Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

It will be unbelievable and unimaginable to celebrate the holiest week and holiest day of the year in a seemingly empty church. It’s been also inconceivable how we are not gathering together as a church to worship each week, especially during these stressful and uncertain times, and how we are not even allowed to come together in loving fellowship to support and comfort one another. This whole pandemic and the way we are called to control it with social distancing seems so contrary to the Christian spirit. We are a family of love, that longs to be together, sharing in Christ-centered fellowship with one another. Yet, these are strange and uncertain times during which we must social distance from one another to protect one another. We do this out of love, even though it seems so unnatural.

As such, we can still learn some important lessons from this crisis. First, we remember that the CHURCH is NOT a BUILDING but a PEOPLE. WE ARE THE CHURCH, the FAMILY OF GOD. No one can actually close down the church because WE ARE THE CHURCH. During 70 years of communism when militant atheists tried to destroy the church, the People of God survived! During 400 years of the Ottoman Empire throughout the Balkans, the Family of God survived! During the 1300 years of Islamic rule in the Middle East and Egypt, the Church survived! No earthly circumstance, whether war or violence or governmental control, whether pandemic or disease can stop the Church, the Family of God, from being the Church. This is what Christ meant after Peter confessed that “Jesus, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and the Lord responded by saying, “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:15-18).

We need to remember that nothing can prevail against the Church, even if we are not allowed to gather together to celebrate our Lord’s Passion and Resurrection. We will still celebrate and sing “Christ is Risen!” We will be united in prayer from our homes. We will be united in spirit as we pray for one another. We will be united by watching the Facebook Live Feed of the service. We will be united by our Zoom Coffee Fellowships, Zoom Bible Studies, and other such virtual meetings.

As the Family of God, we will never stop praying because we are not allowed in our church building. We pray all the more in our homes, as families, praying for one another and with one another. Read the
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Greek Orthodox Church
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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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LIGHT OUT OF DARKNESS

article on p 16 about “Building Up Our Home Churches” and especially find inspiration from the story of what happened in the 11th century Egypt when the Muslim Caliph CLOSED all Christian churches for NINE YEARS!!!

We also remember that the Church is not simply a building and not only our Church Family here on earth, but the Church includes as well the Church Triumphant - the saints and angelic powers and all the heavenly hosts. Nothing can ever hinder their prayers for us and our communion with them! All together, the Church on earth and the Church in heaven - WE ARE THE CHURCH!!!

As a part of your prayers from home, I want to really encourage all of you to participate in the beautiful and inspiring services of Holy Week and Pascha by watching our services on Facebook Live Stream (if you don’t know how to connect, either call me or better yet, ask some teenager and they can help you!) but also by following along and reading the beautiful Holy Week hymns. If you want to borrow a Holy Week book from the Church come and take one. Or you can get all the services online by going to the website AGES INITIATIVE which has all the services (http://www.agesinitiatives.com/dcs/public/dcs/dcs.html). Take an hour every day during Holy Week to read through these services and meditate on the powerful, inspiring, and reflective hymns and prayers!

As we continue through this crisis, also keep asking yourself, “What is God trying to say to me, and to our world, through these uncertain days? How should I repent (turn away from all that is superficial and not of God and turn toward God and all that is eternal, holy, pure, good, and noble)? What good can come out of this crisis, and what good can I do in the midst of this crisis?”

I was so pleased with our Church when we got a request from the Webster Public Schools to give 15 food baskets to families in need. When I put this request out to our Church Family, within 24 hours we collected $1800 and 12 baskets. Then when AJ from Point Breeze asked if our church could sponsor a free meal for Webster’s First Responders, Sam and Evelyn Pappas offered to sponsor one meal, our Church’s Living Bread sponsored another meal, and we had others willing to sponsor even more!!!

There are many people in need during this crisis. If anyone in our Church family is in need, please contact Fr. Luke immediately. If you know of other families in the larger community, again reach out to Fr Luke so we can help!

I have heard of numerous parishioners who are calling up one another to check in with each other. Let’s keep that up for as long as this crisis continues. Call up. Text. Send handwritten notes. Don’t let anyone you know feel like they are alone. In some ways this social distancing can help us feel more connected with one another if we consciously reach out to each other!

As we stay closed up in our homes, enjoy the time we have with our families, and make a commitment to continue such quality family time even after the pandemic ends! I’ve heard many tell me they have found time to take long walks, and to pray much more than usual. Keep praying after the crisis ends. See the good that is happening will continue long after all this is over!!!

I conclude by lifting up the frontline medical workers in our community who risk their lives to serve others, and to all those who continue to work and provide services for our shut down community. Keep praying for God to protect them and bless them.

God is with us!!! Never forget this Good News!!!

With love and hope in our Risen Savior Jesus Christ,

+Luke

The Food baskets we gave out to Webster Families, and to anyone who is in need.
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.

PALM SUNDAY EVENING - Matthew 21:18-43. This evening's service calls to mind the beginning of Jesus' suffering. The gospel describes the plotting of the priests and elders to trap Jesus into convicting Himself as a religious heretic. Through parables, Jesus tells us of His coming betrayal, trial, conviction and execution by crucifixion. The hymns of this service commemorate two things; the first, the prophetic figure of Joseph, who, while virtuous, nonetheless suffered unjustly at the hands of his brothers before being greatly rewarded, and the second, the parable of the fig tree, which in failing to bear fruit, became a symbol of fallen creation, and of our own lives, in which we also have failed to bear spiritual fruit.

HOLY MONDAY EVENING - Matthew 22:15-46; 23:1-39. This evening's theme is the need for watchfulness and preparation, lest we be called unprepared before the awesome judgment seat of Christ to render an account of ourselves. The gospel reading contrasts the efforts of the Pharisees to trick and discredit Jesus, with the forceful resistance which Christ mounts against their evil. The hymns remind us of the parable of the Ten Virgins, in which the faithful Christian is exhorted to vigilance.

HOLY TUESDAY EVENING - John 12:17-50. The need for true repentance is the concern of Tuesday evening's service. This transformation from the life of sin to a life of faith and obedience is exemplified for us in the person of the sinful woman who received the gift of forgiveness when she anointed Jesus with myrrh and washed His feet. The highlight of the service is the hymn written in honor of this woman by St. Kasiiani. The Gospel meditation foretells of the coming suffering of Christ and recalls His inner struggles and agony.

HOLY WEDNESDAY EVENING - James 5:10-16, Luke 10:25-37. The primary theme of Holy Wednesday is our human need for the healing and forgiveness that comes into our lives when we establish a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. We are reminded that the way to this relationship is to be found, above all else, through the life of prayer. In the Sacrament of Holy Unction, the faithful are anointed and thus, healed both physically and spiritually. They are also reconciled to God and one another so that they might receive the gift of the Holy Eucharist instituted by Christ at the Last Supper.

HOLY THURSDAY MORNING - Matthew 26:2-27:2, John 13:3-17. On Holy Thursday morning, we ascend Mt. Zion with Christ and the Twelve, and enter into the upper room. Once there, we witness the awesome moment when, at the Last Supper, Christ abolishes the ritual practice of sacrifice in the Old Covenant and establishes the ritual of the New Covenant, prophesied by Jeremiah, through the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The faithful receive Holy Communion at this Liturgy.

HOLY THURSDAY EVENING - In this service, 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 12 Gospel read-
Their unwavering devotion is rewarded—they are the first to share in Christ's triumph over evil and death. They are the first witnesses to the Resurrection. This joy is commemorated through the scattering of bay leaves and rose petals by the priest.

HOLY SATURDAY EVENING & PASCHA SUNDAY MORNING

Mark 16:1-8. The lamentations of the previous night are repeated and 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.

GLORY BE TO HIM FOR ALL THINGS, AND MAY YOUR PASCHA BE BLESSED!

CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY HE IS RISEN!
NEW LIFE IN THE RESURRECTION

Christians in the first century had a strange custom. When one of their fellow Christians would die, they would march in procession to the graveyards, singing joyous hymns, and then they would place laurel wreaths on the graves, the same wreaths that the Greeks would use to crown the victors of athletic contests. Why did they do this? Because they believed that through Christ Jesus, all his followers have received victory over the power of death!

We see this same idea when we hear the Resurrectional hymns of Pascha. In one such hymn, Hades is crying out in despair: “I wish I had not received Jesus, for He has broken my power. Christ has shattered the gates of hell, and He has raised up the souls which I have held captive!”

This is what we celebrate on Pascha! The day of Resurrection! The day of Salvation! The day of ultimate victory of good over evil, hope over despair, light over darkness, joy over sadness, life over death! Easter is a day for new beginnings! For the Good News of our Lord’s glorious Resurrection offers each one of us an opportunity to see life from a fundamentally new perspective, to begin life with a fresh and new start!

Archbishop Anastasios of Albania has written, “With Christ’s Resurrection everything was made new again; everything was restored! From that point on, the question posed for every human being has been whether or not to participate in this restoration.”

If we choose to participate, really take part, in Christ’s Resurrection, our perspective on life radically changes! We can never remain discouraged, we can never lose hope, we can never despair, for we know that Christ is Risen and He has defeated evil. He has overcome sin. He has annihilated death itself! Through His resurrection, He has given us new and eternal life.

Another hymn of Pascha has Hades groaning, “My authority has been broken down. The Shepherd who was crucified has raised Adam, and I have been deprived of all those whom I held captive. He who was crucified has cleared the tombs!”

These hymns emphasize the common theme of ultimate victory. Evil and sin, pain and suffering, sorrow and death may threaten us, and even darken our perspective in life. But if we can remember that the overall war has already been won, we will not dwell in despair. Yes, everyday battles continue in this life, and we may be wounded many times until the 2nd coming of Christ, but we can rest assured of the outcome of the overall war itself.

Christ is Risen and thus, good shall prevail over evil. Christ is Risen, and thus hope shall prevail over despair! Christ is Risen and thus light shall prevail over darkness. Christ is Risen and thus joy shall prevail over sadness. Christ is Risen and thus life shall prevail over death!

This is why, if we choose to participate in this resurrection, we enter into a new beginning and a victorious life! Our entire worldview changes!

Think of a few examples of people we will hear about during Holy Week, people who entered into the new life that resurrection brings. Among the apostles of Christ, Judas betrayed Jesus, and because he didn’t stay around to see the resurrection, he fell into despair and committed suicide. In contrast, although the other apostles all abandoned Christ and felt shame and despair, they did not give up. Even Peter, the head of the apostles who denied knowing Christ three times, didn’t despair but after he witnessed the Resurrection, he became a new person. He knew he was forgiven and loved. From a fearful coward he became a bold preacher, living a life in Christ and ultimately dying for His Master! Peter and the apostles became new creations in Christ!

Another hymn of Pascha has Hades groaning, “Remember me in your kingdom.” Even though this condemned man may have lived an evil life, in his last moment he longed to participate in our Lord’s Resurrection and with the cry, “Remember me in your kingdom,” discovers paradise.

Mary Magdalene was a broken, despised woman whom the Gospels describe as being possessed with seven demons. Her love and faithfulness for our Lord, how-
ever, transformed her life from one of wretchedness into one of meaning. She was the first to see the Risen Lord, and thus became an apostle to the apostles, sharing the joy of resurrection with others!

Even the Roman Centurion, who actually participated in Christ’s crucifixion, came to believe and partake of the Resurrection, thus ending his life not as an anonymous Roman soldier in history, but as St. Longinos the Centurian, a saint of the Church!

Here lies the powerful Good News of Pascha and Christ’s Resurrection! No matter who we are or what we have done in life, no matter how many times we've turned away from God or even denied and rejected Him, no matter how many times we've fallen into our common sins or even more serious transgressions, Pascha Sunday proclaims that we should never despair. If we willingly participate in our Lord’s Resurrection, we will discover new hope for a renewed life and a fresh start!!!

We can’t stay hopeless when we know that we have a God who loves us so much that He willingly dies for us! We have a God who not only endured betrayal, denial, humiliation, rejection, and the most cruel form of death on the Cross, but a God who willingly descended into the deepest darkness of Hades to wrestle with the Evil One and break His bonds over humanity, destroying his power of sin, evil and death!

For those of us who choose to participate in this restoration of life, in this resurrection from the dead, than joy and peace and hope will be ours. We will live abundant lives in the power of Christ and in the victory of His Resurrection!

Christ is Risen! Christos Anesti! Krishti U Ngjall!
Yes, God is all-powerful and all-mighty, yet the paradox we experienced through Christ’s week of Passion during Holy Week is precisely that the Lord is the God of mystery. He voluntarily accepts to be betrayed, rejected, despised, tortured, and viciously murdered on the Cross. He willingly accepts to die and go into the darkest depths of Hades, tasting the greatest horror of humanity, death itself.

God is with those who are suffering from the coronavirus, He is with the families that have lost loved one, He is with the frontline healthcare workers who are risking their lives to save other, He is with those who have lost their jobs and who are worried about paying next month’s rent, He is with all those who are afraid, alone, anxious, scared, and stressed out.

Life is a mystery - a life full of the mystery of suffering, of illness, of violence, of darkness, of evil and of death. We can see it every day in the news around the world, as well as from people we know, and maybe even from our own life experience.

Yet, what we remember and celebrate on Pascha is that the mystery of life doesn’t end with evil conquering goodness, with hatred winning over love, with darkness outlasting the Light, or with death prevailing over life! Jesus did not remain in the tomb! Death could not contain Him! Christ experienced His Passion yet rose out of the tomb and stands victoriously alive today! And this victory is what gives meaning to life, to our life, especially when it seems like such a mystery.

On Holy and Good Friday, one hymn beautifully expressed this ultimate victory. We sang, “Hades was pierced in the heart and was consumed by the force of Divine Fire for the salvation of the world.” Yes, Jesus Christ suffering a humiliating and painful death on the Cross, He was buried and left for dead, just like all humanity before Him, yet the story did not end there!

Christ is Risen, and through His Resurrection He pierced Hades in the heart and brought salvation to the world. Jesus revealed a different ending to His story, and a different ending to our story!
The passion of Christ entailed suffering and death, yet in the midst of evil and darkness, Christ’s power shines forth. His love prevails. Satan can’t hold Jesus in the depths of darkness, just like he can’t hold God’s people in any form of darkness either.

When we choose to participate, truly partake, in Christ’s Resurrection, our life radically changes! We can’t ever remain discouraged; we never lose hope; we never despair; we won’t allow darkness to prevail in our lives; because we know that

Christ is Risen! and He has defeated all darkness and evil.
Christ is Risen! and He has overcome the sin of the world.
Christ is Risen! and fear is vanquished!
Christ is Risen! and suffering will not remain!
Christ is Risen! and the doors of paradise are opened!
Christ is Risen! and He has annihilated death itself!

Through His resurrection, we see life through a new, joyous and victorious prism. We can’t stay hopeless when we know that we have a God who loves us so much that He willingly died in our place! Our celebration of Pascha marks a new era in human history, in our life story! As St. John Chrysostom so eloquently emphasizes in His famous Paschal Sermon:

"Forgiveness has dawned from the tomb, so let no one grieve over their sins! The Savior’s death has set us free, so let no one fear death! Christ has destroyed death by enduring it. By descending into Hell, He made Hell captive! Christ is Risen and the Hell is overthrown. Christ is Risen and life is liberated. Christ is Risen and not one dead remains in the grave."

And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry:
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.

O Death, where is your sting? O 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.
Consequently, when He shall come again to judge the world, will a different God judge it? Will it not be the same good God, the God of mercy and lovingkindness, Who loves mankind? Let us be certain that we shall not appear before any other God than Him Who created us and saved us. And so, it is again with the same mercy and love that He will judge us. For this reason, we should neither panic nor waver, for it will be the same God that will receive us in the other life and will judge us with the same kindness and compassion.

Some fear that the hour of their end has come. This plague of Coronavirus has also a positive aspect, because we have a few weeks from the moment it will assail us until our end. Therefore, we can dedicate this time to prepare ourselves for our meeting with God, so that our departure may not occur unexpectedly and without preparation, but after we have run through our whole life each time we stand in prayer before God, at times with thanksgiving unto the end for all the things
God has done for us and at other times with repentance, seeking the forgiveness of our transgressions. Nothing can harm us with such a God, Who allows all things out of His goodness. We must simply keep thanksgiving unto the end and the humble prayer of repentance for the forgiveness of our sins.

As for myself, this plague is helping me. I longed to find again the prayer I had before, with which I can run through my whole life from my birth until now, thanking God for all His benefits ‘whereof I know and whereof I know not’; and also, with which I can run through my whole life repenting for all my sins and transgressions. It is wonderful to be able to run through your life praying, bringing all things before God with persistence in prayer. Then you feel that your life is redeemed. This is why this situation is truly helping me. I am not panicking but ‘I will be sorry for my sin’ (Ps. 38:18).

We must see the goodness of God in all the things that are happening now. The Holy Fathers did see His lovingkindness. A similar epidemic occurred in the 4th century in the Egyptian desert, which harvested more than a third of the monks, and the Fathers were saying with great inspiration that, ‘God is harvesting souls of saints for His Kingdom,’ and they did not waver. The Lord Himself speaks in the Gospel about the last days, about the trials and afflictions which the world will go through before His Second Coming. However, we discern neither morbid sadness nor despair in His words. The Lord Who prayed in the garden of Gethsemane with a sweat of blood for the salvation of the whole world, says that when we see the terrible things that precede His Second Coming, we should lift up our heads with inspiration, for our redemption draws nigh (cf. Luke 21:28). Some tell me, ‘May God extend His helping hand.’ But this is precisely the hand of God. He desires and works our salvation ‘at sundry times and in divers manners’ (Heb. 1:1): ‘My Father worketh hitherto, and I work’ (John 5:17). This virus may be a means that God uses in order to bring many to themselves and to repentance, and to harvest many ready souls for His eternal Kingdom. Therefore, for those who surrender and entrust themselves to the Providence of God all will contribute for their good: “All things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28).

Thus, there is no room for morbid dismay. Neither should we resist the measures that the government is taking in order to diminish the spreading of the afflictions we see in the lives of so many people. It is wrong to go against the authorities. We should do whatever the Government says, because they are not asking for us to deny our faith, they are only asking us to take a few measures for the common welfare of all people, so that this trial may pass, and this is not at all unreasonable. Some people take it too confessionally, they raise flags and play the martyrs and the confessors. For us there is no doubt: we shall show pure submission to the orders of the Government. It is unfair to disobey the Government since, when we fall ill, it is to their hospitals that we run and they are the ones who undertake all the expenses and our care.

This is the ethos of Christ that God showed in
Continued from page 8

His life on earth and this is the apostolic commandment that we have received: ‘...be subject to principalities and powers, obey magistrates, be ready to every good work, speak evil of no man, be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men’ (cf. Tit. 3: 1-2); and ‘Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme...’ (see 1 Pet. 2:13-17). If we do not obey our governors who are not asking much, how will we obey God, Who gives us a divine law, which is far more sublime than any human law? If we keep the law of God we are above human laws, as the apologists of the 2nd century said during the Roman Empire which was persecuting the Christians. It is surprising to see in the country where we live, in the United Kingdom, that the footballers show such understanding and discernment so as to be the first to withdraw from their activities with docility towards the indications of the Government to take prophylactic measures. It would be sad for us, people of faith, to fail reaching the measure of the footballers and showing the same docility towards the authorities for which our Church prays.

If they ask us to stop our Church services, let us simply surrender and bless the Providence of God. Besides, this reminds us of an old tradition that the Fathers had in Palestine: in Great Lent, on the Sunday of Cheese fare, after the mutual forgiveness, they would go out in the desert for forty days without Liturgy; they would only continue in fasting and prayer so as to prepare and return on Palm Sunday to celebrate in a godly way the Passion and the Resurrection of the Lord. And so, our present circumstances force us to live again that which existed of old in the bosom of the Church. That is to say, they force us to live a more hesychastic life, with more prayer, which will however make up for the lack of the Divine Liturgy and will prepare us to celebrate with greater desire and inspiration the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Thus, we will turn this plague into a triumph of hesychasm. In any case, whatever God allows in our life is out of His goodness for the well-being of man, for He never wants His creature to be harmed in any way.

Certainly, if we will be deprived of the Divine Liturgy for a longer period of time, we can endure it. What do we receive in the Liturgy? We partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, which are filled with His grace. This is a great honour and benefit for us, but we also receive the grace of God in many other ways. When we practice hesychastic prayer, we abide in the Presence of God with the mind in the heart calling upon the holy Name of Christ. The Divine Name brings us the grace of Christ because it is inseparable from His Person and leads us into His Presence. This Presence of Christ which is purifying, cleanses us from our transgressions and sins, it renews and illumines our heart so that the image of God our Saviour, Christ, may be formed therein.

If we shall not have Easter in the Church, let us remember that every contact with Christ is Easter. We receive grace in the Divine Liturgy because the Lord Jesus is present in it, He performs the sacrament and He is the One imparted to the faithful. However, when we invoke His Name, we enter the same Presence of Christ and receive the same grace. Therefore, if we are deprived of the Liturgy, we always have His Name, we are not deprived of the Lord. Moreover, we also have His word, especially His Gospel. If His word dwells continually in our heart, if we study it and pray it, if it becomes our language with which we speak to God as He spoke to us, then we shall have again the grace of the Lord. For His words are words of eternal life.
(John 6:68), and the same mystery is performed, we receive His grace and are sanctified.

Furthermore, each time we show kindness to our brethren the Lord is well-pleased, He considers that we did it in His Name and He rewards us. We show kindness to our brethren and the Lord rewards us with His grace. This is another way in which we can live in the Presence of the Lord. We can have the grace of the Lord through fasting, alms giving and every good deed. So, if we are forced to avoid gathering in Church, we can also be united in spirit in these holy virtues which are known within the Body of Christ, the holy Church, and which preserve the unity of the faithful with Christ and with the other members of His Body. All the things we do for God is a Liturgy, for they minister unto our salvation. The Liturgy is the great event of the life of the Church, wherein the faithful have the possibility to exchange their little life with the boundless life of God. However, the power of this event depends on the preparation we perform before, through all the things we have mentioned, through prayer, good deeds, fasting, love for neighbour, repentance.

Therefore, my dear brethren, it is not necessary to make heroic confessions against the Government for the prophylactic measures that it takes for the good of all people. Neither should we despair, but only wisely machinate ways so as not to lose our living communication with the Person of Christ. Nothing can harm us, we must simply be patient for a certain period of time and God will see our patience, take away every obstacle, every temptation and we shall again see the dawn of joyful days, and we shall celebrate our common hope and love that we have in Christ Jesus.

The Bishops of the Holy Orthodox Church love their flocks and ever strive to lead them to well-watered and rich pastures. They care for them, body and soul. In so doing, they are following their Master Christ who not only “cast out unclean spirits,” but also healed “all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.” (Matthew 10:1). In the Gospels, we see that Christ sometimes treated the soul first and the body second; at other times, the body first and the soul second. In the presence of the highly contagious and potentially lethal corona virus, the Bishops’ concern is for the bodily welfare of their people lest even a single lamb be needlessly lost. This is not from a lack of faith or dearth of compassion, but from unwavering faith and an abundance of compassion.

Compassion is expressed in giving each sinner the time necessary to repent, for in “hell there is no repentance” (Saint John of Damascus). Faith is expressed in the certainty that our Lord can always be in our midst, that He can always be by our side, for the Psalmist proclaims, “If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there” (Psalm 139:8). And if I am shut up in my home away from Church, “Thou art there,” even as the Lord was there for and with the Apostle Peter when he was locked up in prison, so He is there for and with us.

During times of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear, we naturally turn to God for refuge, peace, and courage. This is our birthright as baptized Orthodox Christians. Indeed, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth should change” (Psalm 46:1-2). With the corona virus, the earth has changed, but we do not fear. The faithful are isolated in their homes, physically separated from loved ones, and even unable to gather together as the Church for the celebration of the mysteries, but we do not fear, for God re
mains our refuge, our peace, and source of courage. Many are understandably discouraged and downcast about the decision to ban eucharistic gatherings in Church for the sake of the health of our neighbor whom we love. Yet, God remains our refuge, our peace, and our source of courage. Within this trial, this threat to so much that we hold so very dear, there is a call that is given and a promise that beckons. But to hear that call and see the fulfilment of that promise, we need to approach our Savior as His faithful children have always approached Him, not with self-righteous indignation or self-pitying despondency, but with humble, patient hope.

The call is to prayer of the heart. The promise is the purifying and illumining grace of the Holy Spirit. In the emphasis on more frequent communion over the past forty years, we might be tempted to neglect the necessary ongoing moment-to-moment inner communion with Christ by prayer, that talking with Him and walking with Him that characterized most of the lives of the Apostles before and after the institution of the Mystical Supper. Many of our greatest saints were deprived of Holy Communion for periods of time that for us would be unbearable to contemplate, but that for them were periods of continued growth from glory to glory, because they were never without Holy Communion with Christ through prayer. Prayer is not easy; it requires concentration, dedication, and love, but through the gates of prayer, we can touch Christ, Christ can touch us, and we can be healed. It is imperative for us all to learn to serve Liturgy at the Altar of the heart and the time is now at hand.

During this crisis of the corona virus, we are given the opportunity to become men and women of deep prayer. We are given the occasion to “enter into our closet, and when we have shut the door, pray to our Father which is in secret” (Matthew 6:6), offering Him our repentance, our gratitude, and our love. We can come to understand that “prayer is a safe fortress, a sheltered harbor, a protector of the virtues, a destroyer of passions. It brings vigor to the soul, purifies the mind, gives rest to those who suffer, consoles those who mourn. Prayer is converse with God, contemplation of the invisible, the angelic mode of life, a stimulus towards the divine, the assurance of things longed for, ‘making real the things for which we hope’” (Theodore, the Great Ascetic, Century 1:61). As Saint Sophrony of Essex puts it, “prayer is infinite creation, far superior to any form of art or science. Through prayer we enter into communion with Him that was before all worlds…Prayer is delight for the Spirit.” (On Prayer, 9).

The Elder Aimlianos whose love for the Divine Liturgy was incomparable once said, “It is pointless to go to Church, unnecessary to attend Liturgy, and useless to commune, when I am not constantly praying” (The Church at Prayer, 14). A spiritual life of private prayer is not a monastic prerogative, but the common inheritance of all the faithful. The saintly elder further notes, “The harm that befalls us if we do not know how to pray is incalculable. Incalculable? It is the only harm from which we suffer. There is no catastrophe that can compare to it. If all the stars and all the planets were to collide with one another, and the universe to shatter into smithereens, the damage would be far less than that which befalls us if we don’t know how to pray” (The Church at Prayer, 10). The threat of the virus perhaps can open our eyes to the threat of not knowing how to pray to God in our heart. The threat of the virus may turn into a blessing that can enliven our spiritual life.

The temptation before us is to deafen our ears to this call to active, arduous prayer to approach God and instead to prefer more passive, easier ways for God to approach us. Now is not the time to try to devise any means to avoid this prayer in private, but it is the time to heed the call to prayer in our heart to the God of our heart. There is a rich, inner world beckoning to us, a world where God is all in God. Let’s take the gift of this time to enter into that world. And if we do so, when we come together for the Divine Liturgy with a yearning magnified by distance apart, that Liturgy will be more radiant and more angelic than anything we have known before. Through a deep life of inner prayer, we will indeed learn how to set aside all earthly cares, that we may receive the King of all.
HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Watch all services on our Church’s Facebook Live Stream
https://www.facebook.com/stsconstantinehelenchurch

LAZARUS SATURDAY - APRIL 11
Matins 8:30; Divine Liturgy 9:30

PALM SUNDAY - APRIL 12
Matins 8:30am; Divine Liturgy 9:30am
Bridegroom Service 6:30 pm

HOLY MONDAY - APRIL 13
Bridegroom Service 6:30 pm

HOLY TUESDAY - APRIL 14
Bridegroom Service 6:30 pm with the Hymn of Kassiani

HOLY WEDNESDAY - APRIL 15
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30am
Holy Unction Service 6:30 pm

HOLY THURSDAY - APRIL 16
Divine Liturgy 9:30 am
SERVICE OF THE 12 GOSPELS 6:30pm

HOLY AND GOOD FRIDAY - APRIL 17
Service of the Royal Hours 9:00am
Vespers - Taking Christ Down from Cross 10:30am
***LAMENTATIONS SERVICE 3:00pm (We will leave the Tomb of Christ outside our Church for the faithful to drive by and see the epitaphio and offer a prayer - come by in a car after 5:00)

HOLY SATURDAY - APRIL 18
1st Resurrection Divine Liturgy 9:30am
RESURRECTION SERVICE 11:00 pm

PASCHA SUNDAY - APRIL 19
“Service of Love” Easter Vespers 12:00

BRIGHT MONDAY - APRIL 29
Resurrection Matins 9:00 Liturgy 9:30
Bright Wednesday - Paraclesis 6:30pm; BRIGHT FRIDAY - Liturgy 9:30
DO NOT BE AFRAID
PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR
Comforting Words of Holy Scripture During Times of Distress

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid…
In the world you will have tribulation; but take courage, I have overcome the world
(John 14:27; 16:33)

And remember I am with you always even to the end of the age.
(Matthew 28:20)

“Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”
(Mark 6:49-50)

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”
(Romans 8:28)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:6-7)

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.
(1 Peter 5:7)

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins… God is love and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him… There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear”
(1 John 4:10, 16, 18)

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you… He will never leave you nor forsake you.
Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”
(Deuteronomy 31:6, 8)

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand…
For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.
(Isaiah 41:10, 13)

“The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer.”
(Psalm 18:2)

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.”
(Psalm 118:24)
“I will sleep and rest in peace, 
For you alone, O Lord, cause me to dwell in hope.”  
(Psalm 4:9)

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? 
The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?  
(Psalm 27:1)

The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?  
(Psalm 118:6)

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, 
that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”  
(Hebrews 4:16)

“No evil will conquer you; no plague will come near your home. 
For he will protect you wherever you go.”  
(Psalms 91:10-11)

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. 
In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.”  
(Proverbs 3:5-6)

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 
Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, 
and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, my burden is light”.  
(Matthew 11:28-30)

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack for nothing. 
He makes me to lie down in green pastures. 
He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. 
He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. 
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death 
I will fear no evil, for You are with me; 
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me, 
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies 
You anoint my head with oil my cup runs over. 
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; 
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord to the end of my days”  
(Psalm 23)

“The Lord lives, and blessed by my rock: 
And exalted be the God of my salvation.”  
(Psalm 18:46)

“Be still and know that I am God”.  
(Psalm 46:10)
BUILDING UP THE HOME CHURCH

During these uncertain times when our churches are closed to public worship due to the coronavirus, we have a special opportunity to build up our “Home Church.” Remember, the Church is not a building, but “the Family of God” joining with the saints in worshipping our Lord. And during challenging times, we focus on other ways to pray. Read this story from the past which shows the importance of the Home Church:

“In the 11th century, the Muslim Caliph Al-Hakim decreed the closure of all churches in Egypt for nine years. It was a time of great distress for all Christians. One day, the Caliph was walking through the streets where Christians resided and he heard their voices praising and praying in each house. Then he said, “Open their churches again and let them pray as they please. I wished to close a Church on every street, but today I discovered that when I made this decree, a church was opened in every home.”

If you do not currently have a special place for prayer set aside in your home, create one. It doesn’t have to be fancy or elaborate. It can be the corner of a room, or even a hallway where the family can gather together in prayer on a consistent basis. Create a sacred space. Hang icons on the wall or a shelf or table; have a prayer book and the Bible on the table, and a candle and an incense holder.

Gather the family at your icon corner, light your candle, light incense, use your prayer book and pray together. This way you will build up the Church in your homes and you will build up the temple of the Holy Spirit within the souls of each family member.

Here are some examples of prayer corners from the homes of parishioners in our Church:
Join Our Virtual ZOOM

- Coffee Fellowship
- Bible Studies
- Sunday School
- Church Meetings

Sunday of Orthodoxy
with our Sunday School Students
processing with the icons and
proclaiming the
Triumph of Orthodoxy

Please Continue Stewardship Support

We are in unprecedented and uncertain times. Who could have imagined our entire world shutting down, our churches being closed especially for Holy Week and Pascha, hitting the highest level of unemployment in the history of our country, and our whole society practicing social distancing. These are difficult, confusing days for sure, yet we know that God is with us!

During these uncertain times, we also want every member in our Church Family to know they are not alone, but we are there for one another. If there is anyone in our Church Family that has a need, who needs someone to go to the supermarket or pharmacy for them, or who is simply struggling financially, please contact Fr. Luke. If you also know of other families in the community that are struggling at this time, please let us know. We are a Church Family that wants to help out one another, as well as help out our community at large. We will pray and mobilize resources and volunteers to help those in need. This is the mission of Christ and His Church!

To help us continue this sacred mission of Christ, please continue to support the Church through your stewardship and generosity. 1) Continue to send in your stewardship offering each week or month, 2) Go online at our church website to donate (www.schwebster.org) or help light up our church each week by going online at https://my-site-108326-103062.square.site/.
**Important Dates in APRIL:**

*Make a visit, give a call, or express your congratulations to members of our Church family who celebrate special days during this month.*

**BIRTHDAYS:**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 3</td>
<td>Lex Pappas</td>
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<td>April 7</td>
<td>Persephoni Sgouritsas</td>
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<td>Pauline Mueller</td>
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<td>Kaiden Kunkel</td>
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<td>Ephraim Dunning</td>
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<td>April 21</td>
<td>Muriel Angelo</td>
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<td>April 23</td>
<td>Leslie Manthos</td>
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<td>April 23</td>
<td>Celia Milios</td>
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<td>Harrison Jordanoglou</td>
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**WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES:**

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<td>April 28</td>
<td>Richard &amp; Sophia Bethune</td>
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**NAMEDAYS:**

**Easter**  Anestis Jordanoglou

**Sunday after Easter—St. Thomas**
Thomai Gatsogiannis
Thomas Klebart
Tom Laurea

**April 21**  St. Alexandra
Brittany Alexandra Moore

**April 23**  St George
George Condos
George Dunning

**Our Church paid for the meal on April 17th at Point Breeze to thank all the first responders in Webster for their frontline work!!!**

God bless them and keep them safe.

**MAKE A SPECIAL DONATION DURING LENT IN HONOR OR MEMORY OF A LOVED ONE**

*Please see Fr. Luke or our Church Treasurers to dedicate your offering to someone.*

**Bridegrooms Icon Flowers – $40**

**Uction Supplies - $50**

**16 White Lilies for Easter - $40 /ea**
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!

SAVING DATES FOR SUMMER

(Hopefully these will still go on!)

Vacation Church Camp
June 21-25

Project Mexico
July 16-23

MBC Summer Camp
Week 4 - July 27-Aug 2
(sign up ASAP because this week fills up quickly. Go to www.mbcamp.org)

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

Christos t’ensah em’ muhtani! - The Light - April 2019
Thank You to those who sponsor our monthly bulletin!
# APRIL 2020

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<tr>
<td><strong>CHRIST IS RISEN!!!</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TRULY HE IS RISEN!!!</strong></td>
<td>6:00 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</td>
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<td>13 Holy Monday</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>6:30 Bridegroom Service</td>
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<td>9:30 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</td>
<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>9:00 Royal Hours</td>
<td>9:30 1st Resurrection Service</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>6:00 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy</td>
<td>6:30 Holy Unction Service</td>
<td>6:30 Service of the 12 Gospels</td>
<td>6:30 Paraclesis Service</td>
<td>11:00 Taking Christ Off Cross</td>
<td>11:00pm Resurrection Service and Liturgy</td>
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<td>12 Palm Sunday</td>
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<td>24 Bright Friday - Life-Giving Font</td>
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CHRIST IS RISEN!!!
TRULY HE IS RISEN!!

With Apologies to Dr. Seuss

I do not like this quarantine
I do not like this quiet scene
It seems so very harsh and mean
To have to keep this quarantine

Can I go out to the park?
Can I go out after dark?
No you can't go to the park
No you can't go after dark
Can I go out to the gym?
Can I work out to get slim?

No you mustn't be so dim
Of course you can't go to the gym!
Nor can you go out to the park
Even if it's after dark

Can't I just go out to eat?
Or to buy an ice cream treat?

No you can't go out to eat
Nor to by an ice cream treat
And you can't go to the gym
Not to bulk up or to slim
No you can't go to the park
Even if it's after dark
Even if it's harsh and mean
You have to stay in quarantine!

I can't! I can't! I'll lose my mind!
No walks or trips of any kind?

No walks or trips of any kind
No great loss if you lose your mind
So even if you kick and scream
You have to stay in quarantine!

Why must I follow this dumb rule
It seems ridiculous and cruel
it seems so very harsh and mean
To be stuck in this quarantine!

We're doing this to stop the spread
So no more people end up dead
This will protect the elderly
By acting extra cautiously
If we all do our part, and fast!
All this will soon be in the past
So please stop making such a scene
And just stick to the quarantine!

Ok I think I get it now
We must save lives and this is how
We can't go out with friends to eat
Or to a picnic or retreat
We cannot go out to the gym
(Who'll even see if we are slim?!) We cannot go out to the park
Even if it's after dark
We cannot go out here and there
We should not go out anywhere
I'm sorry for the nudge I've been
I'm gonna stay in quarantine!