invite all college students for lunch after Liturgy on Sunday, January 14. We will have a lunch/discussion in the library. There is no cost. The February gathering will be on Sunday, February 4.

St John needs all hands on deck for Gasparilla on January 27!

Every year we've opened our parking lot to attendees of the Tampa Bay Gasparilla Festivities. This has been a successful undertaking for years and we are thankful for all who have helped in years past!

To run this event, we are asking for your help once more!

We are looking for a new person to chair this event, as our past chairperson is unable to fill that role this year. He is, however, willing to help a new chairperson understand what is involved in this. If you are willing to chair this event, please contact Fr. Stavros. As for everyone else, even a few hours of volunteering is a great help to make this a safe, fun and profitable event. A sign-up genius along with details will be forthcoming through email and the bulletin.

FOOD PANTRY UPDATE

Thank YOU for YOUR Support in 2023 of the St. John Food Pantry. We finished the year strong and have been able to provide bags of groceries to many families in need and supply Metropolitan Ministries with monthly donations!

~The New Year is off to a great start and we appreciate the ongoing support ~

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

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

Lastly, we accept grocery store gift cards in the church office.

Thank you for your support and thinking of the St. John Food Pantry one item at a time! If you have any questions or know of someone in need (we can create meals in a bag to go) please contact Sandra Pappas at 813-785-3747



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

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



Nursing Ministry

Faith Care Nursing, January - National Blood Donor Month

Stepping into the new year holds a special significance as January unfolds as National Blood Donor Month since 1970. This month serves as a reminder of the pressing need for blood donations, especially during a season when challenges to the blood supply emerge.

Mark your calendars! St. John's Greek Orthodox Church is set to host the mobile blood bank this February and October. Specific dates and times will be shared soon.

While Florida may not witness the traditional winter snowfall, the holiday festivities and unpredictable weather patterns still contribute to a decline in blood donations. National Blood Donor Month strategically addresses this seasonal dip.

A powerful act of generosity, blood donation becomes a lifeline, particularly for those facing surgeries, trauma, or chronic illnesses. One donation has the potential to save multiple lives.

Let this National Blood Donor Month become an example of unity and generosity, where our collective efforts pave the way towards a healthier and more compassionate world. As we revel in the spirit of giving, let each drop of blood donated be a cherished gift of life and a living embodiment of the teachings that guide our faith.

The Ladies' Philoptochos Society of St. John's



Twenty-five women gathered to usher in the Christmas Season at a brunch held at 717 South on December 3rd. Being angels to those around us as well as to each other, was the theme of the event. We were welcomed by President, Katherine Sakkis prior to joining in prayer and then enjoying a delicious brunch. Afterwards, we had some fun with a game and prizes. A highlight of the event was honoring our Past President, Melissa Krinos, for her tireless efforts for Philoptochos and St. John's. Melissa was presented with the Philoptochos past President pin, a certificate of recognition, and a bouquet of flowers. We were honored to have 4 Past Presidents in attendance - Myra Armstrong, JoAnn Hartung, Melissa Krinos, and Katherine Sakkis. Our best wishes to you and yours as welcome 2024!



Continued...

The Ladies' Philoptochos Society of St. John's- Christmas Brunch Pictures



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.

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.

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 unawares.*
HEBREWS 13:2

MY WORD 2024

For the past five years, we've encouraged parishioners to identify one word that will shape their year. If you haven't sent in your word for 2024, please send it to Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com by January 15 so it can be included on our wordle for 2024.

Weddings, Divorces, Baptisms, Funerals, Memorials as well as Office, Fundraisers and Hall Use Procedures

*The Greek Orthodox Church is not a church of rules. But without some guidelines to go by, there would be chaos. The following guidelines are rooted in Orthodox Tradition and Canon Law. These guidelines are printed in **The Messenger** in the beginning of each calendar year, and it is a good idea from time to time for people to review them. These guidelines have been copied from the 2020 Yearbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Please review them, and keep them in mind when planning for your important life events. If you have any questions, please contact Fr. Stavros. (Special requirements specific to sacraments at St. John the Baptist appear in italics.)*

Weddings

For the union of a man and woman to be recognized as sacramentally valid by the Orthodox Church, the following conditions must be met: The Sacrament of Matrimony must be celebrated by an Orthodox Priest of a canonical Orthodox jurisdiction, according to the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church, in a canonical Orthodox Church, and with the authorization of the Metropolitan.

Before requesting permission from the Metropolitan to perform the marriage, a Priest must verify that: a) Neither of the parties in question are already married to other persons, either in this country or elsewhere (if a person comes to the United States after age 18, they need to provide a letter from their country of origin that they are indeed free to marry); b) the parties in question are not related to each other to a degree that would constitute an impediment; c) if either or both parties are widowed, they have presented the death certificate(s) of the deceased spouse(s); d) if either or both of the parties have been previously married in the Orthodox Church, they have obtained an ecclesiastical as well as civil divorce. (The Ecclesiastical Divorce process is done after the civil divorce becomes final, and involves counseling with the parish priest, forms that are filled out, a review by the Metropolitan, a divorce hearing which in the Tampa Bay area is held in Clearwater, and this process usually takes several months to complete. Fr. Stavros will not set a wedding date for anyone until an ecclesiastical divorce has been

secured, so please plan accordingly, the ecclesiastical divorce process often takes several months.) e) the party or parties who are members of a parish other than the one in which the marriage is to be performed have provided a certificate declaring them to be members in good standing with that parish for the current year; and f) a civil marriage license has been obtained from civil authorities.

No person may marry more than three times in the church, with permission for a third marriage granted only with extreme oikonomia.

In cases involving the marriage of Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians, the latter must have been baptized in water, in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Church cannot bless the marriage of an Orthodox Christian to a non-Christian. The couple should be willing to baptize their children in the Orthodox Church and raise and nurture them in accordance with the Orthodox Faith. There is a list of religious groups that Orthodox are prohibited from marrying, i.e. Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, all non-Christians and others. Fr. Stavros can provide you with this list. **This is IMPORTANT to consider when you begin to date someone. Make sure your children are aware of this!** Because circumstances exist where a couple is dating where one of the two is not eligible to be married in the Orthodox Church, and this causes heartache in the relationship and often leads to someone leaving the church.

Fr. Stavros will not schedule a wedding for a couple where one of them is not Christian, until the non-Christian person is baptized. All too often, the situation arises where a couple asks for a wedding date to be set and one of them isn't baptized. They promise to come to church, take the Orthodoxy 101 class and then don't. This presents a dilemma and forces a priest essentially to do a "shot-gun" baptism, in order to satisfy a requirement so that the wedding may take place.

So as not to put our priest in the awkward position to do a baptism for someone who hasn't prepared whatsoever, versus cancelling a wedding and dealing with that fallout, the wedding simply will not be scheduled until both parties present evidence that they are baptized (with at least one being Orthodox).

The same goes for someone who needs an ecclesiastical divorce. It takes several months to get an ecclesiastical divorce. Thus, a wedding will not be scheduled until the ecclesiastical divorce process has been completed. Again, because there have been cases where someone is ineligible to get married because they need an ecclesiastical divorce, the date has been scheduled, the person then does not go through the divorce process and that creates a problem. The problem is now solved, no wedding date set until the ecclesiastical divorce process has been completed.

A baptized Orthodox Christian whose wedding has not been blessed by the Orthodox Church is no longer in good standing with the Church, and may not receive the Sacraments of the Church, including Holy Communion, or become a sponsor of an Orthodox Marriage, Baptism, or Chrismation. A non-Orthodox Christian who marries an Orthodox Christian does not thereby become a member of the Orthodox Church, and may not receive the Sacraments, including Holy Communion, serve on the Parish Council or vote in parish assemblies or elections. To participate in the Church's life, one must be received into the Church by the Sacrament of Baptism, or in the case of persons baptized with water in the Holy Trinity, following a period of instruction, by Chrismation.

Canonical and theological reasons preclude the Orthodox Church from performing the Sacrament of Marriage for couples where one partner is Orthodox and the other partner is a non-Christian. As such, Orthodox Christians choosing to enter such marriages fall out of good standing with their Church and are unable to actively participate in the sacramental life of the church. While this stance may seem confusing and rigid, it is guided by the Orthodox Church's love and concern for its member's religious and spiritual well-being.

The Sponsor (koumbaros or koumbara) must provide a

current certificate of membership proving him or her to be an Orthodox Christian in good standing with the church. A person who does not belong to a parish, or who belongs to a parish under the jurisdiction of a bishop who is not in communion with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, or who, if married, has not had his or her marriage blessed by the Orthodox Church, or, if divorced, has not received an ecclesiastical divorce, cannot be a sponsor. Non-Orthodox persons may be members of the wedding party, but may not exchange the rings or crowns.

Days when marriage is not permitted

Marriages are not performed on fast days or during fasting seasons or on the feasts of the church as indicated: September 14 (Holy Cross Day), December 13-25 (Christmas), January 5 and 6 (Epiphany),

Great Lent and Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, August 1-15 (Dormition Fast) and August 29. Any exceptions can only be made with the permission of the Metropolitan. Also a wedding can only be done on a Friday, when Friday is a fast day, with the permission of the Metropolitan.

Prohibited Marriages

The following types of relationships constitute impediments to marriage:

Parents with their own children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren or Godchildren of the same Godparents; Brothers-in law and sisters-in law; Uncles and aunts with nieces and nephews; First cousins with each other; Foster parents with foster children or foster children with the children of foster parents.

Godparents with Godchildren or Godparents with the parents of their Godchildren. (In the Chrismation of an adult, one has potential marriage impediment. For any questions regarding, please see Fr. Stavros)

A date cannot be set for marriage unless one of the parties getting married, NOT THE PARENTS, contact Fr. Stavros, who sets all the dates for weddings. In order for the date to be locked in, one person in the couple has to come and meet with Fr. Stavros to go over the wedding procedures.

Continued...

Pre-Marital Counseling is also required for weddings at St. John the Baptist. There is a two-fold requirement. One is that the couples need to meet with Fr. Stavros for two sessions. Second, the Metropolis of Atlanta requires couples participate in a Saturday regional premarital counseling seminar. Contact the Metropolis of Atlanta or visit the Family Life Ministry section of their website for dates in 2024. For people who wish to be married at St. John the Baptist who are not members anywhere, a substantial fee is imposed for use of the church, it's actually rather appalling that people think they can just show up at the church, use it, and never be seen again, thus the fee to use the church for non-members. Further appalling is that non-members complain about a fee when they are spending thousands of dollars on a wedding. The fees are imposed to discourage this kind of behavior, thereby encouraging all those who wish to have the sacraments of the church to be members in good standing. Also, the Koumbaro/Koumbara for a wedding must be in good sacramental standing. If they are not members of St. John the Baptist, they must bring a letter from their parish priest saying that they are in good sacramental standing. Otherwise, there will be a fee imposed as well.

A Note on Bridesmaids Dresses

We have asked that shoulders be covered, i.e. no strapless dresses, for bridesmaids. A shawl or throw can be worn in the church and ditched for the wedding reception.

Because this has been an issue at several weddings, we require the bridesmaids dresses to be approved by Fr. Stavros. A picture of someone wearing the dress will be sufficient. Should this continue to be a problem, we will look into buying something appropriate (shawls of shame) that can be placed over dresses that are inappropriate for church.

Baptisms

A person who wishes to sponsor a candidate for Baptism or Chrismation must be an Orthodox Christian in good standing and a supporting member of an Orthodox parish. A person may not serve as a Godparent if the Church has not blessed his or her marriage or, if civilly divorced, he or she has not been granted an ecclesiastical divorce, or for any other reason he or she is not in communion with the Orthodox Church. Baptisms may not be performed

from during Holy Week, or on any of the Great Feastdays of the Lord.

For people who wish to have a child baptized at St. John who are not members anywhere, a fee is imposed for use of the church, thereby encouraging all those who wish to have the sacraments of the church to be members in good standing. Also, the Godparent must be in good sacramental standing. If they are not members of St. John, they must bring a letter from their parish priest saying that they are in good sacramental standing. Otherwise, there will be a fee imposed as well.

Funerals

Funeral services are permitted on any day of the year, except for Sunday and Holy Friday, unless permission is granted by the Metropolitan. If you wish to have a service outside of the church, it will not be a funeral service. It will either be a Memorial Service or a Trisagion. A funeral service must be in an Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church does not allow for cremation. This is based on Ezekiel's vision of a valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37) and St. Paul's writing that the Body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19) and thus must be treated with dignity even in death and allowed to return to its elements naturally. The Orthodox Church will not allow a funeral service for someone who has been cremated. Many people have mentioned in their will their desire to be cremated. Please discuss this with Fr. Stavros if there are any questions regarding this, and make the appropriate changes, because Fr. Stavros cannot grant oikonomia (dispensation) and do a funeral service if someone has been cremated. Further, it is the custom of the church for the casket to be open at a funeral. This shows honor for the person who is deceased and makes us aware of the reality of death.

Additionally, eulogies offered in the church at a funeral service may only be offered by an ordained Orthodox clergyman. If members of the family wish to offer testimonials, these may be done at the funeral home the night before the funeral or at the makaria luncheon.

Memorials

Memorial services may not be chanted from the Saturday or Lazarus through the Sunday of Thomas, or on any Feastday of the Lord or any Feastday of the Theotokos. We customarily do not offer memorial services on the 1st Sunday of Lent (Sunday of Orthodoxy) or the 3rd Sunday of Lent (Sunday of the Holy Cross), or the Sunday after September 14. In 2024, the Sundays when NO memorial services will be offered include: March 24 (Sunday of Orthodoxy), April 7 (Sunday of the Holy Cross); April 28 (Palm Sunday); May 5 (Pascha); May 12 (Sunday of St. Thomas); June 23 (Pentecost); September 15 (Sunday after Holy Cross Day).

Memorial Services may be scheduled through the church office.

You must contact the church at least two weeks in advance of when you want the service. 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. 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 the Philoptochos does the kolyva, there is a \$125 charge for this service—checks may be made payable to “St. John Philoptochos.” 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.

Organ Donation

The Orthodox Church allows the faithful to donate organs after death if they wish.

Forty-Day Blessings

Forty-Day Blessings for babies may be done on any day. The prayers of this service connect the 40-day churching of the baby with the mother of the child (if she is Orthodox) receiving Communion. Thus, if this service is offered on a Sunday, or before any Divine Liturgy, Father Stavros schedules them at 9:30 a.m., prior to the Divine Liturgy, so that the new mother can receive Holy Communion in the context of the Divine Liturgy.

Some Guidelines Unique to our Parish

In line with the guidelines from the Archdiocese provided above, we also have some guidelines for things in our parish that are helpful to review as we start the new year. The Parish Council has adopted what is below with the approval of Fr. Stavros. Most of these guidelines are old, though a few of them are new. For the “Good of the Order” at our church, we ask that everyone cooperate in following these guidelines. Please read these over carefully and if you have any questions, please address them to the Parish Council or Father Stavros.

PROCEDURES FOR THE OFFICE:

- The deadline for submitting information for the weekly bulletin is Wednesday at 12:00 p.m. All submissions must be sent electronically to office@stjohntpa.org.
- The deadline for the Messenger shall be the 10th of the month. If the 10th is a weekend, then please submit the Friday before the 10th. As a cost cutting measure we reduced the size of the Messenger, so no full page flyers will be put in. All submissions must be sent electronically via email. Simply send in your event information to officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com.
- Events may be advertised a maximum of two months prior to the event date for The Messenger and four weeks prior for the bulletin.
- **Open Office Hours and Monday - Friday 10:00 a.m. - 2:00p.m. Or By Appointment Only.** If you wish to see Fr. Stavros or the office staff, you must make an appointment. Also, when meeting with the office staff, or when meeting with Father Stavros on a non-pastoral matter, please be efficient with your time. There is lots of work that goes on in the office and constant interruptions make for little progress. Planned appointments are fine, they are not interruptions.

FUNDRAISERS/HALL USAGE:

- All fundraisers and events by ministries or church affiliated groups should be scheduled at the August calendar meeting.

Continued...

For those, not scheduled at this meeting; please submit your event request to the Parish Council; via the office email officestjohnngoctampa@gmail.com

- Please clean up the kitchen after your event. No food, trays, utensils, etc., should be left on the counters, sink, or drying rack. Please throw away all trash and wash all dirty dishes, trays, etc. and return to the appropriate places.
- All sales of tickets and other fundraising items, shall take place at designated tables immediately outside of the foyer and in the center of the hall. These tables will be preset for your use. Our foyer has become increasingly crowded and we need to maintain clearance per fire code.
- All contracts for caterers, bands, etc., made in the church name that obligate the church for payment shall be submitted and signed by the Parish Council.

COFFEE HOURS/FUNDRAISERS:

- Our time after Sunday Liturgy provides fellowship that we all look forward to and appreciate. This time is often a mix of simple to more elaborate coffee time and also includes fund raisers and more formal luncheons. As we begin a new year we would like to reiterate some procedures and policies. We have a calendar meeting in August to establish the schedule and luncheons that will be considered fund raisers during the year. Each Ministry is asked to give input before this schedule is finalized.
- The Parish Council discussed that each Ministry should determine what they bring to Coffee Hour without strict guidelines. With the end goal that our parishioners should not be pressured or asked to give additional money just to receive a cup of coffee and cookie. Luncheons/ Fundraisers fall into a different category and will be published in the monthly calendar.
- Additionally, when a Ministry needs to setup a table for a special purpose - Information/Sales - **The ministry must call the church office to reserve a table during coffee hour.**
- Lastly any Ministry that wants to charge for a lunch (not on the original schedule) will need to get approval from the Parish Council by sending written notice prior to the monthly Parish Council Meeting.

Letters of good standing-When a parishioner goes to another parish to participate in a sacrament, i.e. to get married somewhere, or to be a sponsor of a wedding or a baptism, they must have a letter of good standing sent on their behalf. The reason for this is two-fold. First, to verify that they are an Orthodox Christian (people come here for sacraments, how do we know if they are Orthodox if we don't know them, so their home priest writes a letter testifying that they are Orthodox), and secondly, to verify that they belong somewhere. A person cannot be considered in good standing merely because they were once baptized Orthodox. A person is in good standing if they are actively participating in the sacramental life of the church—i.e. they worship regularly, they receive Holy Communion regularly, ideally they go to confession regularly, and they offer stewardship somewhere, they participate in sustaining the life of the church and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. People will often, sadly, approach asking for a letter of good standing when they don't do any of these things. They don't worship, they don't commune, they are not a steward, and yet, somehow, they expect a letter of good standing to be sent on their behalf to another parish, essentially lying for them. So, here's the policy at St. John. For the person who approaches for such a letter, a \$500 fee will be collected. Then, a letter will be written and sent to the priest where they are going stipulating that they gave \$500 to the church, even though they rarely if ever attend, and the other priest can decide what he wants to do. It pains me to write this paragraph, but this practice of asking someone to lie about being in good sacramental standing is actually preposterous and I'm not going to continue to do it. As I have said before, people come with their "you understand, Father, we have baseball, sports, work (insert excuse here) and can never come to church, or even be bothered to fill out a pledge form to support the church so it is here on Pascha when we come once a year." And the truth is actually, I don't understand. And I don't understand how a person in this can actually ask me to write a letter saying they are in good sacramental standing. Hence, this policy. You understand, right?

+Fr. Stavros

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stjohntpa.org

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Tampa, FL 33609

(813)876-8830

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.**

Parish Registry Statistics for 2023

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Weddings	10	11	11	8	7	8
Baptisms	21	20	19	13	20	27
Funerals	6	11	9	12	10	9
Chrismations	7	4	4	5	5	6

◀ Dec 2023	January 2024					Feb 2024 ▶
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
**Fast Day	1 New Year's Day Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	2	3 Choir Practice	4 Royal Hours 9:30 a.m. Philoptochos Board (zoom) 7 p.m.	5 ** Vespers Liturgy 9:00 a.m.	6 Liturgy (in Tarpon) Vespers 6:30 p.m. Reception (Philoptochos)
7 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	8 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	9 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	10 ** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. Choir Practice	11 Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m. Young Adult Discussion	12 **	13 Sunday school teacher seminar Young at Heart 12:30 Children's Greek School
14 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Vasilopita Sunday- philoptochos CH-Philoptochos College group GOYA 5:00 p.m.	15 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	16 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Meeting of Ministry Heads	17 ** St. Anthony Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Choir Practice	18 Sts. Athanasios and Cyril Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m.	19 **	20 Community Outreach Gasparilla Children's Parade
21 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday JOY Tweens-Fr. Stavros 5:00 p.m. Clergy Paraklesis and dinner	22 Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	23 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	24 ** Choir Practice	25 St. Gregory the Theologian Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m.	26 ** GOYA Clearwater Winter Event	27 GOYA Clearwater Winter Event Gasparilla Adult Parade
28 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Prayer for Teachers Sunday school confession 1 st -3 rd grade Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	29 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	30 Three Hierarchs Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	31 ** Choir Practice			

February 2024						Mar 2024 ►
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
**Fast Day				1 Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m. Philoptochos Board zoom 7	2 ** Presentation of Christ Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	3 Children's Greek School Young at Heart
4 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday College group	5 Orthodoxy 101 Teaching Liturgy 6:30 p.m.	6 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	7** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. Choir Practice	8 Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m. Young Adult Discussion	9 **	10 St. Haralambos Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. JOY Tweens offsite Men's Retreat Children's Greek School GOYA Lock-in
11 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Souper Bowl of Caring Philoptochos Salad luncheon	12 Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	13 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	14 ** Choir Practice	15 Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m.	16 **	17 Community Outreach Children's Greek School
18 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. SS confession 4 th -6 th grade	19 Presidents Day Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	20 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	21** Choir Practice	22 Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m.	23**	24 Children's Greek School Philoptochos general meeting with bowling and fellowship 1 p.m.
25 Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. CH-Choir SS Confession GOYA 5:00 p.m.	26 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	27 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	28 Choir Practice	29 Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m.		

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As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "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