



St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

THE MESSENGER

MAY 2024



"CHRISTOS
ANESTI"

"CHRIST IS
RISEN"

"The Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ - May 5"

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

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

VISION:

Love God, Love your neighbor and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ as an Orthodox Christian community.

MISSION:

The mission of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is to welcome and serve people with love, truth, joy and peace, and to create an environment that encourages all to seek salvation through Orthodox Christianity.

CORE VALUES:

Love, Worship, Community, Learning, Service

St. John's Directory

Timetable of Services

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

Parish Priest

Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis
813-876-8830 (O) 813-394-1038 (C)
firstav@gmail.com

Retired Priest in Residence

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

Retired Priest in Residence

Rev. Fr. John Stefero 813-876-8830 (O)
678-637-4425 (C)
jwstefero50@hotmail.com

Parish Council

John Zelatis, President 813-727-2271
Euripides Panos, Vice President 813-352-3972
Marilyn Sandborn, Secretary 813-760-6289
Mike Xenick, Treasurer 813-340-8737
George Ameres 941-720-3494
Peggy George 813-727-5587
Peter George 781-910-9971
Amin Hanhan 813-846-2957
Suzanne Pileggi 813-244-5855
Alexis Scarfogliero 813-892-1599
Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026

Office Staff

Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper
debbie@stjohntpa.org 813-443-4899 (fax)
Elli Kahagias, Administrative Assistant
office@stjohntpa.org 813-876-8830

Adopt a College Student

Kathy Kaburis 813-240-6513

Adult Greek School

Magda Myer 813-523-5771

AHEPA

Thomas Sakaris, President 201-819-2319

Altar Angels

Kalliope Chagaris 813-789-4134

Altar Boys

Fr Stavros Akrotirianakis 813-394-1038

Bookstore

Presbytera Denise Stefero 678-464-4833

Bible Study-Tuesday Night

Fr. John Stefero 678-637-4425

Buildings & Grounds

Euripides Panos 813-352-3972

Choir

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

College Student Program

Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis 414-254-5134

Community Outreach

Greg Melton 813-967-2074

**Connect Through Christ -
Special Needs Ministry for Children**

Dante and Lindsey Skourellos 813-765-9534

Dance Groups

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

Daughters of Penelope

Elena Paras Ketchum 813-229-0144

Festival

Mike Xenick 813-340-8737

Finance Committee

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

Food Pantry

Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747

Gasparilla Parking

Volunteer Needed

GOYA

Michael & Bessie Palios 813-523-0346

Hope/Joy

George & Zackie Ameres 813-245-3813

Joy Tweens

Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963

Junior Olympics

Dwight Forde 561-310-5034

Men's Fellowship

Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis
813-394-1038

Parish Nursing Ministry

Marcelle Triantafilou 612-396-5026

Oratorical Festival

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

Photography Ministry

Karina Findlay 813-476-9632

Philoptochos

Katherine Sakkis 813-309-1073

Stewardship

Chris Kyrus 757-672-1920
George Mitseas 813-748-1220

Sunday School

Vickie Peckham 813-758-3102

Usher

Pete Trakas 813-505-2193

Veterans/1st Responders

Fr. John Stefero 813-876-8830

**Website / Social Media / APP
VOLUNTEER NEEDED!**

Welcoming Ministry

Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

Women's Bible Study

Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis
813-394-1038

Young Adult

Aris Rogers 813-309-5525

Young at Heart

Dora Morgan 813-613-3738

Youth Protection

Suzanne Pileggi 813-244-5855

12 Disciples

Volunteer Needed

Fr. Stavros' Message



*And Jesus answered them,
"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."*

John 12:23



Facts about our Parish at Present

On most Sundays, the church cannot hold all of our worshippers. Some must worship in the hall. Eventually, when there is nowhere to sit in the church, people who don't get in the church will stop coming to church. Our church is growing and continues to grow. That is a challenge, a good challenge. We need more room for people to worship.

The church does not have a bathroom except for in the altar.

There is no handicap ramp in the front of the church, no way for people in wheelchairs to enter from the front of the church.

The Kourmolis Center is aging. It needs a facelift. The bathrooms are old and tired. The kitchen needs some remodeling.

The current administration building has been falling apart for years. It needs a new pretty much everything. It would cost less money to tear it down and rebuild it rather than fixing everything that needs fixing.

The school building is 21-years old. Our tenant is destroying the building and much of the rest of our property with heavy use.

We lack adequate meeting room space. We do not have dedicated Sunday school classrooms.

We are debt-free. The very large debt incurred by the old St. John Greek Orthodox Day School has been fully paid off and we've been able to put some money in the bank the last year-and-a-half that we have been debt free. We are in a solid financial position.

The lease with our tenant expires June 30, 2025. At that point, we will have no tenant.

We need more parking.

These are facts. They are not opinions.

The Church

We have an amazing opportunity in front of us to glorify God and strengthen our community.

For several months now, a small committee appointed by the Parish Council has been working on a vision for the future of our parish, including its extensive physical plant.

We've shown the community preliminary plans for an expansion project for our church sanctuary. These were first shown in summer of 2022 and they are being printed here again. These plans show additional seating for 200 people, enough to support the number of people who worship at St. John each Sunday, with some room for anticipated growth. (Why do we anticipate growth? This is still a growing area. There have been an influx of converts which shows no sign of abating. And it is the mission of the church to grow—we can't fulfill this mission if there is no room to grow, no more seats in the church. The plans also allow for bathrooms, a proper narthex and handicap access from the front of the church. The plan will also address our HVAC system (no more loud air conditioner) and repair the dome (which will no longer be affected by the HVAC system as it is at present).

We plan to do some updating in the Kourmolis Center—updates to the bathrooms and the kitchen and an overall facelift for this important, but aging building. There is no point in making any updates while we are operating a charter school which regularly damages this building. Once the tenant is gone, we will be able to make updates and improvements that will last. Our community deserves a functional and aesthetically pleasing community center.

We will be renovating our grounds. We will create more parking and more green space. We will update the playground. The current office building will be demolished, opening up space for more parking and green space.

An Invitation

On Sunday, May 19, we will hold the coffee hour in the school library, for three purposes. First, there are many people in our community who have never been in the school building. Someone recently said to me they didn't even know we owned that building. Second, people have no idea in what poor shape the building is. It's our building. You all should know the kind of mileage that our tenant is inflicting on it. Third, and most important, this is an opportunity to dream about what this building can be.

~Dedicated classes for our Sunday school students. Where teachers can decorate and create a welcoming atmosphere, where it feels like a second home, rather than that we are the tenants, living out of a cabinet.



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~Two rooms will be designated as multi-purpose rooms, meaning that ministries will have places where they can meet, which allows different ministries to meet at the same time instead of competing for space in the Zaharias Room.

~The library will be turned into a small hall. We currently have no place on our property where a large group of 30-50 can meet other than the Kourmolis Center, which feels empty when there are 30 people in it. This can be created to be a place where ministries can meet, where people can gather for fellowship. It can become a more intimate space than the large hall.

~The church offices will be relocated to the bottom floor. There will be adequate work space for both employees and volunteers, adequate storage space for records, and a proper reception area for those who come for an appointment to sit.

~One dream I have is to create a sound studio so that things like the Messenger and Prayer Team can be sent out as audio files, for our parishioners who can't read well, or for those who would rather hear a podcast in the car on the way to work.

There are so many possibilities.

Timing

The timing of everything is critical. When we expand the church, it will mean that we have to worship in the hall for a period of time. I personally would hope not to have to do Holy Week in the hall. It will take 9-11 months to expand the church. Which means whatever year this begins, it MUST happen the week after Pascha. Since we won't have the hall for full-time use until the tenant is gone, the soonest this can happen is April 2026, which is the target date, with occupancy in a remodeled church by April 2027.

Working backward from this, the tenant will be gone on July 1, 2025. We would like to remodel the school building to become offices and classrooms beginning in July 2025. This should take six months. If we can move the offices into the school building in January 2026, this gives a couple of months to demolish the current office building and create some additional temporary parking to make up for the parking that will be temporarily lost when construction on the church begins in April 2026.

How is this going to happen? We need your buy-in. We need your help. Hence, the coffee hour in the school library on May 19. So we can dream of what is possible. And get to work on what is needed.

Building a Future on the Foundation of the Past

I had the opportunity recently to offer a retreat at St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Ocean Township, New Jersey. This community relocated its entire physical plant from the neighboring city of Asbury Park to its current location. They sold a church complex they had used for over 70 years. They've been in their current location for twelve years. Everything still looks new, clean, and is very functional. They built with a plan that looked forward. People sacrificed for this project and the outcome is stunning. What they had to mourn, though, was the loss of their old church sanctuary, and all the nostalgia and history they had to leave behind.

We don't have to do this. We are not moving anywhere. We will still have our church—the church that many of you were married in, where you baptized your children, where you've worshipped for much of your life. But we need some updates and we need them badly. We need a bigger church. We need bathrooms in the church. We need handicap access to the church. We need more parking. The bathrooms and the kitchen in the Kourmolis Center need updating. Our office building needs to be relocated. Our children deserve to be a priority and not an afterthought. Our adult ministries deserve space to have meetings. Our church deserves a property it can use full-time with the singular purpose of being a church. And Christ deserves to be glorified by a community that seeks first His Kingdom and His righteousness. (Matthew 6:33) Proverbs 29:18 reads "Without a vision, the people perish." A well-known business proverb says "people don't plan to fail, they fail to plan," or better put, "a failure to plan is a plan to fail." All of these hold true for our parish. Without some thought of how we will go forward, we will go backward. And the wave of growth that we've experienced and are experience will either crush us or we will miss it. The present school building was built in 2003 and was built over the objections of most of the parish and the debt was paid off over twenty years. It's a building we've never been able to fully utilize. The last building that we put up and used was the Kourmolis Center back in 1981. It is time for our generation to add to the legacy of the ones that came before us. It is a time to look forward, to dream for the future, and to work for those dreams to come true.

Indeed, "the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

I hope to see each of you on May 19. I hope you will dream with me on where this community can and needs to go. And I hope that you will work with me on taking it there.

With love in the Risen Lord,
+Fr. Stavros



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

YOU ARE INVITED TO TOUR OUR ENTIRE CAMPUS

**HONORING OUR PAST
BUILDING FOR OUR FUTURE**

WE ARE THRILLED TO SHARE THE VISION TO :

EXPAND THE CHURCH SANCTUARY

Add more seats, bathrooms, accessibility ramps, Narthex

UPDATE THE KOURMOLIS CENTER

Renovate and remodel the kitchen and bathrooms

REDESIGN THE PARKING AND GROUNDS

Create more parking, prayer garden, updated playground, covered walkway, green spaces

**RELOCATE THE OFFICE INTO THE EXISTING SCHOOL
BUILDING/ESTABLISH MINISTRY FACILITIES**

Develop Sunday school classrooms, a small hall, meeting rooms, church offices

**SUNDAY
5/19/2024**

Immediately following Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour will be held in the school library.

Everyone is invited and encouraged to come and see
plans and renderings, as well as walk around our
campus and our facilities, ask questions, offer
suggestions, and most importantly,
envision the possibilities for our parish.

PHILOPTOCHOS MAY NEWS

PALM SUNDAY BAKESALE

Saturday April 27 & Sunday April 28 after Liturgy

Thank-you to our Chair - Lisa Alsina for another successful Palm Sunday Bakesale! Thanks to all the ladies that gave thier time and talents to make the delicious kolourakia! And thanks to our St. John's community for your support.

PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON

Annual Community Palm Sunday Luncheon
Sunday April 28

Our Palm Sunday luncheon was a huge success! Thanks to our chefs Chris Halkias and Ari Georgiou for a delicious meal. Thanks to our decorating chair Amy Kafentaris for the beautiful table decorations. And many thanks to our Philoptochos Board for chairing the overall event. Great fellowship and great food!

All proceeds from the luncheon and bake sale support our many parish, community and national charitable causes. Thank you for your generous support!

MARY & MARTHA HOUSE

On behalf of or Philoptochos, Christine Whorley, a member of our Philanthropy Committee, was able to present Mary & Martha House with a check for \$2000. This organization provides emergency transitional housing and support services to homeless women and children in a crisis situation.



Liturgical Schedule for May

Monday, May 6

Bright Monday-Feast of St. George

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



Wednesday, May 8



St. John the Theologian

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

Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary 6:00 p.m.

Friday, May 10

**Life-Giving Fountain of the Virgin Mary
(Zodochos Peghe)**

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



Sunday, May 12



Thomas Sunday

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

Wednesday, May 15

**St. Pachomios
Fr. Stavros' 26th Anniversary of Ordination
to the Priesthood**

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



Sunday, May 19



Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women

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

Tuesday, May 21

Sts. Constantine and Helen

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



Sunday, May 26



Sunday of the Paralytic

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

Wednesday, May 29

Mid-Pentecost

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



Sunday, June 2



Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

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

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE 2024

HOLY WEEK AND PASCHA EASTER SCHEDULE FOR 2024

April 27 - *Saturday of Lazarus-Commemoration of the raising of Lazarus from the dead*

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Proskomide 9:30a.m.
Divine Liturgy 10:00-11:15 a.m.
*Fr. Stavros will celebrate the service of the Proskomide, the Preparation of the Holy Communion on the solea at 9:30 a.m. GOYA and Sunday School students are requested to attend to help in preparing the crosses for Palm Sunday, after Liturgy.

April 28 - *Palm Sunday-The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem*

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

April 29 - *Holy Monday*

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

April 30 - *Holy Tuesday*

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

May 1 - *Holy Wednesday*

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

May 2 - *Holy Thursday*

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

May 3 - *Good Friday*

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

May 4 - *Holy Saturday*

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

May 5 - *PASCHA*

The Service of the Resurrection of Christ-Midnight
Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom 12:30-2:00 a.m.
Following Liturgy, all are invited to a reception in the Kourmolis Center
AGAPE Vespers 11:00 a.m.-noon
Easter Vespers of Love-The Gospel is read in numerous languages to indicate the universal character of the Christian message
Easter Egg Hunt for Children NOON

ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΟΣ 2024

Σάββατο, 27 Απριλίου - *Σάββατο του Λαζάρου*

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

Κυριακή, 28 Απριλίου - *Κυριακή των Βαίων*

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

Δευτέρα, 29 Απριλίου - *Μεγάλη Δευτέρα*

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

Τρίτη, 30 Απριλίου - *Μεγάλη Τρίτη*

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

Τετάρτη, 1 Μαΐου - *Μεγάλη Τετάρτη*

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

Πέμπτη, 2 Μαΐου - *Μεγάλη Πέμπτη*

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

Παρασκευή, 3 Μαΐου - *Μεγάλη Παρασκευή*

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

Σάββατο, 4 Μαΐου - *Μεγάλο Σάββατο*

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

Κυριακή, 5 Μαΐου - *Αγίω Πασχα*

Μεγας Εσπερινος της Αγαπης 11:00 π.μ.



Liturgical Notes for May

The Pentecostarion - The 50 Days After Pascha-

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

No Kneeling until Pentecost-

It is actually the Tradition in the Orthodox Church that we not kneel on Sundays in honor of the Resurrection of Christ. Because we do not worship on a daily basis in our church communities, priests have encouraged people to kneel on Sundays, the thought being that if we do not kneel on Sundays, that we’ll never kneel in church. It is a Tradition, that for 50 days after Pascha, we do not kneel in honor of the Resurrection. The next time we will kneel after May 4 is on the Feast of Pentecost (June 23) at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says “Again and again on bended knees let us pray to the Lord.”

Fast Free the week after Pascha-

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

Monday, May 6 – St. George -

St. George the “Trophy Bearer” is one of the most famous saints of our church. He lived in the third century. He was a soldier, famously memorialized in icons as slaying a dragon. Symbolically, he “slayed” the “dragons” that opposed Christianity and was martyred for his faith. His relics were placed in the altar of our church when it was consecrated in 1986. St. George’s feast day is celebrated on the Monday after Pascha when Pascha falls on April 23 or later (when Pascha falls earlier than April 23, we celebrate his feastday on April 23). Thus, this year, we will celebrate his feastday on Bright Monday, May 6.

Wednesday, May 8 - Feast of St. John the Theologian and St. Arsenios-

On May 8, we celebrate the feast days of St. John the Theologian, the author of the fourth Gospel, as well as the Epistles of St. John and the book of Revelation, and also celebrate the feast of St. Arsenios, a monk of the 5th Century.

Wednesday, May 8 – Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary -

We will continue to offer Paraklesis once a month, so that we can pray for all the members of our community by name, out loud. We will alternate some in the evening and some in the morning. For May, the Paraklesis will be offered on Wednesday Evening, May 18, from 6:00--7:00 p.m.

Friday, May 10 - Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain -

Friday after Pascha Commemorates the consecration of a Chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which was built over a spring in Constantinople, that emits water with healing powers. Hundreds of miracles and healings have occurred at this spring. This feast day of “Zoödochos Peghe - Ζωοδόχος Πηγή” the Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain, is always celebrated on the Friday of Bright (Renewal) week, the week after Pascha, May 10, this year.

Sunday, May 12 - Sunday of St. Thomas-

The Church brings to our mind the unbelief of Thomas followed by his belief after seeing the scars of Christ.

Monday, May 15 - Feast of St. Pachomios-

Fr. Stavros' Anniversary of Ordination - Fr. Stavros was ordained to the Holy Priesthood of the Greek Orthodox Church on May 15, 1998. This will mark his 26th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. Every year, Fr. Stavros marks this anniversary by celebrating Divine Liturgy in thanksgiving for the gift of priestly ministry.

Sunday, May 19- Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women-

They came to anoint Jesus' body, but found an EMPTY tomb. We also commemorate Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

Tuesday, May 21 - Sts. Constantine and Helen-

May 21 commemorates the feast of Sts. Constantine and Helen. St. Constantine was the emperor of the Roman Empire who decided to make Christianity the official religion of the empire. For the first time in history, the Christian church would not fall under persecution. St. Constantine also moved the capital of the Empire from Rome to Constantinople (present day Istanbul, Turkey), where he inaugurated the Byzantine Empire which flourished from 325 until 1453. He also convened the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in the year 325, which inaugurated what is known as the “golden age of Orthodoxy,” and resulted in the writing of the Nicene Creed (edited to its current version in the year 381). St. Helen, the mother of St. Constantine, is recognized as being the person who found the true cross of Christ in Jerusalem. She went on a pilgrimage to the Holy City and searched diligently for the Cross, finding it under a patch of Basil (Vasiliko) on the Mountain of Golgotha. Sts. Constantine and Helen have the title Isapostolou, “Equal to the Apostles” because of the tremendous contributions they made to the Orthodox Christian Church.

Sunday, May 26 - Sunday of the Paralytic-

The healing of the paralytic who was afflicted for many years. This event bears witness to Christ's authority over the human body: He who can overcome death in His own body has power over all human flesh.

Wednesday, May 29– Feast of Mid-Pentecost-

The icon depicts Christ the teacher, foreshadows the teaching to the Samaritan Woman, celebrated the following Sunday, and it is the feast day of teachers. About the middle of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus went up again to the Temple and taught. The Jews, marveling at the wisdom of His words, said, “How does this man know letters having never learned?” But Christ first reproached their unbelief and lawlessness, then proved to them by the Law that they sought to slay Him unjustly, supposedly as a despiser of the Law, since He had healed the paralytic on the Sabbath. This feast is held mid-way between Pascha and Pentecost.

Sunday, June 2 - Sunday of the Samaritan Woman-

Christ talks about the water of eternal life which will never make us thirst again. The woman here is St. Photini.

Congratulations to our Graduates!

- If you have a student who is graduating, please email all information to the church office by Wednesday, May 15 so we can include graduates in the June/July issue of The Messenger! Please provide: Name and Picture of the graduate, the institution graduating from, any degree, in the case of a college graduate, and what college the person plans to attend, in the case of the high school graduate.



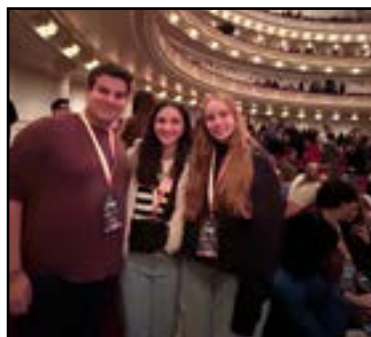
COUNTING THE WINS

We like to celebrate the achievements of our members.
If there is something notable for us to celebrate,
please email Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com



On Friday March 29, Nathan Moran (playing with the Sickles High School band) and Ariana Thatcher (playing with the Plant High School Orchestra) performed at Carnegie Hall in New York City as part of the National Band and Orchestra Festival.

On Saturday, April 6, Ariana Thatcher, Toula Trakas and George Xenick sang at Carnegie Hall with other members of the Plant High School Chorus as part of the National Symphonic Chors' "Evocation of Song" performance.



Sunday School

CANDY LAND

End of Year Party

Please Join Us

Sunday, May 19th, 2024

following Divine Liturgy on Campus

Burgers and Hot Dogs

Frozen Treats, Yard Games and More to

Celebrate a Great Year and Summer!

Please let us know if you would like to help with this event by contacting Zackie at 813.245.3813

Parish Registry

Adult Baptism-Alexa Hegewalt was baptized on Wednesday, March 20. Maria Xenick is the Godmother.

Adult Baptism-Nicholas Braga was baptized on Wednesday, April 17. Marios Stephanides is the Godfather.

Chrismation-Troy (Nicholas) Graham was chrismated on Sunday, March 31. Markos and Ekaterini Mangarides were the sponsors.

Chrismation-Jose (Daniel) DeArmas was chrismated on Sunday, April 14. Roberto Rodriguez was the sponsor.

Funeral-John Mitchell passed away on March 17. His funeral was held on March 22. May his memory be eternal!

Condolences to Dory Passalaris and family, on the passing of his niece Maria. May her memory be eternal!

JOY TWEENS

On April 26, JOY Tweens enjoyed getting together for dinner and a movie one last time before summer break.

On Saturday, May 11, 2024, JOY Tweens will celebrate the end of the school year with a fun day on Hog Island Lake! More details to follow by email/text.

Thank you to everyone who came and participated in our JOY Tween events this year. It was wonderful to see our ministry grow and bring so many of our 4th to 6th graders together for fun and fellowship! We hope all our tweens enjoyed themselves and are looking forward to another great year of fun activities in 2024-2025. If there are parents who would like to be involved in planning activities for our JOY Tweens for next year, please contact Maraquet Edquid, 813-422-8963. Have a great summer!



Tweens mini-retreat with Fr. Stavros on March 31



The JOY Tweens Ministry plans events every month either in conjunction with HOPE/JOY or separately just for JOY Tweens. If you have children in 4th to 6th grades, please sign up for text updates or contact Maraquet Edquid (email: maraquet@gmail.com/ cell: 813-422-8963) with any questions.

Sign-Up for Text Updates!

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

CHILDREN'S GREEK SCHOOL

AWARDS

On Sunday, March 31st the Panhellenic Cultural Association “Prometheus” awarded seven students from Greek Schools for their achievements with the Greek Language. One of these students was Apostolis Marmagiolis (8th Grade) who attends the School of Greek Language and Culture in Tampa every Saturday.

All awarded students had to read an essay they wrote in Greek. Apostolis had written a very nice essay about Greece and his favorite things to do when he visits there with his family.



All seven students got a prize and a check from “Prometheus”.

The awards were given to them from the General Consul of Greece, Mr. Louka Tsoko.

Congratulations, Apostoli!



THE SCHOOL OF GREEK LANGUAGE AND CULTURE VISITED SAINT AUGUSTINE



On the weekend of April, 13th & 14th teachers, students and parents of the School of Greek Language and Culture visited Saint Augustine.

The weather was perfect and all of the



participants had a very nice time there!

On Saturday morning, they visited the Saint Fotios Shrine where they had the chance to learn about the first Greek immigrants who arrived in America during the 18th century from Mrs. Polly Hillier, they saw artifacts of theirs and they watched a short video about the history of the first Greek immigrants in this country.

Later, they visited the Oldest Wooden Schoolhouse in the USA which was built by the Greek immigrant Ioannis Giannopoulos in the early 1700's.



They learned about the history of the Schoolhouse, the traditional, old style interior of it and they rang the bell at the yard.

Next stop was the Greek restaurant “Athina” where they tasted delicious Greek food.

Also, they visited San Marco’s Spanish Fort and they admired its amazing construction.

The rest of the day and the next day, too, they enjoyed the beautiful Saint Augustine with the narrow streets and the traditional buildings.

It was a very nice trip!

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

We hope your Holy Week experiences will continue to strengthen your faith in Christianity. May everyone have a beautiful and enriching PASCHA. Approximately 50 students actively participated and will participate in the many services of Holy Week and Pascha, which makes the week even more special. As always our Altar Boys do a fabulous job throughout the many services. Our many Maidens for the Bridegroom Services on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday evening were adorable. We look forward to seeing our beautiful Myrrh Bearers serve during the Good Friday Lamentation Service.

We are so proud of all of our students' devotion to our Lord.

We would like to thank the families who attended the Saturday of Lazarus Service on April 27th. We had a beautiful service, nice breakfast, and afterwards our children and parents helped to make over 800 crosses for Palm Sunday. It was fabulous to see all of our Sunday School Students participate in the PROCESSION OF THE PALMS on Sunday, April 28th.

We look forward to seeing everyone together for our Holy Friday Retreat on May 3rd. The day will be filled with learning activities and worship. Thank you Zackie Ameres for coordinating this event and leading the Ministry of HOPE and JOY. By the way, our teens will wrap over 500 red eggs for Pascha and cut all the greenery for the Holy Saturday morning service. Truly we are raising such wonderful STEWARDS of St. John's Greek Orthodox Church.

Our TOPICS for April were THE VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS, FAITH - ST. JOHN OF THE "LADDER", PALM SUNDAY, HOLY WEEK, AND PASCHA. Youth Sunday was on April 21st and our children sang beautifully as usual.

On April 21st, our Sunday School heard a special presentation by Andrew McMillan, a First Responders. He brought an AMBULANCE to the church and explained how they respond to emergencies and use the equipment in the ambulance. This was a great opportunity for students and parents to learn more about this important medical field.

Our last day of Sunday School, Graduation, and The End of the Year Party is on May 19th. More details to follow in the weekly Sunday School Constant Contact.

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

DATES TO REMEMBER:

Sun., May 5th: PASCHA - No Sunday School

Sun., May 12th: TOPIC: Saints of the Orthodox Church and Doubting Thomas

Sun., May 19th: Last Day of Sunday School - YOUTH SUNDAY

Sunday School Graduation Ceremony for all Students

Sunday School End of the Year Party on CAMPUS



Sunday of Orthodoxy



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 date is May 18th .

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

To Volunteer: [ClickHere](#) (Link also below) or scan our QR code to access our Signup Genius -

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



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

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

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

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



Why is the Date of our Pascha so Different than All the Other Church?

By Fr. George Callos

With love toward all and malice toward none, a summary of the root causes of the Easter/Paschal time differences, considering that both groups use the same basic formula (1st Sunday after the 1st Full Moon after the Vernal Equinox):

- If Western Easter and Orthodox Pascha are separated by about a month: this is an “Old Calendar / New Calendar” thing. We use the Old Calendar date for the Vernal Equinox, and the West uses the New Calendar date, so when the full moon falls in the 13 days between the New Cal Equinox and the Old Cal Equinox, we have a problem.

- If Western Easter and Orthodox Pascha are a week or two apart: this is a “neither East nor West uses common observation of the moon cycle, but instead pre-calculated lunar and solar cycles to determine the date” thing. Since we use different calculations and cycles, we end up with this mess.

- If they’re on the same day: congratulations! This is how the system was designed to work.

Also: Neither East nor West needs to consult the scheduling of the Jewish Passover, since both groups use the original biblical formula for Passover (14th day of the 1st lunar month of the year = 1st full moon after the Equinox, since the lunar month was new moon to new moon (and, thus, full moon was the 14th day of the 28-day month)) as part of their calculation.

Fr. George Callos is the Chancellor of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey.

FOOD PANTRY UPDATE

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

~We appreciate the ongoing support ~

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

“You are the LIGHT of the world” Matthew 5:1

Our heartfelt thanks to the loyal Stewards of St. John for your gifts to our parish....

Christos Anesti! We hope your Lenten journey brought you and your family peace and a feeling of renewal. It was gratifying to see our church so full during Holy Week. Thank you to Father Stavros and his staff for offering such beautiful and moving services.

We are off to a good start in 2024. As of April 1st, 217 families have returned their Stewardship forms, and another 63 have contributed without turning in a form. That's 280 total families and individuals who have answered the call, resulting in \$487,757 given so far. Please let us hear from you today, if you haven't submitted your pledge form.

It is always best to include a Stewardship form along with your gift to our church. It is required every year per our current bylaws to be considered “a member in good standing”. They are available in the church office, church narthex, in the bookstore or online.

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

When Everyone participates, no one is overburdened!

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

~The Stewardship Committee~

Take Advantage of the Parish Assistance Program

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

The BayCare helpline, 800-878-5470, is answered 24/7 by mental health professionals. Many BayCare therapists are also offering telephonic and virtual counseling sessions to help parishioners maintain their emotional wellbeing during these trying times. You can get more information on the BayCare Behavioral Health Community Services Program on their website at: <https://baycare.org/services/behavioral-health/our-specialties/community-healthservices> Help is available for life issues including:

Help is available for life issues including:

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

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



TWELVE DISCIPLES PROJECT

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

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

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

"Prayer is doxology, praise, thanksgiving, confession, supplication, and intercession to God. 'When I prayed I was new,' wrote a great theologian of Christian antiquity, 'but when I stopped praying I became old.' Prayer is the way to renewal and spiritual life. Prayer is aliveness to God. Prayer is strength, refreshment, and joy. Through the grace of God and our disciplined efforts prayer lifts us up from our isolation to a conscious, loving communion with God in which everything is experienced in a new light. Prayer becomes a personal dialogue with God, a spiritual breathing of the soul, a foretaste of the bliss of God's kingdom." <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-fruits-of-true-prayer?inheritRedirect=true>

"Pray for others by name and ask people to pray for you, too. The Church is a praying Body. When we pray for others, we lift them up and embrace them. It connects us in Christ, no matter how far away our loved ones may be from us. Prayer is even more intimate when we offer up specific people, by name, (and their specific needs) to the Lord." (Sam Williams, [blogs.goarch.org](https://www.goarch.org), Sept. 24, 2015)

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

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

Participation will warm your spiritual heart.



YOUNG ADULTS

**Young Adult Retreat
March 30**





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

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



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

The Holy Week journey provides us an opportunity to re-commit ourselves to Christ. Pascha is not meant to be an ending but rather a new beginning. If you’ve had some spiritual growth this Lent, stay committed to your new habits. And if you didn’t get much out of Lent, the Feast of Pascha calls on us to let everything begin anew. You can still make some new habits and commit to them. The journey doesn’t end on Pascha. One chapter comes to a close and another begins.

Community News

Meeting of Ministry Heads-

We will have a meeting of ministry heads on Monday, May 13, in the Kourmolis Center from 6:30-8:30 p.m.. We ask that each ministry send at least one representative. We meet periodically to check in and to look over the next few months in the life of our parish. This meeting in particular will be focusing on introducing our church expansion project.

Monday night Bible study with Fr. John-

Monday night Bible study 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 May, the dates are Tuesday, May 7; Tuesday, May 14; Tuesday, May 21; and Tuesday, May 28.

Women's Bible Study-Women's Bible-

Study meets on most Tuesday mornings with Fr. Stavros from 10:00-11:30 a.m. either in person or on zoom. We are finishing up the Epistles of I and II Peter. For May, the dates are Tuesday, May 7; Tuesday, May 14; and concluding on Monday, May 20.

Men's Group-

Our men's group will meet on Sunday, May 19 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Any men of our community are welcome to join us for dinner, discussion. We meet at 5:00 p.m., walk to a local restaurant and get some food, then bring it back to the hall where we eat and have a discussion. Our topic for May will be "Reflections on our Recent Holy Week Journey."

GOYA Meeting June 2 - No Meeting in May-

There will not be a GOYA meeting in May. The June GOYA meeting will be Sunday, June 2. We will welcome our new GOYAnS and bid farewell to the graduating ones. We will also be planning for the Junior Olympics. The Junior Olympics deadline is June 2, for all of our GOYAnS who are participating in the Junior Olympics.

Young Adults-

Our young adult group meets once a month for dinner/discussion (and other times for fellowship and service). The meeting for May will be on Thursday, May 9 from 6:30-9:00 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. All young adults, ages 18-40, are invited to participate. The Topic for "Reflecting on the Holy Week Experience." 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.

Junior Olympics Help Needed-

The annual GOYA Sunstate Junior Olympics will be held on June 7-9, hosted by our parish. Dwight Forde heads the ministry. We need help from volunteers for the weekend. A constant contact will be sent out to our entire community around May 15 letting you know what help is needed. Please utilize the SignUpGenius connected to this constant contact to volunteer some time that weekend. We need lots of help and you don't need to have a child in GOYA to help out.

Looking for a Donor for Audio/Visual Equipment-

We need a bigger screen for projecting the livestream in the hall until we get a bigger church. A bigger screen can also be used for other ministries. We also will need a projector in order to project on a big screen, as opposed to the computer that projects to the small TV. The cost for the projector is roughly \$6,500 and the cost of the screen is about \$500. If anyone is interested in donating either of these items, in part or in full, please contact the office.



For over nine years, 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 Post-Paschal Gospels and on Saturday-Sunday, Father is writing on the Scripture passages of each Sunday. There are 4,479 people on the Prayer Team.



Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 4,479 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 6 years! Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email Vasili at Vasili@stjohntpa.org and ask him to add you. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email Vasili or follow the link at the bottom of the daily emails to do so. If you want to forward to a friend, please use the "forward to a friend" option. Also, make sure prayerteam365@gmail.com has been added to your contacts so that these emails stay in your Inbox rather than going to the Junk or Spam folders.

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

Memorial & Kolyva Protocol



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



I am an Orthodox Christian

*When I say that "I am an Orthodox Christian,"
I am not shouting that "I am clean living".*

I'm whispering "I was lost, but now I'm found and forgiven."

*When I say "I am an Orthodox Christian,"
I don't speak of this with pride.*

I'm confessing that I stumble and need Christ to be my Guide.

*When I say "I am an Orthodox Christian,"
I'm not trying to be strong.*

I'm professing that I'm weak and need His strength to carry on.

*When I say "I am an Orthodox Christian,"
I'm not bragging of success.*

I'm admitting I have failed and need God to clean my mess.

*When I say "I am an Orthodox Christian,"
I'm not claiming to be perfect.*

My flaws are far too visible, but God believes I am worth it.

*When I say "I am an Orthodox Christian,"
I still feel the sting of pain.*

I have my share of heartaches so I call upon His name.

*When I say "I am an Orthodox Christian,"
I'm not somehow holier than thou.*

*I'm just a simple sinner who received God's good grace,
somehow.*

Have questions?

Just need to talk? Worried? Sad? Happy?

We are here for you!



Fr. Stavros
< 813-394-1038

Fr. John
678-637-4425 >



Opt-in on The Messenger

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

Inspiration

The biggest communication problem is we don't listen to understand. We listen to reply.



I forgave you for an apology I was never given because my closure was never tied to a single one of your words. It was dependent upon my willingness to let go. ~Morgan Richard Olivier



If you don't heal from what hurt you, you will bleed on people who didn't cut you.

If you don't leave your past in the past, it will destroy your future. Live for what today has to offer, not for what yesterday has taken away.



Food is not evil, but gluttony is.

Childbearing is not evil but fornication is.

Money is not evil, but avarice is.

Glory is not evil, but vainglory is.

Indeed, there is no evil in existing things, but only in their misuse. ~St. Maximus the Confessor



Five Things Jesus DID NOT Say

1. Follow your heart *Jesus said "Follow Me."*
2. Be true to yourself *Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be My disciple must first Deny himself."*
3. Believe in yourself *Jesus said "Believe in Me."*
4. Live your truth *Jesus said, "I AM the truth."*
5. As long as you are happy *Jesus said, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole World and loses his soul."*



As you get older, you realize that a \$300 watch and a \$30 watch both tell the same time.

A Michael Kors wallet and a Forever 21 wallet hold the same amount of money.

A \$300,000 house and a \$100,000 house host the same loneliness.

A Ford will also drive you as far as a Bentley.

True happiness is not found in materialistic things. It comes from the love and laughter found with each other.

Stay humble. . .the holes dug for us in the ground are all the same size.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT OUR PRIESTS

1. They love God and you a lot. (Be mindful.)
2. They are painfully limited human beings. (Be realistic.)
3. They probably have a pretty low view of their "performance". (Be kind.)
4. They wish they were a better preacher. (Be awake.)
5. They really do want God's best for you and your family. (Be open-hearted.)
6. Their work knows no time or locational boundaries. (Be patient.)
7. They hear much more negative information than positive. (Be encouraging.)
8. They have chosen a vocation in which is hard to remain steadfast. (Be praying.)
9. They have chosen a highly leadership-intensive call. (Be lead-able.)
10. They need help. (Be available.)
11. Their God-given vision is bigger than themselves and the church (Be faith-filled.)
12. They want to personally meet all the needs, but know they can't (Be understanding.)
13. They are going to say some dumb things every now and then. (Be forgiving.)
14. They are greatly encouraged by your faithfulness. (Be there.)
15. They are passionate for God's Word to be made practical to you. (Be hungry.)
16. They long for church to be your spiritual oasis. (Be loving.)
17. They dream for you and your family's spiritual health. (Be receptive.)
18. They need to hear that you pray for them. (Be interceding.)
19. They are just regular people. (Be real.)

Pray for our priests.

YOUNG AT HEART

Young at Heart Visit to Panagia Monastery



**Saturday, May 18th
9 am to 4 pm**

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

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

See Presvytera Denise for availability



St. John's Bookstore

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

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

*With gratitude for your support
and with prayers for God's
blessings
in this Holy Season of Pascha!*

*Presvytera Denise, Elaine Stefero,
and Diane Trimis
Your Bookstore Staff*

THANK YOU!



Community Outreach & Veterans/1st Responders Ministries

would like to thank
everyone for their
donations to benefit
Tampa Hope
Homeless Shelter.

MAY is SKIN CANCER Awareness Month

Nursing Ministry

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States, with over 5 million Americans diagnosed with skin cancer each year. In fact, 1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime. It is estimated that nearly 9,500 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with skin cancer every day. People of all colors and races can get skin cancer.

Some people have a higher risk of developing skin cancer than others, risk factors for skin cancer include: family history of skin cancer, light colored skin, skin that burns or freckles rather than tans, blonde or red hair, blue or green eyes, more than 50 moles, irregular shaped or darker moles, used or use indoor tanning devices as well as history of sun exposure from outdoor activities.

There are many different types of skin cancer, basal cell carcinoma (BCC) and squamous cell carcinomas (SCC) are the most common forms, melanoma is the most deadly. With early detection and proper treatment, the cure rate for BCC and SCC is about 95 percent. When melanoma is detected before it spreads, it also has a high cure rate. On average, one American dies from melanoma every hour. Despite all the advances in the treatment of melanoma, early detection and prevention are still our best weapons to save people from this deadly cancer.

Regular self-skin exams and a yearly professional examination help people find early skin cancers. The most important signs to look for: ABCDE of melanoma.

A: Asymmetry (one half is unlike the other half.)

B: Border (irregular, scalloped or poorly defined borders)

C: Color (varied from one area to another; has shades of tan, brown or black, or is sometimes white, red, or blue.

D: Diameter (more than 6 mm or the size of pencil eraser)

E: Evolving (changing in size, shape or color)

Any spot that looks different from all the others or that is changing, itching or bleeding needs to be checked.

Prevention is better than medicine: Always remember that sun exposure is the most preventable risk factor for all skin cancer including melanoma. Always seek shade and wear protective clothing (long sleeved shirt, pants, wide brim hat and sunglasses when possible), apply water-resistant broad spectrum sunscreen with SPF30 or more, reapply the sun screen every 2 hours even when cloudy and also after sweating or swimming. Avoid tanning beds.

Everyone should begin a lifelong routine of regular skin checks. Routine monitoring is the best means to early detection of skin cancer, leading to a great prognosis for successful treatment. Patients should also remember that skin color doesn't give them a free pass. Everyone can get skin cancer.



An excerpt from the book
***“The Pursuit: The Truth That Will Set You Free is the
Truth They Don’t Want You to Know”***
by David Norrie



How am I supposed to have faith in this story? Because the Priest says so? Because my parents told me to believe?

As you get older, those two things are never enough.

Just as it’s normal for every human to at one point wonder “why am I here?” or “why do I think?”, “why do I feel or love?” its also very normal to think “why should I believe this story of a human coming back to life? Because he loves me? He knows me?

Seems far fetched. And I don’t just do or believe things based on “just because.”

So, eventually, much later in life, I opened the BOOK and read it for myself. That’s when things changed.

Wouldn’t we all love to be Thomas? Assured beyond doubt by touch. How different we would be, I thought.

How different the world would be if we could all see and touch with our own eyes and hands.

But that’s like being given the answers to a test before it’s handed out. What good would that do anybody?

Jesus said blessed are those who believe without seeing. So so true. He knew faith would be the ultimate test and that, as humans, it wouldn’t be that easy.

As lover of history, I really like to see facts. Faith didn’t come easy for me at first.

A skeptical mind says the apostles must have been hallucinating. But the disciples recorded eating and drinking with Jesus, as well as touching him. Yes, the “doubter” put his hands in the wounded flesh.

So 11 people with the same hallucination on the same day?

Agnostics also claim that the disciples may have just been perpetuating a lie, protecting their story. Hmm, they all died violent deaths except John. Scourged. Tortured. Beheaded. Crucified. Go out right now and try to find 10 individuals willing to die that way for a made up story. Good luck.

But it was more than one day that Jesus came back. He came back for 40 days. And it was more than 11 disciples and Mary who witnessed this. It was more like 500, many of whom were still living when Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians (54 AD).

Yes, following Jesus resurrection from the dead he made a number of appearances, no less than 10 of which are recorded in scripture.

“We saw Him with our own eyes and touched Him with our own hands....We are telling you about what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.”” (1 John 1:1-3)

Jesus fulfilled over 300 prophecies; from where and to whom he would be born to where and how he would die. That’s not coincidence. In fact its impossible to do unless its true.

Understand this breakdown:

- 1 person fulfilling 8 prophecies: 1 in 100,000,000,000,000
- 1 person fulfilling 48 prophecies: 1 chance in 10 to the 157th power
- 1 person fulfilling 300+ prophecies: Only Jesus!

How is this for an example of fulfilling a specific prophecy:

Old Testament (Numbers 9-12) This command—that the Passover lamb not have its legs broken—carries symbolic weight. When Jesus, whom John the Baptist proclaimed to be “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), was crucified, not one of his bones was broken.

John 19:31-34 tells us that when the soldiers came to Jesus to break his legs to hasten his death, they found that he was already dead, so they pierced his side with a spear but did not break his legs.

There are many more prophecies and facts to learn about. I don't know everything about Jesus or the Bible.

Mine is a constant journey to learn more and solidify my faith.

I thank my mother and father for always bringing faith into the house and introducing me to God.

Then, much later in life, a good friend showed me the biblical timeline and the impossibilities of the facts being coincidence or “made up” and that went a long way in bolstering my understanding of the death and resurrection of Christ.

My wife, Pastor Mark Driscoll and my spiritual father, Kerry Moss, were the greatest impact on my faith. Opening the Word is a start but we all need a shepherd when we are lost.

So I'll leave you with these interesting facts on this day following Easter Sunday.

The Bible is the best selling book every year, worldwide.

It's the most dissected book in the history of the world, yet it's 2024, that's a long timeline, and still nobody has disproven its claims or authenticity. In fact, most scholars who set out to prove its faults end up being its greatest proponents and evangelists.

There are 6,468 commands in the Bible. None more important than “Love one another” (John 13:34)

Shortest verse in the Bible? “Jesus Wept”(John 11:35) That must not be forgotten that he was of the flesh and had feelings.

There are 1,260 promises in the Bible. One stands above the rest. “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6)

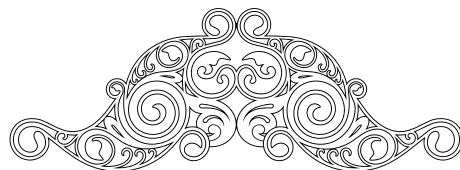
A man saw a snake being burned to death & decided to take it out of the fire. When he did, the snake bit him causing excruciating pain. The man dropped the snake, & the reptile fell right back into the fire.

So, the man looked around & found a metal pole & used it to take the snake out of the fire, saving its life.

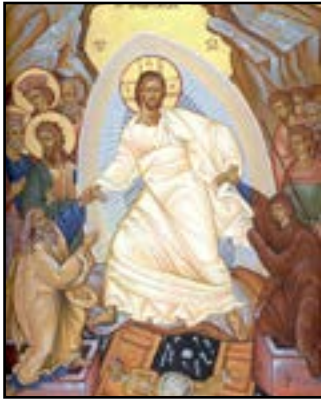
Someone who was watching approached the man and said: “That snake bit you. Why are you still trying to save it?”

The man replied: “The nature of the snake is to bite, but that's not going to change my nature, which is to help.”

Do not change your nature simply because someone harms you. Do not lose your good heart, but learn to take precautions.



St. John's Bookstore



Our bookstore has stocked many of the items you will need in preparation for Pascha.

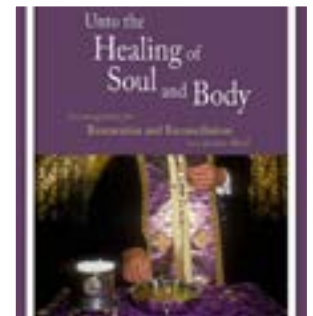
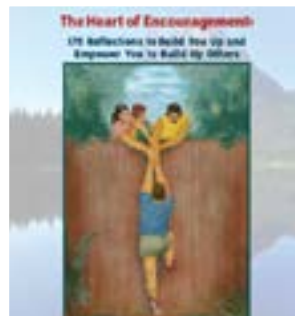
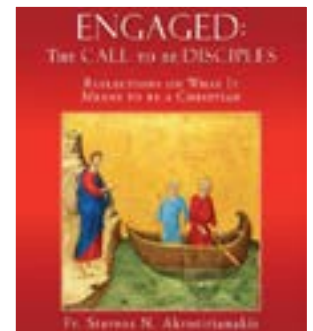
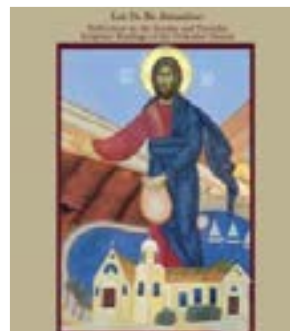
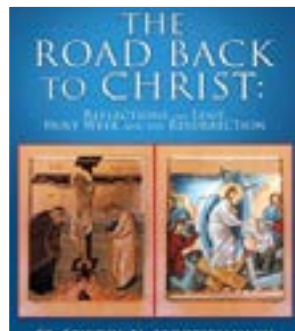
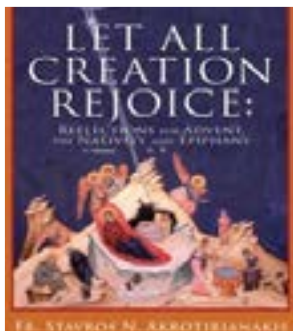
Available now are:

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

Father Stavros has authored 8 books that are available both in the bookstore and online.

They are entitled:

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



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(813)876-8830

St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!

Have you downloaded our App?

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

Do you Like our Facebook page?

 Like our page and suggest it to your friends.

Announcements are posted frequently so you are up to date with everything going on at St. John the Baptist. You can find our page at StJohnGOCTampa.

Live Streaming

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

To access this page

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

All of the services are available to watch at anytime.



Beware of Emails or Text Messages Asking for Gift Cards



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

Any questions? Please contact the office.

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.*

Youth Protection Program



GREEK ORTHODOX
ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA



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

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

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

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

Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

Friend of St. John the Baptist:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

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

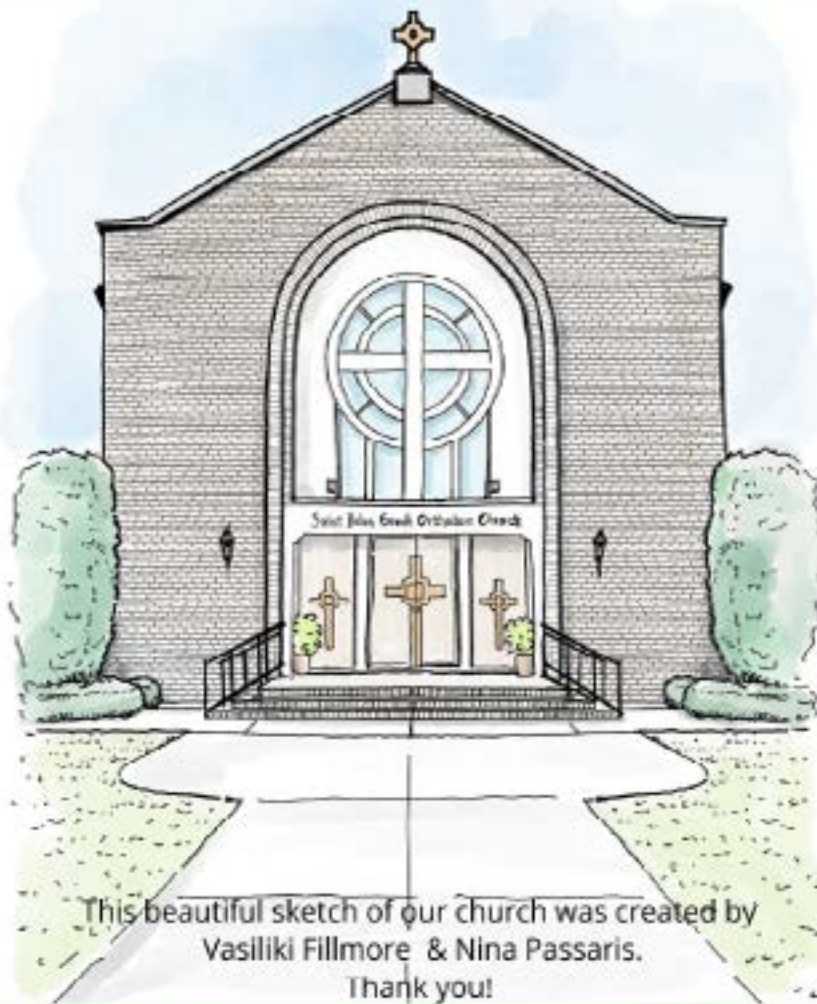
**Please mail this form and check to: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
2418 W. Swann Ave Tampa, FL 33609.**

May 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
**Fast Day			<p>1 **Holy Wednesday 9th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Holy Unction 3:00 p.m. Bridgroom Service 5:15 p.m. Holy Unction 7:00 p.m.</p>	<p>2 ** Holy Thursday Vespers Liturgy 9:15 a.m. 12 Gospels 6:30 p.m. All night vigil at the cross</p>	<p>3 **Good Friday Royal Hours 9:00 a.m. Sunday school retreat 10:00 a.m. Decorating Epitaphios 11:00 a.m. Apokathelosis 3:00 p.m. Lamentations 7:00 p.m.</p>	<p>4 **Holy Saturday Vespers Liturgy 8:30 a.m. Great Canon 11:00 p.m. Resurrection Service 11:45 p.m. Paschal Liturgy 12:30 a.m.</p>
<p>5 PASCHA Agape Vespers 11:00 a.m. Easter Egg Hunt</p>	<p>6 St. George Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. No Fasting This Week</p>	<p>7 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p>8 St. John the Theologian Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Choir Practice</p>	<p>9 Young Adult Discussion 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p>10 Life-Giving Fountain Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</p>	<p>11 Children's Greek School</p>
<p>12 Mother's Day Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</p>	<p>13 Meeting of Ministry heads 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p>14 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p>15 ** Fr. Stavros Anniversary of Ordination Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Choir Practice AIEPA Installation 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18 Community Outreach Children's Greek School Young at heart—monastery trip</p>
<p>19 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Last day of Sunday School- Graduation, end of year party Walk through of the school building Men's Group 5:00 p.m.</p>	<p>20 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m.</p>	<p>21 Sts. Constantine and Helen Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p>22 Choir Practice</p>	<p>23 Choir Practice</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p>
<p>26 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</p>	<p>27 Memorial Day Office Closed</p>	<p>28 Women's Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p>29 Mid-Pentecost Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Choir Practice</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p>	

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
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TAMPA, FL 33609-4712
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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