A new year has begun and the entire world is happy to say goodbye to 2020 and to welcome 2021 with hope for a better year! We all pray that this will be the year that we put the global pandemic behind and start to normalize our lives once again. Yet, take care and reflect on what “normal” is. Should we go back to what our “normal life” was?

What did we learn from 2020 and what do we want different from 2021? One thing we learned was that a virus, something so small that we can’t see it and something so mysterious we didn’t always know how it spread, could shut down our world, devastate communities, and kill 340,000 Americans and 1.7 million people around the world.

Yet, is COVID the most dangerous virus we face? If we understand and take serious our spiritual well-being and truly desire above all the Kingdom of heaven, then we will realize there are many other viruses, even more perilous than COVID.

For example, the insidious virus of pride has separated humanity from God since the beginning of time. The Fathers and Mothers of the Church highlight how pride is the most treacherous of all viruses because it undermines and destroys all the virtues we may cultivate. Another prevalent virus is that of hatred. Hatred towards any person or any group of people, as well as holding on to hatred, anger and bitterness, are common viruses that eat away at our soul. Envy and jealousy are risky viruses that corrupt our hearts, while making us discontent with anything we have. Greed and the love of money are other viruses that can mutate in various forms and poison our souls.

And a very prevalent virus rampant throughout society, we could even call it a pandemic, has to do with lust and the distorted sexual desires and passions fueled by flourishing pornography and oversexualized images fueled by the media, advertisements and so much of what we see every day. These are only a few of the sinister viruses quite alive and active in our lives.

We all pray that the recent Moderna and Pfizer vaccines will inoculate us from the coronavirus, and we anxiously await for the time when we will receive these shots. Yet, are we just as ready and excited to receive our sacred vaccinations that can protect us from the spiritual diseases mentioned above?

Prayer is a medicine we must take every day which can inoculate us from the devious illnesses attacking our souls. Fasting is another shot that can protect us from the evils of these viruses. Reading Holy Scripture and filling our minds with spir-
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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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LEARNING FROM COVID

Reading every day will fill us with the antibodies that fight the germs of the viruses. The most effective inoculation is to receive the Holy Sacraments of the Church - Holy Communion and Holy Confession on a regular basis. These are immunizations that will heal us from our sins and reunite us with the Source of Life.

Will we be just as excited and concerned about receiving these spiritual vaccinations as we are of receiving the Moderna or the Pfizer vaccinations?!?

What is another lesson we have learned from COVID 2020? Hopefully we have learned to truly appreciate many things that we previously took for granted. This is an area where we don’t want to go back to our “normal” way of life. Hopefully we appreciate in a new way loving fellowship and community, and how life-giving it is to be with family and friends. We are social beings who are meant to be with one another. All this social distancing and limited gatherings have created deep stress and increased mental illness. Our separation from one another has reminded us of how we need one another. May we remember this, and always appreciate the family and friends that we have. May we realize what a priceless treasure we have with our connections in our beautiful Families of Faith! Fellowship, especially Christ-centered community, is an invaluable treasure to be cherished!

Thinking of our Faith, what about appreciating the opportunity to worship in our churches and to regularly receive the Life-Giving Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Most of us missed out in our Lenten Journey last year, not participating in the moving services of Holy Week and not celebrating Pascha and the Resurrection of our Lord in a festive manner. All of our special feasts and celebrations throughout the year were limited. As the year normalizes and restrictions are eliminated, hopefully we will have a much deeper appreciation to participate more fully in our treasure of faith.

I wish you all a blessed and peaceful New Year, filled with God’s grace and mercy.

With love and hope in Christ Jesus our Lord,

+Luke

ANNUAL HOUSE BLESSINGS

In memory of Christ’s Baptism on the Feast of Epiphany, when Jesus sanctified all the waters of the world, the Orthodox Church follows an ancient tradition of holding the SERVICE OF THE BLESSING OF THE WATERS on January 6.

The Church asks God’s blessing to come upon the water, which we then share with all believers. Through this water the grace of God comes upon us!

In preparation for this special blessing, Orthodox Christians hold January 5 as a strict fast day. Our fasting is a tool which helps us focus more clearly on God and prepares us to enter into the celebration of the feast in a more intimate manner.

Following the service, the priest blesses all the believers in the Church with the holy water and offers them a bottle to take home and drink each day, or whenever they feel a special need for God’s grace. The Church also has the beautiful tradition of the priest taking the holy water into the homes of all believers and blessing their home. Through this sacred ritual we ask for God’s blessings to come upon the household for the new year.

Every year, I look so forward to visiting everyone’s home and spending a little time with each one of you. This year, however, I must do things a little different. We have the pandemic, and I’m not sure who feels comfortable with me entering their homes. Also, just recently several members of my family tested positive for COVID on December 31st. Thus, I am in quarantine for 10-14 days. Please keep my family, as well as all those afflicted with the virus, in your prayers.

Because of this, after I have quarantined, I will be happy to bless any homes of people who contact me and tell me that you want me to bless your house. I can bless the inside of your house if you feel comfortable, or I can come and simply bless the outside of your house if that is what you prefer. Please call me (774-230-6985) or leave a message at the church if you still want me to come to your home and bless it! I will only go to the homes of people who contact me.

I will surely miss not going to everyone’s house this year! Please give me a call if you want me to come. God bless you all!!!
BEGINNING A NEW YEAR OF CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION

Fr. Luke Veronis

Having just celebrated the entrance of God into the world at Christmas, can we return back to our normal routine of life and our typical schedule? If we have sincerely experienced Christ’s birth, and invited Him to be born anew in our hearts and lives, no one can enter the New Year the same! We should be changed people! At the very least we should be people who in the process of change! Encountering Jesus, and allowing Him to be born anew in our lives should transform our motives, our values, our attitudes, and our entire worldview! Truly meeting Christ means we can’t stay the same because we discover a new potential, our divine calling and destiny.

Remember St. Athanasios’ words that, “God became man so that we could become divine.” Any life that is centered on self, on all that is temporal and superficial, on material things over spiritual things, concentrated on power and fame, and basically a life without eternal meaning should no longer be satisfying. In Bethlehem, and then in Nazareth and Galilee, and eventually in Jerusalem and Golgatha, we discover a new and better way to live, a new path to walk, a life with eternal meaning and significance, a life of sacrificial and divine love.

“Our goal as Christians for 2021 should be to develop a more intimate, authentic, life-changing relationship with God.”

As we say goodbye to 2020, we should turn our attention to not only the change we hope to see in 2021 in relation to the pandemic, but also hope that CHANGE, TRANSFORMATION, and NEW LIFE will take place in our own lives. Here lies a vision that can guide and direct us throughout the New Year. Many people think of New Year’s resolutions to better their lives – whether a resolution for weight loss, or to be more responsible with one’s money and pay off some debts, or to exercise more, or read more, or spend more time with our loved ones, or whatever else it may be, the purpose of resolutions basically is to improve one’s life.

Maybe our resolutions, however, seek to change too little; maybe our vision is too small! If we truly want to better our lives, let us focus on what is most important.

• Why were we created?
• What is our purpose in this brief sojourn on earth?
• What does God expect from us?
• Wouldn’t our Creator know what’s best for us?

If so, then are we seeking to discover the abundant life that God desires for each one of us?!!

What is our vision for 2021?

Whenever someone begins a journey, he or she needs to know what their destination is. For if we have no clear destination, than we can go and go and go, but never get anywhere new! Even worse, we can go around in circles and end up in places we had no intention to visit.

Our goal as Christians for 2021 should be to develop a more intimate, authentic, life-changing relationship with God. And through this renewed relationship with God, we will hopefully discover beautiful relationships with other, including our neighbor and our enemies. Christian progress depends upon how we show our love for God by showing concrete love to the other, especially to the less fortunate.

Although many determine success by standards of more money, pleasure, entertainment, and enjoyment of life, success for the saints of God always implied greater faithfulness to God’s com-
mandments, especially His first and greatest commandment - to love God and to love the other.

If we make this our central New Year’s resolutions, then we will journey on an exciting path of change, of transformation! Yet, HOW we can reach this goal?

Well, here are four suggestions. First, we must strive to connect and communicate with God on a daily basis. This implies setting aside time each day to talk with Him and to listen to Him - through disciplined prayer, reading of Holy Scriptures, and simply dwelling in His presence.

Second, we must try to apply in our lives what God commands. This is not what we always want to do. It’s not always convenient. Many times, in fact, God calls us to follow the difficult path of loving and serving and forgiving those who are difficult to love and serve and forgive. Yet, we don’t follow this path because it’s easy, or because we always want to do it. We follow this path because our love for God compels us to imitate Him. Remember, we can only come as close to God as we are to our worst enemy. And love and mercy and grace is the central way we can draw closer to God.

Third, we must learn to share our faith with others, and become good witnesses of God to the world around us. Our faith is not a private affair, but something we are called to offer the world around us. Jesus calls us the light of the world. He commands us to be the salt that flavors the society we live in. Never consider your faith a private affair, but learn to share what you believe and who you with your words, but more importantly with your actions.

Finally, commit to journeying together, in fellowship with one another. There is no such thing as an individual Christian. We are the Church, the Body of Christ, a community of believers walking together on the same path with the same destination. Let us choose to make this journey with one another. In fact, an important part of this journey together is not only the help that we will offer one another, but the accountability we will hold one another up to.

If you want to be serious about this commitment to develop a more intimate, authentic, life-changing relationship with God, then we need to find someone in our Church family who will hold up accountable to the goals we set, to the plans we make. You can come to me, the priest, and we can talk together about your spiritual goals. I will try to hold you accountable if you come to me regularly. You can also try to share your goals with someone else in this church family, and meet with them regularly, asking them to hold you accountable. By sharing your goals with another, and then meeting with them regularly, you will discover God’s Spirit working within you, and you will begin to see change and transformation occur in your life!

“We can only come as close to God as we are to our worst enemy”

It is through these disciplines that we can experience a new and better way to live, a new path to walk, a life with eternal meaning and significance.

1. Connect and communicate with God each day, both speaking and listening to Him

2. Apply in your life what God teaches you each day, no matter how inconvenient or hard it may appear

3. Don’t keep your faith to yourself, but share it with others

4. Walk this path together with someone else within our Church Family, finding someone who will help keep you accountable to your spiritual goals.

May we leave behind 2020 with all its disappointments and struggles, and may we go forward seeking a most blessed and fruitful New Year, filled with an abundant of our Lord’s grace, love and peace!
The Light - January 2021

EPIPHANY/ THEOPHANY: “THE FEAST OF LIGHTS”

By Fr. George Mastrantonis

The Witness of the Son of God

January the 6th is recorded in the annals of the Christian Church as an ancient celebration of an event in the life of Jesus Christ which is considered as the beginning of His official dedication to His Divine Mission in the presence and manifestation of the Triune Christian God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. This celebration is called Epiphany, a combined Greek word which is derived from epi: to and phainein: to show, to show forth, to shine upon; the noun is epiphaneia, meaning appearance, manifestation. This Feast included the Birth of Jesus Christ (that is, the Incarnation of the Logos), His Baptism (that is, His dedication in a human manner), and the appearance of the Father and the Holy Spirit—the first and only united appearance of the true Christian God. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, "filled with the Holy Spirit", said in anticipation, "whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

The story of Epiphany is related by the first three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, from the Baptist's proclamation of the arrival of the Savior, to the baptism of Christ and to the witness of the Father and the descending of the Spirit as a Dove. The Evangelist John, on the other hand, preserves John's witness of the divinity of Christ. John the Baptist acknowledged the arrival of the Savior, saying that "one mightier than I is coming after Me"; that "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire"; and "will gather the wheat into his barn." The dialogue between Jesus and John the Baptist resulted in the recognition and proclamation of Jesus' divinity and mission.

"When Jesus had been baptized...behold" the appearance of the Holy Trinity took place: (i) the "heaven was opened, and (ii) the Holy Spirit descended upon him (Jesus) in bodily shape with a dove, and (iii) a voice come from heaven which said, "You are my beloved Son; in You I am well pleased," as St. Luke relates the divine event along with the other two sacred writers. The baptism of Jesus Christ was not "with water unto repentance" as was John's; the Divine and sinless One needed neither repentance nor remission of sins. Therefore, "John forbade him (Jesus to be baptized) saying, I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to
me?" Furthermore, the important statement of Jesus to John the Baptist implies that Jesus felt that baptism was not necessary for Him, but He submits to the rite because, "I came to fulfill all righteousness"; that is, all people should submit their duty and obligation to God.

The reason that John the Baptist was "baptizing with water" was "that He (the Lamb of God) might be revealed to Israel", and John bore witness to this Divine Event, fulfilling his mission and saying, "I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." By this witness the Church treasured and established the belief that "When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was manifested," which belief has remained as the cornerstone of the Christian Church ever since. All believers in the past "drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ" as the Apostle Paul aptly unites the past, the present and the future in the person of Christ as the God-Man and Godhead.

**The Significance of Epiphany Today**

What meaning does the annual repetition of Epiphany have for our faith and for our Christian life? If we repeat the "Feast of Lights" for a mere sentimental impression, surely we betray the treasure of this great observance. The feast of Epiphany is not held only as a commemoration of an historical event in the life of Jesus, not merely for the attractiveness of the artificial atmosphere of lights, music, and poetry. The recurrent celebration of Epiphany has a great spiritual significance far beyond either of these. It is not the mere commemoration of a historical event because in the Christian faith everything is present, here and now, for our Lord Jesus Christ is with us here and now, our inseparable Companion and Comforter. The historical event is but a motive and remembrance, for the Person of Christ is ever present, and His Grace is not merely a memory of history. Secondly, the physical environment, artistic or otherwise, many times helps the believer to approach his goal - the vivid worship of our Lord, despite the danger of making this environment an end in itself.

Holding candles in our hands and with our voices and feelings of devotion, together we raise a symbol to the living Christian God - the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit - as He appeared at the moment of the Baptism of Jesus Christ, as He has been determined by the Church in the Creed, as He is accepted by every believing Christian, as the living God, the God Who harkens to our voices, the God Whom we beseech to accept us in communion, Whom we hope to have as our Companion, Who is our Comforter, Who is the Alpha and Omega of our Faith. To Him, with fear and love, we dedicate the day.

We hold candles for our brothers and sisters and all the martyrs of the early Christian centuries, a great many of whom became torches themselves rather than deny Christ. We hold candles, and our hearts burn as the hearts of those two blessed persons who walked with the Risen Christ to Emmaus. Yes, it is the "Feast of Lights," the lights which illuminate our conscience and our Christian way of life.

It is rather the Feast of The Light. "I am the Light," Jesus said. He did not say: "I will show the light to you," but "I am the Light." It is not a new theory of life; it is mainly the knowledge of the true God which makes life as it is stated in the prayer of our Lord to His Heavenly Father, "And this is eternal life, that they know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."
In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes:

Hope is one of the theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do.

It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven.

It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this world. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth “thrown in”: aim at earth and you will get neither. It seems a strange rule, but something like it can be seen at work in other matters.

Health is a great blessing, but the moment you make health one of your main, direct objects you start becoming a crank and imagining there is something wrong with you. You are only likely to get health provided you want other things more - food, games, work, fun, open air. In the same way, we shall never save civilization as long as civilization is our main object. We must learn to want something else even more.

Most of us find it very difficult to want “Heaven” at all - except in so far as “Heaven” means meeting again our friends who have died. One reason for this difficulty is that we have not been trained: our whole education tends to fix our minds on this world. Another reason is that when the real want for Heaven is present in us, we do not recognize it.

Most people, if they had really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise.

Sadly, many of us are so tethered to this world and the things it offers that we scarcely take thought of the world to come. Yet it is precisely by reflecting often on the joys, beauties, and satisfactions of eternal life in the world to come that we find a hope that empowers us to live fully for Christ today.

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

(Colossians 3:1-4)
**THE BREAD OF BASIL:**
**THE VASILOPITA**

The Vasilopita Bread is one of the most prominent Greek Orthodox traditions on New Year’s Day. It is a sweet, bread-like cake that is made for the New Year. Recipes for this cake differ depending on the family or the region of Greece, but in general, it involves flour, eggs, butter, and sugar and is usually finished with a sprinkle of confectioners’ sugar.

**All About the Vasilopita Tradition**

At some point during the first day of January, mostly commonly within the first minute of the year, a family will cut the vasilopita with two slices, making a cross, in order to bring God’s blessings to the home. A coin is inserted into the dough prior to baking it. The cake is then cut up, with the first piece going to our Lord Jesus Christ, the second piece to His Mother, and then to every family member and guest, with the recipients lining up from oldest to youngest.

No one is allowed to look at their piece until everyone is given their piece. Then, once the server or the head of the household gives his or her okay, everyone checks to see if they found the coin. The type of coin contained within the cake varies depending on what’s available. Some cakes have gold coins, others have smaller pieces of change. The type of coin doesn’t matter as much as the fact that the coin is in the cake.

The Vasilopita is not only served in Orthodox households, but also cut up in the Church, and in various Church organizations. For instance, churches often distribute pieces of vasilopita first to the Church leaders, and then to all parishioners.

**History of the “Bread of Basil” - the Vasilopita**

The history of vasilopita can be traced back to the ancient festivals of Kronia and Saturnalia and is connected to a legend of Saint Basil (St Vasilios, thus the name of the cake, “Vasil”opita). It is said that this great bishop implored the citizens of Cesarea, the place where he was from, to raise money in order to stop a siege. Each citizen was to give whatever they had in the form of coins or jewelry. When the ransom was handed to the siege, those who organized the siege were so shamed by the collective generosity that the siege was cancelled. When Saint Basil attempted to return the valuables to every Caesarean only to realize there was no way to distinguish how to distribute the funds back to the people. To solve this problem, he baked the coins and jewelry into bread and then distributed it all back to the people in that way.

In honor of Saint Basil, or Agios Vasilios, people bake this bread every year on his feastday, which also falls on the beginning of the New Year, January 1. The tradition has evolved from the original story and now whoever finds the coin is said to have the blessing of Saint Basil for the rest of the year. Of course, the bread itself does serve as a reminder for all that Saint Basil did for people of his area.
Saint Anthony the Great is considered the father of monasticism, the greatest of the Desert Fathers. He gave away his parents inheritance when he was 20 years ago after he heard the words of Christ, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven." (Mt 19:21) He then spent the next 85 years living in the Egyptian desert, seeking God, inspiring thousands of others to follow his ascetic way of life, while acting as a witness and conscious of the Church. Here are some of his sayings:

+ + +

+ A time is coming when people will go mad, and when they see someone who is not mad, they will attack him, saying, 'You are mad; you are not like us.'

+ I saw the snares that the enemy spreads out over the world, and I said groaning, “What can help me get past such snares?” Then I heard a voice say to me, “Only Humility.”

+ “Reject pride, and consider everyone more righteous than yourself.”

+ When St. Anthony entered the desert, the demons watched him and taunted him, “O You young of age and mind, how did you dare to enter our territory, as we have never seen a human before you.” And they all started to fight him. He said to them, “O strong ones, what do you want from me, the weak; And who am I so that you all gather to fight me. Don’t you know that I am ashes and dust, and unable to fight the smallest in you.” And he lay on the ground, shouting to God, “O God, help me, and strengthen my weakness. Have mercy on me, as I sought after you. Do not leave me; and do not let those who think that I am something overcome me. O God, You know that I am unable to fight the smallest of these.” When the demons heard this prayer full of life and humility they fled away.

+ My son, do not stray away from God seeking what is perishable; but rather remember what you have decided in the time of your fervor, and do not forget the seal by which you were purified. Remember the tears of repentance, and the prayers that were raised on your behalf, and flee from the evil thoughts lest you be lost. My son, leave your bed every night, and wet your bedclothes with your tears, and supplicate to the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, your renewal of life, and for help in the good deeds so that you may inherit His eternal heavenly kingdom.

+ Whoever hammers a lump of iron, first decides what he is going to make of it, a scythe, a sword, or an axe. Even so, we ought to make up our minds what kind of virtue we want to forge, or we labor in vain.

+ Once St. Anthony was asked, “What good work shall I do?” And he answered. “All works are not equal. Holy Scriptures said that Abraham was hospitable, and God was with him. And, Elijah loved quiet, and God was with him. And, David was humble, and God was with him. What therefore you find that your soul desires in following God, that do, and keep your heart.”

+ A brother said to St. Anthony, “Pray for me.” The old man said to him, “I will have no mercy upon you, nor will God have any, if you yourself do not make an effort and if you do not pray to God.” St. Anthony implied that we should not rely on the prayers of others without having our own prayers and spiritual struggle.

+ Regarding resisting evil thoughts, St. Anthony advises us saying, “Tire yourself in reading the holy books, as they save you from evil thoughts”… “Tire yourself in reading Holy Scripture, and following the commandments, so that the mercy of God comes upon you speedily.”

+ “Seek repentance all the time, and don’t leave yourself to laziness for one single moment.”
If devils praise your asceticism, and call you ‘blessed’ do not listen to them, and do not deal with them, but rather make the sign of the cross on yourselves and pray. You will find that they will flee, as they are craven, and fear the sign of the cross of the Lord, as the Lord disarms them, and makes a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in the cross.”

St. Anthony presented a few sick people who were demon possessed to some pagan philosophers. He asked them saying, “Can you heal them by your arguments, or by any art, or by sorcery entreating your idols? Otherwise, if you cannot, cease from fighting us, then you will see the power of the cross of Jesus Christ.” He said that, and called on the name of Christ, and made the sign of the cross three times on the sick. Immediately, the men stood up, healed, with sound minds, and they gave thanks to God.

When the demons see Christians, specially the monks, working joyfully and growing in the spirit, first they fight them with temptation, and by placing obstacles to hinder their growth, trying to inject evil thoughts in their minds; but there is no reason for fear from their temptations because their offenses fail instantly by prayer and fasting, especially if you have had armed yourself with faith and the sign of the cross.

Whoever has not experienced temptation cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, for without temptation no one can be saved.

I never preferred my own benefit over that of my brethren… my son, do not hate anybody, but love your neighbor as yourself.

If a man loves God with all his heart, all his thoughts, all his will, and all his strength, he will gain the fear of God; the fear will produce tears, tears will produce strength; by the perfection of this the soul will bear all kinds of fruits.”

Regarding the avoidance of remembering sins, St. Anthony says, “Do not focus on your old sins, lest the war will be renewed on you. Do not remember your carelessness and your pleasures in the time of your laziness; do not talk about them so that they do not become a stumble block.

All sins are despised by God, but especially pride. My beloved, rebuke yourselves, and confess your own sins, so that God may elevate you.

The motives that drive a person to the life of repentance and prayer and asceticism are three, and God provides all of them:

First, there are those who are called by the law of love which is in their nature, and which original good implanted in them. They achieve the true manner of life, because their souls are ready to follow the love of God.

Second, there are those who hear the written law testifying of the pains and torments prepared for the wicked, and of the promises for those who walk worthily in the fear of God. By the testimony of the written law, their thoughts are roused up to seek to enter into the calling.

Third, there are the souls which at first were hard of heart and persisted in the works of sin; and somehow the good God in his mercy sends upon such souls the chastisement of affliction, till they grow weary, and come back to their senses, and are converted, and draw near, and enter into knowledge, and repent with all their heart.

Regarding the attentiveness from falling into despair, St Anthony said, “Many fall, then rise up again into a state of health and virtue; but others fall from virtue into sin. Those who fall then rise up are better from those who rise up then fall.

Now therefore, my beloved, I beseech you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, not to neglect your salvation, that this transitory life may not deprive you of eternal life, nor the skin of this corruptible body deprive you of the kingdom of light ineffable, nor a guilty seat lose you the angelic thrones of judgment. Truly my children, my heart is in wonder and my spirit in terror, that even when we were given the full freedom to become saints, we all take our pleasure like drunkards on new wine.”

To say that God turns away from the sinful is like saying the sun turns away from those who are blind.

When you lie down on your bed to sleep, remember with thanksgivings the blessings and providence of God.
OUR SMALLER COVID CHRISTMAS PAGEANT
Saint Nicholas visits our community
TEN RESOLUTIONS AND DAILY SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES FOR 2021

Try to live by these Ten Resolutions throughout 2021, and you will see how your life will be greatly blessed.

1. **PRAY EVERY DAY.** Talk with your priest and develop a Prayer Rule which you will try to follow every day. Remember, prayer is connecting with God, communing with the Source of Life. Connect with God through your prayers every morning and evening, as well as then throughout the day. Don’t let an hour go by where you don’t “check in” with God and turn your attention towards Him.

2. **MEDITATE.** This means sitting in silence for 10 or 15 minutes each day, and trying to clear your mind of all the noise and clutter, simply dwelling in the presence of God. You can do this in front of an icon, or you can sit anywhere and close your eyes, reciting the Jesus Prayer — “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have Mercy On Me, a Sinner.”

3. **FILL YOUR MIND WITH ALL THAT IS GOOD.** Every day try to fill your mind with something that is “true, noble, just, pure, lovely, holy” (Philippians 4:8). In other words, take time every day to read Holy Scripture, and other edifying spiritual writings. Fill your mind with words and thoughts that will challenge you and sanctify you. Meditate on what you read, and try to apply what you read in your life.

4. **EXPRESS GRATITUDE,** first towards God and then towards others. Even when you are having a tough day, pause and think of five things for which you can thank God. And make it a point that even when you are frustrated or having a bad day, you take the time to think of your blessings and to thank our Lord!

5. **HAND OVER ANY ANGER, BITTERNESS OR RESENTMENT TO GOD.** Don’t allow the day to end holding on to any bitterness or resentment. This means practicing forgiveness daily. Take time to reflect on your own mistakes, asking God for forgiveness, and then offering your forgiveness to anyone who may have hurt or offended you.

6. **REFUSE ALL JEALOUSY, GREED, COVETOUSNESS, AND ENVY TO FILL YOUR MIND.** Thank God for what you have, and learn to “rejoice with those who rejoice.” Don’t allow yourself to focus on what others have and what you may not have.

7. **SERVE OTHERS WITH JOY.** Every day remember how Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, and think about how you can humbly serve others. Strive to serve others with a joyous spirit. Remember that it’s a blessing to be able to serve and to give to others.

8. **DO ACTS OF KINDNESS AND BE GENEROUS.** Be deliberate in conscious acts of kindness. Each day think about how you can do something special for the people who cross your paths? And if you err, err on the side of generosity.

9. **SMILE, AND BRIGHTEN UP THE DAY.** Try to bring joy to each person who crosses your path. Say words that “edify and bring grace to the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29) Don’t allow anyone to meet you and not to walk away feeling blessed.

10. **KEEP AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE.** Each day remember that some people have tragically died. Remembering death can help us live life better. If we think about how we are but brief sojourners on this earth, and that our ultimate citizenship is in heaven, it changes our perspective on how to live life here and now.
THANK YOU TO OUR 2020 STEWARDS

Through December 130 out of our 160 Families have donated towards their Stewardship Offering.

Thus far the average offering is $910/year.

Please send in your late Stewardship Offering for 2020!!! We have collected $129,099 out of our budgeted $143,000.

Help us surpass our goal!

THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE WHO SUPPORT OUR BELOVED CHURCH!
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
THANK YOU

To Everyone who Offered Poinsettias and Christmas Donation to our Beloved Church

The two front Door Wreaths – For the Glory of God from Eleanor Teguis and Mary Fatsi

Three Poinsettias in memory of my mother Dumnica, my father Thimia, & sister Elizabeth Vriga from Liz and Richard Pavlach

In loving memory of our parents from Chris and Helen Constantine

In memory of Charlie and Helen Pappas from Sandi and Gerry Kunkel

In loving memory of Charles & Loucia Christos from Sam, Evelyn, Angelo, and Dhimitra

In loving memory of Stavros & Evangelia Pappas from Sam, Evelyn, Sakis, Lola, Olympia

In loving memory of John Panagiotou from his son Kostas and wife Evangelia

In loving memory of my husband Charlie from Ann Chito

In memory of Athanasios and Vasiliki Kiritsis from the Kiritsis Family

In loving memory of Mariann Naumovski from her beloved daughter Kathy Kunkel

In loving memory of my parents Antonio and Costa and brother Chris from Rita Carabina

In loving memory of Vasil, Bruce and Alexis from Despina Condos

In loving memory of the Naum Family from Ana Naum

In loving memory of Eleni and Paul Xanthopoulos from Sophia, Steve and Louisa

For the glory of God from Maria and John Karastogiannis and Family

In loving memory of our mother Bessie Koulax from Charlotte and Neal Neslusan and Family

In loving memory of Vasilios and Sophia Siozopoulos from Steliane and David Thompson and Family

MAY THEIR MEMORIES BE ETERNAL!
A NEW YEAR’S PRAYER

When the Christmas carols have been stilled,
When the star-topped tree is taken down,
When family and friends are gone home,
And we are back to our normal schedules
Now the work of Christmas begins:
To feed the hungry and care for the marginalized,
To build bridges of trust not walls of fear,
To generously share our gifts,
To welcome the refugee,
To heal a broken planet,
To seek justice and peace for all people,
To bring Christ’s light to a world of darkness.
God bless our new year!

YOUTH EPISTLE READERS
Jan 3 - Helen Dunning
Jan 10 - Panayiota Veronis
Jan 17 - Maia Beaudry
Jan 24 - Helen Dunning
Jan 31 - Panayiota Veronis

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

Jan 3 - Neal Neslusan, Mike Chito
Jimmy Karapanos, Brenda Romillard
Jan 10 - Nicoleta Cojocaru,
Chris Dillon, Bill Thompson,
Jan 17-Marie McNally, Matt Benoit,
Lisa Healy, Debby Raymond
Jan 24-Arthur Bilis, Chris Geotis,
Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau
Jan 31 - Neal Neslusan, Mike Chito
Jimmy Karapanos, Brenda Romillard

We need more ushers!!! See Fr. Luke.

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/.
3. Or go to our website on bottom left corner for online giving at http://schwebster.org/
**GOD GRANT YOU MANY BLESSED YEARS!**

**Important Dates in JANUARY:**

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

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The Light - January 2021
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.

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!
# JANUARY 2021

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**Jan 1 St Basil**

*A Blessed and Happy New Year!*

**9:15 Matins**

**10:00 Divine Liturgy**

**5:00 Vespers**
A DAILY PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

LORD, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, let me bring healing and pardon,
Where there is doubt, let me plant seeds of faith.
Where there is despair, let me bring hope.
Where there is sadness, let me bring comfort and joy.
Where there is darkness, let me shine forth Your light.

YES DIVINE MASTER, grant that I may not so much
seek to be consoled as to console:
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

LORD, make me an instrument of your peace.
AMEN

(Prayer of Francis of Assisi)