FORGIVING OTHERS

“Forgive a wrong done you by your neighbor; then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.”

(Wisdom of Sirach 28:2)

In my prayers this morning, I read this beautiful Old Testament passage. Of course, it resonates completely with our Lord’s message of mercy and forgiveness. “Forgive us our trespasses,” Jesus teaches us to pray, “as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

Forgiveness and mercy play such a central role in our Christian faith, and yet, how difficult it is to live according to this divine principle. Others offend us, hurt us, do all sorts of things against us, and our fallen human nature wants to respond with anger, revenge, hurt, pain, bitterness, self-righteousness, and the decision NOT to forgive. We look at how others treat us, and we want to respond in like manner.

Yet, when we strive to live under the reign and rule of God, we make the conscious decision NOT to take the path of the majority; we decide NOT to imitate those who hurt us; we commit NOT to walk as our fallen nature leads us.

Instead, our faith reminds us to look at ourselves, and see our own shortcomings and sinfulness. Before God, who among us can say we are sinless? Before God, who among us can say that we are so good? Before God, who among us can claim that we have done no wrong to anyone else?

When we keep our focus on our sinfulness, it is much easier to realize our own need for mercy and forgiveness from God. And humbly turning to God for His compassion should then lead us to express a similar compassion towards others.

Listen carefully to what the Wisdom of Sirach 28:2-7 teaches us:

Forgive a wrong done you by your neighbor; then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.
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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FORGIVING OTHERS

Can a person preserve wrath against his neighbor and still seek healing from the Lord?

Can a person show no mercy towards another like himself, and still beg God for mercy for himself?

If one human being keeps his anger continually, who will atone for his sins?

Remember the end of your life, and cease from enmity.

Remember destruction and death and stand fast in the commandments.

Remember the commandments and do not express your anger against your neighbor.

Remember the covenant of the Most High God, and overlook faults of others!

One of the most common problems a priest deals with in his community will be the issue of people not willing to forgive one another, which leads to greater anger and bitterness, which then leads to breaking one’s communion with another. How many of us know of people who won’t speak to one another for weeks or months, and then it turns into years.

Life is too short to hold onto such grudges. Our Lord Jesus is so merciful and gracious to us, and those of us who follow Him are called to imitate his love and compassion.

I remember two good friends of mine who themselves were best friends with each other. Things happened that led these two best friends to break communion with one another, to reject one another, to not accept to forgive one another, and to go TEN YEARS without speaking to each other. Only when one was diagnosed with cancer and ready to die, did they grudgingly acknowledge one another. And the sad ending to this so common story is that years later, I witnessed the children of one of these men who now have fought with each other and who presently are going on several years without speaking to one another.

The spirit of the world arrogantly instills in us a self-righteous attitude of how we are better than others. If someone hurts us, then “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” We must seek justice when we are hurt. Others must pay for their transgressions. The world too often looks at anger, bitterness, stubbornness, and self-righteous pride as acceptable responses to hurt and offense. The world, unfortunately, does not follow the Good News which our Lord brought into the world.

Jesus Christ teaches us to “turn the other cheek,” to “forgive 70 x 7,” to “love your enemies” and “to do good to those who harm you” and “to bless those who curse you.” This may sound impossible for many people of the world, but for those of us who call ourselves followers of Jesus, we must realize that this is the spirit of His Kingdom. Living under God’s reign, and striving to allow His Holy Spirit to inspire and guide us in our lives, we should realize that forgiveness and mercy are not impossible ideals.

The key is for each of us to open up our hearts to the Almighty’s Spirit, and allow Him to direct us. We need to meditate upon Holy Scripture and allow this mindset to influence and govern our own world view.

It surely will be hard to forgive at times, and we may be tempted to shut out a person who has hurt us from our lives, yet this is the path that leads to death. Life, as it was meant to be lived, and Life that continues for all eternity, is a life of communion with one another. Mercy, forgiveness, compassion, kindness, and agape love - these are the virtues of living in God’s Kingdom!

Let us forgive one another

With deep gratitude for the mercy of God,

+ Luke
The Worcester Telegram and Gazette wrote about our Church, “When it comes to the adage ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive,’ Saints Constantine and Helen Church practices what it preaches.” We put into practice the Joy of Giving! We have learned the understanding that We are Blessed So That We Bless Others, so that we share our blessings with others less fortunate! This is the spirit of our Church and we want to cultivate this in all our members.

We kicked off the “Good and Faithful Steward Challenge” at the end of November and have completed its first phase. We gave monetary gifts to 55 families in our community and asked them to glorify God by reaching out to people or organizations in need, and to share God’s love in a concrete way with these people. We’ve gotten back a number of responses and are getting an idea of how we have glorified God! We also have seen how families have seriously discussed how they can help others and even shared with friends about this great Challenge. It’s generating a lot of thoughtful discussion, reflection, prayer, and action!

We are now passing out the gifts to the next 55 families, asking them to continue and build upon this blessed spirit in our Church! But first, let’s hear and reflect upon what some of our people have been doing. Here are a few of the responses we’ve received from this Challenge:

1. Since the start of the Good and Faithful Steward Challenge, my family and I have talked a lot about the monetary gift we received from the Church. We truly feel that it is important to take time and reflect on the wonderful opportunity we’ve been given and to determine how best we can use our gift to glorify God. Although we have yet to determine where we will donate the money we received, we have been inspired to become charitable on our own. We feel God has blessed us in our lives and hope that in some small way we can help others. We decided to match and go beyond what the Church gave us by donating our own money in a variety of ways. Our goal is to donate to a charity or individual every month for an entire year. We gave Fr Luke $250 in gift cards to hand out for Thanksgiving, $200 in gift cards for Christmas, and $200 in January for the Church Agape Fund to help families in need.

2. We sat down as a family and brainstormed how to use this gift. We decided to help two families who’ve faced tough time. One family has had car troubles all year, the wife is disabled, and the husband works many jobs to keep the family afloat. They have children with lots of needs. The other family was unable to have children so they adopted three siblings, all who are survivors from drug withdrawal as infants. They also foster the fourth sibling. They have been having a hard time keeping up with mortgage payments. We decided to give each family $125 to their favorite store, and then took $50, bought food and invited both families over for dinner, surprised them with the gift cards and gave them an ornament to remember our get-together. We built gingerbread houses and so enjoyed our Christmas.
time together. Thank you so much for giving us this opportunity to help others.

3. This Good and Faithful Steward Challenge is brilliant! I’m not even from your church, but two of my close friends told me all about it. This idea is quite a lesson for me personally. I was enamored with thoughts of how one would share the talent and make it “bigger” for the Master verses burying it to “protect” it? Would I try to double the talent and give it back? I thought of the parable about “giving a man a fish” versus “teaching a man to fish.” I thought of a local waitress where I go for lunch. She takes care of her mother and has a son and daughter-in-law who live with their two small children in NC. She can only get down to see them every year and a half. I decided to help them. I talked with my two friends about what they will do with their gift. They took this idea so seriously and wanted to do something that would truly glorify God. In the end, this Challenge made us all think a lot and pray a lot about the best way to glorify God with the talents He has given us. IT REALLY CHANGED THE WAY I THINK GOING FORWARD. That may be the greatest lesson from this exercise!

4. “Now this Challenge is absolutely amazing! Imagine a church having money and giving it back to their parishioners to help others? I’m floored. This to me shows the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Your Church is “walking the walk.” Maybe some of your people need this gift desperately and I hope they keep it. Yet, all of your parishioners have been challenged to pay it forward! This spreads God’s light, His kindness and joy right in your hometown. Your Church is looking at the people right under your noses and helping them in a tangible way. This is not some abstract ‘hope’ in Christ, but it is very concrete. Your people are experiencing the joy of giving, which maybe some thought they couldn’t afford to do otherwise. I am just blown away by this. I’ve never seen it before and I’m very impressed.” (from an observer not from our church)

5. Our family discussed what we would do and decided to split up the gift between the four of us, allowing each one to use it wherever they felt best. I donated my portion to St. Luke’s Guesthouse, a homeless shelter in Southbridge. They told me that residents supply their own food, so I donated $50 along with a bag of food and a bag of clothes. My husband knows of a special-needs man who walks to and from work everyday. On his way home every day he stops at 21 West and buys a couple beers with a handful of loose change. My husband decided to give his $50 to pay for the man’s drinks for a few days, without him knowing. My daughter gave a $50 food card to a friend whose relative is struggling.

6. My family and I really wrestled with trying to agree upon a charity that would honor Emmanuel Pappas’ memory as well as benefit the community he loved. We discussed many charities that benefit women in developing nations, the American Red Cross with whom I have personal experience, St Jude’s Hospital, and the Worcester County Food Bank. Ultimately, our family already supports each of these charities. So, we decided the best way to use this money was to help our local community. We are returning the $300 and adding another $100 so that we can sponsor one meal at our church’s monthly Living Bread Luncheon in memory of Emmanuel Pappas. We have witnessed the appreciation of the 100 guests who attend these luncheons and feel this would best honor his memory. (A second person also wrote, “I think our Church’s Living Bread Luncheon is such a special event, and it offers loving fellowship and a delicious meal to so many people. I’m returning the $100 gift the Church gave me and adding an additional $50 to be put forward to partially sponsoring one of our Luncheons.”)
7. I am so thankful for God’s providence. I received this gift from God and used the money to help someone buy four new tires for their car. Without this help, they could never have been able to buy new tires.

8. I prayed a long time before giving away this gift. I prayed God would show me the right person or organization to give it to. God showed me a need in a person’s life one Sunday morning. He touched my heart and I knew who to give it to. I did it anonymously and felt so blessed glorifying God by sharing this gift. Praise God! He is faithful in all circumstances and will lead us in the right direction when we ask Him.

9. The responsibility of sharing in this mission of faithful giving turned out to be more of a challenge than expected. It was a true endeavor of love and commitment. We were led to realize the need of a family who had a dire hardship. This husband is a handyman and the wife works in a distribution center. They have four children and struggle to make ends meet. The husband’s work was terminated for the winter months and he scrambled to find means to support his family. When my husband offered this man our gift, he looked at us in disbelief. Many tears flowed from these men together in a garage sharing a gift that was so needed for his family. He expressed such gratitude and awe that a Christian church would give this money to the parishioners to make a difference to others in need. The concept of this challenge created a wonderous joy within us.

10. We decided to divide up our gift and give it to the following places: 1) St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, which offers free treatment, as well as room and board, to children with the most severe conditions; 2) Worcester County Food Bank, which increased our gift fourfold. We learned that 1 in 9 children from the Worcester County do not have enough food to eat; 3) Children’s books for the Webster Public Library, 4) Dunkin Donut gift cards given out in the name of our church. I even saw one “Thank you for making my start of the day better” because of our gift on the Webster/Dudley/Oxford facebook page. I have to say that donating this money made us feel as if we wanted to help those in need even more.

11. I donated the gift to the CT Food Bank, where I have volunteered at the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen in New Haven from 8th grade until I graduated from high school. I knew that I wanted to use my donation in a way that would help the greatest number of people most efficiently. Given that none of the work I did at the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen would have been possible without the CT Food Bank, I knew this was a good choice. Second, the problem of poverty in Connecticut, with a proliferation of drugs and mental illness are a big factor in urban poverty: they are spurs and aggravators for people who are on a downward trajectory toward poverty. Because of this, I felt it was important to entrust the donation with someone who could use it responsibly. As a sidenote, I have been attending your church for the past six months and my experience with your community was more enriching, encouraging, and heartening than I think I can express with words. The care you took to speak with me, to guide me in the parish customs and encourage me in worship has greatly impacted me. I was able to take my rightful place in the broader work of the community as a prayerful participant in the liturgy and as a servant to Christ in the poor through the Good and Faithful Steward Challenge. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to occupy my place in doing the good work of prayer and charity.
12. Our family thought very hard about what to do with the church's gift. There are so many wonderful organizations and people in need. We thought of the homeless, foster children, underprivileged children. It is overwhelming when you stop and think how many people need support. We wanted to do something that has an impact on people and can help in a positive way. Our children have been blessed with music the last few years, and we've seen how it has helped them grow and give them confidence. Our son’s music teacher started a non-profit organization called OpporTUNEity. The organization brings kids from Worcester who may not otherwise be able to participate in music classes to Anna Maria for a music program. A music therapist teaches many kids with disabilities. One of her newer programs brings Anna Maria students and herself to teach songwriting to inmates at the Worcester County House of Corrections. This program is where we've decided to use our gift. I know Melissa received some flack for running a program for those who have "done wrong" and we struggled at first with our choice, but in the end, helping those who have been led astray is central to Christianity. Watching one of her concerts with these people is so powerful because we can see the joy on their faces, and we hope that this experience helps them to heal and perhaps want to strive to do good things with their lives when they are released.

13. After receiving the gift from the Challenge, I thought and prayed about what I should do. I first thought about giving it away in $20 amounts to anyone I meet on the street asking for money. But I don’t really go walking on the streets much, so this was a romantic idea. After more reflection, I looked to see where homeless shelters are in the area. I drove to St Luke’s Guesthouse in Southbridge and was impressed by the neatness and general feel of welcome. It is run by a doctor and his wife, and they take in homeless men, women and children. The place supports people looking for housing and work. It keeps 75% of any earnings and puts this money into the individual’s savings account, which is held until the person is ready to leave. Help and counseling are provided. There is room for up to 12 people and they can stay for three months. I want to keep supporting this beautiful ministry.

14. I prayed and asked God for help in finding the proper place to offer this gift. I divided the money and gave it to several charities – the Christian Appalachian Project for poor families, the Boys and Girls Club, Pine Street Inn who helps the homeless in Boston, and then gave part of it to a lonely 85 year old neighbor who doesn’t have any relatives, and struggles to keep her house warm. She cuts firewood herself to warm her house. Despite her living conditions she is so positive and was very grateful for the help from our Church.

15. As a family, this was much more difficult to decide how to use this gift. We came up with many different ideas, but in the end we did the following: 1) Supported a Toy Drive for Christmas at our children’s after school program, 2) Bought blankets for a “Winter Warmth Drive” at the hospital, 3) Donated for pajamas at Children’s Hospital, and 4) used a modest amount to buy supplies and run a hot chocolate stand to raise money for our school (and so far we have doubled the money we will give to the school). It feels great to give and people are so appreciative. It was also an educational process to get the kids to think about all the different ways good could be done!

16. I prayed and asked God to help me discern among the many needs. I decided to give part of the donation to the NASCAR Family Foundation for children in need with terminal illnesses. I also gave part of the money to the Hospice and Palliative Care. My eyes filled with tears and my heart was gladdened by being able to help others.

17. I gave the money to the St. Catherine’s Embroidery Project 2020, which pays widowed Bedouin women of the Jebelinja tribe a fair
wage to sew bags that will be sold at St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai.

18. I gave the money to my niece who will use it for the Farm Hands Preschool, a small community that works for social justice by raising children in a multi-ethnic climate of love, generosity, vulnerability and connection with one another.

19. An anonymous donor read what we are doing in the local newspaper, and was so inspired by it, that they sent in the mail $150 worth of gift cards to give away during Christmas. This is similar to how one of our Church Family members was telling her neighbor about what our Church is doing. The next day, this neighbor came back to our parishioner’s home with $600 in gift cards and told her to give it to the priest and have him pass them out to needy families.

The joy of giving! Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Realizing that we are blessed by God so that we can share those blessings with others less fortunate. This is what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. This is what it means to be the Church of Christ. This Good and Faithful Steward Challenge is meant to inspire and motivate all of us to continue glorifying God in all that we do and to act as good and faithful stewards with all of the blessings He gives us every day!

HOW OUR CHURCH HAS GLORIFIED GOD THUS FAR:

♦ Helped at least 37 specific families in need and entered into their lives by sharing God’s love and presence
♦ Supporting two months of the Living Bread Luncheon, which touches 100 people each month
♦ St Luke’s Homeless Shelter
♦ Toys Drive for Children
♦ Winter Warm Drive
♦ Bedouin women in Egypt
♦ Farms Hand Preschool
♦ NASCAR Family Foundation
♦ Hospice and Palliative Care
♦ Pajamas for Children’s Hospital
♦ Pine Street Inn Homeless Shelter
♦ Boys and Girls Club
♦ Christian Appalachian Project
♦ OpporTUNEity
♦ CT Food Bank
♦ St Jude’s Hospital
♦ Worcester Food Bank
♦ Webster Library
♦ Dunkin Donuts to random people
♦ Helped someone buy new tires
♦ TEEG

Let’s keep the stories coming!!!
At no matter what age of life we die, we always see death as a distortion of our existence. Death portrays a horrible tragedy because it is the fruit of evil in the world. We were not created to die. When Almighty God created the first man and woman in his own image and likeness, he meant for all humanity to live for eternity with Him. Since God has no end, He desired for His beloved creation to dwell in His infinite love forever. This is why, deep within each of us, we all sense an innate desire for life!

From this perspective, death is fearful, and something we despise. And yet, although we can see death as the greatest evil, St. Paul counsels us “not to mourn as those who do not have hope.” He advises us to never despair over the dead, because “if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.” (1 Thess 4:14)

Here is the essence of our Christian faith and the Good News we proclaim week after week. “Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by His own death, and granting life to those in the tombs!”

For all of us who have believed in Christ and walked with Him in the newness of life here and now, death becomes but a doorway into a fuller union with Him. This is why St. Paul could say, “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Phil 1:21) The Apostle Paul goes on to say, “If we have been united [through baptism] in the likeness of Christ’s death, we also shall be [united] in the likeness of His resurrection.” (Rom 6:4-5)

We all have loved ones who have passed away, and as a Church we never forget them. At each Divine Liturgy, I remember all the faithful who have died and passed on. On their anniversaries, whether the 40 day memorial, the one year memorial, the three year memorial, as well as on the Saturday of the Souls, which we hold for two Saturdays right before the beginning of Great Lent, and then on the first Saturday of Lent, as well as right before the Saturday of Pentecost, we remember the departed, and pray for them.

Why? What is the purpose of our memorial service and why do we pray for the dead?

To answer this question, I first want us to understand clearly how we, as Orthodox Christians, view death itself. Then, I will explain why we remember the dead continuously, and pray for them.

Although death is the culmination of evil in our world, for Christians our faith in Jesus Christ transforms death. For one who is united to our Lord here on earth, death is no longer a fearful and tragic conclusion of one’s life. It is but an entranceway into a new beginning!
I remember a story my parents told me about their first travel abroad 60 years ago. My father and mother had only been married for half a year, and my mother was several months pregnant, when both got on a boat heading towards Greece, so that my father could study at the University of Athens. Both my parents remember vividly the scene of their farewell, as they leaned on the rail of the ship waving goodbye to tearful family and friends. Many mixed emotions passed through their minds as the ship slowly sailed away, and the figures of their loved ones got smaller and smaller in the horizon. During the long journey which followed, my parents became anxious about their separation from family, their pregnancy, and their new life in Athens.

When they arrived at the port of Piraeus many days later, however, their anxieties and concerns were washed away as other relatives and family friends lovingly waited to receive them in their new country.

Death itself may seem like an uncertain, even fearful journey, and yet as Christians we know who awaits us on the other side. Our Lord Jesus Christ is there, lovingly waiting, with His arms outstretched, ready to embrace us in deeper union with Himself, and welcome us into our eternal home.

As Christians, we can face death with hope, knowing that our loving, all merciful and compassionate Lord awaits us! Divine love is greater than death. St. Paul even dares to say, “Death has been swallowed up in victory!” The victory of divine love.

Well, this same love is central to understanding the role of the Memorial Service in the Orthodox Church. We remember and pray for the dead because of God’s divine love for us, and our sacred love for one another.

As the famous French writer and Catholic reformer Leon Bloy once wrote, “To say to a person ‘I love you’ is tantamount to saying ‘you shall never die.’”

We express our love to our departed ones through our prayers to reaffirm that those who have died are not dead to us, nor to God. Our love for one another continues even after death. Metropolitan Anthony Bloom so beautifully explains, “A person bereaved must learn never to speak of the love relationship that existed before in the past tense. One should never say ‘We loved one another.’ We should always say ‘We love each other.’ If we allow our love to become a thing of the past, we have to recognize that we do not believe in the continuing life of the person that died.”

St. Paul teaches, “Love never ends.” The Church understands well this precept, and
therefore, continues to pray for the dead always. Since love never ends, our prayers never end; our communion with the departed never end; our union with them through Christ never ends.

Our prayers for the dead reveal in a most beautiful way our understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ both here on earth and in heaven. We are one Church, which includes those struggling here on earth, together with those who now live in fuller union with God in paradise. Just as we pray for one another here on earth, we also pray for those who have departed. The Body of Christ is not just the members who we see each week in Church. The Church is also the saints who we see in the icons, and the beloved faithful who have died and live in Christ. That is why before each Divine Liturgy, when I am preparing the bread which will be used for Holy Communion, I offer prayers for each one of you by name, as well offer prayers for the names of many who have died. There is no separation in our prayers for the living and the dead. Divine love unites us all together, as one Church.

So we hold Memorial Services and pray for the dead because we love!

Now, I know some people will say, “OK, I understand we pray for the dead because our love for them never ends, but do our prayers actually help those who have died?”

Sincere prayer unites us to God, and when we pray for others, we believe our prayers can help others in their own union towards their Creator.

Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald, a professor at Holy Cross Theological School, writes, “Death alters but does not destroy the bond of love and faith which exists among all the members of the Church. Orthodoxy believes that through our prayers, those "who have fallen asleep in the faith and the hope of the Resurrection" continue to have opportunity to grow closer to God. Therefore, the Church prays constantly for her members who have died in Christ. We place our trust in the love of God and the power of mutual love and forgiveness. We pray that God will forgive the sins of the faithful departed, and that He will receive them into the company of Saints in the heavenly Kingdom.”

Of course, some who have died have not lived a righteous life of faith and love in Christ Jesus. Even for such as these, we still pray with hope. We know that God’s unfathomable mercy and love is immeasurably greater than any sin or shortcoming of a person, no matter how evil. Therefore, by turning to this ocean of love in prayer, we believe as Orthodox Christians that our prayers in some way, and this way may be a part of the mystery of God, our prayers bring in some way comfort and benefit to the person we pray for!

Love compels us to pray for one another, with hope and with faith. And death can never stop this!

As a symbol of this hope we have for the dead, it is traditional for the family to bring a bowl of boiled wheat to the Church for the Memorial Service. This wheat, known as kollyva in Greek, reminds us of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ spoke, “Unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.” (Jn 12:24)

Death is not the end, and our Memorial Service concretely proclaims this fact!
BLESSINGS FOR A NEW YEAR

Congratulations to the three who found the special coins from the Vasilopita Luncheon:

EVELYN APERGES
NIKE BEAUDRY
ARISTOS PROIMAKIS

May the prayers of St. Basil be with you and bless you throughout the new year of 2020!
Come Support our

Pancake Breakfast & Bake Sale
Sponsored by our “Good and Faithful Steward Challenge”

8:00am-11:00am,
Saturday, Feb 8
(snowdate Feb 29)

Includes 2 pancakes, scrambled eggs, 2 sausage, homefries
Milk, Coffee, and Juice

Tickets: Adults $8.00   Children under 12 $6.00

We need volunteers to bake pastries and cookies, and to help serve and clean up. Please contact Sara Darlagiannis for details (508-207-3177)

All Proceeds to benefit the homeless of our community through the Blessed Backpack Brigade and the Veterans Council

100th Anniversary Dates to Remember

March 13-15 - Eikona Music Weekend and Concert & Visit from the miraculous Kardiotisa Tender Hearted Icon
June - Getting to Know our Neighbor Dinner
July - Indian Princess Greek Night
*Nov 14, 2020 - 100th Anniversary Gala Dinner at the Mansion at Bald Hill in Woodstock, CT
Save the Dates for a Very Inspirational Weekend!!!

The Miraculous Kardiotissa (Tender Hearted) Icon of the Virgin Mary

to visit our Church

6:00pm, Friday, March 13th
during the 2nd Salutations Service

Plus

A Weekend with EIKONA

(Eikona (pronounced ee-ko-na), is a three-sister ensemble who chant Byzantine-styled Hymns and sing Contemporary Christian Music. Rooted in the Greek Orthodox Church, their music preserves, shares and promotes centuries’ worth of rich, musical tradition of hymns and psalmody. Their angelic voices have been heard in services and homes around the world and continue to inspire, encourage, and excite countless people.)

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

6:00pm EIKONA will chant the 2nd Salutations Service
6:45pm Fr. Mark Leisure will talk about the miracles of the Kardiotissa followed by the Paraclesis Service and Anointing with Holy Myrrh
9:00pm High School GOYA Overnight Retreat with the icon

SATURDAY, MARCH 14

9:30am-12:30pm A Great Lenten Retreat led by EIKONA
   Two Presentations:
   * Experiencing and Understanding Orthodox Worship
   * Building a Personal Prayer Life

5:00pm Great Vespers chanted by EIKONA
6:00pm - A 60 minute CONCERT of uplifting EIKONA Christian Songs with Lenten Appetizers and Wine

SUNDAY, MARCH 15

8:30am EIKONA will chant Matins followed by the Divine Liturgy
SUPPORT OUR PROJECT MEXICO TEAM

Dear Beloved Parishioners

Our Church will once again send a MISSION TEAM TO MEXICO to serve our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church in a cross-cultural setting. This will be the Ninth TIME our Church will send such a group. We are sending a team of 25 participants. As in past years, we will travel to Mexico and work with the PROJECT MEXICO, while staying at the St. Innocent Orphanage. We will go from July 16-22, 2020.

Our primary goal will be to help construct a home for a needy family in Rosarito. Over the entire summer, Project Mexico will be building 30+ homes. We will also spend time with the teenage orphans at the St. Innocent home, as well as spend time with the local people we meet.

In order for our group to participate in this mission trip, WE ARE RAISING $25,000, which will pay for the supplies and materials needed to build the house, our food and lodging at the orphanage, our flights to San Diego and the van we must rent for Mexico.

Would you prayerfully consider becoming a spiritual and financial partner with us on our mission? As a financial partner, you can make a tax-deductible donation to Sts. Constantine and Helen Church. Please write Project Mexico in the memo line of the check. You can learn more about Project Mexico on their website www.projectmexico.org.

Thank you for helping our Church fulfill its part in our Lord’s global mission and outreach!!

In Christ’s love,

+Luke

THE AGAPE FUND

In January, I blessed approximately 150 homes. It was a joy to enter your homes and bring God’s special grace for the New Year. Thank you for welcoming me warmly. If I missed your home, and you want it blessed, please call me to set up a time to come.

When I blessed your home, many of you gave me a monetary gift. Please know that it is my joy to come into your homes and bring the special blessing of our Lord. No monetary gift is ever expected, and if you give a gift, know that I do not keep it for myself. All the money I receive from House Blessings, as well as any money received from Sacraments (Baptisms & Weddings) or Memorials and Funerals goes into my “AGAPE FUND.” I use this AGAPE FUND to help a variety of people in need - this may include people within our parish, as well as others outside our Church Family. I also use it to help various Church ministries. I always welcome any donations made out to this special fund.

If anyone tells me of a special need, I will try to respond to it. Of course, any such help is always held in the utmost confidence.

THANK YOU again for supporting this special AGAPE Fund!

With love in Christ,

+Luke
Join us for

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
HELPING TO BUILD A HOME IN WORCESTER

Saturday, March 28

We need 12 volunteers to serve from 8am to 4pm.

Contact Fr. Luke.

WISDOM FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE

If you draw near to serve the Lord, prepare your soul for temptation. Set your heart right and be steadfast, and do not strive anxiously in distress. Accept whatever is brought upon you, and in exchange for your humiliation be patient; because gold is tested in fire and acceptable men in the furnace of abasement. Believe in Him, and He will help you, make your ways straight and hope in Him.

Wisdom of Sirach 2:1,2,4-6

All wisdom comes from the Lord and is with Him forever... The beginning of wisdom is to fear the Lord... The fear of the Lord is the crown of wisdom... The root of wisdom is to fear the Lord.

Wisdom of Sirach 1:1,12,16,18

Do not set your heart on your possessions, and do not say, “I am independent.” Do not follow yourself and your strength, so as to walk in the desires of your heart... Do not delay to turn to the Lord, and do not put it off from day to day.

Wisdom of Sirach 5:1,2,7

THANK YOU

Thank You to all our Stewards Who supported our Church in 2019.

These are names we missed mentioning in the January bulletin:

Ethel Angelo
George/Julie Milios
Vasiliki Zahariadis

The Light - February 2019
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW PARISH COUNCIL OFFICERS

President: Michael Chito
Vice President: Joseph Gliniecki
Secretary: Marie McNally
Treasurers: Leah DiDonato and Bill Thompson

LIVING BREAD LUNCHEON

12:30-1:30pm, Saturday, February 1

The January Luncheon is offered in loving memory of CHARLES CHITO
From his wife Ann and the Michael Chito Family

You can honor a special person or offer the meal in loving memory of a beloved one for a $400 donation (which will feed 120 people)

We Need Help for Coffee Fellowship Hour.

Please let the Church Office know if you can help ONCE every EIGHT weeks to bring pastries, donuts, fruit or veggies for our coffee fellowship.

We are also looking for more volunteers to join one of our four groups and help serve the Coffee Fellowship once a month!

+ + +

USHERS/GREETERS

Also looking for a few more stewards to join one of our four Greeters and Ushers groups!

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

Wednesday 10:00am At the Church

Thursday 7:00pm at home of Fr Luke/Pres Faith (41 Noble St, Dudley)

Everyone welcome!

Come and Learn our Faith through Study of Holy Scripture.
Coffee Fellowship Supply
Pastries/Donuts Groups

*These groups will bake or bring in pastries/donuts and/or fruit and veggies for our coffee fellowship. We are looking for more volunteers to help!!!*

Feb 2 – Sandi Kunkel, Evelyn Pappas, Gulapka Kostovski, Betty Tonna
Feb 9 – Kathy Bilis, Marie Monroe, Eleni Sgouritsas, Tina Collelo
Feb 16 - Leah Didonato, Mary Seferi, Olga Poulokhine, Vasiliki Zahariadi
Feb 23 - Sara Darlagiannis, Sissy Darligiannis, Helen Constantine Alexandra Koulax
Mar 1 – Lisa Healy, Marie McNally, Despina Condos, Trish Lareau
Mar 8 Charlotte Neslusan, Evis Jordanoglou, Dolly Sosnowski, Annalisa Dunning
Mar 15 – Lynn Purcell, Rayne Purcell Sophia Foisy, Kelly Vosnakis
Mar 22 - Titi Chito, Rina Sgouritsas, Pres. Faith Veronis

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Monday, Feb 10 - 8:45 Matins; 9:30 Liturgy for St Harallambos and St Theodora
Wednesday Feb 19 = Paraclesis Service to the Virgin Mary
1st Saturday of Souls, Feb 22 - 8:45 Matins; 9:30 Liturgy w Memorial Service
2nd Saturday of Souls Feb 29—8:45 Matins; 9:30 Liturgy w Memorial Service

USHERS & GREETERS SCHEDULE

Feb 2 Arthur Bilis, Chris Geotis, Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau
Feb 9 Marie McNally, Matt Benoit, Lisa Healy, Nick Seferi
Feb 16 - Neal Neslusan, Jimmy Karapanos, Brenda Rombillard Tatyana Zhuk, Mike Chito
Feb 23 – Nicoleta Cojocaru, Chris Dillon, Jared Quill, Bill Thompson

COFFEE FELLOWSHIP SERVING GROUPS

Feb 2- Sara Darlagiannis, Christine Kiritsis, Charlotte Neslusan, Stephanie Quill, Brenda Rombillard
Feb 9- Donna Cooney, Leah Didonato, Rena Klebart, Betty Tonna, Atsede Tsegaye
Feb 16 - Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau, Deb Raymond, Vange Wilson,
Feb 23 - Marie McNally, Christa Benoit, Sandi Kunkel, Mary Seferi, Chris Dillon

YOUTH EPISTLE READERS

Feb 2 - Helen Dunning
Feb 9 - Zach Beaudry
Feb 16 - Panayiota Veronis
Feb 23 - Maia Beaudry
Mar 1 - Kiera MacKenzie
Mar 8 - Lily Mueller
Mar 15—Kara Bilis
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:

Feb 1    Michael Chito
Feb 2    Fr Luke Veronis
Feb 2    Teddy Benoit
Feb 3    Vasiliki Zahariadis
Feb 3    Katya Kladas
Feb 4    Grace Darlagiannis
Feb 10   Athena Bilis
Feb 11   Lily Mueller
Feb 12   Bozena Khozami
Feb 13   Arthur Darligiannis
Feb 13   Athanasia Darligiannis
Feb 13   Norman Desrosiers
Feb 13   Michael Angelo
Feb 15   Richard Bethune
Feb 16   Kelly Vosnakis
Feb 20   Barbara Constantine
Feb 23   Eleanor Teguis
Feb 25   Nike Avlas
Feb 26   Angelina Papageorge
Feb 28   John Sgouritsas
Feb 28   Helen Dunning

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES:

Feb 11   George/Mary Papageorge

NAMEDAYS:

Feb 6    St Photios the Great
         Morgan (Fotios) Vosnakis

Feb 6    St. Katya
         Katya Kladas

Whenever God sees someone who is fallen and broken, He is NOT interested in punishment and justice. He is NOT interested in revenge and retribution. Instead, God’s unconditional, radical, unfathomable love IS interested in healing and repentance, in offering second chances that lead to new life!
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!

THOUGHTS ON HUMILITY

“True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.”

C. S. Lewis

To be humble means to consider ourselves deserving, for our sins, of every humiliation, injury, persecution, and even blows; and to be meek means to patiently endure injustice, abuse, and so forth, and to pray for our enemies.

St John of Kronstadt

“As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on thing and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down you cannot see something that is above you.”

C. S. Lewis

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!

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www.sspcpa.com

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**Point Breeze**

Your Restaurant on Webster Lake

114 Point Breeze Road
Webster, MA
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<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy with OCMC Missionary Jen Rice</td>
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I KNOW SOMETHING GOOD ABOUT YOU!

Wouldn’t this old world be better,
If the folks we meet would say;
“I know something good about you,”
And then treat us just that way!

Wouldn’t it be fine and dandy,
If each hand clasp warm and true,
Carried with it this assurance,
“I know something good about you!”

Wouldn’t things here be more pleasant,
If the good that’s in us all,
Were the only thing about us,
That folks bothered to recall.

Wouldn’t life be lots more happy
If we’d praise the good we see,
For there’s such a lot of goodness,
In the worse of you and me!

Wouldn’t it be nice to practice,
This fine way of thinking too,
“You know something good about me,
And I know something good about you!”