Lord willing, we all are hoping to get back to “normal” sometime this year. Yet, what will the “new normal” look like once the pandemic is past? How has this new life of social distancing, wearing masks and being concerned of getting the virus or passing the virus on to others changed us? What long-term impact will the pandemic have in our lives? Has the past year permanently changed us, our relationships with others, and even our understanding of God and His Church?

These are serious questions to reflect upon and to pray about. The pandemic has presented a serious challenge for all of us, but hopefully it has also acted as a wake up call which will help us see more clearly what is most important in life.

When I was sick with COVID for 15 days, feeling miserable with a fever, body aches and extreme fatigue, the experience helped me appreciate life, health, my family and friends, and even my faith and the Church in so many ways I too often took for granted. Not serving in the Divine Liturgy for three Sundays in a row was the longest I was away from the church in my entire life. Some days when I felt too tired to even pray reminded me of how precious the treasure of faith is that we have. I sincerely missed seeing people even for those three weeks, and realized what a special gift we have in friends and in Church family!

I am praying that this pandemic and the time some people are having away from the church will only help them come to a new realization of what a special gift we have in our community of faith. Hopefully we’ve come to understand that despite the unexpected challenges of this pandemic, and the surprising events of whatever life may bring, God is still always with us. In fact, God’s presence is sometimes most consciously felt when we face the extreme difficulties and challenges of life, and hopefully the pandemic has made us realize this.

To be honest, though, I’m not sure everyone will come to the same conclusions that I have reached. I’ll admit that I am praying for everyone to come to a renewed relationship with God and a deeper appreciation of their faith and our Church Family during the pandemic, yet I am also afraid that the difficulties of this past year may only have disconnected too many people from the Church, the community of faith, from one another, and even from one’s relationship with God.

I’m concerned that too many people haven’t been to Church in almost a year. Others have come to worship and shared in Christ-centered fellowship very sporadically. Habits are being solidified where Sunday is no longer the Day of the Lord, the Day of Resurrection, the Sabbath Day which we
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

Father Luke A. Veronis
Telephone: (508) 949-7623 (h) (774) 230-6985 (cell)
e-mail: frlukeveronis@gmail.com

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consciously dedicate to God in a special way. Early on during the pandemic, some people found comfort in worshipping and participating via the live stream services our churches offers. Yet, watching the Divine Liturgy or some other service on television is not the same as participating in person, where we receive the life-giving Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and share in the nourishing Christ-centered fellowship of our Church Family. Someone commented to me that watching the services on live stream compared to participating in person is similar to looking at a beautiful scene of a summer day at the beach on TV compared to being present and experiencing the warmth of the sun, smelling the ocean air, and jumping in the refreshing water. Watching someone on TV can never be compared or replace the actual experience of being there, especially in the worship and fellowship of the Church.

So what is happening with each one of us? How are we adapting? Are we aware of the changes that may be occurring in our lives and in the new habits that are being formed? The Christian life has always been about spiritual disciplines. Disciplines don’t come about automatically and are not easy to develop. They take time and effort. They take sincerity of heart and desire.

We live in a secular world that tempts us to compartmentalize our faith into a small corner of our life, to minimize the importance of our relationship with God, or even to focus on the material world and the here and now instead of remembering that we are but sojourners during a very brief life on planet earth. We discover the answers to the deepest questions of life, we find the purpose and meaning of why we exist, and we discover a path of peace, hope, love and joy when we make a priority our pursuit for God. May we not give in to the temptations of our secular society and may this pandemic only highlight our need to always “seek first the kingdom of God.”

For those I haven’t seen in church, I miss you dearly. I missed not coming to your house for the annual blessing. Yet, you are still in my continual prayers and thus, you are close to my heart.

With much love and hope in Christ Jesus,

+Luke

PARISH HOUSE RENTAL

We are looking for new tenants to rent our Parish House starting in May. If you know of anyone who might be interested, please put them in contact with our Church office or with a Parish Council member.

We want to thank Lisa Healy for donating a number of renovations which have updated our parish house. We also thank Mike Chito and Neal Neslusan for working on the house.

It is in good condition as a rental so please let any friends or co-workers or acquaintances who may be looking for a rental to contact us.

THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who was praying for me and my family over the last month during our bout with COVID. Thank God that we all are doing well. I was feeling sick for 15 days but have fully recovered and feel great. Please continue to pray for several other parishioners who presently have COVID. May our Lord have mercy on all of us and keep us in His care!

With love,

+Luke
A number of years ago under Communism, there was a certain old priest in Romania who would never greet anyone with the typical “Hello” or “Good Morning”. Instead, whenever he greeted anyone, he would say, with a shining smile on his face - “Rejoice always!” Now this may seem like an unusual way to greet someone, but it is even more incomprehensible when one realizes that this priest was in jail, he had a son who was in a Soviet prison, a daughter who was sentenced to 20 years of hard labor, and two sons-in-law who were in jail with him. This man realized that his grandchildren were starving, and his whole family suffered. Still, he could greet people in prison by saying, “Rejoice always!”

When another prisoner asked this priest how he could rejoice when he and his family suffered so much, the priest simply replied, “Rejoicing is easy when we follow one verse from the Bible, “Rejoice with those who rejoice.” If we learn to rejoice with all those who rejoice, we always have plenty of motivation for rejoicing. For example, I sit in jail yet I rejoice that so many are free. I can’t go to Church and receive Holy Communion, yet I rejoice with the millions of people around the world who go to Church weekly and receive Holy Communion. I can’t see my children and grandchildren, but I rejoice with all those who play with their children and grandchildren. When we learn to rejoice with those who rejoice, then we always have something to rejoice over.”

This story truly captures the essence of Christian love and the spirit of our Orthodox faith – to rejoice in the joy of others, to participate in the good will of others, to be happy and grateful when others do well. In other words, the spirit of the Gospel is completely opposite any spirit that may be jealous and envious, contrary to any spirit that covets what others have. Remember the 10th Commandment in the Mosaic Law – “You shall not covet your neighbor’s possessions,” and yet how many of us struggle with rejoicing in the joy of others?

On February 28th we will hear the Gospel story of the Prodigal Son, which offers a memorable illustration of how hard it is to acquire this spirit of joy and love for others’ good fortune. Of course, the Gospel reading of the Prodigal Son is possibly the most beautiful story in the entire Bible because it summarizes, in a very brief manner, many central elements of our faith. Oftentimes, we draw attention to either the Loving Father or the rebellious younger son, because they both teach us about 1) God’s unconditional and never-ending love for us, 2) the fruit of our rejection and departure from God, and 3) how we truly repent, or turn back to Him after we have sinned. Too infrequently, though, we pause to reflect upon the older, obedient son, who never physically left the father, yet who failed to learn and adopt the spirit of the father – the spirit of mercy and love and joy which were so central to the Father’s life!

Let’s briefly recall the story: A father has two sons. The younger son greatly offends the father by asking for his inheritance, and basically by doing this says to his father, “I know I will receive an inheritance when you die. So give it to me now, because I consider our relationship dead and over. Your money is more important to me than you are!”

Because of His unfathomable love, the Father respects the freedom that his younger son possesses, and grants him his request. The Father understands true love can only come where freedom exists, so he allows the younger son to take his inheritance and run away to a distant land. Now we describe how this separation from the Father vividly portrays the fruit sin, and how the utter depravity the son eventually falls into, wasting all his treasure and ending up living among the pigs, represents life away from God. But we’ll save that for another time.

When the younger son finally realizes that he lives in a self-imposed hell, he comes to his senses and returns to his father in humility and deep repentance. The Father, the image of our loving God, not only welcomes his prodigal son back, but even receives him with unimaginable love and mercy. The Father rejoices because his son was lost and is now found, was dead and is now alive! Mercy, joy, love, and grace abound in the Father’s spirit towards his son!
Well, the story doesn’t end with the return of the lost son and the divine love of the Father. Here is where I want to draw our attention. As the Father welcomes the younger son back, and begins to celebrate and feast over his resurrection from death to life, the older son returns home from working in the fields.

Now we need to remember that the older son has never left the side of the father. He has been the dutiful son, staying close to the father, trying to obey his father’s wishes. The only problem is that even though the older son has physically stayed close to his Father, outwardly being the obedient older son, he never understood nor adopted the Father’s spirit of divine love and mercy, of joy and grace. The older son obeyed his father out of duty, not out of love. The older son focused more on the rules and regulations of what an older son should do, instead of striving to imitate the Father’s heart, cultivating the same spirit of joy and love which the Father possessed. Although outwardly the older son never rejected his Father and left his house, as the young son did, the older son’s spirit departed from the Father long ago, becoming hard, cold, and unloving.

As the Father rejoices that his younger son has returned safe and sound, the older son returns from the fields hearing music and a celebration coming from the home. He’s quite annoyed. A feast for my good-for-nothing brother who wasted all his money on prostitutes and prodigal living? Why all this celebration and joy, instead of punishment? Where is the justice that my brother rightly deserves? My father shouldn’t give him a feast, but a beating! My brother deserves nothing more, and I won’t take part in any unjust celebration!”

How many of us can relate with the older son? Truth be told, the father hasn’t been just! He hasn’t given the younger son what he deserves. Instead of justice, the Father has shown mercy. Instead of a beating, the Father has shown love and compassion. Instead of rightly justifying himself to his younger son, the Father humbly rejoices that his son is alive again!

The older son, and it’s probably the older son who represents many of us in the Church, can’t comprehend his Father’s unconditional love and mercy, his infinite forgiveness and kindness. And because of his inability to understand, the older son chooses to stand outside the feast, angry, jealousy, and self-righteous.

If one were to say to the older son, “Rejoice with those who rejoice,” as the Romanian priest in my opening story, the older son would simply look at you with a blank stare, or maybe even with self-righteous contempt. He judged others according to an outward law, instead of according to divine love and God’s mercy.

The Father of the story, who represents our heavenly Father, is truly divine agape, divine love. And the most important characteristic that we his followers must imitate and cultivate within our own lives is such love. Divine love rejoices in the joys of others. Divine love forgives not according to what one deserves, but according to how God forgives each of us. Divine love does not wish the death of a sinner, but that any and every sinner, no matter how terrible they are, will return to their heavenly father and partake in His feast of joy. Divine love knows no jealousy or envy, and does not rejoice in the sufferings of others, but instead is kind and compassionate, rejoicing in and hoping for the good of others!

As we continue our preparation and journey towards Great Lent over the next weeks, let us all focus our attention on how we can capture the loving Father’s spirit of mercy and compassion, of grace and kindness. We truly must cultivate such a spirit of “rejoicing with those who rejoice,” and never wish or rejoice in the ill fortune of anyone, if we sincerely want to walk through life in a Christ-like manner!
"Better is the person who has sinned, if he knows he has sinned and repents, than the person who has not sinned and thinks himself righteous." This advice came from the Desert Fathers, who were holy saints of the 4th century and to whom thousands of people flocked for spiritual wisdom during their time.

Think for a moment about this saying: "Better is the person who has sinned, if he knows he has sinned and repents, than the person who has not sinned and thinks himself righteous."

In other words, the Desert Fathers are teaching us that our salvation and our good standing with God doesn’t depend on whether we sin or not. Reality shows us that we all sin and fall short of the glory of God. I’m reminded of this every time I pray the Trisagion service and I offer a prayer which in part says, “As a good and loving God, forgive every sin this person has committed in word, deed or thought, for there is no one who lives and does not sin.”

The foundation upon which we begin a serious journey towards God and His Heavenly Kingdom must start with the knowledge of our own spiritual situation. The philosopher Socrates taught us to “know yourself.” Knowing oneself in the fullest sense implies knowing our shortcomings and sins as well as knowing the divine potential we all possess. Such self-knowledge is essential for any mature Christian who wants to journey towards God.

We fall into one of the greatest deceptions of life, a lie that hinders any spiritual growth, when we fool ourselves into thinking that our good deeds are worthy of God’s blessing and salvation, that we are “good” people, that in fact, we are better than others. This is why the Desert Fathers warned, “Better is the person who has sinned, if he knows he has sinned and repents, than the person who has not sinned and thinks himself righteous.” Paradise cannot be earned by good deeds or gained through our efforts, no matter how worthy they may be. If any of us think of ourselves as righteous, deserving of heaven, then we walk on a very dangerous precipice. Our Lord Jesus Christ offers the Kingdom of Heaven as a gift to those who turn to Him in humility and love. Of course, sincerely turning to God implies doing many good deeds of unconditional love for people all around us. Good deeds and a life of unconditional love surely play a central part in our journey with God. Yet, we must take care not to think any good deeds earn us the Kingdom of Heaven, and to beware that we can spoil and ruin any good deed of love with an arrogant or self-righteous spirit.

This is why St. Kosmas Aitolos instructs us that “A Christian needs two wings to fly to paradise: humility and love.”

We see this lesson of humility most clearly illustrated in the Gospel story of the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector, which we will hear on February 21. A Pharisee was a well respected religious leader of the Jews who strove to follow every detail of the Mosaic law. He prayed daily. He gave 10% of his money to the Temple. He fasted twice a week. He tried to stay away from any evil acts and tried to obey God’s law. From an external perspective, the Pharisee was a model Jew during the time of Jesus.

Yet in the story, Christ does not praise the Pharisee, but condemns him! Why? Because the Pharisee spoils all his good deeds through his arrogance and self-righteous pride. The Pharisee thought very highly of himself because of his good actions, and his pride led him to judge and condemn others, like the sinful tax-collector.

While the Pharisee noted his external behaviors, he did not “know himself” well enough because he ignored his heart, he disregarded the mean spirit that controlled his being. While the Pharisee lauded his meticulous obedience to the Law, God pierced his heart and found the cancer of arrogance and pride eating his soul away.

In the eyes of God, pride is the first and greatest sin, because pride tempts us to think that we are truly good in and of ourselves. The Bible teaches that only One is good, and that is God Himself, because only God is sinless. All others, no matter how much good we do, still fall short of perfect goodness, because with any good comes plenty of sin in our thoughts, words, and deeds, as well as in our actions and inactions.
The Tax-Collector, in comparison to the Pharisee, was truly a terrible sinner in external terms. Tax-collectors were typically dishonest and dishonorable people. Remember, in the times of Christ, tax-collectors were held in such disrepute that the Jews equated them with murderers and robbers. This tax-collector surely sinned plenty of times, and lived a sinful life, yet in this story he comes to the point of “knowing himself.” He dares enter into the Temple, and unlike the Pharisee who walks to the front, praying in a loud voice for all to hear, the tax-collector stays in a back corner, falling on his face in humility, and quietly crying tears of repentance while offering the most simple prayer, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.”

Although the tax-collector sinned in countless ways, he repented by turning back to God with one of the greatest virtues – humility. Humility means truly knowing yourself – knowing the evil that is within you, as well as the divine potential waiting to burst forth. The tax-collector approached God by hoping solely in His great mercy, and believing that even he, a great sinner, could become once again a child of God!

Now one danger we must take care to avoid, as we listen to this moving story of humility, is to misunderstand the true nature of humility and repentance. Too often I have heard people flipantly say that they can do anything they want, because God will forgive them. Yet, such people fall deeper and deeper into the abyss of sin as they deceive themselves with such a superficial understanding of repentance and humility. Authentic repentance does not denote simply saying “I’m sorry” and then continuing in sin. Sincere repentance entails deep self-reflection, piercing self-understanding, and a radical decision to change the direction of your old way and life, and turn towards the ways of the Lord. Such a surrendering understanding of repentance has absolutely nothing to do with the flippant and careless “I’m sorry. God will forgive me” attitude.

This contrast of humility vs. arrogance, repentance vs. self-assurance, contrite sorrow vs. a self-righteous attitude leave us much to reflect upon as we prepare for our upcoming Lenten Journey. That’s right, Great Lent is only three weeks away, and this parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector is our wake-up call to get ready. We have three weeks before we begin our 40 day journey of fasting and spiritual effort, and the Church reminds us that the first way we can prepare for this journey towards Easter is by “knowing ourselves,” looking within, and evaluating what spirit we possess deep within our souls. Do we possess the spirit of the Pharisee – a bit proud of our deeds, self-assured of our efforts, and judgmental towards others? Or are we cultivating the spirit of the tax-collector – aware of our sinfulness, humble before God, and contrite and sincere in our repentance and turning back towards Him?

Jesus warned us, “Those who think highly of themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

“Better is the one who has sinned, if he knows he has sinned and repents, than the person who has not sinned and thinks himself righteous... A Christian needs two wings to fly to paradise: humility and love.”

“Better is the person who has sinned, if he knows he has sinned and repents, than the person who has not sinned and thinks himself righteous.”
“Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thess 5:17)

Have you ever wondered what St. Paul was talking about? How can a person pray constantly? Yet this wasn’t the only time St. Paul urged his hearers to constant prayer.

“Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer” (Romans 12:12).

“Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance” (Eph 6:18).

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving” Col 4:2.

If he took the trouble to say this to four different communities of faith, he must have thought it was important. And he must have thought it was possible. He wouldn’t have kept urging his hearers to do something that was completely beyond their capability.

In the 2nd through 5th century, men and women began going out into the deserts of Palestine and Egypt to devote themselves wholly to prayer. They are known as the Desert Fathers and Mothers. They wanted to find a way to be in constant communion with God, as St. Paul had urged.

They soon discerned that the reason it’s hard to be in such communion is the ceaseless inner flow of wandering thoughts: old memories, desires, fears, criticism of others, any number of aimless thoughts that disrupt the mind and keep it unsettled. These are not the constructive thoughts used in problem-solving, but the wandering thoughts of a mind seeking something to “chew on.” Since the impediment came in the form of thoughts, the cure was a substitute thought—a single, simple thought of prayer. After experimenting with various short scriptures and petitions, this is the form that emerged: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.” It called the Jesus Prayer.

The prayer is drawn from the Gospels, from passages where people called on Jesus for mercy: the ten lepers who cried, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us” (Luke 17:13), the Canaanite woman who said, “have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David.” (Mt15:22), and blind Bartimaeus, who said, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mk 10:47). In Jesus’ parable, the publican ‘would not even lift his eyes to heaven but beat his breast, saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner!’” (Luke 18:13). These requests for mercy aren’t like a criminal begging a judge for leniency, but are stories of people in need asking for the Lord’s tender mercy.

I’ve been saying the Jesus Prayer for fifteen years now, and have found that it has greatly increased my ability to sense the presence and voice of the Lord. Mostly, it gets rid of the clutter. Instead of being blindsided by thoughts that carry me away into the past or future, I am able to size up the thought and decide whether or not I want to give it my time.

The Jesus Prayer strengthens the part of your mind that observes your mind, building an entryway, as it were, where thoughts must prove their validity before being invited in. At all times, the inner you
rests in the presence of our Lord, the light that drives away all darkness.

As we said, the goal is to pray constantly, but you can’t begin by doing anything all of the time; you have to begin by doing it some of the time, and gradually build up. The advice about acquiring the habit of this Prayer hasn’t changed for 1500 years. Set aside a bit of time each day when you will do nothing but say the Prayer—even just ten minutes a day. Sit quietly, close your eyes, and begin repeating the prayer inside.

The ancient sources speak of “bringing the mind into the heart,” but you must keep in mind that “mind” and “heart” don’t mean “reason” and “emotion” in the ancient texts. (As best I can tell, the notion that we are divided into “head” and “heart” arose in the West in the Middle Ages. It’s not biblical and, I’ve become convinced, not true.) In the ancient writings about the Jesus Prayer, the “mind” is the receptive intelligence, the understanding or comprehension. It is always hungry for something to take in, and restless.

During prayer practice, discipline that hungry mind to keep returning to gaze at the Lord. Deny it anything other than the words of the Prayer to think about. As St. Paul said, “Take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor 10:5). You will find this impossible at first, but very gradually you will make headway. Those who stick with it report that, over time, there is a nearly physical sensation of the prayer activity move from buzzing around the top of your head, to being lodged securely at your physical center, the chest or heart. (This has nothing to do with emotions; the Prayer is a mental exercise, but it does, of course, produce better control over negative emotions.)

I wondered at first how it was possible to be praying all the time when I had so many other things to think about and accomplish. I found that it works by utilizing a layer of your awareness, not your entire awareness. It is like having a friend along as you go through your day. The presence of your silent friend wouldn’t limit your ability to concentrate and handle the demands of daily life, but it would give them a different color or flavor. In this case, the best of Friends provides tranquility, perspective, love for the unlovely, patience, and good humor.

But the purpose of the Jesus Prayer is not tranquility or inner healing; the purpose is to bring you into the presence of Christ. He is all our joy. I think it is wise that the Prayer asks for mercy, to remind us of the necessity of humility, rather than the narcissism that can accompany the self-designation “spiritual.”

So the Jesus Prayer is not an end in itself, but a way of training the mind to remain always in his presence, no matter what else life brings. As the anonymous pilgrim says, in the 19th century Russian text The Way of a Pilgrim, “Sometimes my heart would feel as if it were bursting with joy, so light was it and full of freedom and consolation. Sometimes I would feel a burning love towards Jesus Christ and all of God’s creatures… Sometimes, by invoking the name of Jesus, I was overcome with happiness, and from then on I knew the meaning of the words, ‘The Kingdom of God is within you.’”
"Love all creation," says Starets Zosima in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel The Brothers Karamazov. "Love all creation, the whole of it and every grain sand within it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything you will perceive the divine mystery in things."

The 'divine mystery' of which Staretz Zosima speaks is precisely the interdependence, the reciprocal coherence, of all created things in God. Everything, like the ocean, flows and enters into contact with everything else: touch one place, and you set up a movement at the other end of the world.

Such is Dostoevsky's vision of cosmic unity. The created world constitutes individual whole, and so the salvation of each individual person is inextricably bound up with the salvation of all mankind and, yet more widely, with the salvation of the entire universe. 'We are members of one another' (Ephesians 4:25) needs to be given the broadest possible application. It is not only we humans who depend on each other as the limbs of a single body; but we have bonds of kinship with the animals as well, and also with trees and plants, air and water. We live in them and they in us.

Precisely the same sense of cosmic unity is expressed by Saint Silouan the Athonite: "He who has the Holy Spirit in him, to however slight a degree, sorrows day and night for all mankind. His heart is filled with pity for all God's creatures, more especially for those who do not know God, or who resist Him and therefore are bound for torment. For them, more than himself, he prays day and night, that all may repent and know the Lord".

Archimandrite Sophrony, in his book on Staretz Silouan, sums up the teaching of the Staretz on cosmic coherence in these words: "The life of the spiritual world, the Staretz recognized as one life and because of this unity every spiritual phenomenon inevitably reacts on the state of the whole spiritual world."

Despite the striking parallels between the Russian novelist and the Athonite monk, it is highly unlikely that Saint Silouan had ever read Dostoevsky. More probably, the similarities arise because both are shaped by the same living tradition and both are drawing on the same sources.

Saint Isaac the Syrian, who writes in a famous passage of the Ascetical Homilies: "What is a merciful heart? It is a heart for the whole of creation for humanity, for the birds, for the animals, for demons, and for every created thing. At the recollection and at the sight of them such a person's eyes overflow with tears owing to the vehemence of the compassion which grips his heart: as a result of his deep mercy his heart shrinks and cannot bear to hear or look on any injury or the slightest suffering of anything in creation. This is why he constantly offers up prayer full of tears, even for the irrational animals and enemies of truth, even for those who harm him, so that they may be protected and find mercy."

What exactly does Staretz Silouan mean when faithful to the teaching of Saint Isaac, he affirms that the Saints "embrace the whole world, with their love?" Let us note the all-embracing love and prayer that constitute our true vocation as human persons. There is first his firm conviction that God calls every human being to salvation. Secondly, there is his con-
ception of the "total Adam" and, linked with this, his insistence that my neighbor is myself. Thirdly, there is his firm assurance that in God's total plan it is not only human beings but the entire cosmos that is to be redeemed and transfigured.

"Divine Love Desires Salvation for All"

"It was particularly characteristic of Staretz Silouan to pray for the dead suffering in the Hell of separation from God", writes Father Sophrony and he goes to recall an exchange that he overheard between the Staretz and a hermit:

I remember a conversation between him and a certain hermit, who declared with evident satisfaction, "God will punish all atheists. They will burn in everlasting fire". Obviously upset, the Staretz said: 'Tell me, supposing you went to Paradise and then looked down and saw somebody burning in Hellfire—would you feel happy?' 'It can't be helped. It would be their own fault,' said the hermit. The Staretz answered him with a sorrowful countenance: 'Love could not bear that,' he said. 'We must pray for all!'

The fact that God desires the salvation of all does not mean of course that our salvation is automatic and inevitable. As the Letter to Diognetus states, "God persuades, He does not compel, for violence is foreign to Him. God's call to salvation comes in the form of an invitation, which we on the human side are free to accept or to reject. But, although the response varies, the call is universal."

"Dwelling in heaven, the Saints behold Hell and embrace it too in their love." This is possible for them, because the love that is at work in their hearts is nothing else than the love of God Himself, and God's love is present everywhere—even in hell. God is present in hell, too, as love…Even in hell Divine Love will embrace all men, but, while the love is joy and life for them that love God, it is torment for those who hate Him.

In the words of Vladimir Lossky, "The love of God will be an intolerable torment for those who have not acquired it within themselves."

In the teaching that the power of love extends even to Hell, the Staretz is once more following Saint Isaac the Syrian who writes:

"Even those who are punished in Gehenna are tormented with the scourging of love. The scourges that result from love—that is, the scourges of those who realize that they have sinned against love—are harder and more bitter than the torments which result from fear… The power of love works in two ways: it torments those who have sinned, just as happens here on earth; but those who have observed its duties, love gives delight. So it is in Gehenna: the contrition that comes from love is the harsh torment; but in the case of the sons of Heaven, delight in this love inebriates their souls."
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.

**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: $166,300
(as of November 15)

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

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

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

SAVE THE DATE

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

Please put this date on your calendar.
We hope the pandemic will be behind us
and we will be able to gather as a Church Family
to conclude the celebration of our
Church’s 100th Anniversary in a festive manner!

We need old pictures!!!
We are putting together a video for our 100th Anniversary and we need your help!

We are looking for old pictures that will help us show the history of our church.
If you have any old pictures of your parents or grandparents at some church event,
pictures of the original church on High Street,
pictures from any special events that your parents or grandparents participated in at the church,
during any times from decades ago,
please bring them to the Church office
so we can make copies of them and use them for our 100th Anniversary video.
The Light - February 2021

JOIN OUR NEW BOOK STUDY GROUP

Wednesday 7:00 PM - 8:15 PM following the Paraclesis Service.

We are reading together and discussing C. S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*. This is a fascinating book about temptations and understanding how the devil and his demons strive to lead us astray in our everyday lives.

Join us in person on via zoom for this 12 week course.

YOUTH EPISTLE READERS

Feb 7 - Helen Dunning
Feb 14 - Panayiota Veronis
Feb 21 - Maia Beaudry
Feb 28 - Helen Dunning

Please Continue Stewardship Support With Online Giving

During these uncertain times, we 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, please contact Fr. Luke. If you want to donate toward our Church COVID Fund, which Fr Luke will give to those in need, please send a check to the Church office.

Please continue to support our Church through your stewardship and generosity:

1. By sending in your stewardship offering each week or month.
2. Making online donations or buy candles to light up our church at [https://my-site-108326-103062.square.site/](https://my-site-108326-103062.square.site/).
3. Or go to our website on bottom left corner for online giving at [http://schwebster.org/](http://schwebster.org/)

JOHNSON'S & GREETERS SCHEDULE

(Only for Ushers and Greeters who feel comfortable being back in Church)

- Feb 7—Arthur Bilis, Chris Geotis, Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau
- Feb 14 - Neal Neslusan, Mike Chito Jimmy Karapanos, Brenda Romillard
- Feb 21 - Nicoleta Cojocaru, Chris Dillon, Bill Thompson,
- Feb 28—Marie McNally, Matt Benoit, Lisa Healy, Debby Raymond

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

### Important Dates in FEBRUARY:

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

### BIRTHDAYS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 1</td>
<td>Michael Chito</td>
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<td>Feb 2</td>
<td>Fr Luke Veronis</td>
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<td>Feb 2</td>
<td>Teddy Benoit</td>
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<td>Feb 3</td>
<td>Vasiliki Zahariadis</td>
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<td>Feb 3</td>
<td>Katya Kladas</td>
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<td>Feb 4</td>
<td>Grace Darlagiannis</td>
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<td>Feb 10</td>
<td>Athena Bilis</td>
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<td>Feb 11</td>
<td>Lily Mueller</td>
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<td>Feb 12</td>
<td>Bozena Khozami</td>
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<td>Feb 13</td>
<td>Arthur Darligiannis</td>
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<td>Feb 13</td>
<td>Athanasia Darligiannis</td>
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<td>Feb 13</td>
<td>Norman Desrosiers</td>
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<td>Feb 13</td>
<td>Michael Angelo</td>
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<td>Feb 15</td>
<td>Richard Bethune</td>
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<td>Feb 16</td>
<td>Kelly Vosnakis</td>
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<td>Feb 20</td>
<td>Barbara Constantine</td>
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<td>Feb 23</td>
<td>Eleanor Teguis</td>
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<td>Feb 25</td>
<td>Nike Avlas</td>
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<td>Feb 26</td>
<td>Angelina Papageorge</td>
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<td>Feb 28</td>
<td>John Sgouritsas</td>
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<td>Feb 28</td>
<td>Helen Dunning</td>
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### WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES:

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 11</td>
<td>George/Mary Papageorge</td>
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### NAMEDAYS:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 6</td>
<td>St Photios the Great</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 6</td>
<td>Morgan (Fotios) Vosnakis</td>
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<td>Feb 6</td>
<td>St. Katya</td>
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<td>Feb 6</td>
<td>Katya Kladas</td>
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<td>Feb 10</td>
<td>St Haralambos</td>
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<td>Feb 11</td>
<td>Theodora Veronis</td>
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<td>Feb 11</td>
<td>Theodora Stathis</td>
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<td>Feb 17</td>
<td>St. Theodore</td>
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<td>Feb 17</td>
<td>Ted Theodores</td>
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<td>Feb 26</td>
<td>St. Fotini</td>
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### PRAYERS

The Father is my hope. The Son is my refuge. The Holy Spirit is my protection. Holy Trinity, Glory to You.

Grant to me, O Lord, that with peace of mind I may face all that this new day is to bring. Grant to me to dedicate myself completely to Your Holy Will. For every hour of this day, instruct and support me in all things. WHATSOEVER TIDINGS I MAY RECEIVE DURING THE DAY, TEACH ME TO ACCEPT WITH TRANQUILLY OF HEART, IN THE FIRM CONVICTION THAT ALL WILL FULFILL YOUR HOLY WILL. Govern my thoughts and feelings in all I do and say. When things unforeseen occur, do not let me forget that all comes from You. Teach me to behave sincerely and peacefully toward all people, that I may bring confusion and sorrow to none. Bestow upon me, my Lord, strength to endure the fatigue of the day, and to bear my part in all its passing events. Guide my will and teach me to pray, to believe, to hope, to suffer, to forgive, and to love. Amen.
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!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sun</th>
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<td>8:30 Matins</td>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>8:15</td>
<td>St Harallambos</td>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>MBC Regional Camp at our Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Liturgy</td>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Zoom Bible Study</td>
<td>6:00 Paraklesis</td>
<td>5:00 Vespers</td>
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<td>8:30 Matins</td>
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<td>10:00</td>
<td>Zoom Bible Study</td>
<td>6:00 Paraklesis</td>
<td>7:00 Book Study</td>
<td>5:00 Vespers</td>
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<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Bible Study</td>
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<td>7:00 Book Study</td>
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<td>Triodion Begins</td>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>No Fasting</td>
<td>10:00 Zoom Bible Study</td>
<td>6:00 Paraklesis</td>
<td>7:00 Book Study</td>
<td>5:00 Vespers</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
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<td>Bible Study</td>
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<td>7:00 Book Study</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>March 1</td>
<td>March 2</td>
<td>March 3</td>
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<td>March 5</td>
<td>March 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 Matins</td>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>1st Saturday of the Souls</td>
<td>8:45 Matins</td>
<td>9:30 Liturgy and Memorial Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Zoom Bible Study</td>
<td>6:00 Paraklesis</td>
<td>8:45</td>
<td>Matins</td>
<td>5:00 Vespers</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 Parish Council Meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bible Study</td>
<td>7:00 Book Study</td>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Liturgy and Memorial Service</td>
<td>5:00 Vespers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fall in Love

Fr. Pedro Arrupe

Nothing is more practical
than finding God,
than falling in Love
in a quite absolute, final way.
What you are in love with,
what seizes your imagination,
will affect everything.
It will decide
what will get you out of bed each morning,
what you do with your evenings,
how you spend your weekends,
what you read, whom you know,
what breaks your heart,
and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.
Fall in Love, stay in Love,
and it will decide everything.