“Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O hades, where is your victory?” Christ is Risen and new life is granted to all!

The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ changed history forever. This event ushered in the most incredible revolution that humankind has ever witnessed. The radical events of Holy Week and Pascha give a resounding response to the great mystery of evil and death itself!

We can study human history and see much suffering and pain throughout the centuries. We can also look around in our contemporary society, and although we see progress in certain areas, we also realize that some things haven’t changed at all with the passage of thousands of years. Despite any technological advances that have happened in society, suffering and death continue to exist.

This past year we have even seen how random death can be with the more than 500,000 deaths that have come from the pandemic. Many people fear because anyone can get Covid and no one know who will live and who will die if they get the virus.

With the entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ into the world however, and especially through His Passion, Death and Resurrection, a resounding response has been given to the worst of all the evil in the world. Satan and all his evil influence no longer have the final say in our lives! Death itself does not have the final word. NO! Christ is Risen, and death is ultimately defeated. Christ is Risen and the devil, with all his darkness, can no longer maintain his grip on humanity. Christ is Risen and the promise of a new life is offered to all humanity, a new life beginning here and now!

As St. John Chrysostom said most beautifully, “Let no one fear death, for the Savior’s death has set us free! Death and hell itself have been angered and annihilated!”

CHRIST IS RISEN!
TRULY HE IS RISEN!

PALM SUNDAY
April 25
9:30 Divine Liturgy

HOLY WEEK
APRIL 25-30
6:30 pm Services
Every Night

PASCHASunday, May 1
9:30 am First Resurrection Service
***11:00 pm - Main Resurrection Service

Sunday, May 2
11:00 Easter Egg Hunt
12:00 Agape Service

ALL SERVICES ON LIVE STREAM
Connect at website
www.schwebster.org

ONLINE GIVING
Sts. Constantine and Helen
Greek Orthodox Church
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Webster, MA 01570
Church Telephone: (508) 943-8361 website: www.schwebster.org
Facebook: St Constantine Helens (Church)
Church Office Hours: Monday, Fridays 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

The mission of Sts. Constantine and Helen Church is to proclaim the Good News of Salvation through the Orthodox Christian Faith for the glory of our Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We are a community of believers who journey towards our Lord Jesus Christ and one another through our WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP, SPIRITUAL GROWTH, WITNESS, and SERVICE. We invite all people to join us on this journey in the Kingdom of Heaven.

We are under the jurisdiction of
His Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew
His Eminence, Archbishop Elpidophoros of America
His Eminence, Metropolitan Methodios of Boston

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One of the hymns from Holy Saturday’s Resurrection Service puts it this way, “Today Hades lets out a groan. My power is swallowed up! The shepherd was crucified but raised up Adam. All I ruled over is lost; all I was able to consume in my power I have spewed out. The Crucified One has emptied the graves. The sway of death is no more!”

As followers of Jesus Christ, we know that if we walk with our Lord in this life, He will walk with us throughout the challenges and struggles of this life, AND He will walk with us into the next life. Nothing is greater than the divine love of God, and thus, nothing can separate us from that love, including the evil of this world and death itself.

As St. Paul writes, “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Jesus who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:37-39)

Last year the pandemic closed our churches and only a few people were able to celebrate these holy days in church. As more and more people get vaccinated, I’m seeing more people come back to church. I hope that this year I will see many of you at the various services throughout the remainder of Lent and especially during our services celebrating Holy Week and Pascha!

May we all experience in a vibrant and renewed way the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and live each day with the Spirit of this Risen Lord dwelling richly in us!

Christ is Risen!!! Christos Anesti! Krishti u Ngjall! Vertete u Ngjall! Hristos a Inviat! Khristos Voskriese!

With joy and love in our Risen Lord, +Luke

**DEATH IS DEFEATED**

**Invite Your Friends to Easter Services!**
(And to a Holy Week Service!)

This year, invite a friend, co-worker, or neighbor to attend some Holy Week Service, our Resurrection Service Saturday evening (11:00pm), or our Sunday Agape Service of Love (12:00 noon)! We all know plenty of friends and acquaintances who are not connected to any Church, and who may not be planning to go to any Christian service during this holiest time of the year. Invite them to experience the warmth of our Church Family and our beautiful worship services! You don’t have to say much, just tell them to “Come and See!”
EXPERIENCING & UNDERSTANDING HOLY WEEK

The services of Holy Week transform us into eyewitnesses and direct participants in the awesome events of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. In readings taken from both Old and New Testaments, in hymns, processions, and liturgical commemoration, we see the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies, and the mighty acts by which God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, grants us forgiveness for our sins, and rescues us from the pain of eternal death.

Holy Week and the celebration of Pascha should be the highlight of the entire year for Orthodox Christians. We not only remember but we re-live the saving events of our Lord Jesus which become life-changing events in our own lives. Make an effort and come to as many or even all of the services during this week. Yes, there are many services and they are long. You will be in church more than 20 hours, yet you will journey with our Lord through His passion and suffering, as well as partake with Him in His glorious Resurrection.

LAZARUS SATURDAY: Lazarus Saturday is the day which begins Holy Week. It commemorates the raising of our Lord's friend Lazarus, who had been in the tomb four days. This act confirmed the universal resurrection from the dead that all of us will experience at our Lord's Second Coming. This miracle led many to faith, but it also led to the chief priest's and Pharisees' decision to kill Jesus (John 11:47-57).

PALM SUNDAY
Our Lord enters Jerusalem and is proclaimed king - but in an earthly sense, as many people of His time were seeking a political Messiah. Our Lord is King, of course, but of a different type - the eternal King prophesied by Zechariah the Prophet. We use palms on this day to show that we too accept Jesus as the true King and Messiah of the Jews, Who we are willing to follow - even to the cross.

HOLY MONDAY, TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY: The first thing that must be said about these services, and most of the other services of Holy Week, is that they are "sung" in anticipation. Each service is rotated ahead twelve hours. The evening service, therefore, is actually the service of the next morning, while the morning services of Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday are actually the services of the coming evening.

The services of these days are known as the Bridegroom or Nymphios Services. At the first service of Palm Sunday evening, the priest carries the icon of Christ the Bridegroom in procession, and we sing the "Hymn of the Bridegroom." We behold Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church, bearing the marks of His suffering, yet preparing a marriage Feast for us in God's Kingdom. Each of these Bridegroom services has a particular theme. On Holy Monday, the Blessed Joseph, the son of Jacob the Patriarch, is commemorated. Joseph is often seen as a Type of Christ. Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, thrown into a pit, and sold into slavery by them. In the same way, our Lord was rejected, betrayed by His own, and sold into the slavery of death. The Gospel reading for the day is about the barren fig tree, which Christ cursed and withered because it bore no fruit. The fig tree is a parable of those who have heard God's word, but who fail to bear the fruit of obedience. Originally the withering of the fig tree was a testimony against those Jews who rejected God's word and His Messiah. However, it is also a warning to all people, in all times, of the importance of not only hearing the God's word, but putting it into action.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins is read on Holy Tuesday. It tells the story of the five virgins who filled their lamps in preparation for receiving the bridegroom while the other five allowed their
lamps to go out, and hence were shut out of the marriage feast. This parable is a warning that we must always be prepared to receive our Lord when He comes again. The theme of the day is reinforced by the hymn we sing: "I see Your Bridal Chamber adorned, O my Savior, but have no wedding garment that I may enter. O Giver of Light, enlighten the vesture of my soul, and save me."

The theme of Holy Wednesday is repentance and forgiveness. We remember the sinful woman who anointed our Lord in anticipation of His death. Her repentance and love of Christ is the theme of the wonderful "Hymn of Kassiane" which is chanted on this night, reminding us one more time, before "it is too late," that we too may be forgiven if we repent.

**HOLY WEDNESDAY - Holy Unction:** The Mystery or Sacrament of Holy Unction is celebrated on Holy Wednesday evening. Actually this service can be celebrated any time during the year, especially when one is ill. However, because of our need for forgiveness and spiritual healing, we offer this service during Holy Week for the remission of our sins. We should prepare for this service in a prayerful way, as we do for Holy Communion.

**HOLY THURSDAY:** We turn to the last events of our Lord and His Passion. Thursday morning begins with a Vesperal Divine Liturgy commemorating the Mystical Supper. Everyone who is able should make an effort to receive Holy Communion at this service as it was at the Mystical Supper that our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist. We remember also that this is when Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, teaching them the lesson to always be servants who wash the feet of others. At this Liturgy a second Host is consecrated and kept in the Tabernacle. It is from this Host that Holy Communion is distributed to the shut-ins and the sick throughout the coming year.

**THURSDAY EVENING** actually begins the services of Great and Holy Friday. We re-live the undeserved suffering of Jesus Christ, endured for our sake, so that we might be reconciled anew to God our Father. The service of the Twelve Passion Gospels commemorates the solemn time of our Lord’s Crucifixion. After the reading of the fifth Gospel, the holy cross is carried around the church in procession, and Christ's body is nailed to the cross in the center of the church.

**HOLY AND GOOD FRIDAY** This holiest of all days is a day of strict fast. As little as possible should be eaten on this day. It is the only day in the entire year that no Divine Liturgy of any kind can be celebrated. In the morning we celebrate the Royal Hours. These solemn hours are observed as we read the various accounts and hymns concerning the crucifixion. In the afternoon we celebrate the Vesper service of the taking down of Christ's body from the cross. During the Gospel reading, our Lord's body is taken off the cross and wrapped in a new, white linen sheet. This act commemorates the removal of Christ's body from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38-42). Later in the service, the Epitaphios, or winding-sheet, with Christ's body on it is carried in procession and placed in the recently decorated tomb. In the evening the Lamentations service is sung. This service begins in a solemn manner, but by the end of the service we are already anticipating the Resurrection of our Lord. Remember again, that the Holy Friday evening Orthros is actually the first service of Holy Saturday, the day in which we commemorate our Lord's body resting in the tomb while His all-pure soul descends into Hades to free the faithful of the Old Covenant.

**GREAT AND HOLY SATURDAY:** This day is a day of hope and waiting. In the morning we celebrate a Vesperal Divine Liturgy which commemorates Christ's victory over death. Bright vestments are worn as we anticipate Christ’s Resurrection. Roses or laurel leaves are strewn throughout the
Continued from page 3

church during the service, because in the ancient world laurel leaves were a sign of victory. As the leaves are strewn, the choir chants "Arise O God and Judge the earth, for to You belong all the nations." The Old Testament story of Jonah in the belly of the whale is read at this service because Jonah is seen in the Church as a proto-type of Christ. As Jonah was three days in the belly of the great fish, and was then safely deposited back onto land, so our Lord was three days in the tomb before His glorious Resurrection. The Vesperal Divine Liturgy of Holy Saturday concludes the services of Holy Week, and brings us to the eve of Great and Holy Pascha.

HOLY PASCHA MIDNIGHT SERVICE:

In this service the church is plunged into darkness to symbolize the despair and defeat experienced before the dawn of Christ's victory over the Enemy of our salvation. Precisely at midnight, a single light emerges from the altar representing the victory of Christ over death, the defeat of the Prince of Darkness by Jesus, the Light of the World. As the light is passed from person to person, it pushes back the darkness of the church and defeats it completely. The Resurrection is proclaimed in song and triumphant procession, and after the Liturgy, its light is carried into our homes so that they too might be filled with its light and warmth and triumph.

PASCHA SUNDAY VESPERS OF LOVE

Christ's Resurrection and victory is affirmed in this morning's theme. The Gospel is read in numerous languages to illustrate the universality of the Good News of the Resurrection and its proclamation every nation to the very ends of the earth. Love, forgiveness, reconciliation, triumph, hope and joy - these are the gifts which we receive because Christ lived and died and conquered evil and death, triumphing for our sake.

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

May we never allow anything that happens in our lives make us forget about the hope and joy we have through Jesus Christ's Resurrection from the dead!

St John Chrysostom's Paschal Homily

...Let no one fear death, for the Savior's death has set us free. He that was held prisoner of it, has annihilated it. By descending into Hell, He made Hell captive. He angered it when it tasted of his flesh. As Isaiah, foretold: Hell was angered when it encountered you in the lower regions. It was angered, for it was abolished. It was angered, for it was mocked. It was angered, for it was slain. It was angered, for it was overthrown. It was angered, for it was fettered in chains. It took a body, and met God face to face. It took earth, and encountered Heaven. It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen.

Death, where is your sting? Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons have fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life is liberated. Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave.

For Christ, having risen from the dead, becomes the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

To him be glory and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen.
On Great and Holy Wednesday, the Sacrament or Mystery of Holy Unction is offered. This Sacrament is for the healing of soul and body and for forgiveness of sins. At the conclusion of the service of the Sacrament, the priest anoints everyone with holy oil, and the grace of God, which heals infirmities of soul and body, is called down upon each person.

When one is ill and in pain, this can very often be a time of life when one feels alone and isolated. This Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, or Holy Unction, reminds us that when we are in pain, either physical, emotional, or spiritual, Christ is present with us through the ministry of His Church. He is among us to offer strength to meet the challenges of life, and even the approach of death.

As with Chrismation, oil is also used in this Sacrament as a sign of God's presence, strength, and forgiveness. After the reading of seven Epistle lessons, seven Gospel lessons and the offering of seven prayers, which are all devoted to healing, the priest anoints the body with the Holy Oil. Orthodoxy does not view this Sacrament as available only to those who are near death. It is offered to all who are sick in body, mind, or spirit.

Christ came to the world to "bear our infirmities." One of the signs of His divine Messiahship was to heal the sick. The power of healing remains in the Church since Christ himself remains in the Church through the Holy Spirit. The Sacrament of the Unction of the sick is the Church's specific prayer for healing. If the faith of the believers is strong enough, and if it is the will of God, Lord can heal those who are diseased.

The biblical basis for the Sacrament is found in James 5:14-16: "Is any among you sick, let him call for the presbyters of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."

In ancient Christian literature one may find testimonies of the Mystery of Unction in St Irenaeus of Lyons and in Origen, as well as clear testimonies of it in Saints Basil the Great and John Chrysostom, who have left prayers for the healing of the infirm which entered later into the rite of Unction.

The express purpose of the Sacrament of Holy Unction is healing and forgiveness. Since it is not always the will of God that there should be physical healing, the prayer of Christ that God's will be done always remains as the proper context of the Sacrament. In addition, it is the clear intention of the Sacrament that through the anointing of the sick body the sufferings of the person should be sanctified and united to the sufferings of Christ. In this way, the wounds of the flesh are consecrated, and strength is given that the suffering of the diseased person may not be unto the death of his soul, but for eternal salvation in the resurrection and life of the Kingdom of God.

It is indeed the case that death inevitably comes. All must die, even those who in this life are given a reprieve through healing in order to have more time on the earth. Thus, the healing of the sick is not itself a final goal but is merely "instrumental" in that God offers a sign of his mercy and as a grace for the further opportunity of man to live for him and for others in the life of this world.

In the case where a person is obviously in the final moments of his earthly life, the Church has special prayers for the "separation of soul and body." Thus, it is clear that the Sacrament of Holy Unction is for the sick - both the physically and mentally sick - and is not reserved for the moment of death. The Sacrament of Unction is not the "last rites" as is sometimes thought; the ritual of the anointing itself in no way indicates that it should be administered merely in "extreme" cases. Holy Unction is the Sacrament of the spiritual, physical, and mental healing of a sick person whatever the nature or the gravity of the illness may be.
REFLECTING ON HYMNS FROM GOOD FRIDAY & HOLY SATURDAY

Hades was angered when it encountered You, a man deified, covered with wounds yet still All-Powerful, and he shrank at the awesome sight.

Falling supernaturally into lifegiving sleep, You awakened life from sleep and death, as the Almighty.

Hades rules over the race of mortals, but not forever. Laid in the tomb, O Mighty One, You demolished the bars of death with Your sovereign hand, and to those who slept there eternally You proclaimed true release and freed them from their bondage, becoming the first-born of the dead, O Savior.

Hades groaned when he received you because You prevailed by Your greater strength … Through Your power You shattered the bonds of death and opened the gates of Hades.

On Holy and Great Saturday we celebrate the burial of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ in His divine body and His descent into Hades, by which our race was called out of death and transported to eternal life.

Hades was wounded to the heart when it received the One they wounded with a spear and crucified on the Cross. Hades was unexpectedly consumed by the divine fire.

O blessed tomb, you have received the Creator as if sleeping, yet He proved to be a divine storehouse of life and the source of salvation for the world.

Hades the Fearsome was utterly shaken when it beheld You, the Immortal Sun of Glory, as it hastily surrendered the captives it held from the beginning of time because it no longer had authority over them.

When You descended into death, Life Immortal, You struck Hades dead with a lightning flash of divinity; and You raised up the dead from the underworld giving new life to the world.

Today, Hades lets out a groan: “I wish that I had not received the Son of Mary, for when He came upon me He dissolved my power; He shattered the gates of bronze, and He raised up the souls that I had help captive there.”

Today Hades lets out a groan: “My sovereignty is destroyed. I received Him as a mortal, one among the dead; but this One I am powerless to contain; instead with Him I lose all I had governed. I had held the dead for ages, but behold, He resurrects all.”

Today, Hades lets out a groan: “My power is swallowed up! The Shepherd was crucified but raised up Adam. All I ruled over is lost; All I was able to consume in my power, I have spewed out. The Crucified One has emptied the graves. The sway of death is no more!”
Saint Paul in one of his Epistles says that if Christ is not risen we are the most miserable of all people... And, indeed, if he was not risen we would be, because then all our faith, all that we call our spiritual experience, all the life we build on it would have been nothing but a delusion or a lie, a hallucination. But we are the most happy of all people because Christ is risen. This not only hundreds and thousands, but millions know from a direct, personal experience.

Many could say: God exists because I have met him, Christ is risen because I have met the risen Christ. And not only in spirit but also in the flesh; because we have the witness of the Apostles, simple men who had run away from Calvary, knowing - as they thought - that Christ was defeated when he was taken down from the Cross and buried, knowing that everything they hoped for had come to an end.

And yet, they are the witnesses of the Resurrection, unprepared, hesitant, and then exulting in the joy of the truth which was revealed to them; exulting because the women came in the morning to anoint Christ, and they saw that his body was no longer there. John and Peter came after them, and the tomb was empty. And when they came to the other disciples, asking themselves questions, doubting, hesitating - Christ came to them, and he himself said to them: Fear not! I am not a ghost, I am not a disincarnate vision; a ghost has no flesh and no bones as you can see that I have! And he ate with them, he spoke to them, they touched him!

Indeed, St John says in his Epistle that what the Apostles proclaim is what their eyes have seen, their ears heard, their hands touched, and that they are speaking the truth. Yes, Christ is risen, risen not as a ghost, not as a spiritual presence but as a living God with his body, the body of the Incarnation. In fact, if we truly believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was God himself become man for the salvation of the world, then, what is beyond our imagination is that he, who is life itself, could die; and the thing which is obvious and simple is that Life Eternal should break the fetters of death, conquer death, and that he should rise, in the body, in the flesh, as a promise to us; because uniting himself to human flesh he has shown us that man is so vast and so deep that he can be at one with God, united with God.

Actually, a human being is complete only if he is in oneness with God, when he is a partaker of the divine nature, to use the words of St Peter's Epistle. The Resurrection is a revelation of the mercy of God, of the power of God, of the love of God... but also of the greatness of man.

Death has no fear for us; it has become a gate into eternity, and we know that the day will come when the voice of Him who brought into being all things will resound and He will clothe us with eternity.

Let us believe the word of God, let us conquer our doubts and hesitations by listening to God himself speaking to us, and let us respond to the word of God and to the event of the Resurrection with faith and gratitude!

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!
THE IMPACT OF CHRIST’S RESURRECTION

What impact does Christ’s Resurrection from the dead have in your life? In other words, what does it mean for you personally that the greatest event in human history has occurred? Does the fact that “Christ is Risen” truly affect your life and every aspect of your life?

On Pascha, this first and greatest of days, 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide celebrate the event of God Almighty becoming a human being like each one of us, living on earth for 33 years, and then willingly accepting to confront the greatest evil of history – the jealousy, the slander, the rejection, the livid hatred, the denial, the betrayal from one of his closest friends, the ridicule and humiliations, the mocking, the unimaginable torture from scourging to a crown of thorns to crucifixion on a cross, and even death itself. On Pascha we celebrate how Jesus willingly endured and then responded to all this evil by the power of His love. He accepted to taste evil and death itself because He loved the world so much. He accepted to confront this evil because He knew that only by experiencing it, and then overcoming it, would He set a new path for humanity!

By Christ’s actions, He showed to us that evil, in whatever hideous form, no longer needs to have control over our lives, nor to have the final say in our lives. We all may face various forms of evil and suffering, and we will all eventually face death itself one day, yet because of Easter Sunday, because of Christ’s resurrection from the dead and His victory over satan, sin and death itself, our lives have changed!!! Our perspective and worldview of life itself, with all the challenges and surprises that life brings, is different when we choose to live in the light of the Christ’s resurrection!

Never let anything in life ever allow us to forget the joy and power of the Resurrection! Archbishop Anastasios put it this way, “With Christ’s Resurrection, everything was made new again, everything was restored. From this point on, the question posed for every human being is whether or not we choose to participate in this restoration!”

Yet, here lies the fundamental question for each one of us on this Holy Pascha celebration! Do we choose to participate fully in the joy and power and ultimate restoration of Christ’s Resurrection, or will we leave this beautiful service unmoved and untouched by the greatest event in human history?!? Does the Resurrection of Christ affect the way we live our lives or not? Do we carry the joy and power of Christ’s Resurrection in all our relationships – our relationships at homes, in our workplace, in our hobbies and forms of entertainment, and in every aspect of our lives? Will the forgiveness and mercy, will the love and victory that radiate from the Risen Lord be the spirit which we carry throughout our lives?

The choice is ours! And the choice we make determines how we relate with everything for the rest of our lives!

Let me give a few examples during the life of Christ of how different life became for those who chose to live in the light of Christ’s resurrection, as opposed to those who didn’t. The first obvious example comes from what happened to two of Jesus’ own disciples and followers. Peter and Judas both followed Christ for three years. Both men heard his beautiful teachings, witnessed his amazing miracles, and came to understand Him as the Son of God. And both men ended up making terrible choices in their lives. One denied Christ three times, while the other betrayed him to death. Judas’ sin, without the perspective of the resurrection, led him to utter despair. He didn’t see that Christ’s suffering and death were not the end of the story, and thus he couldn’t forgive himself for...
the evil choice that he made. As a result, his life ended in suicide and death.

Peter, on the other hand, denied his beloved Master and ran away from Him in His most desperate hour, yet he looked at his sin through the prism of the Resurrection, and thus, received forgiveness and healing. Although Peter denied His Lord and abandoned Him, he was still given another opportunity after the resurrection to profess his love for Jesus. And by the power of the Resurrection, Peter went on to become one of the leaders of the early Church and one of the greatest of saints of history.

Choosing to live in the light of the resurrection, or choosing to live in the darkness of denial makes all the world of a difference.

Then there’s the example of the two thieves on the cross. Both committed crimes which led to their crucifixion, yet one chose to stay in the depths of his evil deeds, only adding to them with his ridicule and blasphemy against the crucified Christ. The other thief, however, understood that Christ would resurrect, and that this ignoble death on the cross wasn’t the end of his story. Therefore with hope, even during his last minutes of his life, the second thief chose to live in the light of Christ’s resurrection and cried out to Jesus, “Lord, remember me in your kingdom!” And during his final moments of life, the gates of paradise open up for its first recipient – a criminal and thief who repented and believed in the Resurrection!

Choosing to live in the light of the resurrection, or choosing to live in the darkness of evil makes all the world of a difference.

Does anyone know who St. Longinos was? Well, that is the name of the centurion who oversaw the crucifixion of Christ. That’s right, the man who oversaw the murder of Jesus is remembered in the Church as one of her saints, precisely because this man chose to live in the light of Christ’s resurrection. Unlike the other soldiers who chose to cast lots for the clothes of Jesus, or unlike the soldiers who guarded the tomb of Christ and chose to lie about any resurrection in order to profit monetarily for themselves, St. Longinos had the eyes to see that an innocent man was murdered. He had the eyes to see beyond the blindness of the religious and political leaders of his day, and to understand who Jesus truly was. Following Christ’s crucifixion, Longinos accepted Jesus as His Resurrected Lord and lived a life according to His teachings. Today, 2000 years later, his name is still remembered among the saints of the Church. As for those other soldiers, who knows their names?

Choosing to live in the light of the resurrection, or choosing to live in the blindness of hatred and self-centeredness makes all the world of a difference.

A final, vivid example of the power of resurrection can be seen in the life of Saul the fanatic vs. Paul the Apostle. Saul the Jewish Pharisee denied the resurrection of Christ and went to great lengths to persecute and even kill those who proclaimed Christ Risen. Saul thought he was doing God’s will by killing St. Stephen and arresting and imprisoning other Christians. Yet when Saul finally came face to face with the Resurrected Lord, he no longer could deny the fact of the resurrection and accepted Jesus as Risen. This new perspective in life changed him from a fanatic murderer to a passionate proclaimer of God’s love. He no longer persecuted others, but unconditionally loved and forgave others. He no longer killed in the name of God but accepted to be martyred for the sake of the Risen Lord.

The question for each one of us during this holy season is this: Do we choose to participate fully in the joy and power and ultimate restoration of Christ’s Resurrection, or will we live our lives as if the Resurrection of Jesus never occurred and has nothing to do with our daily lives. The choice is ours. Yet our choice will determine whether we live lives full of the power of God, full of His grace and mercy, full of His compassion and love, and ultimately, full of meaning and purpose!

“With Christ’s Resurrection, everything was made new again, everything was restored. From this point on, the question posed for every human being is whether or not we choose to participate in this restoration!”
HOLY WEEK SERVICES
IN PERSON OR LIVE STREAM http://www.schwebster.org

LAZARUS SATURDAY - APRIL 24
Matins 8:30; Divine Liturgy 9:30; Palm Making 10:30 and Putting candy in Easter Eggs

PALM SUNDAY - APRIL 25
Matins 8:30am; Divine Liturgy 9:30am
Bridegroom Service 6:30 pm

HOLY MONDAY - APRIL 26
Bridegroom Service 6:30 pm

HOLY TUESDAY - APRIL 27
Bridegroom Service 6:30 pm with the Hymn of Kassiani

HOLY WEDNESDAY - APRIL 28
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30am
Holy Unction Service 6:30 pm

HOLY THURSDAY - APRIL 29
Divine Liturgy 9:30 am
SERVICE OF THE 12 GOSPELS 6:30pm

HOLY AND GOOD FRIDAY - APRIL 30
Service of the Royal Hours 9:00am
Vespers - Taking Christ Down from Cross 2:00
(We will leave the Tomb of Christ outside our Church for the faithful to drive by and see the epitaphio and offer a prayer)
***LAMENTATIONS SERVICE 6:30pm

HOLY SATURDAY - MAY 1
1st Resurrection Divine Liturgy 9:30am
RESURRECTION SERVICE 11:00 pm

PASCHA SUNDAY - MAY 2
Children’s Easter Egg Activity 11:00am
“Service of Love” Easter Vespers 12:00

BRIGHT MONDAY - MAY 3
Resurrection Matins 9:00 Resurrectional Liturgy 9:30

BRIGHT WEDNESDAY - Paraclesis 6:30pm
BRIGHT FRIDAY - Matins 8:45 ; Divine Liturgy 9:30
Get a copy of Fr. Luke’s newest book through our Church bookstore or on amazon.com in paperback or kindle

SHARING THE LIGHT

Meditations on the Good News of Jesus Christ

"One of the most effective ways to heal people and draw them close to God is through teaching and preaching."
(Saint John Chrysostom)

We live in a day and age where our lives are filled with busyness and superficial nonsense. We need to remember the advice of the Psalmist to "Be still and know that I am God." In silence and stillness we encounter God. In dedicating time to dwell in His Presence we nourish our souls. We need to consciously choose to take time each day to fill our minds with spiritually uplifting words which enrich our hearts. My prayer is that you will find such words in this book that will bless your heart and nourish your soul. My purpose is to help people encounter the living God so that they invite His Spirit into their lives to guide and direct them, to inspire and empower them, to comfort and heal them, to lead them to repentance and change, and to recreate each person more and more into the likeness of God.

Fr. Luke’s other books available on amazon.com or in our bookstore:

Go Forth: Stories of Mission and Resurrection in Albania

Lynette’s Hope: The Life and Death of Lynette Katherine Hoppe
Lessons from Saint Mary of Egypt

Justin Doty

If we go to the local bookstore and open up a biography of a famous man and turn to the first chapter, we will almost always encounter a story of that specific person’s early life. It will begin with him, end with him and take on hundreds of pages about him. Historians can write thousands of pages on one person, with that person being the center of attention at all times.

How odd it is to the modern age that when we open the Life of Saint Mary of Egypt and the story begins with a monk named Zosimus. Where is Mary of Egypt? So humble is this great saint and mother, that even in the story of her life, she hides from us until nearly four pages in. Maybe Saint Mary offers us a call during this season of Lent: a call to humility! And not humility for the sake of pride, or for the sake as appearing holy to others. No, not at all. The monk Zosimus revealed to us the life of Saint Mary of Egypt to teach us to be humble for the sake of our salvation. For as Saint Mary teaches us holiness is revealed to us to show us the pathways to salvation, not for our own glory.

Why in the middle of our Lenten journey on the 5th Sunday of Lent do we focus on this story of Saint Mary of Egypt? Humility is almost too easy an answer. Saint Mary of Egypt’s example is a cure to a double-edged sword. In the fires of Lent there is a temptation to feel exalted and proud if we are championing the hardships of spiritual battle; and then there is also the temptation of lamenting and shedding tears over our failures to follow both the physical and spiritual demands of Great Lent.

Yet if we examine the life of Saint Mary, we will see the remedy for these problems. Her story begins with the great monk and elder Zosimus. He is a man who has nearly reached perfection. He almost never eats, and when he does, it is bread and water. He has attained the gift of unceasing prayer. He prays in his sleep, when he works, when at Church, when alone. He keeps all the fasts. He is revered as a great monk. He has more spiritual children than anyone else around him. He is a great man, according to men. But God has more plans for him, and aims to show Zosimus, for the sake of his salvation, a soul who is so high up the spiritual ladder that her body takes flight in prayer. God aims to show Zosimus the saint who hides in humility and repentance.

Zosimus follows God’s call to leave his monastery and his native land and to enter into a new monastery. He finds even deeper spiritual rigor, but as the story says, the rigor is not what will save him here. It is the journey he will take into the desert, which is part of the monastic rule at his new home. After journeying into the desert to accomplish what few in the spiritual life have ever done, Zosimus finds himself face to face with a woman so transfigured, so holy, so sanctified and purified of all evil, that she can recognize his priesthood and his whole person without ever having met him.

But who is this woman? Was she, like Zosimus, a monastic since her youth? Has she read through the scriptures dozens of times? Has she been reared by great spiritual fathers and trained in the catechetical schools? Do people come from around the world to seek her spiritual guidance? No. She is a penitent who wanders the desert. She is dead to the world. She seeks the favor of no man. She lives in secret. She begs forgiveness. She has no books. She has no people of this world to teach her. And even more, she is not from the ranks of monastics. She was, in her former days, from the rank of harlots.

In her own words she tells Abba Zosimus that she lived for debauchery. Every corruption and abuse was, in her former life, the source of her joy. There was no sin of fornication she did not commit. And these things were not even done for a profit—she did not charge a fee. But even when she followed young Christian men to tempt them and lead them into darkness, God did not abandon her. As she tells us, God was seeking her repentance and salvation even in her darkest, most despicable moments. Alone in the desert, God and the Theotokos became her teacher—delivering to her scripture and wisdom. And from the tutoring and warm embrace of the
Theotokos, Saint Mary of Egypt was formed in the desert to be the greatest of repentants and the greatest of Christians.

In the life of Saint Mary of Egypt, we are given a small glimpse of what it looks like to draw near to “God’s time.” When the world looked at Mary the Egyptian, they saw a harlot, a prostitute, a grifter and a lowlife. Yet when God looked at her, he saw deep in the heart of Mary potential to become the greatest of saints. Mary was not the harlot to God, she was the great repentant who, despite all her former voluntary sin, attained a heart of virginity so pure that she was transfigured into a holy mother of virtue and miracles.

This is the message given to us today. That God’s mercy turns harlots into saints, his forgiveness grants prostitutes hearts of virginity, and that the Mother of God chooses the likes of Saint Mary of Egypt—the likes of those who hide from glory, fame, pride, exaltation. Those who are lowly, those who are cast away by the world, those are the ones chosen to be taught and nurtured by the Theotokos, as she did Christ, to prepare us for the judgement day when we shall meet God.

So, when we leave the doors of the Church, let us not be built up by the pride of our fasting or discouraged in our struggle to maintain it. Let us return into the world seeking repentance and a newness of life. Let us seek the virginity and innocence of the spiritual life in Christ. Let us look upon each other and even strangers, or those who we rank as our enemies, as saints being formed in the fire of struggle, who will one day intercede for us and help us reach the kingdom of God. Let us hide from the passions as Saint Mary hid from the world. Grab onto the coat tails of Saint Mary of Egypt, and let us all together reach the great humility and repentance that allows us to resist pride and embrace tears of repentance.

KHRISTOS VOSKRESIE!

You probably do not remember the name Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin. During his day he was as powerful a man as there was on earth. A Russian Communist leader who took part in the Bolshevik Revolution 1917, and who was editor of the Soviet newspaper Pravda (which by the way means truth), and who was a full member of the Politburo. His works on economics and political science are still read.

There is a story told about a journey he took from Moscow to Kiev in 1930 to address a huge assembly on the subject of atheism. Addressing the crowd he aimed his heavy artillery at Christianity hurling insult, argument, and proof against it.

An hour later he was finished. He looked out at what seemed to be the smoldering ashes of men’s faith. "Are there any questions?" Bukharin demanded. Deafening silence filled the auditorium until one man approached the platform and mounted the lectern standing near the communist leader. He surveyed the crowd first to the left then to the right. Finally he shouted the ancient greeting known well in the Russian Orthodox Church: "Khristos Voskresie! (CHRIST IS RISEN)"

En masse the crowd arose as one man and the response came crashing like the sound of thunder: "Voistinu Voskresie! (TRULY HE IS RISEN)"
100TH ANNIVERSARY

SHARING THE LIGHT

Vision and Goals

In honor of our beloved Saints Constantine and Helen Church’s 100th Anniversary
(founded in 1919 and celebrating 100 years in 2020/21)

We have set a goal to raise $250,000 to help our Church share the Light of Christ to the local community and the world through certain charitable projects, while also beautifying and upkeeping our Church Building.

Some POSSIBLE Outreach Projects and Church Beautification/Upkeep Projects in honor of this event:

**OUTREACH AND CHARITY:**
- Working with “RIP Medical Debt” to pay off $2 million in medical debt for hundreds of families in Central Massachusetts
- Sending St Innocent Orphanage and Project Mexico $15,000 to help them survive this COVID crisis
- Sending our Metropolis of Boston Summer Camp Program $10,000 in gratitude for all they do for our youth.
- Supporting certain programs helping those with addictions
- Supporting children who need help with their medical needs

**CHURCH BEAUTIFICATION AND UPKEEP:**
- New $45,000 HVAC System and Duct Work for Church Sanctuary
- New $30,000 Roof for Church Sanctuary
- LED Lighting for Chandeliers in Church
- Pantocrator Icon on Ceiling of our Church (completed)
- Possible Marble Flooring for Church Solea and Altar
- Possible Outdoor Pavilion and Landscaping for Backyard of Church
- Other Projects???
Please Consider Participating in this once in a Lifetime Celebration

THANK YOU!!

FUNDRAISING GOAL: $250,000
TOTAL IN CASH AND PLEDGES: $175,000
(as of March 1)

ARCHANGELS ($40,000-$50,000)
♦ An Anonymous Donor Inspired by our Church’s Good and Faithful Steward Challenge

ANGELS ($30,000-$39,000)
♦ Michael and Titi Chito

PRINCIPALITIES: ($20,000–$29,000)
♦ Marion Thomas
♦ Philip and Barbara Thomas

GOOD SHEPHERDS: ($15,000 - $19,000)
♦ Neal and Charlotte Neslusan

TORCHBEARERS: ($10,000 - $14,000)
♦ Joey Gliniecki
♦ Sandi/Gerry Kunkel and Scott/Kathy Kunkel Family

BENEFACTORS ($5000-$9000)
♦ Paulette Steffa in honor of Fr Alexander/Pres. Pearl Veronis
♦ In loving memory of Cosma and Stella Hadjoglou from Christine Mayo

PATRONS: ($2000-$4900)
♦ Jared and Stephanie Quill
♦ Anonymous Donor offering our new Visitation Icon

SUPPORTERS: ($1000-$1900)
♦ Ann Chito
♦ Athina Bilis
♦ Leah DiDonato
♦ Mary Fatsi
♦ Bill and Christine Kiritsis
♦ Eleanor Teguis
♦ Ted Theodores
♦ In memory of my wife Hariklia from Jimmy Milios
♦ Tasi Vriga
100TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION

SAVE THE DATE

100th Anniversary Gala Dinner
at the Mansion at Bald Hill in Woodstock
Saturday, November 13th

We need old pictures to show the history of our Church in a video we are putting together for our 100th Anniversary and we need your help!

Can you recognize this picture from a wedding in 1958? Who do you recognize? Some of our beloved members!!!

If you have any old pictures of your parents or grandparents at some church event, pictures of the original church on High Street, or some special event at the church from decades ago, please bring them to the Church office so we can make copies of use them for our 100th Anniversary video.
The Sacrament of Confession has always been a central part of an Orthodox Christian’s journey in Great Lent and the preparation for Pascha.

Anyone interested in participating in this Sacrament of Confession and Reconciliation can plan on doing it after any Lenten Service, or make set a time with Fr. Luke.

Fr. Ephraim Peters would also be available to meet with anyone for confession.

USHERS & GREETERS SCHEDULE
(Only for Ushers and Greeters who feel comfortable being back in Church)

April 4—Arthur Bilis, Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau
April 11 - Neal Neslusan, Mike Chito Jimmy Karapanos
April 18 - Nicoleta Cojocaru, Bill Thompson, Debby Raymond
Palm Sunday, April 25—Marie McNally, Matt Benoit, Lisa Healy,
Holy Wednesday, Apr 28 - Arthur Bilis, Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Laureau
Holy Friday, Apr 30—Neal Neslusan, Mike Chito, Jimmy Karapanos
Pascha Night, May 1—Nicoleta Cojcaru, Bill Thompson, Debby Raymond

We need more ushers!!! Please contact Fr. Luke if you could help out once a month and serve as an usher.

BUY FLOWERS FOR EASTER
Altar Flowers - $40
Friday Salutation Flowers - $40
Garland at Entry of Church - $40
Resurrection Icon Flower - $50
Easter Lilies - $40
Remembering Our Church Family

Important Dates in APRIL:

Make a visit or give a call to members of our Church family who celebrate this month.

**BIRTHDAYS:**

April 3     Lex Pappas  
April 4     Elisabeta Cojocaru  
April 7     Persephoni Sgouritsas  
April 7     Del Monroe  
April 10    Maximos Pappas  
April 10    Jonathan Baraklilis  
April 12    Julian Raymond  
April 12    Helen Thomas  
April 13    Dhimitra Adamopoulouos  
April 18    Kathy Bilis  
April 18    Pauline Mueller  
April 20    Ephraim Dunning  
April 23    Leslie Manthos  
April 23    Celia Milios  
April 25    Harrison Jordanoglou  
April 25    Zachary Bethune

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES:**

April 28    Richard & Sophia Bethune

**NAMEDAYS:**

April 23    St George  
            George Condos  
            George Dunning  
            Evis Georgia Jordanoglou  
            George Baraklilis  
            George Carabina  
            George Dunning  
            George Kerbici  
            George Khoy  
            George Milios  
            George Nonis  
            George Papageorge  
            Leslie Georgia Manthos  
            Georgia Sgouritsas Beland  
            Giorgios Sgouritsas  

April 27    St Symeon the Apostle  
            Symeon Dunning

Sunday of Orthodoxy
IS OUR CHURCH IN YOUR WILL?

Remember Christ’s Beloved Church in your Estate Planning and Legacy Giving!

What a beautiful way to remember the Church that has blessed you and nourished you throughout your life, or at different stages in your life.

Even after you have gone to be with the Lord and join the Church Triumphant in the company of the saints, you can still help the Church here on earth continue her sacred ministry of love and hope to the world!

COMMIT TO 20 MINUTES WITH GOD EACH DAY

Use Fr. Luke’s Daily Email to help you spend 20 minutes every day connecting with God through Meditation and Scripture.

Sign up to the daily email at www.schwebster.org and go to bottom right column of homepage.

Look for our safe and convenient Online Giving at bottom left of Church webpage at www.schwebster.org

Learn your Orthodox Faith from Orthodox podcasts, music, teachings at www.myocn.net

www.AncientFaith.com
Thank You to those who sponsor our monthly bulletin!

Shaw-Majersik Funeral Home
48 School Street
Webster, MA 01570
tel: 508-943-6278
Because We Care
Richard D. Majersik, Director
www.shaw-majersik.com

Robert J. Miller, Inc.
Funeral Services
366 School Street
Webster, MA 01570
Tel. (508) 943-0045
ROBERT J. MILLER Toll Free 866-360-0045
Funeral Director Fax (508) 943-3163
Email: miller.funerals@verizon.net  ww.rjmillerfunerals.net

Point Breeze
Your Restaurant on Webster Lake
114 Point Breeze Road
Webster, MA
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<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td>9:00 Palm</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Crete</td>
<td>52</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td>10:00 Palm</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>6:30 Holy Uction Service</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td></td>
<td>11:00 Palm</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>6:30 Service of the 12 Gospels</td>
<td>54</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 Palm</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>9:00 Royal Hours</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td>1:00 Palm</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>2:00 Vespers</td>
<td>56</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td>2:00 Palm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking Cross</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td>3:00 Palm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Off the Cross</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
<td>4:00 Palm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6:30 Lamentations Service</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td>5:00 Palm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:30am 1st Resurrection Service</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>6:00 Palm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10:00pm Main Resurrection Service</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td>7:00 Palm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **May 2**: Holy Pascha
- **May 3**: Bright Monday
- **May 8**: Palm Sunday
- **May 9**: Holy Monday
- **May 10**: Holy Tuesday
- **May 11**: Holy Wednesday
- **May 12**: Holy Thursday
- **May 13**: Holy Friday
- **May 14**: Holy Saturday

**Easter Activities**:
- 11:00 Easter Egg Activity
- 12:00 Agape Vespers
- 11:00 Easter Matins
- 9:30 Resurrection Liturgy
- 6:30 3rd Salutation Service to the Virgin Mary
- 5:00 Vespers
- 6:30 4th Salutation Service to the Virgin Mary
- 5:00 Vespers
- 6:30 Canon of St Andrew of Crete
- 6:30 Akathist Hymn to Virgin Mary
- 5:00 Vespers
- 6:30 Bridegroom Service
- 5:00 Vespers
- 6:30 Bridegroom Service
- 5:00 Vespers
- 6:30 Bridegroom Service
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- 6:30 Bridegroom Service
- 5:00 Vespers
THE VESPERS OF LOVE
PASCHA DAY

On the day of Pascha, after we have celebrated the Resurrection Service at midnight, after we have proclaimed and sung dozens of times “Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and granting life to the world,” and after we have broken our 40-Day Fast, our special spiritual struggle concludes in great joy! Jesus Christ is victorious over Satan and all evil, He has defeated darkness and death itself, and He has ushered in a new era for all humanity - to live continuously in the light and hope of the Resurrection!

This victory is for the entire world! He took upon Himself on the Cross the sins of all humanity, and He offers peace to everyone everywhere. This Good News can never be limited in any way. As a sign of the universal message of salvation, during the Agape Vespers, the Vespers of Love on Pascha day, we read the Gospel of John 20:19-25 in as many languages as we can. Typically in our Church, we will read it in 10 languages, but we can proclaim the Good News in as many languages as people know in the Church! Why? Because Christ’s Resurrection is for all people everywhere! Let us never forget this reality!

This is why we also fly a variety of flags outside our Church. Jesus Christ and His victorious resurrection is Good News for all nations! Our Lord confirmed this to His apostles when He gave them His final commandment after His Resurrection, “Go and make disciples of all nations!” Thus, let us learn “Christ is Risen” and the respose “Truly He is Risen” in as many languages as we can, and share it with everyone!