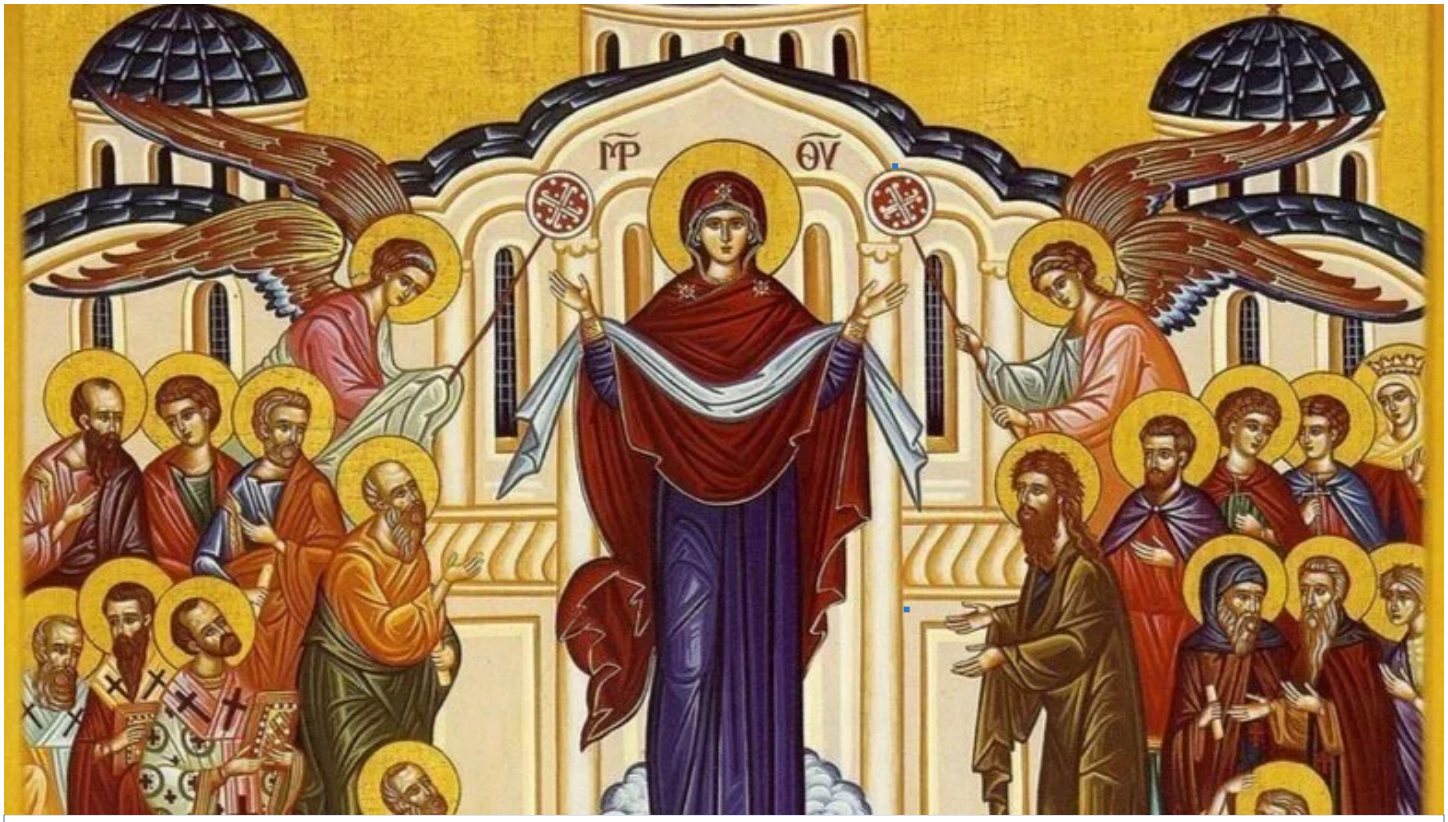
St. John the Baptist
Greek Orthodox Church

—The Messenger—

October 2026



Holy Protection of the Theotokos— October 28

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

*Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople *Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America* Metropolis of Atlanta*

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Without a vision, the people perish. Proverbs 29:18

MISSION:

Love God. Serve Others. Share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

VISION:

We encourage all to seek salvation through prayerful worship, active engagement, and Christ-centered ministry, cultivating a welcoming, generous, and growing church community rooted in authentic Orthodox Christianity.

CORE VALUES:

Love • Worship • Community • Learning • Service

St. John's Directory

Timetable of Services

Sundays: Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Weekdays: Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy10:00a.m.

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Connect Through Christ - Special Needs Ministry for Children
Dante and Lindsey Skourellos 813-765-9534

Dance Groups
Η ΧΑΡΑ ΜΑΣ,
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Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963
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Marina Choundas 813-877-6136
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Daughters of Penelope
Ourania Stephanides 813-546-4711

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Gasparilla Parking
Fady Hakim 678-294-7732

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George Fellios 813-495-7562

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Tia L'Hommedieu 727-260-2100

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Amy Wenditz 727-251-2233

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Usher
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The Messenger of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is published on a monthly basis. Publication is the first of each month. Deadline for notices and announcements for The Messenger is the 15th of each month.

A Message from our Priest

-Not Forgetting the Most Important Things
Positive Developments-

There is a lot of emphasis in our community right now, and rightly so, about our Arise & Build Expansion Project. Work has been underway in the ministry building for almost three months. The final plans for the church are scheduled to be submitted in early October for permitting. This is exciting!

The ministries of our church are thriving. The fall installment of Orthodoxy 101 has over 70 people attending! A new record, the previous record was 53. There have been over 40 baptisms in our parish this year, and another 17 Chrismations. The forty baptisms is also a record with still 25% of the year left. Last year, we brought in 64 people into Orthodoxy through Baptism or Chrismation. As we begin October, we are at 57, and that record is likely to be broken. This is exciting!

The Greek Festival is right around the corner, **November 6-7**. There will be a lot of baking days and preparation that will happen in October. This is exciting!

As we do every month, there will be many opportunities to worship. Worship is more important than Arise & Build, ministries and the festival. For there is nothing more important than gathering together to worship the Lord, and to receive Christ in the Eucharist. That is the most important thing we do. The Divine Liturgy will be held on Friday, October 16. That is the feast of St. Longinus. Who is that? He is the centurion that presided over the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. When one thinks of severity of sins, there can't be a much worse sin that killing the Son of God. How is it that the centurion became a saint? He repented. Immediately after seeing Jesus expire on the cross, and experience the earthquake that followed, he looked on the scene and said *"Truly, this was the Son of God!"* ____ That scene, that sin, changed his life. He became a Christian. He was later martyred for his Christian faith. He is now a saint. And on October 16, we will celebrate Divine Liturgy in his honor and memory. The lesson of St. Longinus is that NO ONE IS BEYOND REPENTANCE. NO ONE IS BEYOND THE REACH OF GOD. So long as we are alive, there is an opportunity to repent, the change course, and even the greatest sinner can become a saint. This is exciting!

On October 22, in the evening, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy of St. James. St. James was the first bishop of Jerusalem, and is known as the brother of our Lord. He authored the first Divine Liturgy in 70 A.D., less than forty years after the Resurrection of Christ and the establishment of the Church. His Liturgy is the oldest Eucharist service still in existence in the Christian world. It is celebrated only once a year, on the feast of St. James. During this Liturgy, we will experience how the early church worshipped. We will realize that the structure of the Divine Liturgy we are still celebrating in 2026 was in place in the Divine Liturgy of St. James, 1,950 years ago. Also in this Divine Liturgy, there is an opportunity to receive the Eucharist in separate elements, like the clergy still do to this day, and how all the people received in the early centuries of Christianity, until the 8th century. This is exciting!

The church is filled to capacity every Sunday, and now nearly every Sunday, there are 100 people worshipping in the Kourmolis Center. Fortunately, the days of the split congregation are just a few months away from ending, when we can all be together worshipping. Thank you for your patience. Thank you to all those who have contributed to Arise & Build. We are taking concrete steps each day toward the completion of this project. This is exciting!

HOWEVER. . .

We Can't Forget the Basics

In this time of excitement, it is very tempting to forget some of the basics of our faith. We learn and relearn the basics of our faith. Other denominations speak of a moment when one is "born again," as if to say that there is one moment in life where everything tilts to Jesus Christ and one is never the same again. St. Paul had one such moment on the road to Damascus, where he was heading so that he could persecute the church and imprison the early Christians. Jesus Christ spoke with him on that road, and a bright light blinded him. He could not see for three days and during this time, he fasted, reflected, and repented. He emerged from this "Damascus experience" as a committed Christian and became the paramount among the Apostles. St. Paul's experience, however, is exceptional. While some people have a similar "Damascus experience," most of us do not. Our experience of faith is a climb up mountains and a descent into valleys and our focus becomes taking one more step up the mountain, and when we take steps backward, to resume the climb upward. Every day becomes an opportunity to an experience of repentance and recommitment.

-Prayer-



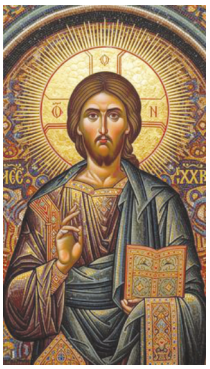
The first place we experience this is prayer. I have suggested for the last few months a nine-minute rule of prayer. That is one percent of the day. A sample "rule of prayer" follows this article. These prayers can be done without haste in under nine minutes. Included in this can also be Scripture reading. Or you do the

Prayer Rule in the morning and read Scripture in the evening. We only get to know someone better by spending time with them. We can know *ABOUT* the Lord but until we begin to pray we will not *KNOW* the Lord. You'll see that the suggested prayers are a combination of Orthodox Prayers with the opportunity to add in our own personal prayers.

The word for "prayer" in Greek is *prosefhi.* This word is made up of two words, *pros,* meaning "towards" and *efhi* meaning "blessing." So prayer literally means "towards a blessing" and obviously that blessing comes from God. We are supposed to go to God in prayer as we begin each day, to ask for His blessings over the day. We are supposed to go to Him throughout the day, before driving, before beginning a task, before a meal, etc., in order to ask for His blessings on everything we do. If we are going for a blessing, we are not then going to turn around and do something sinful. Because seeking a blessing and going away from God can't possibly happen at the same moment. The more we pray, the more we consciously go to God to bless what we are doing, the less we sin. When we forget to pray, this is when we are likely to sin more.

The Lord's Prayer

The most complete prayer is the Lord's Prayer. Entire books have been written on this one prayer. Here is a quick summary of what the prayer means and what you should be thinking of as you are offering it.



Our Father-The first two words encapsulate the two Great Commandments, to love God and to serve our neighbor. The word "Father" points to our relationship to God as Father, and reminds us that we are to love God as a Father. The word "Our" is in the plural. It reminds us that God is the Father of all of us, and therefore we are not only neighbors but brothers and sisters with everyone and are to see one another in this way. As we pray these words, we should ask ourselves, how can I better love God? And how can I better serve my neighbor?

Who art in heaven-We should consider the majesty of God, and our own humility as compared to it. God is beyond comprehension. His love and mercy are without limit.

Hallowed be Thy name-How can I honor God and better love Him today? We must keep the name of God holy, and our lips that praise God must be kept free from words of sin, gossip, and hate.

Thy Kingdom come-The Kingdom of God is not supposed to be some far-off destination but a present reality. We should ask ourselves how can I live like I am in the Kingdom of God, because we are in His kingdom, as we say in the Divine Liturgy, "now, and forever." Using our God-given talents to love and serve one another is how we live in the Kingdom.

Thy will be done-These are the hardest four words of prayer, because when prayed sincerely, they put aside any personal needs. Most of us offer these words with the true intention of telling God, "Please leave my marriage, children, house, job, income and retirement alone and Your will can be done with the rest of it." To really pray "Thy will be done" means that there is no agenda or line in the sand with God. We really give it all to Him. We should ask ourselves "What is something I am struggling with that conflicts with God's will and how can I manage that today?

On earth as it is in heaven-Our lives should resemble a heaven on earth. And we should ask ourselves "How can I be more Godly in my life?"

Give us this day our daily bread-This phrase comes from the Old Testament book of Exodus, when the Israelites were in the desert and didn't have food to eat. God made manna fall from heaven, in the amount that each person needed. They were not to take more, or hoard manna from others. They were to trust God that He would take care of providing for them their bread/food on a daily basis. We should ask God, "What are the things I need today?" without looking too far into the future.

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us-This is probably the most dangerous phrase of prayer. To ask God to forgive us in the same way we forgive one another. If we do not forgive others, or hold a grudge against others, it's like asking God to hold a grudge against us, to withhold forgiveness from us. We should ask ourselves "Who do I need to forgive?" and "Who needs me to be patient and kind?"

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil-We should ask ourselves "What are the pitfalls of today where I might fall into temptation?" and we should look around and ask ourselves "Who do I need to lift up and help avoid temptation?" Most temptations are not constant. If I am tempted to overindulge on ice cream, for instance, that is not a temptation all day. The day has 24 hours. I spend some of them sleeping, driving, working, eating, etc. There is probably only a couple of hours window where I might succumb to the temptation to eat ice cream (or fill in the blank of your favorite temptation). The key becomes managing the times and the situations where temptation arises, and prayer helps to do this.

Prayer is not effective because of the amount of words or even the amount of time we spend doing it. Prayer works when we come to God with the appropriate disposition of our hearts.

The Arise & Build Prayer-This special prayer was composed to coincide with our Arise & Build Campaign. Our committee has committed to praying that every day for the last 20 months. In life, we want to put everything under the auspices of prayer, we want to go to God for His blessing on each step of this project. We will put this prayer into the *Messenger* each month until the project is complete and invite everyone in the community to offer it. We are all part of this community. The Arise & Build Project will benefit all of us.

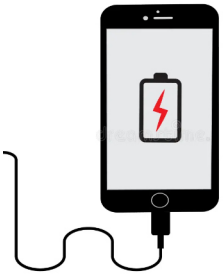
-Scripture-

Most of us were not raised reading the Bible. There are many reasons for this. In Orthodox worship, emphasis is placed on prayer and the sermon is just a fraction of the time we spend in worship. In other denominations, the focus of worship is the sermon, people carry Bibles, and the sermon becomes like a small Bible study. Perhaps because we have such an emphasis on "Tradition," the reading of Scripture was never prioritized. Scripture does two things for us. It helps us learn about our Christianity. The Old Testament is history and prophecy. It sets up the coming of Christ—why it was needed, what would be fulfilled in His person. The New Testament is the life and teachings of Christ (The Gospels), the history of the early Church (Acts) and the Epistles which are letters of guidance, teaching and encouragement to the newly established churches. The information in the Epistles is still relevant to our churches today. We also read the Bible for guidance, encouragement, reassurance. The Bible reinforces what we believe and how we are to live. A Bible with annotations (study notes) is important, as it is often difficult to interpret certain passages of Scripture. Spending a few minutes reading Scripture each day is very beneficial. And now with technology, one can even hear scripture read and interpreted in the car with podcasts. So we can listen to the Bible.

An important caveat—while we can listen to Scripture and its interpretation, we cannot listen to prayer. Prayer is personal. We need to offer prayer. Yes, one can be prayed over, I pray over many people during sacraments, before an operation, and on many occasions, but the prayer of someone else does not take the place of praying for ourselves.

-Recharging our Spiritual Batteries-

Most of us have phones and with the phone it is necessary to charge it daily. We can see how low our phones are getting as far as their charge. And we even get a warning when we are low on battery life that it is time to plug in and recharge. When I travel, I am very careful not to let the phone battery get too low, because I need the phone for my airplane tickets, uber app, etc. So I am particularly careful that it is properly charged. No one would dare travel with a one or two percent charge on the phone.



Prayer helps to charge our spiritual batteries. If we are not plugged into prayer, we are not spiritually recharging. We don't charge the phone once a week, or only on holidays, and we don't wait until the phone has no charge in it to plug it in. We safeguard our phones from going out on us. Why wouldn't we take the same, or better, care of our souls? We should charge our souls daily through prayer and weekly through worship and the Eucharist.

-Holy Communion-

We were discussing Holy Communion recently at a Bible study session and we were discussing what people think about as they prepare to receive Holy Communion, as they walk up the aisle to receive, and at the moment they receive. Holy Communion is an intimate encounter with the Lord, in fact it is the most intimate thing one can do, to touch God and to be touched by God. Holy Communion is supposed to act almost as a "super-charger" for our souls. We nourish our souls through prayer and we also feed them generously from the banquet that is the Eucharist, experienced in the Divine Liturgy. As we were discussing the Eucharist, three questions came up:

1. **What should we think about as we prepare to receive Holy Communion?**

We should be thinking about Holy Communion every day, ideally. When people make plans for a Friday night, they tend to think about it all week, they count the days until they get to have their fun night. They probably don't think about it all day long, but they think of it as a motivator to get through the week, as something positive and rewarding to look forward to. We should be thinking the same thing about Holy Communion. It should be a date on our calendar each week, and there should be some joyful thought throughout the week that we are only "x number of days away from receiving Holy Communion again." I don't think many people think like this. Even I don't think like this all the time. I am aware of the Liturgies on the calendar, and generally look forward to them. But even I can do a better job thinking about the beautiful encounter with Christ that is Holy Communion.

2. What should we think about as we approach to receive Holy Communion?

There are lots of things that we could think of as we approach. That we are worthy is not one of them. We should think thoughts of gratitude, we should pray the prayer of the repentant thief "Lord, remember me in Your kingdom." We should pray this over and over again, and imagine that we are walking up to the Lord Himself, because we are.

3. What should we think about in the moment we receive Holy Communion?



This is an interesting question, that I've not really thought of. Having given this some thought, I would say that we should actually think of nothing. At the moment we receive, we should just embrace Christ and enjoy being embraced by Christ. Imagine being held in the arms of Christ in a warm and loving embrace. This should be the thought as we receive Christ.

One more thing, on the subject of being plugged in. Last month I wrote a lot about church etiquette. Worship is a good place to unplug from our phones. We should refrain from using our phones in church. Worship is a good place to "de-tox" from phone use. One of the bad side effects of the continuous phone use is that it inhibits are ability to sit still and not only enjoy worship but other things like the sunset. Unplugging from the phone in church helps our brains repair from constant stimulation. In seeking to recharge our souls, it will help greatly to unplug from our phones.

-Conclusion-

There are lots of amazing things going on in our parish. There may be lots of amazing things going on in your life. However, we should not neglect the basic things. And the most basic thing is taking care of our souls and making sure they are spiritually alive, healthy and growing. The most effective ways to do this are daily prayer and Scripture reading and weekly worship and receiving the Eucharist. As we continue to move forward in our parish, as more and more people join, let us constantly remember the foundations of prayer, Scripture reading and the Eucharist that each Orthodox Christian life should be built upon.

With love in the Lord,
+Fr. Stavros

-Daily Rule of Prayer-
(Suggested by Fr. Aris Metrakos)

Fr. Aris Metrakos is the Proistamenos of the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity in San Francisco, CA, and is also spiritual father to Fr. Stavros.

Standing before your icons, make three prostrations, venerate your icons, and pray the following without haste and with attention:

+In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

Glory to You, our God, glory to You!

Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, everywhere present and filling all things, the treasury of good things and Giver of life. Come and abide in us, cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O Good One.

+Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (3 times.)

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

All holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, pardon our sins. Master, forgive our transgressions. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Your name's sake.

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

+Glory to the Father and the Son and 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.

+Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon us and save us. Amen.

Be seated in a quiet place, with feet flat on the floor, and say the following, using a prayer rope:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me a sinner. (Either 33 or 100 times)

Before the concluding prayer, return to your icons, make three prostrations, sit or kneel and using your own words:

1. *Give glory to God for His exceeding greatness;*
2. *Thank Him for the specific blessings which he has bestowed on you;*
3. *Confess the sins which you have committed since the last time that you prayed;*
4. *Make any specific supplications to Him that you may have. Include the names of those persons for whom you pray.*

Then remain on your knees and pray the following (Prayer of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow):

Lord, I know not what to ask of You. You alone know what my true needs are. You love me more than I myself know how to love. Help me to see my real needs which may be hidden from me. I dare not ask for either a cross or a consolation. I can only wait upon You; my heart is open to You. Visit and help me in Your steadfast love.
Strike me and heal me; cast me down and raise me up. I worship in silence Your holy will. I offer myself to You as a living sacrifice. I put all my trust in You. I have no other desire than to fulfill Your will. Teach me to pray.
Pray Yourself in me. Amen.

Stand up, make one prostration, venerate your icons and pray:

+Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon us and save us. Amen.



A Message from our Ministry Coordinator

Galatians 5:22-6:2

Revised Standard Version

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. 26 Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another. 6 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

This month continues a year-long series that will study the fruit of the Spirit. In Saint Paul's letter to the Galatians, nine qualities are identified as the fruit produced by a life lived in communion with the Holy Spirit. This month highlights the second fruit of the Spirit Paul lists: joy.

Have you ever been around someone who is joyful? Like really joyful? Have you ever met someone whose joy seemed completely unaffected by circumstances? Perhaps they were facing illness, grief, or hardship, yet still radiated peace, gratitude, and yes, joy. Being around people like that makes you wonder what they have discovered that the rest of us have missed.

Joy is the second fruit listed by Paul, and it is one that every Christian should strive to possess. Following love on Paul's list, joy reminds us that a life rooted in Christ produces something deeper than mere happiness. True Christian joy comes from the Holy Spirit, particularly in times of distress.

The Old Testament refers to joy countless times in the Psalms and the writings of the prophets. Joy is described as flowing from God's presence, His strength, His deliverance, and even His ability to bring hope after seasons of grief and suffering.

The Greek word for joy is *chara* (χαρά), pronounced "ha-RA." In the New Testament, joy is more than an emotion. The Gospel writers repeatedly connect joy to the work of God. The Magi rejoice at seeing the star which signifies the birth of Christ, Jesus speaks of joy in heaven over a repentant sinner, and He promises His disciples that even their sorrow will ultimately be transformed into joy.

One of His most encouraging promises comes in John 16: *"Your sorrow will turn into joy ... and no one will take your joy from you."*

Joy continues to appear throughout the life of the early Church as recorded in the Book of Acts. The coming of the Holy Spirit brought "*much joy*" to the early Church, the conversion of the Gentiles brought "*great joy to all the brethren*," and even amid persecution, *"the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."*

And then there is St. Paul. St. Paul refers to joy and calls believers to rejoice dozens of times in his epistles. He exhorts the readers and the early churches to embody a joyful life, find ways to rejoice, and not just rejoice, but to rejoice always. And perhaps nowhere is the fruit of joy more evident than in the book of Philippians. In just four short chapters, he uses the words joy and rejoice 16 times.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul shares the secret of unshakeable peace and unfathomable joy in every circumstance. You may already know that he remarkably wrote this letter while he was imprisoned where he was chained to a Roman guard 24/7. This is hardly the place one thinks of joy.



Paul refused to let Rome define binding him to Christ were attached to the guard beside him. defined his physical condition but emotional, and spiritual one. The situation by focusing on the God suffering for good. For Paul, to focus on God's character circumstances. To rejoice is not to to declare that suffering doesn't Hardship and suffering did not he was not looking to his comfort, peace, and fulfillment. Christ!

It's important to make a distinction between happiness and joy. Yes, God speaks about earthly blessings and desires for us to enjoy them, while also recognizing that they come from Him. James 1:17 tells us that *"every good and perfect gift is from above."* However, what God seems to talk even more about is joy.

Joy is a gift that we receive. Striving to have a positive attitude will help us find more enjoyment in life, but biblical joy is a far greater gift than just trying to be happy. We can seek the best in each day, yet without the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit, this often leads us to prioritize our own interests above the interests of others.

Previously in this series, we established that experiencing the fruit of the Spirit is a result of the Holy Spirit and not of our own doing. Like love, joy is the product of the Spirit-led life. Instead of just happiness, *biblical joy is contentment in life that is rooted in the hope of Christ and that comes from surrender to the Holy Spirit.*

Because Christ conquered death and sin, there is nothing this world can do to steal our joy. Even in the most difficult circumstances, we can be content in knowing that we belong to Christ and this world cannot change this reality.

In closing, this short post-communion prayer sums up the gift of joy:

Lord Jesus Christ, my God, let Your sacred Body be unto me for eternal life and Your precious Blood for forgiveness of sins. **Let this Eucharist be unto me for joy, health and gladness.** *And in Your awesome Second Coming make me, a sinner, worthy to stand at the right hand of Your glory; through the intercessions of Your pure Mother and of all Your Saints. Amen.*

May God grant us joy always and allow us to rejoice in Him and His goodness, grace, and mercy forever!

Maria

ARISE & BUILD

"Let us arise and build!" So they strengthened their hands for the good work. Nehemiah 2:18

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

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

As you may have noticed on the Arise & Build prayer cards in the pews, on our A&B table in the Kourmolis Center, on the ariseandbuild.com website, and other places, we have recently made a subtle yet monumental adjustment to one of the sentences of our Arise & Build prayer. Our committee recites this prayer out loud at the end of the weekly Zoom call we have every Tuesday morning, and we strive to pray it individually every day and text a "Prayer Hands" emoji to our committee's group chat when each of us does so.

Once we formally engaged McCullagh and Scott as our general contractor, we added them and all of the subcontractors, architects, engineers, consultants, City of Tampa personnel, and others to our Arise & Build "family" and felt that we needed to include **all those involved in our project** in our daily and weekly prayer. The Hand of God is so visibly and strongly wrapped around our church and this project, it is essential that we continue to thank Him and pray to Him, His Son and the Holy Spirit to guide, support and lead us down the path He has so intently and obviously laid out for us to grow our parish and His Church.

The renovation construction activity of the Ministry Building interior continues robustly, and we thank Rip Panos and our entire St. John construction subcommittee for the DAILY effort and guidance they each are volunteering, on top of their real jobs and in sacrificing family and other time outside of work hours.

As a reminder, because the Ministry Building is an active construction site, please be aware of and follow the safety messages and warnings that have been sent and signs that have been posted to keep you and your family safe, especially in areas outside the building that are marked by orange construction fencing.

Some Current Project Highlights:

1. Recent Milestones Achieved:

- Ministry Building renovation continues in full swing and projected for occupancy by January 2027
- Created/posted construction safety posters around church campus, e-blast & bulletin
- Hosted McCullagh & Scott Executive Team and their families at 8/23 Liturgy and A&B Coffee Hour
- Discussed detailed iconography and mosaic icons proposal with Metropolis Architectural Review Board
- Crossed $6 million in collections on donor pledges
- Started detailed planning for church move to Kourmolis Hall in Jan/Feb.

2. Current Priorities:

- Finalize church plans with architect and general contractor to submit to City of Tampa for permitting by mid-October
- Working on Prayer Garden, Pavilion and Campus Walkway design
- Continue taking weekly progress pictures to add to A&B website gallery
- Continue planning for temporary church move to Kourmolis Hall
- Prepare a more visible presence for the Arise & Build project and campaign at next month's Tampa Greek Festival

Financial Update

As of September 15th, we have received $8,911,570 in pledges from over 430 donors and over $6,014,810 million (67.5%) of that has been collected! We have invested most of these collected funds into a money market mutual fund account that keeps the funds safe and also allows us to earn interest as and until funds are needed. To date, we have earned over $120,000 in interest in addition to collected donations. Thank you to everyone who continues to fulfill their pledges and to those donors who are providing new pledges to support the campaign.

We continue to invite everyone to participate and donate to the Arise & Build capital campaign. As we have consistently communicated since the beginning of the year in all of our communications, additional funds will be necessary to fully complete the entire project. As we get ever closer to finalizing the church construction plans and finalize the full list of furniture, fixtures, equipment and other needs for our community to occupy and utilize the expanded and revitalized facilities, we will have a better understanding of the additional financial need. Given the approximate timing of finalizing the construction plans for the church expansion, prayer garden, pavilion and campus walkway, we estimate the final budget will be better known by the end of October and will be communicated to the entire parish.

I thank you for your continued trust and humbly ask that you continue to pray for Father Stavros, our committee, the many other parishioners who are also donating their time to this effort, the construction and other professionals we are working with and for the continued progress of the Arise & Build project and our beloved St. John community.

We pray our Lord continues to bless and sanctify our efforts and each of you.

With Love in the Lord,

Mike Xenick

Arise & Build Chairman



ARISE&BUILD
St. John the Baptist
Greek Orthodox Church

ARISE&BUILD Prayer

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

Please offer this prayer on a daily basis, so that our Arise & Build Capital Campaign is covered in prayer in our community.

-Donations to Arise & Build from your IRA-

Donations from your IRA. If you are age 70 ½ or older when you make a donation from your IRA, you can reap the benefits of a **Qualified Charitable Distribution** (QCD). QCDs must go directly from your Traditional IRA (or Rollover IRA, Inherited IRA, or inactive SEP or SIMPLE) to the charity, such as Arise & Build. This distribution is generally tax-free, can satisfy your **Required Minimum Distribution** (RMD) if you are 73 or older, and must be completed by December 31st of the year for which you want it to count.

A qualified charitable distribution (QCD) allows individuals age 70½ and older to donate up to $111,000 for tax year 2026 (indexed annually for inflation) from an IRA account directly to charity-and use some or all of those funds to satisfy RMDs for the year. For example, if your RMD for the year is $100,000 but you only need $50,000 for living expenses, you could donate the remaining $50,000 via a QCD to satisfy the rest of your RMD. For those that are charitability inclined, QCDs can be a great tool for managing taxable income in retirement while also helping a worthy cause. Just be aware that QCDs are not permitted from 401(k)s or other qualified plans.

To initiate a direct transfer to Arise & Build, you must contact your IRA trustee or administrator and provide them with the amount and the Arise & Build account information, which you can obtain from Finance Chairman Gary Ward at ariseandbuild@stjohntpa.org.

The amount of your QCD is considered a tax-free distribution and excluded from your gross income, so you do not pay income tax on the transfer. A QCD can therefore provide several potential benefits. It may be a suitable giving strategy for donors who:

- Are required to take a minimum distribution or RMD from an IRA, but don't need the funds and would face increased tax liabilities if they took the distribution as income.
- Would like to reduce the balance in an IRA to lower future required minimum distributions.
- Would like to make a larger charitable gift than they could if they simply donated cash or other assets. The value of charitable gifts that can be deducted from a tax return usually ranges from 20 to 60 percent of the donor's adjusted gross income. This Adjusted Gross Income (AGI)-based limit does not apply to QCDs, allowing donors to make larger gifts.
- Have identified which charities they want to support immediately with a substantial gift.

Thank you for supporting Arise & Build

Address: 2418 W. Swann Avenue, Tampa, FL 33609 **Phone:** (813) 876-8830
Website: www.ariseandbuild.com **Email:** ariseandbuild@stjohntpa.org

Liturgical Schedule For October

Sunday, October 4	Orthros	8:45a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00a.m.
Wednesday, October 7	Paraklesis	5:30p.m.		
Sunday, October 11	Orthros	8:45a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00a.m.
Friday, October 16	**St. Longinus**			
	Orthros	9:00a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00a.m.
Sunday, October 18	**St. Luke**			
	Orthros	8:45a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00a.m.
Thursday, October 22	**St. James**			
	Orthros	5:00p.m.	Liturgy of St. James	6:00p.m.
Sunday, October 25	Orthros	8:45a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00a.m.
Monday, October 26	**St. Demetrios**			
	Orthros	9:00a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00a.m.
Wednesday, October 28	**Holy Protection Of The Virgin Mary**			
	Orthros	8:45a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00a.m.
Sunday, November 1	**Sts. Cosmas and Damian**			
	Orthros	8:45a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00a.m.
Friday, November 6	**Greek Festival**			
	Orthros	9:00a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00a.m.
Saturday, November 7	**Greek Festival**			
	Orthros	8:00a.m.	Divine Liturgy	9:00a.m.
Sunday, November 8	**Archangels**			
	Orthros	8:45a.m.	Divine Liturgy	10:00a.m.



St. Longinus-October 16



St. Luke-October 18



St. Demetrios-October 26

Liturgical Notes for October

Wednesday, October 7— Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary We will continue to offer Paraklesis once a month, so that we can pray for all the members of our community by name, out loud. The Paraklesis for October will be Wednesday, October 7 at 5:30pm.

Friday, October 16 – Feast of St. Longinus—St. Longinus was the Roman Centurion who presided over the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. His name comes from the Greek word "longhi" which means "lance" or "spear," and he was the one who thrust the spear into the side of Christ. He also confessed after seeing the earthquake, that "truly this was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:54) He later become a Christian and was eventually martyred for his faith. The lesson of St. Longinus is that even the greatest of sinners can still become a saint.

Sunday, October 18 - Feast of St. Luke -St. Luke was one of the most intelligent followers of Christ. He is a member of the Seventy Apostles, he authored the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. He also painted the first icon, which was of the Virgin Mary. He is the Patron Saint of doctors, as he is known as the Blessed Physician. He is also the Patron Saint of lawyers, artists and writer. **On Sunday, October 18, at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, a special prayer will be offered for medical professionals.**

Thursday, October 22– Liturgy of St. James– Evening Liturgy The Orthodox Church celebrates four different Divine Liturgies throughout the liturgical year. The most prominent is the Divine Liturgy written by St. John Chrysostom, which is celebrated almost every Sunday and on most feast days. The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is celebrated 10 times a year—on the eve of Christmas, the eve of Epiphany, on the five Sundays of Lent, Holy Thursday morning, Holy Saturday morning, and on the feast of St. Basil, which is January 1. The Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated on Wednesday and Fridays of Great Lent and the mornings of Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, and Holy Wednesday. The Divine Liturgy of St. James is the oldest of the Divine Liturgies and is also the longest. It was written around 70 A.D. making it the oldest Eucharistic service in the entire Christian world. Among the interesting things about this service is that by the end of the first century, the structure of the Liturgy we celebrate today was already loosely in place. The Divine Liturgy begins not in the altar, but in the Narthex of the church, as was the custom of the early church. The priest and faithful enter the church together from the narthex, and the next part of the service is conducted on the solea, with the priest facing the people. The priestly prayers, while very long in the liturgy, reveal a beauty and completeness which would later be shortened by St. Basil and even more by St. John Chrysostom. The most unique part of this service comes at the reception of Holy Communion. This the only Divine Liturgy that has become the custom for the faithful to receive Holy Communion in separate elements, in similar fashion with how the clergy commune. The communicants first receive the Holy Body of Christ in their hands and consume it, and then drink from the Holy Chalice. This is a special beautiful tradition which will be continued at St. John the Baptist, and it is encouraged that all who attend this service fast before-hand and prepare to receive Holy Communion at this Divine Liturgy.

Monday, October 26– Feast of St. Demetrios St. Demetrios was born into a wealthy and distinguished Christian family in the Greek City of Thessaloniki in the late 3rd century. Demetrios was noted for his wisdom, and was a good speaker and polished orator. St. Demetrios was also a distinguished soldier. Thessaloniki was known for popular gladiatorial games which attracted the local pagans. Travelling with the Emperor Galerius after a military victory, Demetrios stopped in Thessaloniki, where many pagans, who were jealous of his successful life, denounced him as a Christian before the emperor, who ordered Demetrios be put in prison. A man named Nestor befriended Demetrios in prison. The Emperor went to the arena to see his favorite gladiator, Lyaios and offered a reward to whomever could defeat him. Nestor accepted the challenge, and through the prayers of St. Demetrios, defeated the giant. When Nestor refused to kill Lyaios, because he had been helped by the "God of Demetrios," the Emperor ordered that both be killed. This occurred in the year 306. We commemorate St. Demetrios on October 26 and St. Nestor on October 27.

Wednesday, October 28 - Holy Protection of Virgin Mary/ Oxi Day—(Mostly) GREEK Liturgy October 1 has been celebrated for many centuries as the feast day of the Holy Protection of the Virgin Mary. October 28, 1940, is observed in Greece as Oxi Day, the day the Greeks said "no" to the Axis powers who were trying to invade Greece. Since 1940, the church of Greece moved the feast of the Holy Protection of the Virgin Mary (Agia Skepi) to October 28, to coincide with Oxi Day. In other jurisdictions, it is still celebrated on October 1. Because many of us have our roots in Greece, celebrating the Holy Protection of the Virgin Mary on October is something that has great meaning. In trying to serve the many and diverse needs of our parish, we get requests periodically to do more Greek in the services. Our use of Greek in worship reflects a congregation that by and large does not speak Greek. Making an effort to accommodate these requests, occasionally a weekday Divine Liturgy will be scheduled that will be celebrated mostly in Greek. October 28 will be one of these.

Community News

Women's Bible Study with Fr. Stavros- Will continue meeting on Tuesday mornings at 10:00am. Women's Bible study meets in the Administration Building in the Parish Council Room, or via zoom for those who can't make it in person. We will be studying the book of Colossians. **For October the dates are: Tuesday October 6, Tuesday October 13, Tuesday October 20 & Tuesday October 27.**

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 October the dates are: Tuesday October 6, Tuesday October 13, Tuesday October 20 & Tuesday October 27.**

Orthodoxy 201 Class-Father John will conduct a class beginning October 29 at 6:30 pm in the Church Hall. This class is intended for Inquirers who are interested in learning more about the Orthodox Faith and for those interested in being received into the Orthodox Church. It will supplement Father Stavros' "Orthodoxy 101 Classes." Please contact the Church Office to sign up for the class. Materials will be provided for the course. **The class for October will be on: Thursday October 29 at 6:30p.m.**

GOYA Meeting- Our regular GOYA meeting will be on **Sunday, October 11**, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

Young Adult Dinner Discussion on Thursday, October 1—Our young adult group meets once a month for dinner/discussion (and other times for fellowship and service.) The meeting for October will be on **Thursday, October 1 at 7:00p.m** in the Kourmolis Center. All young adults, ages 18-40 are invited to participate. We will be having a monthly discussion based on some set topics. The topic for October will be: "What does an Orthodox Life look like?- A life in line with the life God calls us to live". 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, **October 18 from 5:00-7:30** p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Any men of our community are welcome to join us for dinner and 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.

Choir -Choir practices will be held on most Wednesdays in the Zaharias Room from 7:15-8:30 p.m. New singers are always welcome. If you are interested in joining our choir, please contact Tara at tswatzbaugh@ut.edu or 813-313-0439.

Dance Groups—Greek dance practices for Y Hara Mas (3rd-6th grades) will continue practices every Sunday from 12:15 to 12:45pm in the Kourmolis Center (during coffee hour) for October until our Greek Festival on November 7-8, 2026. Please contact Jamie Hartzler Smith (716-713-9642) with any questions. OPA!

Parish Assembly Meeting-The Parish Assembly meeting for the fall will be held on **Sunday, October 25** after the Divine Liturgy. The main items on the agenda will be the budget for 2027 and Parish Council elections.

Parish Registry

BAPTISM—Ana Elisa Cruz-Rivera, was baptized on Sunday, September 6. Anna Urie was the sponsor. Congratulations!

BAPTISM—Amelia Jane Zloczover, was baptized on Sunday, September 13. Tara Carr was the sponsor. Congratulations!

BAPTISM—Paris James Tucker, was baptized on Sunday, September 13. George Moran was the sponsor. Congratulations!

CHRISMATION—Pablo Alberto (Paraskevas) Llamas Correa, was chrismated on Sunday, September 13. Konstantinos Charles & Anna D. Tsambis were the sponsors. Congratulations!

CHRISMATION—Lorenzo Brandon Lopez, was chrismated on Sunday, September 13. Rudolph Reynoso was the sponsor. Congratulations!

CHRISMATION—Brian Kirimdar, was chrismated on Sunday, September 13. Joseph Conley was the sponsor. Congratulations!

CHRISMATION—Anna Isabel Moya, was chrismated on Sunday, September 13. Tara Carr was the sponsor. Congratulations!

CHRISMATION—Rosemary Ellen Wilcox, was chrismated on Sunday, September 13. Athena Chakonas was the sponsor. Congratulations!

Parish Assembly Meeting-October 25, 2026

What Is a Parish Assembly Meeting?
And Why Should You Attend?

What is a Parish Assembly Meeting?

The churches of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America are governed ecclesiastically by Hierarchs. There is an Archbishop of America, there are eight Metropolises, each governed by a Metropolitan. We are part of the Metropolis of Atlanta. His Eminence Metropolitan Sevastianos is our Hierarch. The Uniform Parish Regulations (UPR) is a set of regulations, compiled by both the clergy and laity, which lay out how the church is governed from a legal perspective. As part of the UPR, each parish is required to have periodic Parish Assembly meetings, meetings of all the parishioners, outside of worship, to talk about the administrative (not theological) governance of the parish. Parish Councils are elected by parishioners and nominated at Parish Assembly meetings to represent the parish in day-to-day administrative affairs. The Parish Council reports to the parish at large at a Parish Assembly meeting. It reports on things like finances and budget, buildings and grounds, and other things unique to each specific parish. It sets goals for the parish. And then the parish assembly votes to approve, or not approve, or approve with amendments, the proposals of the Parish Council. Certain Parish Council decisions do not require the approval of the Parish Assembly. For instance, a Parish Assembly approves a budget for the parish, or for a specific project, and then the Parish Council can spend the amount of the approved budget without further consent of the Parish Assembly. These meetings are held at least once a year, usually twice, and sometimes more often if there is a specific project, or financial outlay that the Parish Council needs approval for before executing.

What Happens at a Parish Assembly Meeting?

This is a business meeting. In order to have a meeting, there needs to be a quorum. In our parish, the quorum is 15% of stewards in good standing, in other words, people who have made a financial pledge for the year and are current with their payments. It is important that everyone be a steward, not only because this is how we participate in the life of the church, but this is how we become eligible to participate in Parish Assemblies, vote for Parish Council and other things. If there is no quorum, there can be no meeting. Once the quorum has been met, then the meeting begins with prayer, followed by reports from the priest, the Parish Council President, Treasurer, and others. New business is discussed. At the October Parish Assembly, we pass a budget, and we nominate Parish Council Members. The meetings usually last about an hour.

Why Is It Important to Attend?

There are a couple of reasons. First, we need people in order to even have the meeting. No quorum means no meeting. Our quorum is generally around 50-60 people. Second, we need your input. These public meetings are an opportunity for people to input ideas and to discuss the ideas that have been put forth by the Parish Council and others. And finally, your involvement in these meetings is a reflection of your commitment to our parish in all aspects. You may love worshipping, and that's a great thing. Or partaking in a ministry like Bible Study, or Young Adults, etc. And that's a good thing too. But if there is no Parish Assembly, then there is no budget, which means no priest, no ministry, no buildings, and grounds, it all stops. That's why we need to participate in Parish Assembly meetings because they are vital to the continued growth and operation of our parish.

Why Do More People Not Attend?

I suppose that there are some people who are reading this message who didn't know before now what a Parish Assembly meeting is, so hopefully this message answers that question. There are probably some people who are apathetic about this aspect of the church. And sadly, in some parishes, there have been instances where people act in a less than Christian way at some of these Parish Assembly meetings. Our parish is not an exception, unfortunately, when it comes to this kind of behavior. There is a respectful way to say things, and sadly, there are instances when people teeter on the line of concern and respect, and occasionally there have been times when concerns are brought in a disrespectful manner.

A NOTE ABOUT RESPECT AT ALL PARISH ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

At the beginning of the meeting, there will be a reminder of a code of conduct and the need and expectation for respect and decorum at our Parish Assembly meeting. These ground rules will be enforced for everyone in attendance. If someone chooses to address the meeting in a manner that is disrespectful, the chair of the meeting will offer a warning. If the warning is not heeded, they will be asked to leave and banned from future Parish Assembly meetings.

With all this in mind, we hope you will attend the Parish Assembly meeting on Sunday, October 25, following the Divine Liturgy, in the Kourmolis Center and be a part of helping to shape the future of our parish. . If you haven't made a pledge this year, please do so, so that you can participate in the meeting. On the agenda, under new business, will be the budget for 2027 and nominations for the Parish Council. How WE craft the budget not only will guide how we administer our parish in 2027, but will also say a lot about the kind of parish we are. If you have any further questions about membership or a Parish Assembly, please feel free to approach Fr. Stavros or any member of the Parish Council.

Parish Council Elections 2026

Even though it is October, it will be time to start thinking about Parish Council Elections. On October 25, we will hold our fall Parish Assembly and open up nominations for the Parish Council. This year, there are **five (5)** positions coming up for election for a **two-year term**. According to the Parish By-laws, nominations for the Parish Council will be closed following the Parish Assembly Meeting on **Sunday, October 26.** If you wish to be nominated for the Parish Council, please plan to attend the meeting on **Sunday, October 25** and have someone nominate you, or send a letter to Fr. Stavros prior to the commencement of the meeting, stating your wish to be nominated for the Parish Council and he will read it at the meeting and have someone nominate you. Parish Council Elections will be held on **Sunday, December 13**, following the Divine Liturgy. A mailing to all eligible voters will occur following the close of the nominations period which will have the names of the candidates, a picture of each candidate and a statement by each candidate.

In preparation for nominations and elections, please keep in mind the following: **Regarding eligibility to be a candidate for the Parish Council: Uniform Parish Regulations (UPR) Article 18, Section 1:**

Parishioners

Section 1: Every person who is baptized and chrismated according to the rites of the Orthodox Church is a parishioner. The religious, moral and social duties of a parishioner are to apply the tenets of the Orthodox Faith to his/her life and to: adhere to and live according to the tenets of the Orthodox faith; faithfully attend the Divine Liturgy and other worship services; participate regularly in the holy sacraments; respect all ecclesiastical authority and all governing bodies of the Church; be obedient in matters of the Faith, practice and ecclesiastical order; contribute towards the progress of the Church's sacred mission; and be an effective witness and example of the Orthodox Faith and Traditions to all people.

A parishioner in good standing practices all the religious and moral duties as described in this Section 1. At a minimum, a parishioner in good standing must: be eighteen years of age or over; be current in his or her stewardship and other financial obligations to the Parish, abide by all the regulations herein stated and the Parish Bylaws; and cooperate in every way towards the welfare and well being of the Parish. (Stewardship is recommended to be ten percent (10%) of one's annual income as stated in Holy Scripture to help meet the financial obligations of the Parish, the Metropolis and the Archdiocese.) 2. Regarding Election of Parish Council: UPR Article 25, Section Two

Section 2: A candidate for the Parish Council must be a parishioner in good standing of the Parish for at least one (1) year immediately preceding the date of the election and must live his or her life in accordance with the Faith and canons of the Church. The Priest determines whether the Parishioners are in canonical and financial good standing as specified in Article 18, Sections 1 through 3.

Section 3: Candidates for election to the Parish Council shall be nominated in accordance with the provisions of the Parish Bylaws.

All candidates shall attend a seminar conducted by the Priest prior to the election at which the Priest shall discuss and explain to the candidates the Uniform Parish Regulations, and the significance of the affirmation of office. **This seminar has not been scheduled as of September 10, but we will let you know once it has been scheduled.**

At the discretion of the respective Hierarch, such seminar may be held locally or regionally, provided that candidates are given appropriate advance notice and more than one reasonable opportunity to attend the seminar in a location within close proximity to the applicable Parish.

In the event that an otherwise eligible candidate(s) cannot attend the scheduled seminar(s) for justifiable cause, the Priest shall meet privately with such individual(s) to provide the seminar.

At the conclusion of the seminar all candidates must sign a statement acknowledging that they understand the Regulations and will abide by them and the affirmation of office. If a candidate for the Parish Council does not attend a seminar and sign the statement, his/her name shall be deleted from the list of candidates.

~ Each candidate is expected to be active in the sacramental life of the church. This is covered in Article 18, section one, above. This includes the sacrament of confession. If a candidate has not been to confession in the past year, they are not eligible to run for the Parish Council. In the event your spiritual father is serving another parish, he can send a one-line email to Fr. Stavros indicating your participation in this sacrament in the past year.

~All candidates for the Parish Council will be subject to a background check. Any background check that reveals a felony conviction will make a candidate ineligible to serve for ten years. Any background check revealing a conviction for financial misconduct—embezzlement, fraud, etc., will make a candidate permanently ineligible to serve on the Parish Council.

~Each candidate is asked to write a half a page on why they want to run for the Parish Council and to supply a recent photograph that is able to be photocopied well. The statement and photo need to be to the church office no later than November 15.

Thank you for your interest in being a Parish Council candidate. If you have any questions on any of the above, please feel free to contact me at any time.

+Fr. Stavros

Parish Council Nominations

At the conclusion of the Parish Assembly Meeting in October, we will again nominate people for the Parish Council for **2027**. This is a critical decision each year, as it affects how our church will function in **2027** and beyond. Year after year, people decide to run for the Parish Council. Some are qualified and some are not. Some come in to speak with me about running, even asking a blessing to run. And many do not come into speak with me, they certainly don't seek any kind of blessing to run. As I have mentioned in previous writings and sermons, getting a blessing from the bishop in a Liturgy when multiple priests are serving creates a good sense of order, which in turn, leads to a good sense of Christ. Running without any input or blessing from the priest can create disorder and disharmony in the Parish Council and in the parish. I'm asking then, if you are thinking about running for the Parish Council, please make an appointment and come see me before **October 25,** and let's talk about it.



This month's submission for our One Word comes from a member of our St. John parish, Mary Galin, with permission to print. Demetre's word of the year was **Engage.** We are more than halfway through the year and may this word encourage us to revisit our goals for the year in the next few months. Thank you Mary for the reminder! Please enjoy this "one word" encouragement.

My intention is to stay active with friends and family in-person, by phone, not on social media, so reaching out and staying engaged, involved.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS: OCT 2026

Welcome to Sunday School

Dear families:
Thanks to all our students who participated in the Youth Sunday children's choir on 9/27. They sounded so beautiful! The next opportunity for our students to sing with choir is 10/25.
This year is flying by. Soon we are going to start preparing for the Christmas Pageant on 12/13. All PreK- 6th students will participate and our 4th -6th graders will have a speaking part. Many thanks to Lindsey Skourellos and Donna Trakas who teach our students our beautiful church hymns and lead our annual pageant.

Ministry Connections

Save the Date
The Hope & Joy Fall Party
10/18/26 after church!

Hope & Joy Ministry is for our PreK-6th Graders!

This Month's Topics

Oct 4 Reading the Bible
Oct11 The Ten Commandments
Oct 18 Light of Christ/ Making Faith Personal
Oct 25 Holy Communion- Youth Sunday



Our Sunday School Purpose

Our Sunday School exists to serve both parents and children. We serve parents by coming alongside them in their effort to teach their children about our Orthodox Faith with the love for the Lord and a heart to serve Him. We serve children by providing a safe and enjoyable environment where the Word of God is taught faithfully and Christ is exalted.

Encouraging Our Kids to Pray

To encourage kids to pray, consider the following tips:

- Start with Simple Prayers: Begin with short, simple prayers that are easy for children to understand and remember, such as The Jesus Prayer or prayers of thanks before meals or bedtime prayers.
- Use Visual Aids and Stories: Utilize picture books, Bible stories, or illustrated prayer cards to help children visualize and understand the concept of prayer.
- Encourage Participation: Allow children to say their own short prayers, thanking God for something they are grateful for or asking for help with something they are struggling with.
- Make Prayer Interactive: Engage children in interactive prayer activities, such as creating a "prayer jar" where they can write down their prayer requests.

These strategies can help children develop a personal relationship with God, build a sense of security and peace, and cultivate gratitude by recognizing God's presence and blessings in their lives.

Contact



Look for our Sunday School email every Friday afternoon for weekly updates. Please let us know if there is any specific way we may better serve you and your child during their time in Sunday School.

Zackie Ameres -Phone: 813.245.3813
-Email: Zackiec@yahoo.com

JOIN US FOR A SPECIAL EARLY ACCESS EVENT TO WATCH THE CHOSEN SEASON 6 EPISODE 1.



SEASON 6 OF THE CHOSEN BEGINS THE POWERFUL JOURNEY TO THE CROSS.

THE COME AND SEE FOUNDATION HAS OFFERED CHURCHES THE OPPORTUNITY TO A FREE EARLY ACCESS SCREENING OF THE FIRST EPISODE BEFORE THE SEASON PREMIERS ON AMAZON PRIME.

COME AND SEE AND SHARE IN A MEANINGFUL, MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE TOGETHER.

SEASON 6, EPISODE 1 - SEE IT FIRST!

Fear and confusion reign as the disciples struggle to make sense of Jesus' arrest— and Judas' betrayal. While they fight to stay together, Nicodemus stands alone against the High Priest in a heated showdown that throws the council into disorder.

WHEN: MONDAY OCTOBER 26 AT 12:00 PM
(FOLLOWING THE DIVINE LITURGY)
MONDAY OCTOBER 26 AT 7:00 PM
WHERE: KOURMOLIS CENTER
(MAYBE ZAHARIAS ROOM, AS SPACE ALLOWS)

There is no cost for this, however, we need to arrange the correct space for the number or people who attend. Please RSVP by using this link:

FESTIVAL PREP DAYS

COME WHEN YOU CAN, LEAVE WHEN YOU NEED TO
YOUR HELP IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!

DOLMATHES:
FRI: 10/2/26, 10:00 AM (FILLING & LEAVES PREP)
SAT: 10/3/26 10:00 AM- ROLLING
#6000 DOLMATHES= NEED 40+ HELPERS

KOULOURAKIA:
THUR: 10/8/26, 9:30 AM
THUR: 10/15/26, 9:30 AM

PASTITSIO:
WED: 10/14/26, 10:00AM
FRI: 10/16/26 11:30 AM -AFTER LITURGY
SAT: 10/17/26, 9:00AM- 1:30PM

MEET IN THE KOURMOLIS CENTER KITCHEN
CONTACT ZACKIE AMERES OR LISA ALSINA WITH ANY QUESTIONS. THANKS!

JOIN US FOR OUR SERMON SERIES

MISSION IS POSSIBLE

SEPTEMBER 13 - OCTOBER 11

TAMPA GREEK FESTIVAL

eat dance & be greek

SAVE THE DATE
November 6th & 7th

Be on the lookout for special emails, sign-ups, and ways you can get involved!
You may reach George Fellios at gfellios@gmail.com or (813) 495-7562 with your questions!

Inspiration

-Many will miss heaven by 18 inches, the distance from their head to their heart. They know about Christ, but do not know Him. You can be religious but lost. You can have the Bible in your head, but not have Christ in your heart.-

The Value of a Basketball

Imagine I have a $45 basketball in my hands. It is worth $45.

But if I take that same basketball out of my hands and place it in the hands of Michael Jordan, its value suddenly seems immeasurable. Why? Because Michael Jordan knows what to do with a basketball. In his hands, something ordinary becomes extraordinary. He knows how to use it, how to elevate it, and how to bring out its full potential.

The same is true of our lives. In my own hands, I may not know what to do with my life. I may make mistakes. I may take the wrong direction. I may fail to see my purpose or recognize my worth.

But when I place my life in the hands of Jesus, everything changes.

He knows what to do with my life. He knows my purpose. He knows my potential. He can take what seems ordinary, broken, or insignificant and transform it into something beautiful for His glory.

My life is always better in the hands of Jesus than it could ever be in my own.





Young At Heart

Young at Heart October Gathering



Join us on Saturday, October 17th
Afternoon Social
3pm-5pm
Bring your favorite appetizer or dessert
Beverages provided



We will enjoy a video presentation on
Mount Athos.
with discussion to follow.
See Presvytera Denise to RSVP

Stewardship

Wealth in Service to Christ

When we think of the saints, we often imagine monks, martyrs, or bishops. Yet among the great saints of the Church are men and women who were extraordinarily wealthy. Their holiness was not found in possessing riches, but in how faithfully they used what had been entrusted to them.

St. Melania the Younger inherited one of the largest fortunes in the Roman Empire. Rather than clinging to her wealth, she and her husband freed slaves, cared for the poor, built churches and monasteries, and devoted their lives to Christ. St. Olympias the Deaconess used her considerable resources to support the Church, feed the hungry, and care for widows and orphans. Even St. Joseph of Arimathea offered his own newly prepared tomb for the burial of our Lord.

These saints remind us that stewardship is not measured by how much we have, but by how faithfully we offer our gifts back to God. Everything we have—our time, talents, abilities, and financial resources—is entrusted to us for a purpose. When we use those gifts to build up Christ's Church and serve our neighbors, we participate in God's work in the world.

Stewardship looks different for each of us. One person may offer financial resources, another time and service, another a particular skill or talent. What matters is that we recognize the blessings God has placed in our care and prayerfully consider how they can be used for His glory.

As we reflect on our own blessings, may we ask ourselves: **How can I use what God has entrusted to me for His glory?** Whether our gift seems great or small, when it is offered with love, it becomes a blessing for the entire Body of Christ.

At St. John the Baptist, every stewardship commitment helps sustain the worship, ministries, outreach, and parish life we share together. Thank you for the many ways you continue to offer your time, talents, and treasure in service to Christ and His Church.

Stewardship Housekeeping

Stewardship Update Letters were recently mailed. Please take a moment to review your summary, and if you have any questions or believe an adjustment is needed, please contact the Church Office.

If you have not yet completed your **2026 Stewardship Commitment Form**, we encourage you to prayerfully do so. Forms are available in the Narthex, Church Office, Bookstore, and online.

When making a Stewardship contribution by check or electronically, please remember to include the Stewardship Year in the memo or comments field.

For questions about your Stewardship commitment, please contact the Church Office or George Mitseas, Stewardship Chair.

Twelve Disciples Project

The 12 Disciples Ministry in Honor of Mathew Balasis



What is 12D?
This ministry is simple.We pray.

Know someone that needs prayers?
Visit this link, add their first name and we pray for them: stjohntpa.org/PrayerRequest

Want to join?
It takes 5 minutes per day.Send an email to 12D@stjohntpa.org

Bookstore & Gift Shop

Thinking of a gift for a special occasion? Our bookstore has icons of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Most Holy Theotokos, and many of the Saints of the Church. We can Special Order any icon you desire but please don't wait until 2 weeks before you need it! Visit our bookstore to see our current selection or contact Presvytera Denise for more information.





Community Outreach

Love thy Neighbor through our Monthly Community Outreach

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

Our next dates are: 10/13, 11/17.

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

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

Place: ***Tampa Hope @ 3704 E. 3rd Ave.—Tampa East***
Time: 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

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

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

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



The Ladies Philoptochos Society and the Daughters of Penelope thank you for your contributions to the

Hillsborough County Public Schools – "Erase the Need" School Supply Drive

Through your support, we were able to donate a substantial amount of school supplies to help students succeed in the classroom. Your donation has made a real difference to so many Hillsborough county kids!

Thank you and God bless you for your generosity!

Daughters Of Penelope

Daughters of Penelope Alcmaeon #167 Tampa

Walking Together to End Alzheimer's

The **Daughters of Penelope, AHEPA, and Philoptochos** are joining hands to help find a cure for Alzheimer's disease. This disease impacts countless families—one in three older adults dies with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia—and together**, we can make a meaningful impact**. We invite you to stand with us, walk with us, and offer hope to those affected.

WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S – TAMPA

- **When: Saturday, October 17th at 8:00 AM**
- **Where: Benchmark International Arena** (formerly Amalie Arena)

To **register to walk** or **make a donation**, please visit our team page: **https://act.alz.org/site/TR?team_id=1047978&pg=team&fr_id=19533**

For questions, please reach out to: **Maria Zabetakis – 813-748-7709**

Why We Walk



Walking to End Alzheimer's

Alzheimer's disease is a devastating brain disorder that slowly erodes memory and thinking skills. More than **7 million Americans** are living with Alzheimer's today. Its impact extends far beyond the individual—touching families, friends, and caregivers who witness the gradual loss of abilities and independence. The emotional and physical toll is profound, and our support matters. Walking together is an act of love, solidarity, and hope.

Join the Daughters of Penelope

If you or someone you know would like to join our sisterhood rooted in **Hellenism, philanthropy, education, and service**, we warmly welcome you. Learn more about our national organization at: **www.DaughtersofPenelope.org**

Membership Contacts:

- **Maria Zabetakis**, Vice President & Membership Chair — *maria1106@live.com*
- **Ourania Stephanides**, President — *stephanides.ourania@gmail.com*

Nursing Ministry

OCTOBER IS BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Breast cancer remains one of the most common cancers globally. In the United States alone, **1 in 8 women** will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. In **2026**, it is estimated that over **380,000 women** will face a new diagnosis. However, because of decades of research, advocacy, and advancements in early detection, there are currently **over 4 million breast cancer survivors** in the U.S. today.

Here is what you need to know about breast cancer, how to identify it, and how you can take charge of your health.

Knowing the Warning Signs

Breast cancer doesn't always start with a noticeable lump. It is vital to get to know how your breasts normally look and feel so you can easily spot changes.

Symptoms can include:

- **New lumps:** A firm mass or thickening in the breast or underarm area.
- **Visual changes:** Dimpling, redness, scaliness, or skin irritation that looks like an orange peel.
- **Nipple changes:** Pain, pulling inward, or sudden changes in appearance.
- **Discharge:** Any unusual nipple discharge other than breast milk, including blood.
- **Size or shape:** Any unexplained swelling, shrinkage, or change in the symmetry of the breast.

Note: While breast cancer is far more common in women, **men can get breast cancer too***, making up about 1% of all cases. Everyone should report unusual chest changes to a doctor.*

The Power of Screening and Early Detection

When breast cancer is caught early, it is significantly easier to treat, leading to much better health outcomes.

- **Mammograms:** An X-ray of the breast, called a mammogram, is the single best tool for finding breast cancer early—often years before a lump can actually be felt.
- **When to start:** The Breastcancer.org guidelines emphasize that standard screenings for women at average risk generally begin at **age 40**. For Women at higher risk: those with dense breast, a confirmed genetic mutation (like *BRCA1* or *BRCA2*), a strong family history, or received radiation therapy to the chest during youth, you may need to start screening earlier—often around **age 30**—and combine with alternative screening tools such as breast MRI.

Understanding and Reducing Your Risk

Some risk factors are out of your control, such as aging, dense breast tissue, a first degree relative with a history of breast cancer, and inherited genetic mutations like the **BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes**. However, you can actively reduce your risk by adopting protective daily habits.

Lifestyle Adjustments for Lower Risk

- **Alcohol Consumption:** Even moderate alcohol intake is consistently linked to an increased risk of breast cancer.
- **Body Weight:** Being overweight or obese, especially after menopause, increases your risk. Once the ovaries stop producing estrogen, fat (adipose) tissue becomes the body's main estrogen factory.
- **Physical Inactivity:** Regular physical exercise helps balance hormone levels and reduces your overall risk.
- **Avoid tobacco:** Quitting smoking improves long-term cellular health and lowers cancer risk.

Food Pantry/Community Outreach

Thank you to everyone who has supported our Food Pantry through your generous donations. Because of your kindness, we continue to replenish our inventory, keeping our shelves stocked and ready to serve both our parish family and local outreach ministries whenever a need arises.

As our supplies are shared, our shelves need to be replenished on an ongoing basis. **Large or small, every donation is appreciated and makes a meaningful difference.**

Did You Know? In addition to assisting members of our parish family and local requests, we also support our Community Outreach Ministry by providing a tray of grab-and-go snacks for those in need. Your donations help ensure we are always ready to share Christ's love through this ministry.

Monetary donations or grocery gift cards are also welcome and help us purchase the items needed most throughout the year.

Donations may be placed in the Food Pantry collection area. **Questions?** Please contact **Sandra Pappas** at **813-785-3747**.

Requested Food Pantry Items

Please be mindful of expiration dates. **Bolded items indicate our greatest current needs.**

- Grab-and-Go Snacks
- **Easy Meals with Pull-Top Lids or Pouches** (soups, pasta, chili, ravioli, tuna or chicken pouches, etc.)
- **Peanut Butter** *(plastic jars only)*
- **Individual Hygiene Items** (toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, soap, shampoo, tissues, etc.)
- Granola Bars
- **Canned Meat** (tuna, chicken, Spam)
- Canned Fruits & Vegetables
- Canned or Dried Beans
- Cereal / Shelf-Stable Milk
- Instant Mashed Potatoes
- Jell-O / Pudding
- Macaroni & Cheese
- Oatmeal
- Pasta & Ramen Noodles
- Rice
- Soup (cans or ready-to-go varieties)
- Spaghetti Sauce *(no glass jars)*
- Dry Goods
- Paper Towels / Toilet Paper



College Student Outreach

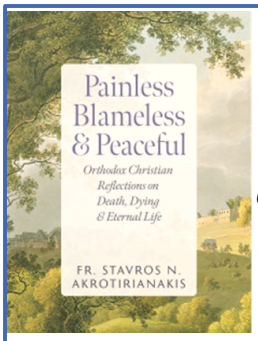
Attention College Students-

WE NEED YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION—

We want to stay in touch with our college students this upcoming school year. Please scan this QR code and send us your contact information. Thank you.

2026-2027 College Student Contact Information

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



Fr. Stavros Books

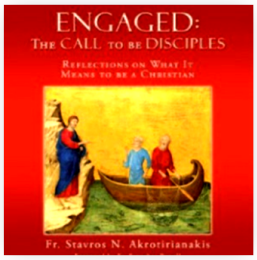
-Fr. Stavros's New Book Release-

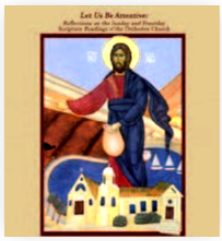
"Painless, Blameless, & Peaceful: Orthodox Christian Reflections on Death, Dying, & Eternal Life"

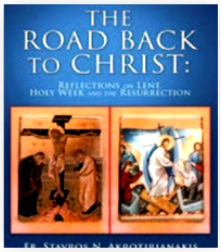
– Fr Stavros discusses ways we can understand and accept death, help prepare our loved ones, and find hope when that final day arrives. Pick up your copy in our bookstore today. –

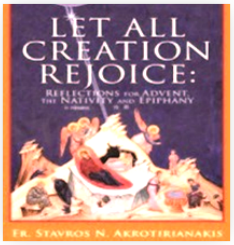
Fr. Stavros has published 9 more books that are available both in the bookstore and online. Below find all his books:

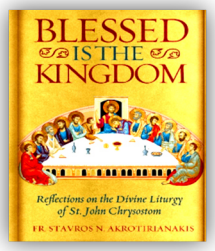
Blessed is the Kingdom;
Let All Creation Rejoice: Reflections on Advent, the Nativity and Epiphany;
The Road Back to Christ: Reflections on Lent, Holy Week and the Resurrection;
Let us Be Attentive: Reflections on the Sunday and Feast day Scripture Readings of the Orthodox Church;
Engaged: The Call To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

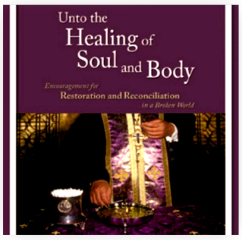






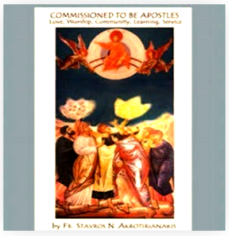












Parish Assistance Program

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church together with BayCare Behavioral Health, will provide our parishioners access to **free and confidential** counseling services - offering additional support when life's challenges become overwhelming. The PAP utilizes a network of faith-based providers that are sensitive to the values and beliefs of those they serve and provide compassionate care to children, adults, parents, and seniors. Parishioners can confidentially contact BayCare directly to request up to three free counseling sessions from a licensed mental health professional. **The BayCare helpline, 800-878-5470, is answered 24/7** by mental health professionals. Many BayCare therapists are also offering telephonic and virtual counseling sessions to help parishioners maintain their emotional wellbeing during these trying times.

Help is available for life issues including:

BayCare Behavioral Health

1)Stress
2)Anxiety
3)Depression
4)Family discord
5)Marital problems
6)Substance abuse issues
7)Behavioral issues

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

The Prayer Team

For over 11 years now, Fr. Stavros has been writing a daily reflection called "The Prayer Team." It comes out every morning at 12:30 a.m. via Constant Contact. From Monday-Friday, Father will be writing on the topic of "**Called to Love**" and on Saturday-Sunday, Father is writing on the Scripture passages of each Sunday. There are **5,658** people on the Prayer Team.

Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 5,658 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 10 years! Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email our office at **office@stjohntpa.org** and ask to be added. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email the office or follow the link at the bottom of the daily emails to do so. If you want to forward to a friend, please use the "forward to a friend" option. Also, make sure prayerteam365@gmail.com has been added to your contacts so that these emails stay in your Inbox rather than going to the Junk or Spam folders.

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

Memorial & Kolyva Protocol

1. Memorial Services MUST be scheduled through the church office at least two weeks in advance of when you want the service.
2. Memorial services for 40 days and one year will be done on the Sunday closest to the appropriate date. All other memorials will be done on the designated Memorial Sunday each
3. Please let the office know when you call or email whether you will be providing your own kolyva or whether you wish for the Philoptochos to provide. If a family chooses to make their own Kolyva, the family will be responsible for scooping the Kolyva in the kitchen after the Memorial Service to share with the entire community.
4. If the Philoptochos does the kolyva, there is a $125 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.

Have questions?

Just need to talk? Worried? Sad? Happy?
We are here for you!

Fr. Stavros
< 813-394-1038





Fr. John
678-637-4425>

Opt-in on The Messenger

*In an effort to be more environmentally conscious, we will be mailing The Messenger **ONLY** to those who ask. If you wish to receive The Messenger Aby 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.*

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

988
Suicide Hotline
Always Forgive Yourself



St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!

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

We Are Live
Our services are live streamed through our church website.
https://stjohntpa.org/live/

Youtube
Subscribe and turn on notifications so you don't miss a sermon, weekly update, or Bible study.
https://www.youtube.com/@st.johnthebaptistgoctampa5658

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.

Photo Gallery



On Sunday August 23 we met and prayed with our contractors from McCullagh and Scott. They worshipped with us together with their families and got to meet us and have a deeper appreciation for our community and the reason why expanding our church is essential at this time in our community's history.













Philoptochos Fanouropita Sunday—On Sunday, August 30, the Philoptochos hosted their annual Fanouropita Sunday, raising $900 for the youth ministries of our Metropolis.





Service Commemorating 9/11—On September 11, we commemorated the 25th year anniversary of 9/11 with Divine Liturgy and a memorial service.







Young Adult Meeting- September 10, 2026

GOYA senior lock-in- September 12, 2026





Orthodoxy 101 Class- Over seventy people are taking the Orthodoxy 101 class this fall.









GOYA-Scavenger hunt, finding icons in our church at our September 20 meeting.







Procession of the Cross—September 20











Bookstore—Our bookstore is open every Sunday after Divine Liturgy and has a large number of books, icons, prayer ropes, incense, jewelry and other things to help us augment our Orthodoxy spirituality when we are not at church. Presbytera Denise Stefero is our book store manager and has done a great job building up a wide variety of things to help us grow in our faith.



Youth Protection Program

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA



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

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

WELCOME TO OUR PARISH

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

PLEASE TEXT THE WORD "WELCOME" TO 813-790-5950

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

DO NOT NEGLECT TO SHOW hospitality TO STRANGERS, FOR THEREBY SOME HAVE ENTERTAINED angels unawares.

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

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

Thank you for your consideration of our parish.
Friend of St. John the Baptist:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____Email:_____

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

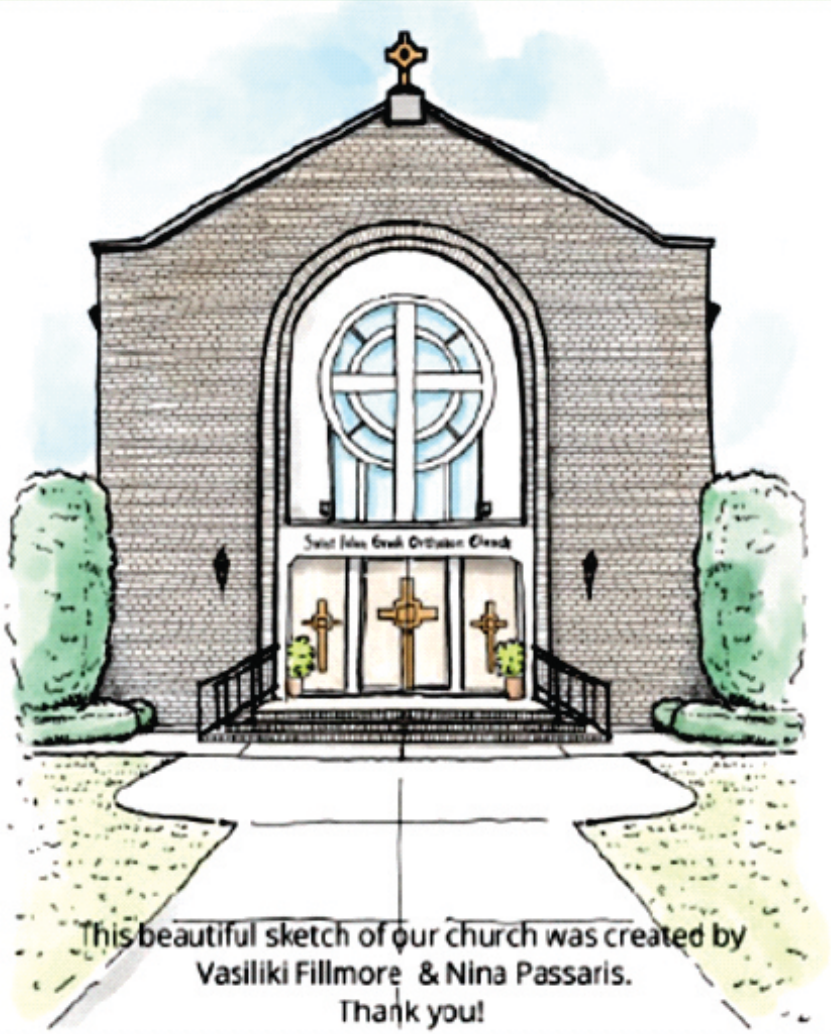
_____ $50 _____$100 _____$200 _____Other

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

◄ September	October 2026					November ►
Sun	**Mon**	**Tue**	**Wed**	**Thu**	**Fri**	**Sat**
				1 Young Adults 7:00 p.m.	2	3 Adult Greek School
4 Orthros 8:45a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Church musician's Sunday I Hara Mas Parea Dance	5 Orthodoxy 101 6:30 p.m.	6 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	7 Paraklesis 5:30 p.m. Adult Dance Group 7:00 p.m. Choir 7:30 p.m.	8 Festival Baking 9:30 a.m.	9 YAL weekend retreat in Tampa	10 YAL weekend retreat in Tampa Adult Greek School Parea Dance
11 Orthros 8:45a.m. Liturgy 10:00m a.m. I Hara Mas GOYA 5:00 p.m.	12	13 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	14 Pastichio baking at 10:00 a.m. Adult Dance Group 7:00 p.m. Choir 7:30 p.m.	15 Festival Baking 9:30 a.m.	16 **St. Longinus** Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Pastichio baking 11:30 a.m.	17 Community Outreach Pastichio baking 9:30-1:30 Adult Greek School Philoptochos/DOP walk to end Alzheimers YAH 2-4
18 **St. Luke** Orthros 8:45a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Blood Drive Wear Pink for Breast Cancer I Hara Mas Parea Dance HOPE/JOY Fall Festival 12-2 Men's Group 5:00 p.m.	19	20 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	21 Adult Dance Group 7:00 p.m. Choir 7:30 p.m.	22 **St. James Liturgy** Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.	23	24 Adult Greek School
25 Orthros 8:45a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday I Hara Mas Parea Dance Parish Assembly Fall Festival	26 **St. Demetrios** Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	27 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	28 **Holy Protection of the Virgin Mary** Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Adult Dance Group 7:00 p.m. Choir 7:30 p.m.	29 Orthodoxy 201 6:30 p.m.	30	31 Adult Greek School

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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