



St. John the Baptist

Greek Orthodox Church

THE MESSENGER

March 2024



Sunday of the Last Judgement-Third Sunday of Triodion-March 10

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

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Retired Priest in Residence

Rev. Fr. Stratton Dorozenski 813-876-8830 (O)

Retired Priest in Residence

Rev. Fr. John Stefero 813-876-8830 (O)
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Euripides Panos, Vice President 813-352-3972
Marilyn Sandborn, Secretary 813-760-6289
Mike Xenick, Treasurer 813-340-8737
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Adult Greek School

Magda Myer 813-523-5771

AHEPA

Thomas Sakaris, President 201-819-2319

Altar Angels

Kalliope Chagaris 813-789-4134

Altar Boys

Fr Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038

Bookstore

Presbytera Denise Stefero 678-464-4833

Bible Study-Tuesday Night

Fr. John Stefero 678-637-4425

Buildings & Grounds

Euripides Panos 813-352-3972

Choir

Tara Swartzbaugh, Director 813-313-0439
Ruth Losovitz, Organist 727-688-2782

College Student Program

Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 414-254-5134

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
IIANHΓYPI, 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

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

Photography Ministry

Karina Findlay 813-476-9632

Philoptochos

Katherine Sakkis 813-309-1073

Stewardship

Chris Kyrus 757-672-1920
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Sunday School

Vickie Peckham 813-758-3102

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

Volunteer Needed

Fr. Stavros' Message

Looking for Some Spiritual Growth This Lenten Season? Consider Coming to our Wednesday Evening Series Seven Words: The Last Words of Jesus from the Cross

If you are looking for a meaningful and easy opportunity for spiritual growth this Lent, consider coming to our Wednesday evening series. This year, it is entitled “Seven Words: The Last Words of Jesus from the Cross.” Every Wednesday night (and Friday morning) of Lent, we celebrate Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, an opportunity to worship and receive Holy Communion as a way to strengthen us in our fast, and focus us even more on Christ during this sacred season of Lent. A different ministry hosts a free dinner in the hall afterwards. Thus, the hour you spend preparing dinner could be spent worshipping followed by a healthy Lenten dinner. If you don’t have time to stay for the presentation, worship, eat and depart. However, if you make a six week commitment (not a whole year like Bible study, just the six weeks of Great Lent), you’ll hear a meaningful presentation each week—The topics will be forgiveness (March 20), Salvation/Destination/Purpose (March 27), Relationships (April 3), Distress and Relief (April 10), Triumph (April 17) and Faith (April 24), all based on the seven last words of Jesus from the Cross and associated scripture passages. These presentations are meant to be informative, encouraging and motivating. Each presentation lasts approximately 30 minutes. This is followed by 30 minutes of small group discussion. This is not group therapy or “bear my soul” kind of conversation. Rather is it conversation directly related to the topic, our understanding of it and our experience of it. The questions are written to again be encouraging and uplifting, as well as challenging us to think and to grow. The whole package is contained from 6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. each Wednesday.

6:00 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
7:15 p.m. Dinner
7:45 p.m. Presentation
8:15 p.m. Discussion
8:45 p.m. Wrap and closing prayer
9:00 p.m. Depart for home



For many people, Lent is just words on a calendar. This season of the year is meant to be a period of growth and transformation, reflection and refocusing. That’s what this series is designed to do, in addition to all of the other Lenten services and programs. So please consider our Wednesday night series. Yes, it is a sacrifice of one night a week, but the reward is worship, food, fellowship and growing in faith. It is also a sacrifice to prepare the materials, but one that we make with joy, knowing that these presentations and discussions bolster faith, encourage faith, and most especially, because of the small group discussions, remind us that we are not alone in our journey.

What Is a Catechumen and How Does that Affect us?

During the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy which is celebrated during Great Lent, we will hear the word “catechumen” over and over again. A “catechumen” is an ancient word, referring to those who were preparing to enter the church through baptism. A person coming into the Church would do so in this way: They would become a “catechumen,” entering into a group of people called the “Catechumenate”, all those who were studying and preparing to enter into the church through baptism. The period of the catechumenate would last TWO YEARS. So this was a serious commitment of time. There wasn’t a “one sermon-who wants to be a Christian” way of entering the church as we see in many contemporary churches. Even contemporary Orthodox churches do not agree on an set period of time to be a catechumen.

During this period of time when one was a catechumen, he or she would be permitted to attend only part of the Divine Liturgy, the first half, which is known as the “Liturgy of the Word.” The “Liturgy of the Word” goes from the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, through the Scripture readings and the offering of the sermon/homily. So that everyone was present for the learning portion of the Divine Liturgy.

After the Homily, there were petitions for the Catechumens (this litany is still found in liturgical

texts but by and large has been suppressed in modern usage), and at the conclusion of these petitions, the Catechumens were asked to depart from the church. We no longer offer these petitions, and we certainly do not ask the Catechumens to depart.

The second portion of the Divine Liturgy is called “The Liturgy of the Faithful,” and this portion of the service was reserved only for those who were Christian (there was no division of denomination in the early centuries), and who were prepared to receive Holy Communion, because the intention of the Sacrament of Holy Communion offered in the Divine Liturgy was that it would be received by all the faithful. There is an extra “check” before the Creed, where the priest says “Guard the doors, in wisdom let us attend.” This was a reminder that only the faithful baptized Christians were to be present, to confess their common faith together and then to receive Christ together in the sacrament of Holy Communion. While we only allow Orthodox Christians to receive the Eucharist, we do allow everyone to remain in the Divine Liturgy until its conclusion. But it’s interesting to note that catechumens were not only in this state for two years, but that they joined a church where they have never been present for the entire service.

At the end of the catechumenate, the catechumens would be baptized, usually in a large group. The custom of private baptisms is only from recent centuries. There were several days during the Liturgical year that were reserved for baptisms, which would be conducted in the context of the Divine Liturgy. We know which days these were because it is on these days that we sing the beautiful hymn “All those who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia.” The baptismal days include Saturday of Lazarus, Holy Saturday, Pentecost, Nativity and Theophany, the days we sing this beautiful hymn.

And because many of the catechumens would be baptized on Holy Saturday, the Pre-Sanctified Liturgies which are celebrated throughout Great Lent refer to the catechumens, with petitions for “those being prepared for Holy illumination and their salvation,” “that the Lord will confirm and strengthen them, that He will enlighten them with the light of understanding and piety,” and many other such petitions. The catechumens would be baptized as a group, in a baptismal room that was off the narthex, immersed in a pool similar to what some modern Protestant denominations are doing, and after the baptism, the now new-Christians would enter

into the church as everyone would sing “All those who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, Alleluia.”

Why Does Matter to Us Now?

A catechumen, at his or her very heart, is a seeker. The catechumens were seeking Christianity, were seeking after the word of Christ. They were committed to a long period of time of learning about the faith they were seeking to enter. And once they did finish, they were both educated and committed to what they were doing.

Because we now predominantly baptize infants, we don’t have this requirement of a catechumenate. We baptize infants who are too young to be seekers, who don’t join the church even by their own choice, who are never required to have a period of learning, or to make a public commitment to follow after Christ. I believe it is a strength that the church brings in infants to the body of Christ, before they even have an age of awareness or a memory of their baptism. Because they will never remember a time that they were not a child of God. There is, however, a weakness in this Tradition, in that we are never required to take a class or to stand up and make a commitment. And thus we see many nominal Orthodox Christians, who either no very little about the faith, or who are not very committed to it.

Great Lent is a Period of Seeking. In a sense we should become like catechumens during Great Lent.

I have used the analogy many times that if one is to run a marathon, but has never run before, they need to start with something small, let’s say running a mile. After running a mile for a period of time, then they add a second mile, maintain that, then add a third, maintain, and so on, until they get to the 26 miles that comprise a marathon. In the spiritual life, we should use Lent as the period of time where we add a mile, so to speak, and then the rest of the year we maintain what we added during Lent. As opposed to giving up something for Lent, only to get it back and then this cycle of giving up and regressing over years of time finds us at the same baseline as it relates to our faith. Ideally we come into Lent seeking something—a deeper relationship with Christ, a deeper understanding of Christ, a deeper commitment to Christ, repenting from a bad habit, a deeper understanding and commitment to pray, worship or reading Scripture, some way in which we can grow, and then when Lent is over, we maintain this growth. In this sense, we are all like the catechumens that we pray for in the services, we should all be seeking to be instructed in the Word of His truth, to have the Gospel

of righteousness revealed to us, to be enlightened with the light of understanding and piety, and to be confirmed and strengthened in our faith.

There is a prayer for the catechumens, that if we reflect on it carefully, is a prayer really for all of us, even if we've been Orthodox for a long time.

Master, let the light of Your countenance shine on those who are being made ready for Holy Illumination, and who yearn to thrust aside the defilement of sin. Illumine their minds; confirm them in the faith; sustain them in their hope; perfect them in love; make them precious members of Your Christ, Who gave Himself as a ransom for our souls. For You are our illumination, and to You we offer up glory: to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

We hope that “the light of His countenance” will shine not only on those being made ready for baptism or chrismation, but on all of us. There is hopefully a collective desire to “thrust aside the defilement of sin.” This is a challenge every year, and all year round, not just during Great Lent. We need constant “illumination in our minds.” To illumine means to shine light on something. We shine a flashlight to illumine a path at night, as an example. This world is so dark and challenging these days. An extra dose of Christ’s light to illumine our path is something we all need. “Sustain them in their hope.” Many people in the world are losing hope—in God, in one another, in human goodness and decency, in the mercy of God, in their own worthiness of salvation—you name it, we are losing hope in it. To pray for all of us to be sustained in our hope is critical for all of us. “Perfect them in love.” There are two great commandments on which the entirety of Scripture, Christ and the Church are built upon—love of God and love of neighbor. Our purpose is to love God and serve our neighbor. Some of us are good at these things and some have a ways to go. But there is no one who is perfect when it comes to love. This is why a prayer to be perfected at this most important aspect of Christianity also applies to everyone.

What Is the Process by Which People Join the Orthodox Faith?

Different priests will answer this in different ways. Unfortunately, there is no set answer. I don’t think that a two-year catechumenate is reasonable in this day and age. Some even think that one year is too long. I think that six months to a year is good. Not less than six months though. And here is why. There are four things

to be considered when it comes to joining the church—catechism, commitment, comfort and community.

Catechism is for one to have knowledge about the faith. Most people who are seeking out Orthodoxy have read or learned something about it. I ask that people take the Orthodoxy 101 class offered in January/February and September/October of each year. This eight hour class gives a good overview of basic theology and practice in the church.

Commitment—coming to church for six months to a year shows commitment. It is not appropriate to baptize or chrismate someone after one week. That doesn’t show commitment or a stable foundation off of which to build. That takes time.

Comfort—one is also not going to be comfortable in the church after only one Liturgy. It takes a while to see the pattern to the services and the rhythm of the Orthodox spiritual life. Oftentimes, it takes someone several months to feel comfortable and familiar with our worship. Also, even though we do not permit those who are not Orthodox to receive Holy Communion, people who are thinking of becoming Orthodox may, and should, do all the other things we do—venerate icons, make the sign of the cross, fast, etc.

Community—This is often a missing link for people. In order to be Chrismated, one needs to have a sponsor/Godparent. Why? Two reasons—First, as someone to mentor and encourage them in their new Orthodox walk. And second, as someone to link them into the community. The Orthodox Christian exists in community. It is not right for someone to come in, worship, leave and know no one. This is why we have people integrate into the community first, find someone to be a mentor/Godparent and then seek Chrismation.

I’ve decided to write about this because we have had a LOT of people express interest in Orthodoxy from outside of our church in recent months, a trend that shows no signs of slowing down. And that’s a good thing!

Great Lent

Great Lent begins on Monday, March 18. Pascha is May 5, so it is five weeks behind everyone else. Great Lent should be observed as a period of spiritual growth and spiritual renewal. What does that even mean? It means that we should be more focused and more intentional. Many of us go through ups and downs as far as our spirituality goes. There are times we are more focused and times we are less focused. There times we are careful

and times we are careless in our practice of Christianity. Great Lent provides us an opportunity to take stock of where we are in our relationship with Christ and in our Christian walk. The many additional services provide us opportunities to worship, to think and to commune with Christ. The Psalms and penitential prayers speak to our broken hearts while the sacraments of confession, Holy Unction and Holy Communion provide healing and reassurance. We will be on this earth for only a finite number of years. We will make only a finite number of Lenten journeys. I spoke with someone recently who was facing major surgery, and it was not a given that they would even survive the surgery. They were told the surgery, if successful, would give them a 10-15 year lease on life. Their response wasn't one of joy or hope. Rather it was one of trepidation. As they told me, "this is the first time in my life that I'm understanding that I will die in 10-15 years as the most. And then what?" And then what? If we have believed in Christ, and if we have spend our lives serving Him, and serving others, the "and then what?" is a joyful entrance into heavenly Kingdom. If we do not believe and if we have not served Him and others, the "Then what?" becomes a scary thought. Great Lent provides each of us an opportunity. For the one who is doing well in faith and in life, it provides encouragement and validation. And for the one who is not doing well in faith and in life, it provides an opportunity for a new start. However, these opportunities do not become successful merely with the passing of time, but by putting forth effort in this time.

With this in mind, our church will again be offering a full slate of Lenten services. We will again present a Wednesday night series, this year focusing on "Seven Words: The Last Words of Jesus from the Cross," and will examine how those words relate to forgiveness and reconciliation, destiny and purpose, relationships, distress and triumph, and faith. This opportunity to learn by listening to presentations and sharing thoughts in small groups has been a real blessing for those who have participated in series in past years. There will

be a women's retreat on March 23. There will be a GOYA retreat in April, and a workshop for Sunday school parents on March 17. If you are doing well, or not doing well in faith and in life, we invite you to make this journey together. So that on Pascha, your flame of faith will burn stronger. This issue of The Messenger had many things to help guide your journey, so please spend some time reading, and preparing for the Lenten journey that begins March 18, so that when Great Lent begins, you have plans in place for spiritual growth and renewal. Great Lent then becomes a time of execution of these plans. And Pascha finds us having made spiritual strides, and thus provides us a reason to really celebrate.

At Some Point, Each Person Needs to Take a Deep Dive Into Orthodoxy

Infant baptism is both a strength and weakness, as noted above. At some point, the Orthodox Christian Faith needs to become personal to each of us. Not just acquired through infant baptism, not just formed by sitting in church or Sunday school, but by taking a deep dive into the joys and the mysteries of the Christian faith. To spend time in prayer, sitting with God, not just a cursory making of our cross but a deep conversation with God. To spend time in worship, not just in hearing what is read in church, but studying God's word when we are not in church. To not only think about what we can do better but make a plan. To not only confess our sins privately, but accept God's forgiveness and absolution in the sacrament of confession. To not only give to charity but to give sacrificially and to give as a priority. The word "Passion" has three meanings. It refers to "suffering", as in the Passion of Christ. It refers to things that tempt us in a bad way—a passion for greed or lust or power. And it refers to things that bring us joy, that we approach joyfully—like a passion for cooking, or in my case, yard work. This Lent, let's take a deep dive into "passion." To examine our sinful passions. To work toward being more passionate about our faith. And to prepare to once again commemorate the Passion and Resurrection of Christ.

On a personal note, it is very hard to believe that this will be my 20th Lenten journey as your priest. From the first year when I made the journey here for the first time, to 2020 during Covid when I made it virtually alone, I look forward as always to the journey, to seeing your growth and progress and to see my own as well. Thus, let us come together and make the journey through the Great Lent, to the awesome days of Holy Week, to the cross of Christ and eventually to the empty tomb.

Kali Sarakosti! Have a blessed period of the Great Lent.

+Fr. Stavros

Liturgical Schedule for March

Sunday, March 3	2nd Sunday of Triodion—Prodigal Son Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, March 6	Paraklesis 6:00 p.m.
Saturday, March 9	First Saturday of Souls Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Memorial Service at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy
Sunday, March 10	3rd Sunday of Triodion—The Last Judgment Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, March 16	2nd Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Memorial Service at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy
Sunday, March 17	4th Sunday of Triodion—Forgiveness Sunday Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Forgiveness Vespers 6:00 p.m.
Monday, March 18	Clean Monday-Kathara Deftera—Beginning of Great Lent Canon of St. Andrew 10:00-11:00 a.m. Sacrament of Holy Unction 6:00 p.m.
Tuesday, March 19	Great Compline 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 20	9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Friday, March 22	9th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations to the Virgin Mary-1st Stanza 6:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 23	3rd Saturday of Souls Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Memorial Service at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy
Sunday, March 24	1st Sunday of Great Lent—Sunday of Orthodoxy Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Procession with icons at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy
Monday, March 25	Annunciation to the Virgin Mary Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Tuesday, March 26	Great Compline 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 27	9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Friday, March 29	9th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations to the Virgin Mary-2nd Stanza 6:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 31	2nd Sunday of Great Lent—St. Gregory Palamas Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.
Tuesday, April 2	Great Compline 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 3	9th Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m.
Friday, April 5	9th Hour 9:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations to the Virgin Mary-3rd Stanza 6:30 p.m.
Sunday, April 7	3rd Sunday of Great Lent—Veneration of the Holy Cross Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Procession of the Holy Cross at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy



Sunday of Last Judgment



Annunciation



St. Gregory Palamas

Liturgical Notes for Triodion and Great 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 began 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.)

Sunday, March 3 - Sunday of the Prodigal Son - On this Sunday in the preparation for Great Lent, Orthodox Christians are to read Christ's parable about God's loving forgiveness (Luke 15:11-24). They are to see themselves as being in a foreign country far from the Father's house and to make the movement of return to God, where we truly belong. The parable gives assurance that the Father will receive them with joy and gladness in their journey through Great Lent, their journey home.

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

Saturday of the Souls – Saturdays, March 9, 16 and 23

It is a Tradition in the Orthodox Church to offer prayers for the souls of all of our loved ones who have departed this life, in the hope of the Resurrection to Eternal Life. There are four Saturdays of the year that are dedicated specifically to this purpose. There are three Saturdays at the beginning of Lent and the Saturday before Pentecost. Everyone is encouraged to submit the names of their loves ones to be commemorated at the services (see enclosed form). Everyone is encouraged to attend one of these services (and bring Kolyva) if you are able, as a way of honoring the people in your family who have passed away, once a year.

Sunday, March 10 – Judgment Sunday (Meatfare)

Judgment Sunday is also called - Meatfare Sunday because it is the last Sunday, according to the fasting canons, that the faithful eat meat before Easter. During the following week, we do not fast on Wednesday and Friday (except for meat, of course). On this Sunday, we call to mind something that has not even happened yet: the Second Coming of Christ. Our Lord has promised us that He will come again, "to judge the living and the dead, and His Kingdom will have no end" (from the Nicene Creed). We call to mind the "criteria" of our entrance into Paradise, as our Lord said in today's Gospel: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me."

Sunday, March 17 - Forgiveness Sunday (Cheesefare)

Cheese-Fare Sunday is the last day in which dairy products are allowed. The Monday after Cheese-Fare Sunday is the official beginning of the Great Lent; this Monday is also called Clean Monday (Kathara Deftera). On Cheese-Fare Sunday the Church commemorates the sending away of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Paradise. Adam and Eve were in complete harmony with God, nature and themselves. They were tempted by the devil and they agreed to eat from the tree of knowledge, in order that they themselves might become gods. The result was fatal;

they were cast out of Paradise and sin came into the world. The Holy Fathers selected this event to remind us of our obligations to God and about the laws of fasting and Christian behavior (Matthew 6:14-21).

Sunday, March 7 - Forgiveness Vespers

Great and Holy Lent begins on Monday, March 18, a day called Clean Monday, or “Kathara Deftera” in Greek. Vespers is the service that ends one day and begins another, so we will celebrate the Vespers of Forgiveness and beginning of Great Lent on Sunday evening, March 17, at 6:00 p.m. This service lasts about an hour and marks the beginning of Great Lent, which is announced during one of the hymns mid-way through the service. During this hymn, the priest changes vestments from white to purple, the lights in the church are dimmed and the mood of the service becomes somber. In fact, it is the opposite of the Resurrection Service on Easter, where everything begins dark and goes to light. The service concludes with a prayer of forgiveness being read over the congregation and the exchange of mutual forgiveness among the members of the congregation. This service is an especially appropriate way to begin the Lenten season, and for those who attended last season, is one of the most moving services of the church year.

Monday, March 18 - Canon of St. Andrew

The Penitential Canon of St. Andrew will be read from 10:00-11:00 a.m. on Monday, March 18 as we begin Great Lent. The Canon, in its entirety, takes hours to read. We will read and chant an abridged version of this Canon on Clean Monday. Service books for this service will be available in the narthex.

Monday, March 18 - Holy Unction on Clean Monday

The Sacrament of Holy Unction is always offered during Holy Week on Holy Wednesday. But the sacrament can be done at any time of the year. The emphasis of this sacrament involves, spiritual healing, spiritual cleansing and repentance. What better way to begin Great Lent than the sacrament of Holy Unction. Please bring your Holy Week book to follow along. The service will be held on Monday, March 18, from 6:00-7:30 p.m.

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

Since the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is offered on each Sunday of Lent, and this Divine Liturgy is slightly longer than the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the Divine Liturgy will begin at 9:45 a.m. from March 24-April 28. The Choir will begin the Doxology at 9:35 a.m.

Mondays of Lent - Great Compline

The service of the Great Compline will be read on the following Tuesdays of Lent—March 19, March 26, April 2, April 9, April 16 and April 23. It will also be celebrated on Monday, April 8. This service lasts about an hour and consists of Psalms and hymns of repentance. Service Books for this service will be available.

Wednesdays of Lent – 9th Hour and Pre-Sanctified Liturgy

The Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts (also called Pre-Sanctified Liturgy) will be held on the Wednesdays during Great Lent. This service consists of Vespers with Holy Communion that was “Pre-Sanctified” the previous Sunday. It is an opportunity to receive Holy Communion frequently during the season of fasting. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy is preceded by the reading of the 9th Hour, a short service with penitential prayers as well as the recitation of the Creed, a pre-requisite for the reception of Holy Communion. Service books for this service will be available. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy will be celebrated on the following Wednesdays of Great Lent: Wednesday, March 20; Wednesday, March 27; Wednesday, April 3; Wednesday, April 10; Wednesday, April 17 and Wednesday, April 24. Several of our ministries will host a dinner as indicated on the schedule below. Each ministry is encouraged to attend at least one Pre-Sanctified Liturgy as follows:

Wednesday, March 20	Sunday School
Wednesday, March 27	Choir
Wednesday, April 3	AHEPA/Daughters
Wednesday, April 10	Young at Heart/Welcome Ministry
Wednesday, April 17	Philoptochos
Wednesday, April 24	Bible Study/Young Adults



Fridays of Lent - 9th Hour and Pre-Sanctified Liturgy

The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy has Traditionally been celebrated on Wednesdays AND Fridays of Great Lent. The 9th Hour will begin at 9:30 a.m., with the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy from 10:00-11:15 a.m. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy will be held on the Fridays of Lent as follows: Friday, March 22; Friday, March 29; Friday, April 5; Friday, April 12; Friday, April 19 and Friday, April 26.

Fridays of Lent - The Salutations to the Virgin Mary (Heretismoi)

This service also lasts about an hour and is a series of prayers and devotions that invoke the intercessions of the Virgin Mary for our salvation. It will be held on March 22, March 29, April 5, April 12 and April 19.

Sunday, March 24 - Sunday of Orthodoxy

A grand procession with icons took place on March 11, 843 A.D. (which was the first Sunday of Great Lent that year), marking the permanent triumph of icons and their return to the churches after a 150-year absence. From this time, icons were defined as objects to be venerated and not worshipped. They are spiritual mirrors through which we see the heavenly saints. Their restoration in our churches is a rue victory for Orthodoxy. Thus, on the first Sunday of Lent each year, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Triumph of Orthodoxy with a procession of icons, together with the reading of a Synodal Statement, authored in 843, marking their return to the church.

IF ANYONE HAS NEW ICONS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN BLESSED, PLEASE BRING THEM TO CHURCH ON SUNDAY, MARCH 24, THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY, AND PLACE THEM IN THE WINDOWS OF THE CHURCH. They will be blessed with Holy Water during the service.

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

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

Sunday, March 31 – Second Sunday of Lent - St. Gregory Palamas

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

Sunday, April 7 - Third Sunday of Lent - Veneration of the Holy Cross

On the 3rd Sunday of Great Lent we celebrate the Veneration of the Cross; the Cross helps us to prepare for the Crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are not just witnessing from afar the passions of our Lord, but we participate in them. In the Synaxarion we read, "Through the forty-day fast, we too are in a way crucified, dying to the passions." Our efforts to keep up with the Fast, through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, might take a toll over our bodies; we need help and encouragement, and the help and encouragement comes from the power of the Cross. In the middle of Great Lent, the Church gives its faithful a sign of victory, one that can bring strength to them in this time of fasting. The Sunday of the Holy Cross is one that brings everything into perspective, especially with the Gospel reading (Mark 8:34-9:1), the Lord saying to all His disciples: "If anyone wishes to

come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" A special procession of the Holy Cross, on a tray covered with flowers, will be held at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

Why does Liturgy seem longer on Sundays during Lent?

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

Sacrament of Confession

Many people have already made appointments for their confessions to be heard, many for the first time in their lives. It is confidential. It helps you reconnect with God and unburden yourself of guilt. It helps you to make a new start in your spiritual journey and is an integral part of any successful Lenten journey. If you have questions about confession, please ask. There is no better way to prepare for Pascha than to receive this sacrament.


Confessions will be heard up to April 27, and then again after Pascha. Please make your appointment as soon as possible with Fr. Stavros or Fr. John, because our priests like to give people whatever time they need. As it gets closer to Holy Week and more and more people are coming, they must go quicker, and it is very important not to be rushed in this Sacrament.

Looking Ahead to Holy Week—We need someone to take charge of the Vigil at the Cross this Year

For over ten years now, we've had an all night vigil at the Cross on Holy Thursday night through Good Friday evening. That duty was taken care of by our pastoral assistant. Since we have no pastoral assistant at present, we need someone (or a couple of people) to step up if we are going to have this event again. This involves setting up a method for people to sign up, and then actually being at the church for the duration of the vigil which is 10:00 p.m. Thursday evening (May 2) through Friday evening (May 3) when the vigil ends at 7:00 p.m. If there are two or three people who can split up the time, that is ideal. If you would like more information or are interested in leading this, please contact Fr. Stavros.

**8 FACTS ABOUT THE
Liturgy of the
Presanctified Gifts**

BASILICA.RO



- It is a service specific to Lent.
- The Church Fathers considered it appropriate that both the clergy and the faithful could receive Communion on the days when, according to the canonical ordinances, the complete Divine Liturgy in which the Holy Sacrifice is performed is not celebrated.
- The complete Divine Liturgy has a paschal character of joy and it was considered not suitable for the penitential season of Lent.
- It can be served from Monday to Friday, except alliturgical days and the feast of the Annunciation.
- It consists of a part of Vespers, a part of prayers and litanies of the Divine Liturgy, and particular prayers and rites.
- Originally, it was performed in the evening, at the time of Vespers, and the faithful would fast on that day. Nowadays, it can also be served in the morning for practical reasons.
- It was composed by St. Gregory the Dialogist.
- The Presanctified Gifts that are used were consecrated on the preceding Saturday or Sunday.

Donations Needed

We are looking for two donations for the altar.

~A set of Gold Altar Covers

~A set of Gold Communion Covers

~One set of Red Velvet Decorative Ribbons

Please see Fr. Stavros if you are interested in donating either.

ALTAR BOY SCHEDULE FOR LENT

CAPTAINS

Demetri Passalaris
Nicholas Akrotirianakis
Nicholas Magos
Nicholas Carter
George Xenick
PJ Zelatis

St. Matthew

Gabriel Gonzales
Michael Galin
Philip Kane
Evan Queen
Kenny Kane
Peter Konstas

St. Mark

Michael Snyder
Zachary Carter
Dorian Setzer-Torres
Leo Lenardos
Niko Kyrus
Josh Roby
Michael Svintsitskiy
Michael Kwasny

St. Luke

Teddy Kafentaris
Andreas Stefanou
Kris Christopher
Vasilios Panos
Jonah Blankenbaker
Theodore Edquid

St. John

Christos Nenos
Constantine Ameres
Zachary George
Louis Mantzanas
Gianni Matassini
Nathan Moran
Michael Meadows

Wednesday, March 20	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	5:30 p.m.	Demetri Passalaris and St. Matthew
Friday, March 22	Salutations	6:30 p.m.	Nicholas Akrotirianakis and St. Mark
Wednesday, March 27	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	5:30 p.m.	Nicholas Magos and St. Luke
Friday, March 29	Salutations	6:30 p.m.	Nicholas Carter and St. John
Wednesday, April 3	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	5:30 p.m.	George Xenick and St. Mark
Friday, April 5	Salutations	6:30 p.m.	Demetri Passalaris and St. Matthew
Wednesday, April 10	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	5:30 p.m.	PJ Zelatis and St. John
Friday, April 12	Salutations	6:30 p.m.	Nicholas Magos and St. Luke
Wednesday, April 17	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	5:30 p.m.	Nicholas Akrotirianakis and St. Matthew
Friday, April 19	Akathist Hymn	6:30 p.m.	George Xenick and St. Mark
Wednesday, April 24	Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	5:30 p.m.	Nicholas Carter, PJ Zelatis and St. Luke

Parish Registry

Double Baptism-Kiernan (Brigid) Smith and Senna (Brigid) Smith, daughters of Jonathan and Jamie (Hartzler) Smith, were baptized on Sunday, December 17. Alexis Scarfogliero was the Godmother for Kiernan and Debbie Nicklow was the Godmother for Senna. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism-Daphne Ann Papadopoulos, daughter of Kyriakos and Lyudmila Papadopoulos, was baptized on Sunday, December 17. Dimitrios and Darcy Papadopoulos were the Godparents! Na Sas Zisi!

Chrismation-Jamie Elizabeth (Brigid) Hartzler was Chrismated on Sunday, December 17. Ekaterini Mangarides was the Sponsor. Congratulations!

Chrismation-Dylan (Michael) Crawshaw was Chrismated on Sunday, January 21. William Comminos was his sponsor. Congratulations!

Chrismation-Gabrielle Kossaris was Chrismated on Sunday, January 28. Victoria Kossaris was her sponsor. Congratulations!

Chrismation-Michael Wenditz was Chrismated on Monday, February 5. Dwight Forde was his sponsor. Congratulations!

Wedding-Ioannis Papou and Tanya Perich were married on Tuesday, December 12. Emmanuel Papou and Irene Papadeogeorgis were the Koumbaroi. Congratulations!

Wedding-Dory Passalaris and Millie Fleming were married on Thursday, December 28. Demetrios Passalaris was the Koumbaro. Congratulations!

Wedding-Paul Cifelli and Ioanna (Nina) Maria Passaris were married on Saturday, February 3. Jenny Demetra Saiger was the Koumbara. Congratulations!

Funeral-Valerie Hampers passed away on January 10. Her funeral was held on January 16. May her memory be eternal!

Funeral-Mathew Balasis passed away on January 11. His funeral was held on January 19. May his memory be eternal!

Condolences to Andreas Tziotis on the passing of his mother, Margaro, on December 19. May her memory be eternal!

Condolences to Melissa Krinos on the passing of her father, Robert Cale, on January 9. May his memory be eternal!



THE LAST WORDS OF JESUS FROM THE CROSS

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



MARCH 20 FORGIVENESS

*"Father, forgive them
for they know not what
they do."*

Luke 23:34

DINNER SPONSORED BY
THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

MARCH 27 SALVATION

*"Remember me when
you come into Your
kingdom."*

Luke 23:42

DINNER SPONSORED BY
THE CHOIR

APRIL 3 RELATIONSHIPS

*He said to His mother,
"Woman, behold, your
Son!" Then He said to
the disciple, "Behold,
your mother!"*

John 19:25-26

DINNER SPONSORED BY
THE AHEPA/DAUGHTERS

APRIL 10 ABANDONMENT/ DISTRESS

*"My God, my God, why
have you forsaken Me?"*

Mark 15:34

"I thirst."

John 19:28

DINNER SPONSORED BY
THE YOUNG AT HEART
AND WELCOME MINISTRY

APRIL 17 TRIUMPH

"It is finished."

John 19:30

DINNER SPONSORED BY
THE PHILOPTOCHOS

APRIL 24 COMMIT

*"Into Your Hands I
commit My Spirit."*

Luke 23:46

DINNER SPONSORED BY
THE YOUNG ADULTS AND
BIBLE STUDIES

EACH WEDNESDAY EVENING SCHEDULE:

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



GREAT LENT 2024
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
TAMPA, FL

JOY TWEENS

Our JOY Tweens Ministry is having a very fulfilling year so far! At our January 28 meeting, our JOY Tweens and their parents enjoyed helpful small group discussions about issues facing our pre-teen children at this stage of their lives in today's world. On February 25, our tweens and their families experienced some thrilling winter adventures together at Snowcat Ridge Snow Park.

This month, on March 31, the JOY tweens ministry will have its last Sunday meeting of the year with Father Stavros, following the Divine Liturgy. Please keep a look-out for more information by email, text messages, weekly church bulletins and Sunday school flyers.

Save the date! On Friday, April 26, JOY Tweens will close out the year with dinner and a movie. Stay tuned for more details to follow.



Joy Tweens Seminar - January 28, 2024



*The JOY Tweens Ministry plans events every month either in conjunction with HOPE/JOY or separately just for JOY Tweens. If you have children in 4th to 6th grades, please sign up for text updates or 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.

HOPE & JOY

Joy 3rd-6th Glow Party

A fantastic group of 13 Joy members had a wonderful time at the Karaoke Glow Party.

We ate pizza, sang, danced and had glow much fun.



Hope and Joy Souper Bowl of Caring



Each year the morning of the BIG game H&J collects food and money to benefit Hope Childrens Home in Tampa for underserved children.

This year thanks to your generosity we collected \$805 and 4 boxes full of food!

St John's correctly predicted the Chiefs win but the BIG winners are the children of Hope Childrens Home.

Thank you for your support of our youth!!

In Christ,

Zackie and George Ameres

GOYA



**GOYA
LOCK-IN
February 10, 2024**

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

We are thankful to be updating you with the activities of our Sunday School for January and February. We have had a very busy few months. Our topics for January were The Epiphany - St. John the Baptist, Vasilopita - St. Basil, The Story of Zacchaeus - Salvation, and Traditions. Our Topics for February were The Presentation of Christ, The Church Building and Sacred Vessels, The Sacraments of the Church, and The Publican and the Pharisee. Of course we also celebrated Valentine's Day by making cards and crafts for our parents.

On January 13th, we had our second teacher retreat of the school year. We would like to thank Fr. Stavros and the teachers for investing in our students by attending this retreat on a Saturday morning. Father Stavros always does an amazing job of teaching us more about our faith and inspiring us to spread HIS word.

We would like to thank Melissa Krinos and Maria Xenick for providing the Sunday School with the our very own Vasilopita on January 14th. Each child and teacher received a piece of this sweet cake and one of our teachers found the coin this year. Congratulations to Vivian Samuel, one of our 4th grade teachers. Many blessing in 2024.

Last month's YOUTH SUNDAY took place on Feb. 4th. We need to thank our children who are singing louder and more beautifully than ever. They did a fantastic job singing the hymn of St. Simeon. We would not have a Youth Choir without Maria Xenick. She has done an amazing job directing our youth in this music program. Thank you Maria.

Our Hope and Joy sponsored SOUPER BOWL of CARING was a huge success on Feb. 11th. Thank you to Zackie Ameres and our students who helped with this fundraiser for Hope's Children's home. We would like to thank everyone for their support of Souper Bowl of Caring. We collected two BIG pots of food and a generous amount of money. Thank you again for supporting our youth ministry and the underprivileged youth in our greater community.

One of the best ways to prepare for Pascha is to participate in the Sacrament of Confession. Each Sunday School class had, or will have an opportunity to participate in this important Sacrament. On January 21st our 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Graders participated in the Sacrament of Confession. On February 4th our 4th, 5th and 6th Graders attended. Our 7th - 12th graders will go to Confession during their upcoming GOYAN Lenten

Retreat. We would like to thank Father Stavros for hearing the confessions of these children. It is a wonderful thing to see our children go to Confession year after year.

On Sunday March 17, after the Divine Liturgy, Fr. Stavros will meet with Sunday School Parents from 12:00-2:00 p.m. to go over how to get more out of Lent in your home. There will be a movie on for children so that parents can enjoy this retreat.

MARCH CALENDAR:

Sunday, March 3rd:	Topic: Prodigal Son YOUTH SUNDAY
Sunday, March 10th:	Topic: Last Judgement
Sunday, March 17th:	Topic: Forgiveness Sunday-Pre-Lent Retreat during class. 12:00 - 2:00 Parent Workshop - Children's Movie
Wednesday, March 20th:	Sunday School sponsored Pre-Sanctified Dinner
Sunday March 24th:	Topic: Sunday of Orthodoxy (1st Sunday of Lent)
Sunday, March 31st:	Topic: Being a Good Friend-The Paralytic (2nd Sun. of Lent)



Our 5th Graders who made their very own Patens (Disko-Star)

4TH GRADE PHOTO 1/28/2024



Father Stavros speaking to the children before Confession.

YOUTH CHOIR 2/4/2024



**PRAYER OF
ABSOLUTION**

2024



*Our adorable
Pre-K3
students
sharing their
Vasilopita
craft.*



*Pre-K4
proud
of their
icon craft!*



*Here is a photo
of Vivian Samuel,
one of our 4th
grade teachers
with her student,
Louis Mantzanas.
Vivian found the
Vasilopita coin
from the Sunday
School this year.
Many blessings for
2024.*

THANK YOU!

Gasparilla Parking Fundraiser-Thank you to Ye Holy Krewe

On January 27, we had our annual Gasparilla Fundraiser, which raised just under \$5,000 for our ministries. Thank you to Ye Holy Krewe—our co-captains Dylan Crawshaw and Nick Fortino, and to our swabbies, Lane Francis, Tom Georgas, Roberto Rodriguez, Gabrielle Kossaris, Alex Limberatos, Bill Comminos, Mike Xenick, Wain Smith, Jose DeArmas, Mary Maas, Joanne Dalaklis and Clive Beldor.

THANK YOU YE HOLY KREWE!

~ Souper Bowl of Caring ~

Thanks to everyone who donated to our Souper Bowl of Caring sponsored by our HOPE/JOY. We collected four boxes of food, and \$750. And while the Chiefs won our Souper Bowl of Caring \$470 to \$280 over the 49ers, the big winner was the Hope Children's Home.

~ Blood Drive ~

A big thank you to everyone who donated blood on February 4 at our blood drive. We saved 26 lives!

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.

Love thy Neighbor through our Monthly Community Outreach

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

Our next date (s) are March 16th, April 20th & May 18th .

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

To Volunteer: [ClickHere](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F48A5A62DA3F49-community1/8067245#/) (Link also 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



FOOD PANTRY UPDATE

Thank YOU for YOUR ongoing Donations to the St. John Food Pantry. We finished the year strong and have been able to provide bags of groceries to many families in need, supply Metropolitan Ministries with monthly donations, help the Children's Home in addition to local needs within our community!

~We appreciate the ongoing support ~

For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. Matthew 25:35

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)
- Soup – Cans or Ready to Go, Ravioli, Pasta (just add water) meals
- Spaghetti Sauce – (no glass)
- Dry Goods
- Paper Towels/Toilet Paper

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

“You are the LIGHT of the world” Matthew 5:14

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

We thank our 361 loyal Steward families of 2023 for your support of St. John's Vision & Mission. Stewardship contributions reached \$712,000 for the year. Your gifts enable us to spread the word of Christ and support Orthodox and non-Orthodox charities throughout the year.

It is your sacrificial giving that enables us to sustain our beautiful church, enjoy fellowship, and most importantly worship together as Orthodox Christians.

December was the Kickoff month for Stewardship. By the end of January, we have received Stewardship Forms from 196 families totaling \$349,000 in confirmed pledges. We are halfway there already! 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.

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 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.

~The Stewardship Committee~

Excerpt from Fr. Stavros' Sermon on February 4, which touched on stewardship.

I have some good news and some bad news to share with you. The good news is that last year, our stewardship income, for the first time in the history of our parish, exceeded \$700K. It was not many years ago that we budgeted \$300K for stewardship income and someone stood up at a parish assembly meeting and laughed at me, and at the parish leadership for such a preposterous idea. We exceeded \$700K. Now to the bad news. About \$400K was contributed by 35 families—they averaged over \$10K each. About \$100K was contributed by another 35 families—they averaged about \$3K each. And the remaining \$200K was contributed by 280 families, who averaged less than \$1K each. There are people in each of the three categories who can do better. When we look critically on what we spend on travel, coffee, alcohol and entertainment, many of us contribute significantly more to these items than we do on our stewardship. Which leads one to wonder is love of travel, coffee, alcohol and entertainment more significant and more important than our love for God and for neighbor. Just something to think about.

The Parish Council will be sitting down this week for our annual planning meeting, and one of the main topics on the agenda will be mapping out our future without a tenant—what will that look like. It will not only be how will we be able to manage without income from a tenant. It will be more along the lines of how will we be able to better fulfill the great commandments of loving God and loving neighbor when we have full use of our property seven days a week. In the coming months, I will be asking for people

to help in planning this course. Imagine use of our facilities on a daily basis that could help us love God better. People frequently donate Orthodox books to our church, and yet we have no place to store them and we end up giving them away. What would it look like if we started an Orthodox library, where people could come to read, or to check out books to read at home. What if we had a dedicated space for our seniors to hang out each Wednesday, to have coffee and fellowship, but before doing so, to gather for prayer and a short worship service. Imagine Sunday school classrooms that we wouldn't have to set up and break down each week, where teachers could get more interactive and creative in putting up decorations that would help our children love God with a greater sense of understanding.

Now imagine how full-time use of our facilities could help us to love our neighbor. There are several people in our parish who attend AA meetings on a daily basis. They have expressed to me how this organization helped to not only change their lives but to save them. Imagine what it would be like for our church to not only change a life but to save one, or ten, or a hundred. Imagine how many lives could be changed if we offered a parenting class, or some people volunteered to be a tutor. This would not necessarily be to only parishioners or Orthodox people, but people who live right around our church. Remember that story from Acts 6—preaching the word and helping people—that's what the church was founded for. It wasn't just for preaching and teaching. It was for helping. And it wasn't just for helping

the community, but people outside of the community. The word “witness” is an important word in the church. Jesus said in John 13:35, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” It wasn’t by food that we are revealed as the disciples of Christ, but by love.

Our stewardship is an expression of our priority to commit some of our time, talent and income to the church, for her sacred mission to teach the word of God and to help others. This is what it is supposed to be for. Stewardship is supposed to be our first fruits, not our left-overs. And in creating a budget for our parish, charity, outreach and ministry should be the first things we put in, not whatever is left-over, if anything. And parishes like ours are not supposed to be landlords who pass the time waiting for the next rent check. We are supposed to be fortresses who provide ministries for those who are living inside of our walls, as well as to those who are seeking refuge and need some encouragement and help.

And it all begins and ends with two great commandments—to love God and to love our neighbor. Your stewardship strengthens our community’s ability to teach about God and to serve our neighbor. And your stewardship, on a personal level, makes a statement on how you follow these two great commandments to love God and to love and serve our neighbors. Our love of God is directed towards the church. Our love of neighbor is reflected by what we can give away from the church. When the church is only able to perpetuate itself, when there is little or nothing left over for outreach and

philanthropy, it is as if the church is saying “we love God but we are not concerned with our neighbor.” The same way that if we gathered for philanthropy, but we never gathered for worship, it would be as if the church is saying “We love other people, but we do not love God.”

Imagine how your life could change this week, if you made the sign of the cross and prayed each day, before your most important and stressful moments of the day “I will love You Lord, with all my strength, with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my mind,” and continued “I will love my neighbor by serving him or her as if I was serving myself.” Imagine how your stewardship would change if, as you filled out the form, you prayed “Lord, let this gift be a true reflection of my love for You and my concern for my neighbor.” And imagine how our parish would be, if we opened our doors with expressions of love for our neighbors, but with the ultimate goal of loving God and encouraging them to love Him as well.

To “Commit” to something means in part to move something from a fantasy of our mind to something we are doing. Imagine what our church could do if each of us went up ten percent with our stewardship, not necessarily giving ten percent (but eventually working our way there), but if we could increase our pledges each at least 10 percent of what we gave last year, we will be well on our way to both loving God and loving our neighbor.



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.



OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2024

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS		THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 25th		<i>TRIODION WEEKS</i> Publican and the Pharisee Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week MARCH 3rd		The Prodigal Son Returns! Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare MARCH 10th FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY		The Last Judgement Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare MARCH 17th FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY		Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! <i>FORGIVENESS SUNDAY</i> Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 24th		<i>GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS</i> SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 31st		ST GREGORY PALAMAS Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent APRIL 7th		VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS <i>HALF WAY TO PASCHAI</i> Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent APRIL 14th		ST JOHN of the LADDER Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent APRIL 21st		ST MARY of EGYPT Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! APRIL 28th GREAT WEEK BEGINS		<i>GREAT AND HOLY WEEK</i> ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY MAY 3rd		GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY <i>JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS</i> CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! MAY 5th NO FASTING!		<i>BRIGHT WEEK</i> HOLY PASCHAI (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

IN PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION

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

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

You shall not make for yourself a graven image in order to worship it.

Have I valued anyone or anything above God? Have I given to anyone or anything the love, honor and worship that belongs to God alone? Have I made an idol of any person, idea, occupation, or thing?

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

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

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

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

Honor your father and mother

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

Thou shall not kill.

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

You shall not commit adultery.

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

You shall not steal.

Have I taken anything that was not mine from anyone or from anywhere? Have I cheated anyone? Have I caused others to steal or cheat? Have I tried to find the owners of lost things I have found? Have I damaged or destroyed anything that belonged to another? Have I defrauded anyone of rightful wages? Have I paid my debts? Have I given to the poor and to philanthropic causes in proportion to my means?

You shall not bear false witness.

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

You shall not covet.

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

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

Important Lenten Prayers

TRISAGION PRAYERS

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

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

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us.
Ho-ly God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us.
Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us.

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

Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

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

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

PSALM 50 (51)—A Psalm of Repentance

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

Prayer of Manasseh, King of Judah (from the Great Compline Service)

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

Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim

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

LORD OF THE POWERS—

Lenten Hymn

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



Donations Needed for Great Lent and Holy Week

Great Lent begins March 18. We have many special celebrations during these weeks. We know that many of you would like to contribute to the decorating of our church and icons during this period. For your convenience, below is a list of items needed for the celebration of the Sacred Services of Lent and Holy Week. Please contact the church office to reserve your desired offering for the health of your loved ones or in memory of a deceased loved one.

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

Lent	Wireless Microphones in the Church	Duracell or Energizer AA Batteries	Many
March 22	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 1st Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$125
March 29	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 2nd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$125
April 5	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 3rd Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$125
April 7	Veneration of the Holy Cross	Flowers for Tray for Procession	\$500
April 12	Salutations to the Virgin Mary - 4th Stanza	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$125
April 19	Akathist Hymn	Flowers for Icon of Panagia	\$125
April 28	Palm Sunday	Flowers for Icon of Palm Sunday	\$125
		Palms Strips & Branches	\$300 total
Holy Week		Pillar Candles for Windows (20)	\$20 each
April 28	Palm Sunday	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom in Narthex	\$125
	Bridegroom Service	Flowers for Icon of Bridegroom on Solea (2)	\$125 each
May 1	Holy Wednesday	Flowers for Icon of Last Supper	\$125
	Holy Unction	Olive Oil, Flour, Prosphora (2)	Donations
May 2	Holy Thursday	Flowers for Icon of Crucifixion	\$125
		Wreaths for Bottom of Cross (2)	\$200 each
		Wreath for Top of Cross	\$300
		Scattered flowers at base of cross	\$75
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)	\$20 each
May 3	Good Friday	16 Bags of Rose Petals for Myrrh-bearers	\$125
		Flowers for Epitaphios	Several
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Apokathelosis	\$20 each
		Candles for Top of Cross (3)-Lamentations	\$20 each
		Icon of Extreme Humility	\$125
May 5	Pascha	Flowers for Icon of Resurrection	\$125
		Flowers for Icon of Empty Tomb	\$125
		Silk Flower for Royal Doors	\$125
		Easter Lilies	\$30 per Lily

The Prayer Team celebrated its 9th Anniversary on February 20!

For nine years, Fr. Stavros has been writing a daily reflection. It comes out every morning at 12:30 a.m. via Constant Contact. From Monday-Friday, Father will be writing on the subject of "The Liturgy of St. Basil" and on Saturday - Sunday, Father is writing on the Scriptures of each Sunday.



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!

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.

Why Am I Sad?

"People feel unhappy and don't know why. They feel that something is wrong but can't put their finger on what it is. They feel uneasy in the world, confused and frustrated, alienated and estranged, and can't explain it. They have everything and yet want more; and when they get it, they're still left empty and dissatisfied. They want happiness and peace, and nothing seems to bring it. They want fulfillment, and it never seems to come. Everything is fine, yet everything is wrong. In America this is almost a national disease. It is covered over by frantic activity and endless running around. It is buried in activities and events. It is drowned out by television programs [and cell phones] and games. But when the movement stops and the dial is turned off and everything is quiet...then the dread sets in, and the meaninglessness of it all, and the boredom, and the fear. Why is this so? Because, the Church tells us, we are really not at home. We are in exile. We are alienated and estranged from our true country. We are not with God our Father in the land of the living. We are spiritually sick. And some of us are already dead."

- Fr. Thomas Hopko

When God Seems Silent

By Abbott Tryphon

When we find it difficult to pray, we should light the lampada before our icons and sit silently before them. Then we should say to God, I am hurting and sad, and am unable to speak to You, so I need You to speak to my heart. Sometimes the most profitable spiritual growth can take place in such periods of brokenness because we see in these moments how very much we need God and depend upon Him.

Be not fearful, dear ones, for God is near, and HE will not leave you. The Lord allows these dry moments when we fear He has left us as a way of making us reach out to Him. When we are struggling, or even suffering, we can grow stronger in our faith. Prayer will return as long as we give God moments in our life when we avail ourselves in silence, and listen for His voice.

“How many Saturdays of Souls are there?”

Clearing up some misconceptions...

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

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

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

Saturday before Judgment Sunday (this year: March 9, 2024)

Saturday before Pentecost Sunday (this year: June 22, 2024)

in which the Divine services are structured in a specific way to pray for the deceased.

“But aren’t there FOUR Saturdays of the Souls?”

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

The Saturday of Cheesefare (this year: March 16, 2024)

is a day the church commemorates the **Memory of all the God-bearing Ascetics**.

The 1st Saturday of Great Lent (this year: March 23, 2024)

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

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

***“With the Saints give rest, O Christ,
to the souls Your servants
where there is no pain, nor sorrow,
nor suffering, but life everlasting.”***

Kontakion of the Saturday of Souls

**PLEASE COMMEMORATE THE NAMES OF MY DEPARTED FAMILY
MEMBERS IN THE SATURDAY OF THE SOULS MEMORIAL SERVICES:**

March 9, March 16 and March 23.

✝ In Memory of ✝

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

****You only need to write the first name of each person. Please mail to the church office by Tuesday, March 5th**

You may also email the names to office@stjohntpa.org



Proverbs 16:3—Commit your work to the Lord; and your plans will be established.

Psalms 37:5—Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will act.



Our word for this year for our parish is the word “Commit.” To commit means to do something. For instance, to commit a crime is to do something that is against the law. To commit to an exercise program requires action. To commit to the Lord also requires us to do something. It is more than an identity than an identity as a Christian, it is certainly more than a feeling. To commit to the Lord is an action, it requires us to do something.

There are many things I can list off that an Orthodox Christian should commit to doing—we know the staples, like prayer, fasting, worshiping, reading the Scriptures, stewardship and charity.

Community News

Celebration of Theophany and our Feastday of St. John

The first week of each year brings the celebration of Theophany and St. John to the calendar. On Saturday, January 6, we had 5 young men from our parish dive for the cross at the Tampa Bay area Theophany celebration in Tarpon Springs—Genaro Scarfogliero, Demetri Passalaris, Alex Findlay, George Xenick and Nicholas Carter.

On the evening of January 6, Fr. Stavros, Fr. John, and Fr. John Bociu (Sarasota) celebrated Great Vespers for our Feastday. A big thank you to Melissa Krinos for offering the Artoklasia and to our Philoptochos Society for sponsoring the reception following Great Vespers. Thank you also to Jeanie Nenos and her crew for decorating the icons of St. John the Baptist on the icon screen and for the procession.

On Sunday, January 7, His Grace Bishop Sevastianos officiated at the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, assisted by Fr. Stavros and Fr. John. Special thanks again to Melissa Krinos for offer the Artoklasia. Thanks to the choir who sang so beautifully. Thanks to the Parish Council for sponsoring the luncheon and to everyone who helped serve. And a big thank you to everyone who attended and made our feastday truly special!

Parish Council Officers for 2024- Our Parish Council officers, as we begin 2024 are John Zelatis, President; Rip Panos, Vice-President; Marilyn Sandborn, Secretary and Mike Xenick, Treasurer.

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 March, the dates are March 5, 19 and 26.

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 March, the dates are Tuesdays, March 5, 12, 19 and 26.

GOYA Meeting for March -The March GOYA Meeting will be **Sunday, March 24 from 5:00-7:30 p.m.** in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

Young Adults- Our young adult group meets once a month for dinner/discussion (and other times for fellowship and service). The meeting for March be on Thursday, March 14, from 6:30-9:00 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. All young adults, ages 18-40, are invited to participate. The Topic for March will be "Getting the Most out of Your Lenten Journey." Group Members use What's App for communication. Please contact Aris Rogers to be added to our what's app for young adults at 813-309-5525.

Men's Group- Our men's group will meet on Sunday, March 3 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Any men of our community are welcome to join us for dinner, discussion. We meet at 5:00 p.m., walk to a local restaurant and get some food, then bring it back to the hall where we eat and have a discussion. Our topic for March be "Getting the Most out of Your Lenten Journey." Please mark down our dates for men's group for this academic year—Sunday, March 3; and Sunday, April 14.

American Foundation for Greek Language & Culture(AFGLC) 2023 Scholarship Recipients- **The AFGLC would like to congratulate the 2023 scholarship recipients:**

The AFGLC Dr. Demetrios G. Halkias Scholarship: Mr. Demetrios Hill St. Stefanos Greek Orthodox Church and Ms. Artemis Xenick St. John Greek Orthodox Church

The AFGLC Peter & Sophia Kourmolis Scholarship: Ms. Elizabeth Xenick

Congratulations and we wish you all the best in your studies!

**The Philoptochos Society of
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 St. Theodore
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

Inspiration

Someone says: Since I will fall again, why should I go to confession? I know that I will do the same again. My brother, sin is like disease. You don't get sick once. Many times you get sick and every time you get sick, you go to the doctor and take the medicine he gives you. Do the same for your soul. Every time you are hurt, even if you are hurt in the same place, repent and confess. Someday the medicine of Grace will completely heal this particular wound. ~*Geronda Ephraim of Arizona*



We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give. *Winston Churchill*



God does not punish anyone, because God is love; HE is limitless love, and boundless love and limitless love does not punish someone. But God, Who created us free, respects our freedom, and if we commit evil deeds instead of good deeds, instead of living close to God, loving God and loving our neighbor, then evil and sin returns to us, and we ourselves suffer, our family, children, and nation suffers all the suffering in the world is due to sin. ~*Met. Seraphim Joanta*



Never be a prisoner to your past. It was a lesson, not a life sentence.



Thus, my son, whatever you ask of the Lord God you will receive, if only it is for the glory of God or for the good of your neighbor, because what we do for the good of our neighbor He refers to His own glory. And therefore He says: All that you have done unto one of the least of these, you have done unto Me (Matthew 25:40) And so, have no doubt that the Lord God will fulfill your petitions, if only they concern the glory of God or the benefit and edification of your fellow man. ~*St. Seraphim of Sarov*



We are not all in the same boat. We are in the same storm. Some have yachts, some have canoes and some are drowning. Just be kind and help whoever you can.



Hell can't be made attractive, so the devil makes attractive the road that leads there. ~*St. Basil the Great*



If you knew how quickly people would forget about you after your death, you will not seek in your life to please anyone but God. ~*St. John Chrysostom*



In Jewish thought, a sin is not an offense against God, an act of disobedience. A sin is a missed opportunity to act humanly. ~*Rabbi Harold Kushner*

He prays, but He answers prayers. He weeps but wipes away tears. He asks where Lazarus has been laid, for He is man; but He raises him to life, for He is God. HE is sold, dirt cheap, for thirty pieces of silver, but He redeems the world, at great cost, with His own blood. He died, but He brings to life, and by His own death destroys death. He is buried, but He rises again. He descends into hell, but rescues the souls imprisoned there. ~*St. Gregory of Nazianzus*



If the WHY is powerful, the HOW is easy. ~*Jim Rohn*



Before you speak, THINK. . .

T—Is it true?

H—Is it helpful?

I—Is it inspiring?

N—Is it necessary?

K—Is it kind?



8 Truths I wish I knew Sooner:

1. Not all friendships are forever
2. Envy is a waste of energy.
3. Partying is not a purpose.
4. A career is not an identity.
5. Either embrace change or embrace pain.
6. Complacency is contagious
7. Mistakes are mandatory.
8. Empathy is clarity.



The husband and wife should be similar to the hand and the eye. When the hand hurts, the eyes should be crying. And when the eyes cry, the hand should wipe away the tears. ~*St. John Chrysostom*



Patiently accept your falls and having stood up, immediately run to God, not remaining in that place where you have fallen. Do not despair if you keep falling into your old sins. ~*St. Nektarios of Aegina*



Life changes. You lose love. You lose friends. You lose pieces of yourself that you never imagined would be gone. And then, without even realizing it, these pieces come back. New love enters. Better friends come along. And a stronger, wiser you is staring back in the mirror.



Mirror mirror on the wall, I'll always get up after I fall. And whether I run, walk or have to crawl, I'll set my goals and achieve them all.



The prayer you say for someone may be the only prayer they received. Pray for someone today and trust that it may be the very thing they need, even if they never know.

PHILOTOCHOS MARCH NEWS

WE ARE CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH!

Women's Retreat
Saturday March 23 10 AM - 4 PM

We will celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation together and then enjoy a spiritual retreat led by Father Stavros as he shares

THE IMPORTANT ROLES OF WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

Join us for a day of fellowship and learning. Lunch served
Please RSVP to the church office by March 18
office@stjohntpa.com
All women are welcome, members or not. Bring a friend!

COLLECTING ITEMS FOR THE SPRING

The Spring provides a safe space and empowering services to survivors of domestic violence and their children.
We will be collecting items for them throughout the month of March. Needed items are:

Shampoo
Conditioner Body Wash
Toothpaste & toothbrush Deodorant
Bedding (twin sheet sets & pillows) Towels
Female hygiene products Non-perishable food
Umbrellas
Phone chargers

Look for the donation bin in the church hall foyer. New items only please.
If you wish to make a monetary donation see Katherine Sakkis.

OCMC

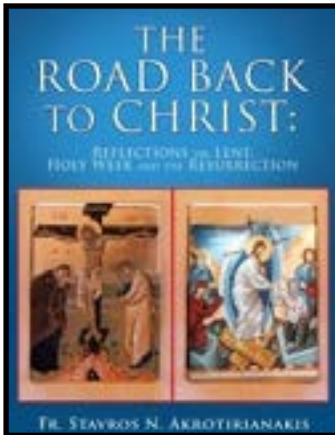
Philoptochos will be sponsoring a fundraising coffee to benefit the Orthodox Christian Mission Center on Marc 31.

Through its many ministries, OCMC has shared the love of Christ offering a living witness of the Orthodox Christian Faith in more than 30 countries around the world.

SAVE THE DATE

April 14th
General Membership
Meeting after church

April 28th
Pascha Bake Sale &
Palm Sunday Luncheon



The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection is now on sale!

It is a series of daily reflections to be read from the beginning of Triodion (this year that is February 25) through All Saints Day (this year that is June 30).

Pick up your copy today so you can begin reading it .

DANCE GROUP NEWS



The dance groups would like to thank Ourania and Marios Stephanides and Margaret and Mike Halikoytakis for donating several Greek costumes to the church collection. Ourania previously donated her own beautiful costume and it was worn during this year's festival performances. If you are cleaning out your closets please consider donating your Greek costumes. We can use any size or type of costume, and it will be much appreciated!

Please contact Marina Choundas at mchoundas@outlook.com for more information.

Thank you!

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY PROGRAM



We will mark Greek Independence Day with a luncheon and short program on Sunday, March 24

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 ENTERED *angels in disguise.*



*Don't
forget
to set your
clock
forward
one
hour!*

Have questions?

Just need to talk? Worried? Sad? Happy?

We are here for you!



Fr. Stavros
< 813-394-1038



Fr. John
678-637-4425 >

Forgiveness by Anonymous

Part of becoming an adult is learning to forgive the sins of your parents.

As a father of two wonderful children I am reminded of this lesson everyday.

You see, I strive to be the best father I can be for my children.

But I fall short of this goal every single day.

In trying to teach them to control their emotions, I can lose my own.

I become impatient, irritated, or I may minimize their feelings and struggles.

And this happens because I am an imperfect person, attempting to raise saints.

So if anyone thinks they are emotional mature... I challenge you to have children. They will bring out weaknesses in you that you thought you had conquered long ago.

But, they will also bring out strengths in you that were never aware of.

Our call as parents is to raise saints. And this is more a process of sanctification for the parent, than it is the child. Because in the process of raising our children in holiness, we as parents come to reflect on our own shortcomings and are therefore reminded of the shortcomings that our own parents must have faced. You are humbled. Because you realize that your parents did the best with what they were given. As you are trying to do the best with what you have been given.

So becoming a father has taught me to forgive my parents... but also to become better than them in the ways that I am able to, so that as I raise my children, they will one day be better than me.

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



Philoptochos 2024 Membership Drive

We are on the MOVE for a Great New Year!

We invite all women ages 18 plus to join the St. John the Baptist Philoptochos Annunciation Chapter!

Membership Drive: January thru April, Suggested Stewardship is \$35.00, however, we accept whatever you can give to support our mission.

Your donation makes you a member of the National, Metropolis and Local Chapters of Philoptochos.

We invite all women age 80 and above to join us as honorary members with no dues required.

“Truly I tell you, whatever you do for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you do for me.” (Matt 24:25)

Name _____ Date _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell _____

E-mail address _____

Main areas of interest (check all that apply): Visiting the Sick _____, Fundraising _____, Spiritual Retreats _____,
Communication (Messenger-Sunday Bulletin) _____, Baking _____, Social Gatherings _____, Decorating _____
Koliva _____ Other (write in) _____

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America – Ladies Philoptochos Society. The mission of the Society shall be:

To aid the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the aged, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widowed, the handicapped, the victims of disasters, to undertake the burial of impoverished persons and to offer assistance to anyone who may need the help of the Church through fund raising efforts; and

To promote the charitable, benevolent, and philanthropic purposes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, through instructional programs, presentations, lectures, seminars and other educational resources;

To preserve and perpetuate Orthodox Christian concepts and the Orthodox Christian Family, and through them, to promote the Greek Orthodox Faith and traditions, in accordance with its doctrines, canons, discipline, divine worship, usages and customs;

To promote participation in the activities of the Greek Orthodox community, with the cooperation of the Parish Priest and the Parish Council.

Please return form to: Presvytera Denise Stefero, 11209 Lark Landing Ct., Riverview, FL 33569 or

Drop off on any Sunday in St. John's Bookstore. Questions: denises54@hotmail.com

Please make checks payable to: St. John Philoptochos or pay online <https://bit.ly/3tTEyF6>

Young at Heart

Young at Heart March Gathering

Saturday, March 9th

Remember your departed loved ones in worship at the Divine Liturgy and Saturday of Souls Memorial Service followed by our monthly gathering with potluck luncheon and program.



**Orthros - 9:00 am
Divine Liturgy – 10:00 am
Memorial Service following
Young at Heart Gathering – 11:30 am
Potluck – Noon
Program to follow**

Young at Heart Visit to Panagia Monastery

Saturday, May 18th

10 am to 5pm



Join us on a bus trip to Panagia Vlahernon Monastery and Annunciation of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Monasteries located near Ocala. Visit both the men's and women's monasteries, offer a prayer in their churches, shop their bookstores, and enjoy quiet time in a blessed and peaceful location.

Cost - \$20 per person due at time of reservation – space limited!

See Dora Morgan, Diane Trimis, or Presvytera Denise to reserve your place.

Nursing Ministry Presentation on Advanced Directives

What are advance directives? Advance directives are legal documents that provide instructions for medical care and only go into effect if you cannot communicate your own wishes.

Who will make your last health care decisions when you no longer can?

*The Nursing Ministry will be presenting a lecture on Advanced Directives,
March 10th after the Liturgy.*

Please join us for this opportunity to gain understanding about Advanced Directives and to make sure your end-of-life health care wishes are what you want.



American Heart Association Life's Essential 8

Improving and maintaining cardiovascular health, or CVH, can help you enjoy a longer, healthier life. Better CVH also has been associated with decreased risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer, dementia and other major health problems.

Life's Essential 8 outlines a few easy steps you can take to live a healthier lifestyle.



- **Eat Better:** Aim for an overall healthy eating pattern that includes whole foods, lots of fruits and vegetables, lean protein, nuts, seeds and cooking in non-tropical oils such as olive and canola.
- **Be More Active:** Adults should participate in 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity. Walking is great for moderate levels of activity. Kids should have 60 minutes every day, including play and structured activities.
- **Quit Tobacco:** Use of inhaled nicotine delivery products, which includes traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes and vaping, is the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S., including about a third of all deaths from heart disease. And about a third of U.S. children ages 3-11 are exposed to secondhand smoke or vaping.
- **Get Healthy Sleep:** Getting a good night's sleep every night is vital to cardiovascular health. Adults should aim for an average of 7-9 hours, and babies and kids need more depending on their age. Too little or too much sleep is associated with heart disease, studies show.
- **Manage Weight:** Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight has many benefits. Body mass index (BMI), a numerical value of your weight in relation to your height, is a useful gauge. Optimal BMI for most adults ranges from 18.5 to less than 25. You can calculate it online or consult a health care professional.
- **Control Cholesterol:** High levels of non-HDL, or "bad," cholesterol can lead to heart disease. Your health care professional can consider non-HDL cholesterol as the preferred number to monitor, rather than total cholesterol, because it can be measured without fasting beforehand and is reliably calculated among all people.
- **Manage Blood Sugar:** Most of the food we eat is turned into glucose (or blood sugar) that our bodies use as energy. Over time, high levels of blood sugar can damage your heart, kidneys, eyes and nerves. As part of testing, monitoring hemoglobin A1c can better reflect long-term control in people with diabetes or prediabetes.
- **Manage Blood Pressure:** Keeping your blood pressure within acceptable ranges can keep you healthier longer. Levels less than 120/80 mm Hg are optimal. High blood pressure is defined as 130-139 mm Hg systolic pressure (the top number in a reading) or 80-89 mm Hg diastolic pressure (bottom number).

St. John's Bookstore



Throughout Great Lent our bookstore is offering a wide selection of books focused on the many ways we can grow spiritually during the Lenten period. Daily meditations, prayer books, Lives of the Saints, guides to preparation for Confession, Holy Week service books, and Lenten cookbooks are just some of those featured. Our bookstore is open Sundays following Divine Liturgy.

Stop in and see the many items available.

Father Stavros has authored 8 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

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

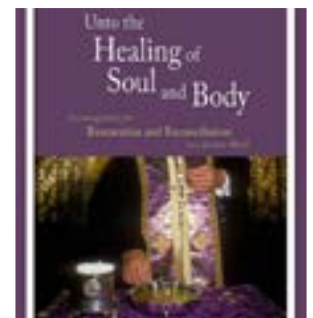
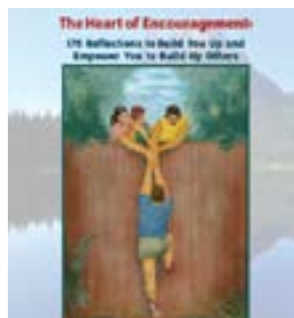
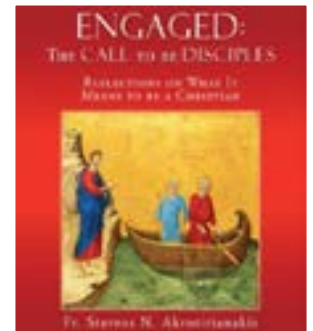
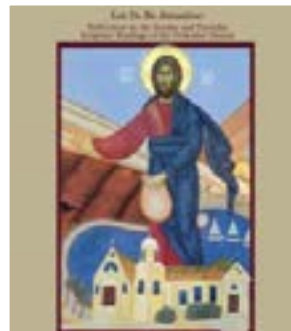
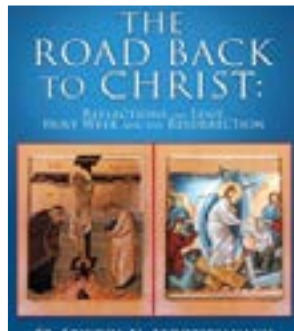
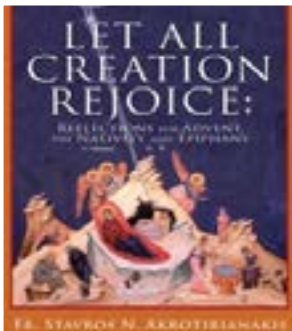
Engaged: The Call To Be Disciples, Reflections on What it Means to be a Christian

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

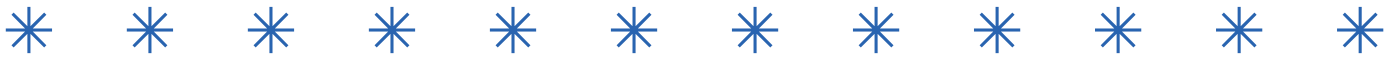
NEW: Unto the Healing of Soul and Body: Encouragement for Restoration and Reconciliation in a Broken World



EPIPHANY 2024



Epiphany Divers for 2024 Nicholas Carter, Demetri Passalaris, Genaro Scarfogliero, Alex Findlay & George Xenick.



**Orthodoxy
101**



Men's Retreat - February 10

Visit of His Grace Bishop Seviastianos - January 7, 2024



Vasilopita Sunday



January 14, 2024



**Archangel Michael
Winners for 2023...**

**< Artemis Xenick
and
Dwight Forde >**



Prayer for Teachers
Occasion of the Feast of Three Hierarchs
January 28, 2024



Souper



Bowl of Caring



"Wear Red Sunday"

Youth Protection Program Reminder



GREEK ORTHODOX
ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

At this time, the Youth Protection Program is currently under revision and changes from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Please be on the lookout in weekly bulletins and future



*If you have any questions or concerns, please contact
Suzanne Pileggi at smpileggi1@gmail.com or (813) 244-5855*

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

Follow Us on Social Media



St. John the Baptist



Let's Get Connected for Our Latest News & Updates



on Flickr

@<https://www.flickr.com/photos/stjohngoc Tampa/>



on Facebook

@<https://www.facebook.com/StJohnGOCTampa/>



on Instagram @stjohn tpa



stjohn tpa.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, livestream 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.

Live Streaming

All of our services are being video recorded and are available on our Livestream page.

To access this page

1. Go to our Church's website: stjohn tpa.org,
2. Scroll the mouse over the "Multimedia" tab on the menu bar,
3. Click "View Liturgy,"
4. Then click on the link where it says, "Check out our live stream of the Divine Liturgy here <http://new.livestream.com/accounts/2454446>.

All of the services are available to watch at anytime.



Beware of Emails or Text Messages Asking for Gift Cards



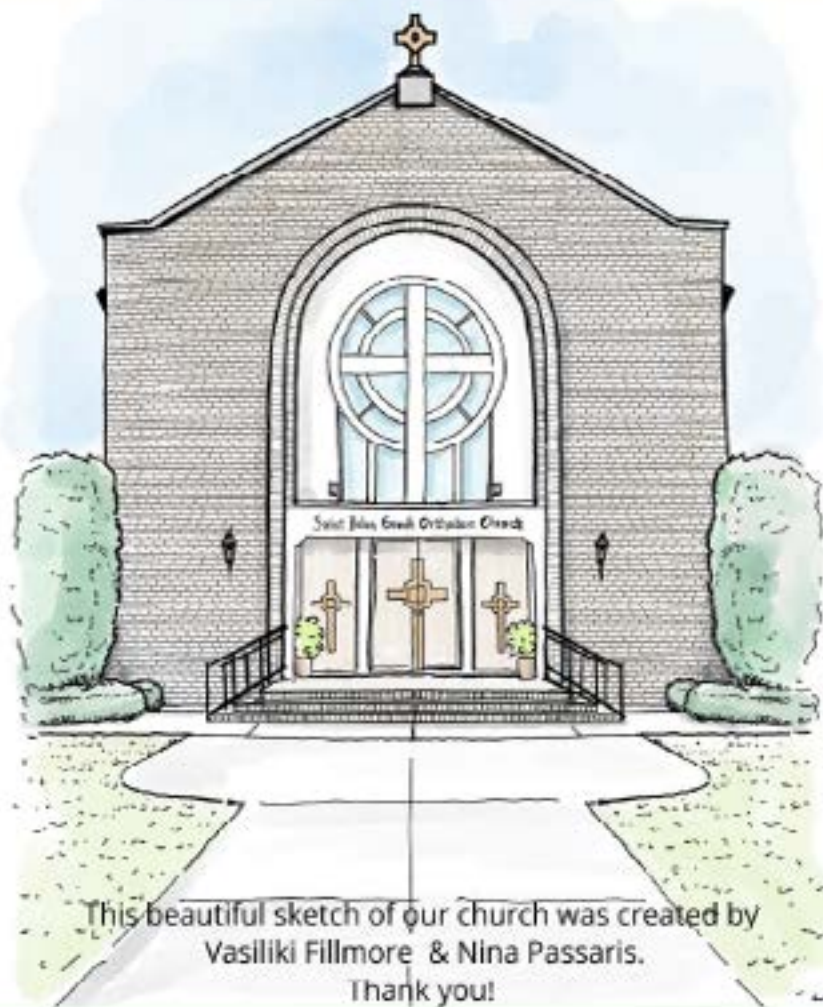
This is a common and very scary thing that is happening. People who are impersonating as Fr. Stavros have been emailing people and asking them to buy gift cards, scratch off the back to reveal the code, take pictures of the code and email them the pictures. Fr. Stavros would never under any circumstances 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.

March 2024						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
"Fast Day"					1	2 Children's Greek School
3 Orthos 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	4 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 5:30 p.m.	5 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 5:30 p.m.	6** Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. Choir Practice	7 Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m. Phonetics Beare 200m /	8** OCA Sarakka retreat	9 1st Saturday of Souls Orthos 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Young at Heart OCA Sarakka Retreat Children's Greek School
10 Daylight Saving Begins Orthos 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	11** Bible Study 5:30 p.m.	12** Bible Study 5:30 p.m.	13** Choir Practice	14** Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m. Young Adult Discussion 6:30 p.m.	15**	16** Community Dulceen 2nd Saturday of Souls Orthos 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Children's Greek School
17 Orthos 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Sunday School Prayer/ Lenten Retreat Parent Seminar with Fr. Stavros 12:2 Young at Heart Visitors 6 pm	18** Clean Monday Communion of St. Andrew 10:00 a.m. Holy Lunch 6:00 p.m.	19** Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Cordoning 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 5:30 p.m.	20** 5-Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner/Discussion (Sunday School)	21** Adult Greek School 6:00-8:30 p.m. Choir Practice	22** 5-Hour 5:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations 6:30 p.m.	23** 3rd Saturday of Souls Orthos 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Paraklesis Women's Retreat Children's Greek School
24** Sunday of Orthodoxy Orthos 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Greek Independence Joy Program	25** Annunciation Orthos 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	26** Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Cordoning 5:30 p.m. Bible Study 5:30 p.m.	27** 5-Hour 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 p.m. Lenten Dinner/Discussion (Choir)	28** Adult Greek School 6:00- 8:30 p.m. Choir Practice	29** 5-Hour 5:30 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Salutations 6:30 p.m.	30** Children's Greek School
31** Orthos 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Lenten Triduum Tr. Slavonic						

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
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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**