"Have no anxiety. Sometimes what’s worse than being sick is being afraid of getting sick. Leave it to God. Whatever God gives you is best for you. God never gives a Cross without first weighing and measuring it very carefully to make sure that the Cross will result in your spiritual growth.”

(Elder Amilianos of Simonpetra)

Reflect on these words of Elder Amilianos in relation to our present crisis. “Whatever God gives you is best for you... to make sure that the Cross will result in your spiritual growth.” God allows us to carry various crosses in our lives, but He measures them according to the potential we possess, according to what we need, according to what will help us on our path of salvation.

This definitely doesn’t mean that we will always like the crosses we carry in life. It surely doesn’t imply that the crosses will be easy to carry. Life is a deep mystery, and many times when we look at the crosses we face in life, we are perplexed, confused, overwhelmed, terrified, and even angry. We may erroneously feel that we are being punished, or that God is expressing His wrath towards us. We may stare in disbelief thinking that there is no way a loving God could allow this cross to become a part of our life.

Many crosses are not easy to carry. Yet if we have the eyes to see, the heart to understand, the humility to accept, we can possibly discover something that will help us on our spiritual journey. Crosses are given to us so that we learn that we can’t possibly rely on our own strength, but must trust completely in God. Instead of looking at crosses as something inconvenient at best and downright cruel at worst, can we see them as a part of the mystery of life and a path towards drawing closer to God?

It is enlightening how we pray for this perspective in every Divine Liturgy and in many of our other liturgical services. We pray, “For all that is good and beneficial to our souls.” In other words, we are asking God to give us whatever is good and helpful to our souls, for our salvation. Sometimes we don’t even know what we are praying for, and maybe wouldn’t even like what we are praying for if we knew what is beneficial to our souls. As an example of this, I think of when we pray for the virtue of humility. Sometimes we learn humility through humiliation, but how many of us would actually pray for the gift of humility if we knew we had to accept humiliation??

An important lesson in life is to learn that we grow most in our lives...
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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CROSSES FOR OUR SALVATION

when we face challenges, experience disappointments, and confront failures. It is often during these moments of struggling and even falling down that we are confronted with our own weaknesses or shortcomings, and we can learn lessons that will help us get back up and draw closer to God. Repentance implies that one takes a good look at their true self, and then turn away from all that is false and superficial, from all that is impure and not of God, and then to turn back towards God in humility.

This brings us to our present situation and the uncertain days and future with this global pandemic and the economic fallout from the coronavirus. Many people are suffering. Too many people are scared and extremely uncertain about their future. Some are getting impatient and angry at all that is happening. We are facing something unprecedented in our lifetimes. This is the Cross that we all bear today.

Is God punishing us? Are these apocalyptic signs of the end? Why is God allowing so many people to suffer?

Maybe these aren’t the right questions to ask about our present cross. Instead, can we simply accept all that is happening as a part of the mystery of life? Can we accept all that is happening as one of the crosses we bear in our lives that can “result in spiritual growth?” Can we see this crisis as something “beneficial to our souls?” During these uncertain days, different people are carrying very different crosses from one another. Yet God knows what each of us needs, and understands how each of us can look at our cross and discover something that can help us in our journey towards Him.

In the daily prayer of St. Philaret, which I try to say everyday, there is one part that says, “In unforeseen events, let us not forget that all things are under your care.” Nothing happens outside the control of God. This doesn’t mean that God determines everything beforehand. He is not a micro-manager of our lives. He gives us freedom and we choose many things in life. By saying God is in control, however, we confess that ultimately, when we make certain choices and set certain things into motion, He can still intervene and take any situation, using it to help us come closer to Him.

During this present crisis, let us pray everyday for God to open our eyes so that we can see where we need to repent. These uncertain days challenge us to see how we have spent too much time on superficial and worthless pursuits, how we have created gods out of so many things we idolize in our lives, how we have become so busy that we realize how little time we have carved out for God in our lives, in our lives before this crisis.

Let me conclude with words from Saint Paisius, who said, “So in every test, let us say, ‘Thank you, my God, because this was needed for my salvation.’” Read Abbot Triphon’s reflection on these words (on page 5) to further reflect on this theme of crosses that lead to our salvation.

May the Lord keep all of us well and safe during these days, and with whatever crosses we carry, may we carry them in a way that will lead us into a deeper relationship with God.

Christ is Risen! Christos Anesti!

With love and hope in our
Risen Savior Jesus Christ,
+Luke

MEMORIAL DAY TRISAGION PRAYERS

Fr. Luke will be at Mt. Zion Cemetery on Memorial Day, May 25th from 9:00am-11:00am. If you want to set a specific time to meet with him and have him offer Trisagion Prayers for a loved one, please email or call him. Plan on wearing masks when you come.
When will we gather together again as a Church Family? We haven’t worshipped together for two months in our Church sanctuary, we haven’t received the precious and life-giving sacrament of Holy Communion, and we even missed journeying together during the holiest time of the year – Holy Week and Easter (except for those who have been able to follow and pray along via internet live streams).

It’s an understatement to say we face truly unprecedented times with the ongoing threat of the coronavirus, the worldwide lock-down and new reality of social distancing, the economic fall-out of this crisis, and the uncertainty of the future. We can’t clearly see where we will be one month from now, six months from now, or even one year from now. We can’t even say with certainty that we will have a vaccine by next year and all will return to normal. We are being greatly challenged as a society and in our individual lives as anxiety, uncertainty, and impatience increase.

Maybe during these ambiguous days, we need to look at our challenges with a perspective on world history. We are not the first generation to face some “unprecedented” event, and surely won’t be the last. A friend recently sent me this reflection on what people from the so-called “greatest generation,” (people born between 1900 and 1920) faced during their lifetime. Imagine this:

"You were born in 1900. World War I starts on your 14th birthday and ends when you are 18. Later that same year, a Spanish Flu epidemic, one of the worst in history, hits the planet and infects one out of every three people in the world. Between 20-50 million people die. This pandemic runs until your 20th birthday. On your 29th birthday, the Great Depression begins. Unemployment hits 25%, the World GDP drops 27%. That runs until you are 33. The country nearly collapses along with the world economy. When you turn 39, World War II starts. On your 41st birthday, the United States is fully pulled into WWII until you are 45. At 50, the Korean War starts. At 55 the Vietnam War begins. When you are 62 the Cuban Missile Crisis threatens to end life on our planet as we know it. When you turn 75, the Vietnam War finally ends.”

During our darkest days of fear and uncertainty, God stands with us and will help us get through whatever global crisis we face, as well as any personal crises we may have to endure.

Yes, we are in challenging times these days. Yet, think about not only all that the “greatest generation” endured during their lifetime, but reflect on all that they accomplished during their tumultuous lives. We need to keep reminding ourselves that great things can come out of times of crisis. God is with us and promised that He would never abandon us. During our darkest days of fear and uncertainty, God stands with us and will help us get through whatever global crisis we face, as well as any personal crises we may have to endure. I read another post that highlighted certain letters and numbers of COVID 19 and divided it up as CO 19, which they interpreted as the Bible verse 2 COR 1:9. Do you know what 2 Corinthians 1:9 describes? The Apostle Paul is telling the Christians in Corinth how much he suffered and had to endure. He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again” (2 Corinthians 1:8-10)
As we confront the anxiety, stress, worry and uncertainty of these days (and weeks and months), can we keep turning to God and relying on Him, knowing that He is with us and that if we stay with Him, He will watch over us and fill us with His “peace that passes all understanding?”

So, for however long our churches may remain closed, we know that the closing of a building or even our sanctuary won’t keep God away from us, nor us away from God. Always remember, the Church is NOT a building, but the Church is the Family of God. We, the faithful, are the Church and we will continue being the Church!!!

Although we believe all this, the question still remains as to when our State will open up and allow our churches to reopen. What will Governor Baker and his COVID 19 Advisory Board recommend for places of worship on May 18th? (Unfortunately, the governor’s advisory board does not include even one person representing communities of faith.) During the first phase of re-opening, will churches be included?

Over the past two months, we have seen how certain “essential” businesses like supermarkets or pharmacies have remained open. Yet, that list of “essential” businesses has also included liquor stores and even gun shops. Are they truly more essential than the Church?!? And if Home Depot can have dozens and dozens of people in their stories wearing masks and properly keeping social distance, why can’t our churches do the same?

These decisions reflect the challenges we face in a secular society. Secular society’s worldview doesn’t necessarily reject religion but places issues of faith in one of many compartments in life. Our secular society will tell us, “You can be a person of faith, but keep your faith private, out of the public sphere.” And when it comes to “essential” elements of society, faith will not necessarily be one of them. Our society may try to treat faith communities the same as entertainment communities, opening up churches when they open up our sporting venues.

Of course, for a true follower of Jesus Christ, our faith is not simply one part of our life. It cannot be equated to any form of entertainment. Our faith is our life. It is what gives our lives meaning, purpose, hope, and direction. Our faith instills in us divine love for all people and inspires us to serve others with compassion and charity. We hold on to a worldview where God is at the center of everything in life, and thus, we can’t compartmentalize our faith by simply putting it in one corner of our busy lives. This is something the secular mind finds hard to understand.

For example, as Orthodox Christians, we are a sacramental church where receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ through Holy Communion is one of the most intimate ways we connect with God. We can’t participate sacramentally in Holy Communion via online streaming! We are also a community of love, where sharing with one another, connecting with one another, supporting and encouraging one another, and serving one another is central to who we are. During this time of pandemic, we have found new ways of supporting, sharing and connecting with one another, but we can’t minimize the importance and value of connecting with one another in person especially during these days of loneliness, anxiety, and distress, and we hope to resume this as soon as is safe.

Absolutely, when churches re-open we will take care especially because elderly populations fill our churches. Many of these elderly feel more than others the loneliness of social distances. Yet, they are also the age group most vulnerable to the virus and thus, we must be careful to protect, and not to unconsciously pass on COVID 19 to them or any others.
WHEN TO REOPEN OUR CHURCH

(continued from page 3)

Some Christians have turned to protests, lawsuits and even mass gatherings to demand the reopening of churches. This has become too political. We want to do what is best for our church communities, as well as what’s best for society. We also ask our civic authorities, however, to understand and respect the value of faith communities and their houses of worship. Government officials need to clearly state why other businesses are considered essential while communities of faith are non-essential, and why they think church communities couldn’t take the same precautions that other businesses are presently doing to reopen.

Our Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the Eparchial Synod of Bishops has announced that each metropolitan will decide when to open his local parishes in accordance with local health and public safety mandates. “We are all deeply concerned, not only for the health of our faithful, but for their morale and their spiritual life. We know that re-opening the churches with attention to nuance of the facts on the ground and deference to the judgment of local authorities is the best way to proceed,” Archbishop Elpidophoros noted. “As shepherds of our flocks, we are committed to safely reopening, and with an abiding sense of responsibility for the spiritual and physical health of the faithful.”

As the Church, when we reopen we will prepare our church facilities, require masks, respect proper social distancing, avoid handshaking and hugs, not allow for time of fellowship after our worship services, and limit the number of people who can attend a service. We can act just as responsibly as any “essential” business that has permission to reopen.

Churches need to be treated as essential, because the reality is that these communities of faith are essential in the lives of countless people. Our faith is essential and stands at the center of our entire lives.

Questions About Church Online Giving

**Q: Is it safe to give online?**
Yes. In many ways giving online is safer than writing a check because an electronic gift cannot be lost or stolen. The security of the system is continually managed by Vanco Services. Vanco utilized the highest Internet security practices and provides secure and confidential transactions for over 23,000 organizations including business, non-profit, and other parishes.

**Q: What types of funding sources can I use?**
You can give online from your checking account or savings account or via debit or credit card transactions. We ask that if you use a card that you consider giving an additional 2.75% to help us cover the card transaction fees. There is an option to automatically calculate and include this when setting up your donation.

**Q: Are there any fees involved with giving online?**
Not to you. You will not pay any fees with an online gift. In addition, online gifts are more cost-efficient way for the church to process donations.

(Look on page 17 for more details to begin your online giving to the Church)
WHY GOD ALLOWS THIS PANDEMIC?

Abbot Tryphon

Saint Paisios of Mount Athos said, “So in every test, let us say, ‘Thank you, my God, because this was needed for my salvation.” This is because a person has salvation not only by his good deeds, but also by his patient suffering of various griefs, illnesses, misfortunes, and failures (Luke 16:19-31, Mark 8:31-38, Romans 6:3-11, Hebrews 12:1-3, and Galatians 6:14).

Jesus Christ gives us the power which is needed for transformation, and prepares us to live with a strength under the most difficult conditions, preparing us for the peace that is eternal. History is filled with periods of trial and tribulation, but we can come out stronger in the end, and we will come out of this pandemic as well.

Without suffering, we can not join ourselves to the cross, and when we do take up our cross in suffering, it is with our Co-Suffering Savior. Sickness and suffering are not given to us by a wrathful and punitive God because we have sinned, but rather allowed by this loving God who co-suffers with us. It is Western juridical misconceptions concerning sin which has tended to distort a proper recognition of suffering and its connection to sin.

Our world has been in a bad place for a very long time, with priorities for most people, and their nations, centered on the acquisition of wealth and comfort. Western Europe has long abandoned her Christian roots, as has America. In these latter times, is it any wonder a pandemic that has closed down the world’s economy, and forced millions to be sequestered in their homes, is being allowed by God as a wakeup call to all of us?

As hard as it is, we must use this difficult time to look inward, and take a very serious look at ourselves, and the direction we have been taking. Now is the time we need to refocus on that which is of eternal value. Our children need their parents to refocus the family on Christ, putting aside everything else. Even as individuals, we need to enter into that silent place, perhaps with the aid of the Jesus Prayer, and find the true peace “that passes understanding”.

The Church’s history is filled with times like these, where, even during terrible persecutions, Christians found solace in their walk with Jesus Christ. Our Co-Suffering Savior is not abandoning us, but rather, joining Himself with our suffering. We will all get through this period of pandemic, together with the extreme economic hardship that has befallen the world, and return, collectively, to being of Christ. In eternity, it is not about being an American, a Russian, or a Brit, it is about being citizens of the Kingdom of God.
HOW CORONAVIRUS MADE OUR CHURCH STRONGER

By Christopher Buskirk, Editor of the Journal “American Greatness”

In public life we spend a lot of time talking about what should be done. When it comes to who should do it, the discussion often becomes an impersonal, contentious and dehumanizing debate that reduces people to “the poor” or “the middle class” or “the 1 percent.” No one really likes it, but that’s the way we talk about politics.

In contrast, the coronavirus is a common enemy. And I’ve been encouraged lately seeing what people can do together when they trust each other and share a sense of mutual obligation. As the Covid-19 public health crisis has developed, along with the economic crisis that came in its wake, I’ve seen how the people in one, small, local Presbyterian Church in Arizona — my own — have responded with humbling grace and generosity. As the situation evolved over the past few months, we talked first about who had needs and then about how we, as a church, could fill those needs.

With the church’s services and other regular activities suspended — but a powerful need to stay connected — we established a variety of responses to meet the needs that we saw and some others we anticipated. Would the members of the church who are most vulnerable to this virus need anyone to do their shopping? Has anyone been laid off or seen hours reduced? Does anyone need food or money to pay rent or other bills? Who is lonely? Who is scared? We’ve already had one member sick, and many have had family and friends become gravely ill. This creates additional burdens. Who can share those burdens? Who needs prayer?

A friend of mine likes to say that the church is a hospital for hurting people. He’s right, of course. Churches are, first and foremost, places of worship that minister to people’s spiritual needs. For Christians like me, there is an emphasis on repentance, spiritual rebirth and living a life of ongoing sanctification. That’s essential to the church. But those same people who come to the church broken in spirit have very real physical needs too. And the church should provide for those too when necessary.

Mine does and it’s both a blessing and a consolation to see and be a part of it. There are certainly financial needs — and of course these will continue to emerge — but the most consistent and widespread need so far has been encouragement. People are lonely, longing for human contact. That’s especially true for people without strong family connections. A phone call every few days can go a long way. And it’s brought me closer to some people that I didn’t know very well a few months ago.

Of course, we’re not alone. A Roman Catholic friend in Europe runs a soup kitchen near her home with a few other people. That’s closed now along with nearly everything else. Still, they’ve found other ways to keep in contact with the people they used to feed every day. Lockdowns are lonely times for many people. Isolation is bad for people’s mental health, even when it might preserve them physically.

The social atrophy described 20 years ago by the sociologist Robert Putnam in “Bowling Alone” has only accelerated in the past two decades. The lack of strong social bonds is amplified during times like these, when the entire nation is under duress. The efforts of our church have underscored for me the power of community Dr. Putnam describes. It has demonstrated that strong communities are still possible and that they can integrate what he saw disintegrating.

Within our church community, despite everything else that is happening in the world, there is a sense of peace and equanimity that I have found heartening. Christians often remind themselves that we are, as the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, “sorrowful but always rejoicing.” This is a strange contradiction but is an excellent description of the Christian life. We recognize the trials, pains and losses of life, which we count as the price...
of living in a fallen world beset by the effects of sin, but we are simultaneously joyful that there is a better world to come, in which Jesus Christ has wiped away every tear. It’s a world we experience only in part today through the church. In what might seem like a paradox, that hope doesn’t mean denying or ignoring the needs of this world, rather it creates a sense of obligation to serve as a witness to that hope.

That’s because as Christians, we live in in-between times, a pilgrim people, but one with a responsibility to both God and man. Christians in their individual lives often struggle with how best to love their neighbors. What does it mean in practice? How do you love your neighbors when they won’t talk to you? How do you love the person who has wronged you? These can be hard questions. But in extremis, in times like those we face today — when people are dealing with the current outbreak, with anxiety, with loneliness from lockdowns, with the economic costs and all the related stresses they bring — we are prepared. In ordinary times, it can sometimes be difficult to see the best way forward, but when the world collapses, when people are in distress, when the needs are clear, we’re ready, not so much as individuals, but as one church.

Congratulations to our Graduating Seniors

SMARANDA IOANA COJOCARU graduated from the College of Saint Rose and received a Bachelors of Science in Communication Sciences and Disorders. She is now pursing her M.S.Ed in Communication Sciences and Disorders at Saint Rose. She wants to become a Speech Pathologist.

ADAM RIVELLI graduated from UMASS Amherst with a double major in Computer Science and Mechanical Engineering. He will return to UMASS Amherst in the Fall and pursue a Masters in Computer Science.

JOHN NESLUSAN graduated from Algonquin High School and may attend Massachusetts College of Art and Design but is still undecided. He will be majoring in Film and Media.

HANNA KUNKEL graduated from Shepherd Hill Regional High School and will be attending Worcester State University and majoring in English.
CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF SAINTS CONSTANTINE & HELEN

(Adapted from an article by Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis)

Saints Constantine and Helen are two of the great saints in Church history, and are the patrons of our beloved Church. In fact, they have been given the title “Equal-to-the-Apostles” for their witness of faith and contribution to the life of the Church. Saint Helen was the mother of Saint Constantine. Saint Constantine was the first emperor of the Roman Empire that became Christian, and he was the emperor who stopped persecution of Christians.

Saint Constantine converted to Christianity during a battle when he was vastly outnumbered by an enemy force. In the sky during the middle of the day, he saw a bright light and a vision of a cross with the words “en touto nika” “In this sign, you will be victorious.” Ordering his soldier to put crosses on their shields, he won the battle and became a Christian. Then in 313, through the Edict of Milan, he made the practice of Christianity an acceptable form of faith in the Roman Empire (Christianity would become the official religion of the Roman Empire under Emperor Theodosios in 380).

Constantine became a great supporter of the Church, even though he did not become baptized until he was on his deathbed. The Edict of Milan was a major turning point in the history of Christianity, as for the first time, churches, Christians and Christianity were not being persecuted. In 325, St. Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to the East on a little town called Byzantium, which he renamed Constantinople, the City of Constantine (Istanbul in modern day Turkey). Thus he transferred the center of the Roman Empire from Rome to the East, slowly making this the greatest and most important city in the world. The Eastern Roman Empire (or as some would later call it the Byzantine Empire), continued for more than 1000 years from AD 325-1453.

Saint Constantine was responsible for gathering all the Bishops of the Church to help resolve various heretic teachings about the Faith and clearly articulate what orthodox Christianity believed. This first council became known as the First Ecumenical Council in Nicea in 325. This Council clearly explained how Jesus was not simply a great man - a teacher or prophet - and not even only divine in a generic sense, but Jesus is God Almighty Himself who became a human being. This basic statement of faith is what we profess to believe at every Divine Liturgy:

I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father through Whom all things were made. Who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.
He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried; And He rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father; And He will come again with glory to judge the living and dead. His kingdom shall have no end.

Saint Helen, Constantine’s mother, was a big influence on him and his introduction to Christianity. A saintly person in her own right, St. Helen traveled throughout the Holy Lands to find the true Cross of Christ, which they found buried on Golgotha. She then helped to organize the building of many churches at all the sights of where our Lord traveled and performed throughout the Holy Lands.

On the feast of Saints Constantine and Helen (May 21), we read the Gospel from John 10:1-9.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber; but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." This figure Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. I am the door; if any one enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."

Taken together with verses 9-16, they speak of Christ as the Good Shepherd. Jesus speaks in words that people of the time could understand, comparing Himself to a shepherd who cares for a flock of sheep, the people. He contrasts Himself to others who came before Him, claiming to be good shepherds of the sheep (the people of Israel) but were in fact more like robbers and thieves who didn’t care for the sheep.

Jesus said that the one “who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way. . .is a thief and a robber.” (John 10:1) The one “who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.” (10:2) The sheep hear the voice of their shepherd and follow the shepherd because “they know His voice.” (10:4) The people are confused, we are told, in verse 6. So, Jesus erases all doubt when He says to them “I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers but the sheep did not heed them.” (10:7-8) Jesus concludes this passage by saying that He is the door by which we are go in and out and find pasture. He is the door by which we will find our salvation. He is the door by which we will go out to the pasture to graze. And we will ultimately graze on Christ and on His word. If we want to find pasture, if we want to be fed and protected, Jesus is THE door (the one and only door) that makes this possible.

Jesus uses the image of the shepherd with the sheep because it is something people of that time understood. They understood that sheep need a shepherd to protect them, that the only place to be safe from wild animals was in the sheep pen, with a shepherd who would guard the door and keep them safe. Unlike sheep, however, who were not intelligent by nature and needed to be prodded and poked to move to safety, Jesus knows that we are rational sheep who need to be loved by the shepherd, and He presents Himself as the shepherd who loves the sheep and who would be willing to lay His life down for them.

The King of kings and God, who adorns the worthy with abundant gifts, caught you in His net, through the sign of the Cross, like He did to Paul the glorious, O Constantine. He said to you, “In this sign conquer your enemies.” Thus having sought Him, as did your godly-minded mother, and having found Him for whom you longed, you utterly defeated them. In company with your mother, earnestly pray for Orthodox rulers, and the Christ-loving armed forces, and all of us who loyally observe your memory, entreating Him who alone loves humanity, to deliver us from all wrath. (Hymn from the Vespers of the Feast)

Saints Constantine and Helen were two disciples who provided “doors” by which Christianity was able to spread to the world. Many people became sheep because of them!

May our Saints Constantine and Helen Church Family in Webster continue the spirit of our patron saints and lead more and more people in Central MA and Northeast CT to discover the great treasure of our Orthodox Christian faith.
CELEBRATING HOLY WEEK AND PASCHA

Christ is Risen! - The Light - May 2019
INVITE CHRIST TO DINE WITH US
Fr. Joseph M. McShane, S.J.

More years ago than I want to admit (especially to myself), my Provincial sent me to Berkeley to complete my theological studies (the last step in my formation prior to ordination). While I was there, I had the great fortune to get to know an older Jesuit who was a scholar-in-residence in our community. Broadly educated and well-read, he was a peerless preacher, a compelling lecturer, and a wise spiritual director. Therefore, his classes sold out. His Mass attendance was famously large. Other Jesuits all but fought to sit with him at dinner—to take notes on what he said. My classmates and I may have been young, but we were not completely clueless. Therefore, it didn't take us long to realize that he was the Real Deal—in Jesuit terms. A man of great stature. A wise man. A holy man. A compassionate priest. A perceptive mentor. An exemplary Jesuit. Now, don't get me wrong. He was no platter saint or sappy holy picture. He had an infectious laugh and a wicked sense of humor. Fortified with all of these gifts, he made it a part of his ministry to us to engage us in what St. Ignatius calls “spiritual conversations.”

In the course of one of those conversations, he suggested that since our lives in ministry would revolve around the “breaking of the bread” (the celebration of the Eucharist), it would be wise for us to look long and hard (and with open eyes, ears, and hearts) at what he loosely called by turns “the theology of dining” or “ministry of the table” contained in the Gospel stories that focused on Jesus as He ate with others. He challenged us to begin our explorations by letting go of our preconceived notions of God and how He acted. (Not to put too fine a point on it, he told us to “let God be God.”) He then encouraged us to switch on “Ignatian mode.” Hmm. We were to watch Jesus in action. To listen attentively to what He said. And to learn with our hearts. (He warned us that what we saw would challenge our preconceived notions as to just who God was. It turned out to be an open-ended seminar. In fact, it is a seminar that has continued till now (and I suspect that it will continue forever).

As I began the assignment, I discovered that (sure enough) Jesus liked to eat. A lot. And seemingly everywhere. From the wedding feast at Cana, to a dinner at Peter's house, to the dinner to which He invited Himself at the house of Zacchaeus (a tax collector), to the dinner at the house of Matthew (another tax collector), to the dinner in Bethany at the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, to the multiplication of the loaves and fishes to feed the five thousand who had followed Him into the wilderness, to the dinner at the house of Simon the Leper, to eating grain on the Sabbath with the disciples on the road, to the comfortable dinner at the home of a Pharisee where his feet were washed with the tears of a sinful woman, to the Passover dinner He celebrated on Holy Thursday. As I said, He loved the company of others. And He indulged that love by sharing meals with others.

And just what have I learned so far about the “theology of dining” and the “ministry of the table” found in the Gospels in this ongoing seminar that I began in 1975? First, that Jesus went out of His way to welcome and eat with sinners, outcasts, and those who suffered from physical infirmities, to identify with them and bring them to Himself. Second, He took special delight in sharing meals with His disciples—meals at which He taught them, encouraged them, and drew them ever closer to Himself as true companions (those with whom He shared bread). Third, in His stern reactions to those who were scandalized by the audacity He showed by eating with outcasts, He made it very clear that God's heart and love are far more expansive than the self-righteous can ever understand.

The Resurrection did not erase or diminish the delight that the Lord took in engaging in table fellowship with those whom He loved. Far from it. The Gospel accounts of the meals that He shared with His disciples in the Upper Room, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, and on the road to Emmaus are suffused with warmth and speak quite powerfully of His heart-felt desire to comfort, console, and embrace them in their time of loss. And to teach them what being “companions with Him in His mission and ministry” entailed.

Of all the stories of Jesus' post-Resurrection meals, the story of the encounter on the road to Emmaus is
probably the most loved. In it, Jesus catches up with two dispirited disciples on their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus. He falls in with them and asks them what they are talking about. Shocked at His question, they ask Him if He is the only person who doesn't know about what had happened in Jerusalem during the days leading up to their encounter. Feigning ignorance, Jesus asks them to enlighten Him. After they finish pouring their hearts out, it is His turn to enlighten them, which He does straight away, explaining to them how and why the Son of God had to suffer and then rise from the dead. When they arrive at Emmaus and Jesus excuses Himself so He can continue His journey, they beg Him to join Him for a meal. He relents. Then, as He breaks the bread, they recognize Him. When He disappears from their sight, the disciples run back to the Upper Room to share the news of their encounter with the hunkered-down disciples.

The story of the Lord’s encounter with the disciples on the road to Emmaus is not only a much-loved story, it is also an oddly unfinished one. What do I mean? Much to the consternation of scripture scholars, the location of Emmaus has never been identified. Therefore, its timeless message about the Lord’s deep and loving desire to catch up to and console all who are weighed down with sorrow, grief, or perplexity is what is important. The exact location of the encounter is not. But what does that mean for us? You know where I am going.

My sisters and brothers, if the truth were told, we would have to admit that in the course of the past few weeks, we have been modern-day disciples on our own road to Emmaus. Like the first disciples on the way to Emmaus, our lives have not been easy. Rather, our every waking hour has been dominated by conversations about and reflections on the present crisis, conversations focused on heart-wrenching stories about lives lost and shattered dreams. About how lost we feel. Alone. Frightened. Hungry for meaning and understanding. Above all, hungry for God’s presence and consolation. With our hearts filled with these emotions and with tears in our eyes, we want to say to God: Where were You? Where are You?

He has been there. And how could He not have been? After all, His heart is always drawn to those who are suffering. Trust me. It is. The Lord has quietly rushed to catch up to us as we have walked a road filled with sorrow. He has eavesdropped on our grief-filled conversations. If He were to ask us what we are talking about or grieving about, we would probably respond with more colorful language than the disciples did. Then, we would let it all spill out. No holds barred. Full-on. And He would listen. Attentively. From the heart. He would not interrupt. He would take it all in. And, as He did with and for the weary disciples in Saint Luke’s Gospel, He would then share with us a great, consoling, and reassuring secret: that in the Resurrection, God says in an unforgettable way that anyone who is brave enough to live a life of unselfish love in imitation of Christ’s life will share in the power of the Resurrection.

Emboldened by the Emmaus story, then, let me propose that you invite Him to take a seat at your kitchen table, where real life plays itself out with a rich mix of strong words and stronger love. No ceremony, please. No Sunday best. Just the knock-about garb of a hunkered-down family. Be honest with Him, for that is what He has always preferred. Speak from the heart. Break bread with Him. As you draw Him into your family, He will draw you into His. That is the magic of table fellowship. The Lord’s way. And then, let your prayers flow. You know what I mean. Ask Him to watch over your family and all whom you love. Ask Him to strengthen and sustain all health care workers. Beg Him to hold the hands of those who have no one with them as they prepare to enter eternal life. Commend to His loving mercy those who have died. Remind Him to embrace the grieving. He will listen from the heart. He surely will, for they are all (in His eyes) His companions and members of His household. They are all close to His heart. Trust me. They are and will be forever.
JUST A MOM?!? RIDICULOUS!!!

A woman, renewing her driver's license at the County Clerk's office was asked by the woman recorder to state her occupation. She hesitated, uncertain how to classify herself. "What I mean is," explained the recorder, "do you have a job or are you just a.....?"

"Of course I have a job," snapped the woman. "I'm a Mom." "We don't list 'Mom' as an occupation, 'housewife' covers it," said the recorder emphatically.

I forgot all about her story until one day I found myself in the same situation, this time at our own Town Hall. The Clerk was obviously a career woman, poised, efficient and possessed of a high sounding title like, "Official Interrogator" or "Town Registrar." "What is your occupation?" she probed.

What made me say it? I do not know. The words simply popped out. "I'm a Research Associate in the field of Child Development and Human Relations." The clerk paused, ball-point pen frozen in midair and looked up as though she had not heard right. I repeated the title slowly emphasizing the most significant words. Then I stared with wonder as my pronouncement was written, in bold, black ink on the official questionnaire.

"Might I ask," said the clerk with new interest, "just what you do in your field?" Coolly, without any trace of fluster in my voice, I heard myself reply, "I have a continuing program of research, (what mother doesn't) in the laboratory and in the field, (normally I would have said indoors and out). I'm working for my Masters, (first the Lord and then the whole family) and already have four credits (all daughters).

Of course, the job is one of the most demanding in the humanities, (any mother care to disagree?) and I often work 14 hours a day, (24 is more like it). But the job is more challenging than most run-of-the-mill careers and the rewards are more of a satisfaction rather than just money."

There was an increasing note of respect in the clerk's voice as she completed the form, and personally ushered me to the door. As I drove into our driveway, buoyed up by my glamorous new career, I was greeted by my lab assistants -- ages 13, 7, and 3. Upstairs I could hear our new experimental model, (a 6-month-old baby) in the child development program, testing out a new vocal pattern. I felt I had scored a beat on bureaucracy!

And I had gone on the official records as someone more distinguished and indispensable to mankind than "just another Mom." Motherhood! What a glorious career! Especially when there's a title on the door.

Does this make grandmothers "Senior Research associates in the field of Child Development and Human Relations" and great grandmothers "Executive Senior Research Associates"? I think so!!! I also think it makes Aunts and Mother Surrogates "Associate Research Assistants"!

Happy Mother's Day!!!
THANK YOU FOR ALL LENTEN & PASCHA DONATIONS

Lenten Altar Flowers:
In loving memory of Hariklia Milios from Demetrios, Celia and Chris
In loving memory of Vasilios Siozopoulos from his daughters Steliani and Despina
Friday Salutations Flowers
In loving Memory of Nick Stathis from Dora Stathis
In gratitude for my family from Pres Faith Veronis
Cross Sunday Flowers - For the glory of God from Denise and Rob Gritzner
Incense (for a year) – In loving memory of Maria Koufos from Stephanie and Jared Quill
Charcoal for (one Year) – For the glory of God from Ted Theodores
Altar Candles (for a Year) – For glory of God from George/Helen Kerbici
Palms and Trees– In loving memory of Jim and Esther Anthopulos and godparents John and Betty
Kokotis from Bill Anthopulos
Bridegrooms Icon Flowers – For the glory of God from Efkarhipa and Dimitrios Sidopoulos
Holy Uction Supplies -
Holy Thursday Candles - For the glory of God from Efkarhipa and Dimitrios Sidopoulos
Holy Thursday Flower Crown - In loving memory of Deceased Naum Family members from Anna Naum
Holy Friday Epitaphio Candles - In loving memory of Apostolos Xanthopoulos from his wife Eleni
Holy Friday Epitaphio Flowers - In loving memory of my grandmother and godmother from Joseph Gliniecki and In loving memory of my grandparents and in honor of my parents from Zach Gianaris
Holy Saturday Rose Petals - In loving memory of my father John from Kostas Panagiotou
Holy Altar Easter Arrangement - – In loving memory of my sister Elizabeth Vriga from Liz Pavlech
Resurrection Candle - In loving memory of our parents Stavros/Evangelia Pappas and Charlie/Loucia Christos from Sam and Evelyn Pappas
Resurrection Icon Flowers – In loving memory of my husband, John Panagiotou from his wife Evangelia
Circular Resurrection icon Flowers - For glory of God from Anton/Nicoleta Cojocaru
White Lilies for Easter
A SPECIAL THANKS TO SONYA AND JIM FROM JUNGLE JIM’S GARDEN CENTER IN WEST BOYLSTON FOR DONATING 50 LILIES!!!
For the glory of God from Efkarhipa/Dimitrios Sidopoulos
For the glory of God from Chris/Helen Constantine
In memory of my father and mother from T.J. Vasilescu
For the glory of God from Sophia Apostol
In memory of Mary and Argyrie Patras from Pauline Mueller
In loving memory of Vasiliki Kou lax from the Neslusan family
For the glory of God from Sandi and Gerry Kunkel
For the glory of God from Kelly Vosnakis
For the glory of God from Ted Theodores
In memory of my mother from Ann Chito
In memory of my husband Charlie from Ann Chito
For the glory of God from Sam/Evelyn Pappas
For the glory of God from Nick/Mary Seferi
For the glory of God from Denise Gritzner
For the glory of God from Bia Pappas Margaritidis
In memory of Anestis Giantsios from his wife Cheryl and children Kira, Ariel, Darius, JR, and Alexis
And THANK YOU to THE MANY OTHERS who offered a special Pascha Donation
to support our Beloved Church!
Over the last two months, we have not gathered together as a Church Family to worship in our beautiful sanctuary. For me personally, it has been quite strange, and yet I have truly felt the presence of all the heavenly powers and the saints. I worship in a church with a handful of people, yet whenever I turn around and cense the church, I cense all the icons and feel the presence of all the saints!!!

I have been happy that a number of you have commented how you have joined our worship via our Facebook and YouTube Live Stream services. I’m grateful to Pete George and Eric Beland who have helped make this possible for all to participate. My hope is that you don’t simply “view” our services, but that you watch our services and participate fully by praying the services with us!!!

Unfortunately, I realize that not everyone in our Church Family may have the ability to watch services online. If there is any way we can help you get online, please contact us and we’ll try to help. One of the positive consequences of these live stream services is that people from literally all around the world can watch our services. During Holy Week we were averaging around 600 “views” per service. Every in the last two weeks, we have been getting 800 and even up to 1000 views on various services! I have received emails from people as far at North Caroline, Georgia, California and several other states who have told me they have been blessed to watch our services.

Our Facebook analytics even showed that we had 165 people from Central MA and Northeast CT have watched our services, but we also had a total of 580 different people in the United States who have viewed our services and another 500 people from 48 different countries watch, including 68 people from Egypt, 57 from Albania, 32 from Australia, 30 from Canada, 22 from Greece, and 18 from Ethiopia. Imagine that!!!

One of the positive outcomes of this present crisis may be that we’ve learned about the power of online services and how they can reach out to people far beyond our little town of Webster! This can become another small part of our ministry in trying to share God’s Good News to the world around us!
Please Continue Stewardship Support Through Online Giving

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

During these uncertain times, we also want every member in our Church Family to know they are not alone, but we are there for one another. If there is anyone in our Church Family that has a need, who needs someone to go to the supermarket or pharmacy for them, or who is simply struggling financially, please contact Fr. Luke.

If you also know of other families in the community that are struggling at this time, please let us know. We are a Church Family that wants to help out one another, as well as help out our community at large. We will pray and mobilize resources and volunteers to help those in need. This is the mission of Christ and His Church!

To help us continue this sacred mission of Christ, please continue to support the Church through your stewardship and generosity:

1. Continue to send in your stewardship offering each week or month. You all should have recently received a letter with a summary of your stewardship and overall giving over the past three years, from 2017-2020. We are challenging those who are in a financial situation to do so, to please prayerfully considering increasing your stewardship and overall giving to the Church during this time of crisis.

2. To make it easier to support our Church, you can make your donations or stewardship offerings online. Either go to our church website at (www.schwebster.org) and you will see a donation tab in the bottom left corner of the website homepage.

3. Another way to make an online donation is to go to our square.site at https://my-site-108326-103062.square.site/. We include this link in our weekly email.

4. We also want to keep our church lit up with candles during all these days when very few people are in the church worshipping in our sanctuary. To light candles as a prayer offering, so to https://my-site-108326-103062.square.site/

All online giving is safe and secure, and kept in the utmost confidence.
## Important Dates in MAY:

Try to make a visit or give a call, to those who celebrate special days this month.

### BIRTHDAYS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>Nick Seferi</td>
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<td>May 3</td>
<td>Kara George</td>
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<td>May 5</td>
<td>Ted Tonna</td>
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<td>May 8</td>
<td>Maria Econome</td>
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<td>May 9</td>
<td>Joey Gliniecki</td>
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<td>May 12</td>
<td>Angelo Adamopoulos</td>
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<td>May 12</td>
<td>Yanni Mironidis</td>
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<td>May 13</td>
<td>Elliot Benoit</td>
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<td>May 14</td>
<td>Cristina Enache</td>
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<td>May 15</td>
<td>Matthew Neslusan</td>
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<td>May 16</td>
<td>Barbara Gianaris</td>
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<td>May 21</td>
<td>Stephanie Quill</td>
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<td>May 21</td>
<td>Taso Zahariadis</td>
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<td>May 22</td>
<td>Joan Geotis</td>
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<td>May 25</td>
<td>Dimitri Mironidis</td>
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<td>May 25</td>
<td>Scott Kunkel</td>
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<td>May 26</td>
<td>Nicholas Avlas</td>
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<td>May 27</td>
<td>Michael Belanger</td>
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<td>May 29</td>
<td>Stephen Pappas</td>
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<td>May 30</td>
<td>Sophia Koufax</td>
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<td>May 30</td>
<td>Lea Koveas Mirandola</td>
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<td>May 31</td>
<td>Gus Koufax</td>
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<td>May 31</td>
<td>Matt Benoit</td>
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<td>May 31</td>
<td>Tina Coleman</td>
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### WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 6</td>
<td>Nicholas/Athanasia Darligianis</td>
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<td>May 7</td>
<td>Michael &amp; Titi Chito</td>
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<td>May 9</td>
<td>Michael &amp; Muriel Angelo</td>
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<td>May 12</td>
<td>Garry &amp; Jaime Ross</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 19</td>
<td>Yanni &amp; Katie Mironidis</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 21</td>
<td>Dimitrios &amp; Efkarpto              Sidopoulos</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 22</td>
<td>John and Eleni Sgouritsas</td>
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<td>May 23</td>
<td>Scott and Kathy Kunkel</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 24</td>
<td>Ron and Sandy Sanderson</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 27</td>
<td>Pauline &amp; Carl Mueller</td>
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### NAMEDAYS:

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>St Irene                            Irene Mountzouris</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 8</td>
<td>St John the Evangelist             Ian Mackenzie</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>St. Glykeria                        Glykeria Partsalis</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 21</td>
<td>Sts Constantine &amp; Helen             Constatine Anifantis Charles Constantine Chito Helen Constantine Helen Dunning Louisa Eleni Foisy Elaine Goulas Helen Hazatones Helen Kerbici Constantine (Gus) Koulax Helen Lepeine Elena MacKenzie Helen Metropoulos Chuck Spiro Pappas Kostas Panagiotou Brandi Eleni Patrick Eleni Sgouritsas Helen Theodores Helen Thomas Eleni Xanthopoulos Morgan (Konstantine) Vosnakas Helen Zenon</td>
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**God Grant You Many More Blessed Years!!!**
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!

A DAILY PRAYER

Father, I abandon myself into Your hands.
Do with me whatever You will.
Whatever You do, I thank you.
I am ready for all, and accept all.
Let only Your Will be done in me.
Into Your hands I commit my spirit.
I offer it to You with all the love that is in my heart.
For I love You, Lord, and so want to surrender myself into Your hands without reserve and with boundless confidence, for You are my Father. Amen.

(Charles de Foucauld)

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

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www.AncientFaith.com
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sun</th>
<th>Mon</th>
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<th>Thu</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>8:30 Matin</td>
<td>6:30pm Paraclesis Service During a Pandemic</td>
<td>CHRIST IS RISEN!</td>
<td>TRULY HE IS RISEN!</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
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<td>9:30am Paraclesis to Virgin Mary</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:00 Virtual Coffee Fellowship</td>
<td>5:00 Vespers</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>8:30 Matin</td>
<td>6:30pm Paraclesis Service During a Pandemic</td>
<td>10:00 Bible Study via ZOOM</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
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<td>11:00 Virtual Coffee Fellowship</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>8:30 Matin</td>
<td>13 Mid Pentecost</td>
<td>8:30 Matins</td>
<td>6:30 Paraclesis to St Nikiforos</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>9:15 Liturgy</td>
<td>10:00 Bible Study on Zoom</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11:00 Virtual Coffee Fellowship</td>
<td>6:30 Vespers for Sts Constantine and Helen</td>
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<td>May 31</td>
<td>8:30 Matin</td>
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<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
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<td>11:00 Virtual Coffee Fellowship</td>
<td>9:30 Liturgy</td>
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<td>May 31</td>
<td>8:30 Matin</td>
<td>8:45 Matins</td>
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<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>9:00 Liturgy</td>
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<td>11:00 Virtual Coffee Fellowship</td>
<td>10:00 Bible Study on Zoom</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>8:30 Matin</td>
<td>25 Memorial Day</td>
<td>27 Close of Pacha</td>
<td>28 FEAST OF ASCENSION</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>9:00-11:00 Fr Luke will be at Mt Zion Cemetery</td>
<td>8:30 Matins of Pascha</td>
<td>8:45 Matins</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:00 Virtual Coffee Fellowship</td>
<td>9:00 Liturgy</td>
<td>9:00-11:00 Fr Luke will be at Mt Zion Cemetery</td>
<td>9:30 Liturgy</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>1:00 Parish Council Meet on Zoom</td>
<td>6:30pm Paraclesis Service During a Pandemic</td>
<td>10:00 Bible Study on Zoom</td>
<td>5:00 Vespers</td>
<td>5:00 Vespers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
There are **ANGELS** God Puts on this Earth
Who care for us and guide us.
You can feel their love and gentleness
As they walk through life beside us.

They do great things for us every day
They whisper in our ears,
They even hold us in their hearts
When we are filled with all our fears.

They are always there to give a hug
And try to make us smile.
They treat us with respect and love,
they treat us like their child.

God blessed me with an Angel,
I’m proud to call my own.
She’s been with me throughout my life,
Been with me as I’ve grown.

She’s guided me the best she can,
She’s taught me like no other,
And I’m thankful I’m the lucky one
Who get’s to call her... **MOTHER**