Who wouldn’t want to participate in a birthday party for someone who turns 100 years old? It’s amazing to meet someone who was born in 1919 and to reflect on all the changes they’ve lived through in their life. Celebrating such a birthday would be all about looking back and remembering the past - the incredible changes and fond memories, the bonds of love with family and friends, the accomplishments and legacy they leave behind. Much would be made about the past, since everyone would know the celebrant’s future is quite limited.

Well, our Saints Constantine and Helen Church Family will celebrate our 100th Birthday on Sunday, November 24th, and we want every member of our community to be there! In fact, this Sunday will mark the official Kick-off for a year long 100th Anniversary Celebration of our past, our present, and our future!!

For a Church Family to celebrate 100 Years is something quite different than when a person marks their birthday. Surely, it is a time to reflect on the past and to remember from where we came. We want to honor our forebearers who established and maintained this beautiful community for a century. We will highlight certain milestones and praise God for the faith that was lived and proclaimed. We will recall the past with deep thanksgiving and gratitude!

We will also celebrate the present. Today, we are not the same community of immigrants who came from Greece and Albania to discover the American Dream and find a better life for themselves and their children. We do have parishioners whose grandparents were among the founders and first people of this church, but we also have many others. We have new immigrants from other traditionally Orthodox lands like Romania, Russia, Belarus, Lebanon and Egypt. We have members who married Orthodox spouses and then themselves embraced the Orthodox faith. We have others who simply discovered the treasures of this ancient church in their search for truth and the original Christian church. And we have still others who have found our community to be a family of love that attracted them to join and become committed members. We will celebrate our present diversity as well as our unity in faith!

Of course, it is extremely important that as we celebrate our 100th Anniversary, we focus on the future! We remember where we came from and who we are, but
Sts. Constantine and Helen
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Facebook: St Constantine Helens (Church)
Church Office Hours: Monday, Fridays 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

The mission of Sts. Constantine and Helen Church is to proclaim the Good News of Salvation through the Orthodox Christian Faith for the glory of our Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We are a community of believers who journey towards our Lord Jesus Christ and one another through our WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP, SPIRITUAL GROWTH, WITNESS, and SERVICE. We invite all people to join us on this journey in the Kingdom of Heaven.

We are under the jurisdiction of
His Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew
His Eminence, Archbishop Elpidophoros of America
His Eminence, Metropolitan Methodios of Boston

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Grounds: Nick Popiak
where are we going? Who do we want to become? Where do we want to be 100 years from now? How can we continue to faithfully represent the Church of Christ, especially in a society that is drastically turning away from organized religion and even Christianity? What do we want others to see in us and in our Church Family? In other words, what do we want to be known for? Is it good enough to be known for our Greek Festival or should we be known for much more than that?

Throughout our year long celebration, we will do a number of things. Each month, we want to remember and celebrate and plan in different ways. Every month we will try to have some special event, or a particular activity, or a celebration, or a fundraiser marking our 100th Anniversary.

We want to accomplish many things over the next year. We want to remember. We want to celebrate. We want to plan for the future. We want to establish more firmly our Church as a central and vital institution (or more appropriately a loving family) that serves the people of Webster, central Mass, and northeast Connecticut, but also reaches out to the world at large!

Our special Kick-Off event on November 24th will be something new and unexpected! It will present a radical challenge that may shock some of our people, but when properly understood, has the great potential to get all of us to reflect on and hopefully discover WHO WE ARE as we celebrate our Church Family’s 100th Anniversary. Through this event, we hope to:

- Do something that can ENGAGE EVERY PERSON AND FAMILY in our Church.
- Get each of us to THINK CAREFULLY about what it means to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.
- Be creative in helping our Church GET INVOLVED in the larger community all around us
- Create a powerful TEACHING MOMENT in our personal lives as well as in the live of our overall church community

Please make sure that you come on Sunday, November 24th to find out what we are doing!!!

Yet our Kick-Off Sunday is only the beginning. Throughout the year, we are planning a variety of events. We are working on some right now, and we are still open to any creative ideas that someone else in the community may have. For example, we have set our date for the end of our celebration.

Our 100th Anniversary Gala Dinner is set for Saturday, November 7, 2020. Please mark your calendars from now so that everyone can be present for this closing highlight of the year long celebration next year!

In January and February, we hope to have some FELLOWSHIP DINNERS where groups of families from our community will come together to share fellowship over a meal, and to discuss what they like about our Church and where they want to see our church go. We want to engage every family in our community in these small group dinners.

During Great Lent we will have a very special music filled EIKONA WEEKEND when we invite the music group Eikona to offer a concert, a music workshop, and chant some Lenten services with us. It will be a beautiful weekend!

We will have other special guest speakers, and do other activities throughout the year. We will also have some various fundraisers. In December, we will kick it off with our DECEMBER RAFFLE CALENDAR, where each day someone can win a special gift card.

We also have set a goal to raise $100,000 for our 100th Anniversary. Mike Chito will be talking with various people and trying to encourage our community in this important fundraising effort.

We have an exciting year coming up in our Church Family. Let us reflect, with deep gratitude and thanksgiving, for the 100 years of our Church, but let us also dream about where we want to go in the future with this beautiful community!

With much love and hope in Christ Jesus,

+Luke
REFLECTIONS ON 25 YEARS IN THE PRIESTHOOD - Part 1

As I think of my 25 years as a priest, I gratefully reflect on my past and all the people who have enriched my life and ministry. I remember growing up as a “Priest’s Kid” in a faithful home of my dear parents, Fr. Alexander and Pres. Pearl Veronis. They set the greatest example for me as good and faithful servants of the Lord. My wife and I also grew up as a part of a very vibrant church community at the Annunciation Orthodox Church in Lancaster, PA.

Even though I went off to Penn State as a computer science major and lost my way, spiritually speaking, during those rambunctious college years, I’m eternally grateful that before my final semester of school, I participated in the first Orthodox mission trip from the United States which went to Kenya in 1987 under the invitation of Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos. That one-month mission trip opened my eyes and set me on a new path in life. The experience set a spark in my life that lit the foundation of faith with which I was raised. I returned to Kenya for one year of service following my college graduation, and during the year that followed, I lived in the bush country of Western Kenya serving again under Archbishop Anastasios. It was in Africa that I decided to go to Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology to better learn my faith and to possibly prepare myself to become a missionary teacher who would return back to serve in some part of Africa.

God surprised me, though, and instead of returning to Africa as a lay missionary teacher, following graduation from Holy Cross I went to post-communist Albania and would eventually become a missionary priest there. Nine months into my mission in Albania, I returned to the States to marry the love of my life, my dearest partner and soulmate Faith Stathis, on August 28th, 1994. Faith and I have always shared a common vision of faith and service. She has proven to be the ideal wife, partner, co-minister, and presbytera. All that I have strived to do in serving our Lord over these past 25 years, she has done with me – sharing her gifts and using her talents in unique ways to touch others and to glorify God. She has always acted as my greatest support, and together we have tried to faithfully and humbly serve God and His people.

Shortly after our marriage, I was ordained a deacon in our home parish of the Annunciation in Lancaster, PA on September 17. I then took my newlywed wife to Tirana, Albania for a ten year “honeymoon” to one of the poorest countries in the world at that time in 1994. Shortly after we arrived, on the Feastday of St. Luke the Evangelist, October 18th our beloved Archbishop Anastasios ordained me to the priesthood.

I served as a priest for 10 years in post-communist Albania, where we were introducing a generation of people to God and His Church, to people who were forbidden to practice or live any form of religion. What an unforgettable experience! I served Liturgy and even the Pascha service in villages where they were forbidden to worship for 25 years, which meant giving Holy Communion to people for the first time in a generation! Imagine that! I introduced countless people to the Good News of Jesus Christ and baptized hundreds of people who came from atheist homes, culturally Muslim backgrounds, as well as nominally Orthodox families. Pres. Faith and I tried to witness for our faith during various crises, like when the country fell into anarchy in 1997 and my wife, along with almost all other Americans, were evacuated by the U.S. Marines, or when in 1999 a half million mostly Muslim refugees flooded into Albania and we befriended and served many of these marginalized people offering the love of Christ. We watched a generation of young people discover and grow in the faith through the youth camps we ran and the university ministry we offered. And I served at the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy, helping teach and prepare more than 150 future priests, including three of the present bishops serving in Albania today!

Following our first decade of service, we then moved to New England to serve a struggling little parish in Webster, MA and to begin teaching at Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. For the past 15 years we have participated in an exciting turn-around situation of a small parish that went from being a problematic church that was close to closing its doors to becoming a vibrant, healthy church family that reaches out to the local community as well as participates regularly in global outreach. During these same years I’ve been espe-
cially blessed to teach 15 years of students at Hellenic College and Holy Cross. I’ve also helped to establish a Missions Institute from which we raise missionary awareness and education among the school community. Both the local parish and the seminary context have truly blessed us with so many dear relationships and wonderful opportunities to serve the Lord and to share His Good News with others!

As I reflect on my priesthood, I thank God for these incredible joys and blessings. A highlight has always been serving at Christ’s holy altar. What an incredible privilege to stand before the Throne of God, to join the saints and angels in worship, and to lead the family of God into His heavenly kingdom! Serving the Divine Liturgy weekly and on feastdays never grows old. Leading worship through the Liturgical calendar, especially through the seasons of Great Lent and into Holy Week and Pascha is still an exciting journey each year. Even when only a handful of faithful gather in the church on a weekday liturgy, I realize we are never alone and never only a few. The Church is always filled with the church triumphant, the saints and angelic powers, and we are united with all Christians throughout the world each time we worship the Lord.

Another beautiful and blessed joy has been gathering together in small groups for study and fellowship. Throughout the past 25 years, I have gathered in small groups to study the Bible, to pray together, and to share in intimate fellowship. These gatherings have taken place in our home, in the church, in other venues, as well as on college campuses. I’ve had small groups meet weekly at 6am on Saturday mornings, held college Divine Liturgies weekly at 6am on Thursdays, as well as gather for the typical 10am Bible Studies in my community along with other small group evening meetings. These times of small group learning and fellowship have truly been one of the most significant ministries for me. It is in groups like this that people sincerely learn their faith, experience intimate and loving fellowship, and feel inspired to grow in their walk with Christ. And it is such groups which have helped me stay focused and have greatly encouraged me throughout the years.

I often think that one of the most special aspects of the priesthood is the incredible privilege to enter into the lives of people during their most vulnerable moments of life, as well as during their greatest joys. Who else is asked to journey with someone facing death, or mourning the death of a loved one; to walk with someone struggling with addiction, depression, mental illness, terminal illness, or some other serious challenge; to support someone struggling in their marriage or with family problems; to help parents address the challenges of their children and to guide the youth themselves in navigating the challenges of their adolescent and young adult years; to comfort someone in their loneliness, desperation and despair; to address whatever forms of brokenness one may face. Of course, a priest realizes that offering such help doesn’t mean that we are any better than others. I’ve learned as a priest that I am truly a wounded healer, one who tries to participate in the life story of others while realizing that I myself am also on a path of healing from my own woundedness and brokenness. We journey together to help one another.

Along with the struggles of life, a priest is also invited to share in the wondrous joys of life. We are present at the birth of children, at their baptism, and at each milestone in their growth. We participate in weddings and family celebrations. We feel honored to be invited to and to bring God’s blessing at each of the joyous moments in peoples’ lives.

Since our return from the mission field, we have always tried to cultivate an understanding of the universal aspect of our Church and faith both in our local parish as well as at the seminary. I’ve taken more than 100 seminarians on mission classes/trips to Albania and arranged for 100 other students to go on Spring Break mission trips. In our Saints Constantine and Helen parish, we have taken more than 100 people to Project Mexico nine times, exposing them to the joy of cross-cultural service and mission. These international experiences have helped many people understand the universal aspect of the Gospel, the centrality of sharing God’s Good News with all people everywhere throughout the world.

It’s been an incredible journey serving God as a priest over these past 25 years and a very special blessing for me and my presbytera, along with our four children. Our family has been deeply loved in the church families in which we have lived in Albania and in Massachusetts. They have experienced countless blessings in the local and global church. Of course, they have also tasted life as a priest’s kid, which at times can bring its own unique challenges, but they have survived and thrived. Overall, we all have been so blessed, and we truly thank God for these 25 years!!!
WHAT DOES THE CHURCH HAVE TO OFFER?
Reflections on 25 Years in the Priesthood - Part 2

Twenty-five years in the priesthood! How the world has changed over the 25 years since I was ordained to the priesthood on the feastday of St. Luke in Tirana, Albania on October 18th, 1994. I served my first 10 years as a missionary priest in post-communist Albania, preaching and teaching and witnessing our Orthodox Christian faith to a generation of people who had never been allowed to practice any religion and many who knew literally nothing about Jesus Christ and the Good News of His Kingdom. The last 15 years of my priestly ministry I have been serving in New England, during which time this area has become the most secular, unchurched region of the United States. In a new way, I’m confronted as in the early years with a number of people who call themselves non-religious and who seem to be uninterested or even reject any value of the Christian faith.

I sometimes wonder where this radical change in the religious landscape of our society will lead? What will our society look like if I reach the 50th anniversary of my priesthood? Will we priests feel like the Prophet Elijah in the Old Testament, when he saw most of his society turn away from God and he thought that he was the only person who remained faithful in all of Israel? Will our society be a fulfillment of Christ’s own words, when he said, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8)

Well, as a priest and as a Christian who wants the world to discover the same treasure of faith that I have found in my own life, I often ask myself what exactly it is that the Orthodox Church has to offer to the world today? Is our Christian faith even relevant for the contemporary person?

Obviously, I wholeheartedly believe it is! The Church has the “pearl of great price,” the treasure of the Kingdom of God! We priests proclaim the eternal Good News of God’s love and mercy, His forgiveness and grace which is a transformative message for the entire world!

When I look around, I see so many people who are hurting and lonely, who are broken and in despair. Even people who appear strong and healthy often hide an emptiness in their lives. I’ve learned that each and every person is broken to some degree, and there is a void that can only be filled with God’s presence and love!

So, when I think of my priesthood over the past 25 years, and what my priesthood will be during the next 25 years, I reflect precisely on this Good News that the Church has to share with our contemporary society. I see four very relevant aspects of faith that the Orthodox Christian Church has to uniquely offer to the world today.

First, the Church offers a mystical encounter with God, an experience of the transcendent. Through our worship, through the mysteries of the Sacraments, through our loving service to those especially in need, through understanding that each and every person is created in the image of God and that we can see Christ in the least of our brothers and sisters, through each of these experiences we can encounter the eternal and transcendent God. Deep within every person there is a desire for this encounter with the Almighty. As St. Augustine once said, “Our souls will remain restless until they rest in the Lord.” The Church offers the way to encounter God in a vibrant and living manner, and then guides us to rest in Him.

Second, our Orthodox Christian faith helps us discover and understand the meaning of life. Who am I? A beloved child of God, someone of priceless value, created in the image and likeness of God. Who is God? The Creator of the universe who became a human being in Jesus Christ and revealed to the world perfect love through His life, death and resurrection. This God invites each one of us into a loving union with Him. What is the purpose of our life? To love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. The purpose of life is to receive God’s divine and unconditional love and then to share this agape love with every person we encounter in our daily lives. Through this interaction of love, we become more and more like God, united to Love Incarnate, to God Himself.

Third, the Church offers a place of belonging for
all people. The Church is a family of faith where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, cherished, respected, and valued. It is a community of faith which guides us into a deeper union with God. It is the Body of Christ continuing the work of Jesus in the world all around us. It is a hospital that offers healing, an oasis that offers refreshment, a lighthouse that gives direction, an ark that offers safety in the midst of life’s storms, and a home where strangers become not only friends and become the family of God.

Finally, the Church is the messenger of unbelievable and eternal Good News. No matter what chaos and evil prevail in the world around us, the Church offers a message of eternal love, endless hope, peace that passes all understanding, light that overcomes all darkness, and faith that can move mountains. The center of this Good News is the fact that Jesus Christ is Risen from the dead and death itself is defeated. We no longer live with any fear in our lives. “Perfect love casts out all fear.” Thus, we do not even fear death itself. A Paschal joy prevails throughout our lives. This is the worldview Orthodox Christians should carry with them at all times!

When I think of these four aspects of our Orthodox Christian Church and our Faith, and then ask myself whether there is a place for Christianity in the future, the answer is obvious. Absolutely! No matter how secular our society becomes, there will always be a need for what the Church offers, and I pray that I can be a good and faithful servant priest who constantly proclaims this Good News of Jesus Christ and helps others to discover the transforming power of God in our lives!

I’ve been blessed to be a priest of God for 25 years! I look forward to the next 25 years striving to faithfully and humbly serve my Lord and to share His Good News with all people throughout the world!

SPECIAL MOMENTS IN THE LIFE OF A PRIEST

Reflections on 25 Years in the Priesthood - Part 3

What are the highlights of being a priest? Well, it’s all about the beautiful relationships we form and develop – first and foremost in our relationship with God, but just as important in our relationships within the Church, the Family of God, as well as in our relationships with all the people we encounter each and every day in society. Here are a few random reflections on such relationships that make serving as a priest such a joy:

I think of how a priest encounters God in a most intimate, mystical way, and from this living, dynamic encounter acts as God’s ambassador to the world! Of course, all followers of Jesus Christ are called to be ambassadors of Christ, yet a priest plays a unique role. We serve as a representative of Jesus Christ as we enter into the depths of peoples’ lives. We have the special privilege to share in their greatest struggles, sorrows and challenges, while also being invited into their moments of joy and blessing. Who else in society gets to experience the highest and lowest moments in other people’s lives?

Praying and connecting with God in my personal prayer life, but especially worshipping as a community in Church every Sunday and on special feast-days and week day services is always otherworldly. Every time we worship, we unite with the communion of the saints. I look around at all the beautiful icons on the walls of our Church and I remember that I am actually standing before the throne of God together with all these saints and the angelic powers! In such worship, we leave time and space on earth to encounter and experience Almighty God. What can be more unbelievable than connecting with God through our worship and through the mysteries of the Holy Sacraments. Unfortunately, I don’t think many Christians realize this divine encounter, and yet that is what happens when we truly pray and worship. We also unite with all the living saints.
here on earth, i.e. with one another as well as with all our fellow Christians throughout the world when we gather together to pray.

As a part of this communal worship, I offer the proskomidi prayers. These are prayers in preparation for celebrating the Eucharist. As a part of such prayers, I have a list of literally several thousand names for whom I try to pray for each week. It is an honor to lift up so many names, asking God to bless, to protect, and to keep in His care all these people. Through these prayers, I feel connected with all of you, as well as with many people whom I haven’t seen in years. And these prayers include praying for the souls of hundreds of people who have died, asking God to have mercy on them and surround them with His eternal love and light. Such prayers play a special role in the life of a priest.

A main calling of every Christian is to proclaim our Lord’s Good News to a world that is in desperate need of His Life-Giving Message of unconditional love, unconquerable hope, unfathomable mercy and grace, and eternal joy. The priest struggles to figure out how best to proclaim this message in a way that people find relevant and meaningful through his sermons, through his writings, through the classes he teaches, and through his life. It’s a difficult task to proclaim such a message in a way people can hear, especially in today’s secular world, and yet, what an amazing honor to take on this challenge.

A highlight of my priestly ministry has been standing around a dying person in their last moments of life. Death is a fearful mystery but it is also a sacred moment when our finite existence encounters the infinite love of God. I have experienced such moments singing hymns, saying prayers, and journeying with the person as they go from this life into eternity, surrounded by the earthly love of family and friends while preparing them to enter into the loving embrace of their Creator. Such moments of death can truly be sacred and beautiful. I remember offering a prayer where I was asking God to receive the soul of a parishioner, and as I read the prayer she stopped breathing and entered into eternal life. Our Christian faith transforms death from a dreaded moment of fear into a powerful divine moment when earth touches heaven. What a privilege to walk with dying people and their families during these sacred moments!

Another beautiful experience was gathering at 6:30am on Saturday mornings for 10 years with a group of 4 to 12 men sharing in Christ-centered fellowship, studying the Bible, and watching one another discover their faith in new ways. Such small group ministry has always played a central role in my priesthood. I remember our first five years in Webster when 10-20 people gathered in our home on Wednesday evenings. In this group we had people in their 70s and 80s reading and studying the Bible for the first time ever in their lives and discovering new ways to live out the priceless treasure of faith. The result of one of these Bible Studies was when one couple decided to give the Church $50,000 in response to the question, “What are we doing for eternity?” Or many other times I gathered on college campuses, at home, and at church studying together with countless people who wanted to better understand the Christian faith and learn how to live a life in Christ!

Of course, serving as a missionary priest for more than 12 years inspired me to introduce many others to the excitement of global Christianity and cross-cultural ministry. I’ve led mission teams to Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, but mostly to Albania and Mexico. I loved leading more than 100 seminarians in missionary classes and practicum to Albania, as well as leading more than 100 parishioners...
and friends to Project Mexico where we’ve built nine homes. Teens as well as parishioners over the age of 70 have participated and been inspired by our trips to Mexico. Watching faithful people leave their comfort zone of America, live in Christian fellowship while sleeping in tents and eating beans for one week, build a home for a family in need and develop loving friendships with people different from oneself, discover the beauty and richness of another culture and learn from people with whom we may have held certain prejudices, all the while discovering the deepest meaning and joy of sacrificing and serving others is a transformative! One participant summarized the feeling of so many who have gone when she said, “I feel the most peaceful and content, the happiest in my life when I’m in Mexico building a home.” She, and many others, discovered the priceless joy of sacrificially giving!

Visiting someone in prison who has made a terrible mistake and who feels terrible about themselves, while trying to help them realize that God still loves them no matter what they’ve done in their life is such a privilege. Or journeying with someone struggling with an addiction - whether with drugs or alcohol or sex or pornography or whatever – and journeying with them on the path of recovery and helping them overcome their feelings of guilt, disappointment, brokenness, and self-hatred is a sacred gift. I’ve shared the story of The Prodigal Son, or better named The Loving Father, with people in these situations to help them realize that our heavenly Father loves us no matter what. God’s love is unconditional! It doesn’t depend on us and on what we’ve done! Just at the Father welcomes back his wayward son and completely restores his place as the heir of his inheritance, in like manner it’s such a remarkable experience to help broken souls realize that they are truly loved, cherished, and valued by God, and that our heavenly Father is waiting to welcome them back into His home.

Listening to the confession of someone who carries, or has carried a heavy burden for many years, maybe from some sin and mistake they have committed a long time ago – an abortion, infidelity, hatred, greed, an incredible hurt and pain they have caused or received, or something else - and helping them realize that God truly forgives them, God loves them, God desires only to heal them if they will allow Him to, is such a sacred gift to offer. We are emissaries in proclaiming that God does not desire the death of a sinner but that he hopes only to heal and forgive and renew and help one rediscover the divine image within that has been covered up by these sins and mistakes.

Meeting one-on-one with people who are suffering with the deep mysteries of life –with some terminal illness, with mental illness and depression, with a broken marriage or desperate family life, with the loss of a loved one or with someone struggling to put their life together after such a loss, as well as with those broken from past mistakes or poor choices – and helping them find a sense of peace in the loving presence of God is remarkable. During these encounters I feel God’s presence and love in abundance and try to incarnate and share His love with those in darkness.

Every January, during the season of Epiphany, I enter 150 homes, being warmly welcomed, blessing the homes for the new year, and sharing Christ-centered love and fellowship with my beloved parishioners. Throughout the year, there are many other times I visit dozens and dozens of people in their homes. What a remarkable privilege to enter so many homes, bringing God’s presence and love into the lives of others!

The priesthood is a place where I’ve met the most incredible people – from living saints, to inspiring monks and nuns, to wonderful co-workers and priests, to humble, faithful believers. I’ve been blessed to know spiritual giants as well as simple devout people whom the world would know nothing about, yet who are giants in the eyes of God. All these relationships have enriched my life immeasurably.

Of course, there are many other special moments in the life and ministry of a priest. These are just a few that can give a glimpse into who a priest is and what he does. The priesthood is an incredible calling, and a most beautiful life. In this ministry, we are reminded daily of our own shortcomings, failures, sins and hypocrisy. Yet we take comfort knowing that “God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness.” We are simple instruments in the hands of God, trying to guide people to the Source of Life and Love and to the only Savior of the World.
COMMENTS FROM THE YOUTH

We would like to say a few words to honor your 25-year anniversary to your priesthood ordination. We know you enjoy adding a little creativity to your children’s sermons, so don’t worry, we have planned something special. Your ordination was indeed something holy. It was a sacrament that united you in a holy way to God and His church. You committed your life to spreading the Good News of God’s Love and Eternal Life through Jesus Christ. You started in Albania where you served 10 years and then came to us here and served almost 15 years. For us teenagers, you have been our Spiritual Father for all of our formative years.

What is the Church and why should we come to church? We have learned through your teachings and ministry that the Church is more than a physical building. It is the Body of Christ where we WORSHIP, SHARE IN FELLOWSHIP, LEARN AND GROW, LEARN TO SERVE OTHERS and WITNESS FOR OUR FAITH. Throughout your ministry, you and Pres. Faith have preached and challenged us to become the Human Church for Christ. So, we want to share with our Church Family how you have taught and preached to us about becoming a Human Church that is alive and active.

We are a Church that WORSHIPS and PRAYS together. You continue to remind us about the importance of keeping Sunday mornings holy and reserved for God. We remember your teaching liturgies when you explained to us what happens during the Liturgy and how we enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. We know that you come to Church on Sunday mornings an hour earlier to pray for each of us by name and all our families during the Preparation Service. You have challenged us to participate in the worship services by encouraging us to be Altar Boys, Choir members, and Epistle Readers.

We are a Church that continues to LEARN about our Orthodox Faith. We will always remember all the lessons that you have taught us through your CHILDREN’S SERMONS. Growing up, we have role played different Gospel stories or Lives of Saints. We appreciate how you capture our attention with Ladders, Suitcases, Pots of Soil, and other interesting props. You teach us through simple songs - like “when we make the sign of the Cross, we remember that God is the Boss” or “Why worry when we can pray” or “This Little Christian Light of Mine, I’m going to let it shine.” Through our SUNDAY SCHOOL you have supported our CHRISTIAN EDUCATION. You have inspired us by inviting many amazing seminarians, missionaries, and guest speakers from around the world. Even SAINT NICHOLAS loves coming to our Church every year in December.

We are a Church that enjoys Christian FELLOWSHIP. You have created a FAMILY atmosphere here at Saints Constantine and Helen, where we truly feel that we are LOVED and CARED for. You help us remember each other’s birthdays and name days every Sunday by singing “God Grant You Many Years.” We will always cherish the memories of our week-long VACATION CHURCH CAMPS where we learned God’s Word and Love through fun themes like Treasure Island, Sports Camp, Safari, Fiesta, The Wild West, Science Lab, Spy Center, Missions Around the World, the Life of Saint Paul, and Jonah the Prophet. As we grew older, we had RETREATS and LOCK-INS to look forward to. You also encouraged us to go to the Metropolis of Boston Camp in New Hampshire where you often accompanied us. We have experienced that growing up in our Church can be fun as we connect with friends in a Christ-centered environment.

We are a Church that SERVES others and reaches out to all people, especially those in need. SERVICE and OUTREACH are, perhaps, the two pillars that have made you stand out as such an amazing priest for our Church community. You have challenged us to offer a Christian witness by visiting Nursing Homes and those who are homebound. We have also volunteered at our monthly Living Bread Luncheon. For many of us teens, Project Mexico has become a life-changing experience where we saw poverty first-hand, met beautiful families as we helped build a simple home for them, and interacted with the Mexican Boys at Saint Innocent Ranch.

WORSHIP, EDUCATION, FELLOWSHIP, and SERVICE and OUTREACH. These are the pillars that you have highlighted here at Saints Constantine and Helen, not only in your ministry, but also in US, your spiritual children and your church family - young and old. Thank You Fr. Luke for all you have taught us through your words, actions, and love. As you can see, you have indeed taught us all well. We are the LIVING CHURCH that will remember to always love God fully and love our neighbors.

AXIOS Fr. Luke. We thank you and love you!
A REFLECTION FROM
EVIS JORDANOGLOU

I met Father Luke and Presbytera Faith on a Thursday morning in October of 1995 at the University Campus in Tirana Albania, in a small communist cultural youth center that Father had transformed into a place to hold the Divine Liturgy. Only several years had passed from the fall of communism and people were experiencing the freedom of religion. Young students like myself were eager to learn about God. Initially I was involved in a Protestant group called Campus Crusade for Christ. I would also go to an Orthodox Liturgy on Sunday morning and a Catholic mass at noon. I tried to follow the Orthodox Liturgy but the services were long and very chaotic with people coming and going. It was hard to understand and pray. I was at a crossroads. It seemed that all churches shared the same message but which was the true church? I prayed to God for an answer.

I heard about an Orthodox Divine Liturgy held on campus at 6am Thursday mornings. I was intrigued that a young American priest and his wife ran this Liturgy, and it was all in Albanian. It was the first Divine Liturgy that I followed and understood from beginning to end. It was amazing! There were only a handful of students at that first Liturgy. When the service was over, I met Fr Luke and Faith and that was the beginning of a lifelong journey of learning more about God and a lifelong friendship with Fr Luke and his family. Fr Luke patiently answered all my questions and soon after I was baptized at 21 years old.

Maybe we can count on one hand the people that impact our lives in a meaningful way. Father Luke and Presbytera Faith are two of those people for me. They have been mentors and become a part of my family. Fr Luke has been my spiritual father and friend. He supported my family when my father was dying and both Fr. Luke and Faith were there to share every happy event of our lives. They not only changed my life but the lives of many of the youth in Albania. As the college ministry grew, that group of 3 students that attended that early morning liturgy became 60 students in a short period of time. Hundreds of students and young people came to know Christ through the college ministry, summer camps, student conferences, bible studies and numerous other activities that we were part of.

Fr. Luke and Pres. Faith opened their home and their hearts to us and welcomed everyone just like Christ would have. In Albania, we are forever grateful for their love and example.

When Fr Luke and Presbytera left their Albanian mission in 2004, part of my heart left with them. I never thought I’d see them again and I was going to miss them terribly. Who would have ever thought I would come to live here in Central MA? But Fr. Luke and Pres. Introduced me to my husband, Anestis, and here I am every Sunday! When I listen to Fr Luke’s sermons, I feel like I am hearing them for the first time in that small room on my college campus. Twenty five years later, I’m still in that same church with a bigger family, with all of you. I’m surprised sometimes that God loves me so much as to be here with them and with you. Thank you, Father Luke and Pres. Faith!

Excerpts from Anestis’ Words

First of all, Fr. Luke, let me thank you and Pres. Faith blessing me and introducing me to my wonderful wife Evis!!! I think I can speak for everyone in saying it’s a huge blessing to have you, Presbytera and your family with us as our parish priest. This is an honor for me and everyone here to call you our spiritual Father...

I know that the Great Commission “Go and make disciples of all nations” has been a guiding principle in your lives. It has motivated your original decision to do mission work in Kenya and Albania, but also it has motivated you to do the work you’ve done with us here in Webster... You have visited us when we were sick or when our loved ones are dying. You and Pres. Faith are always offering encouraging words and a listening ear. You have rejoiced with us during our happy times and comforted us in our sorrows. Your hugs, laughter, and smile (even when you had Bells Palsey you still tried to smile) brought us closer together as a family... I remember that first banner you put up in our church hall - “Welcome to the Church, the Family of God.” It has been wonderful to see how that banner became true in this community. We have become a loving family that warmly welcomes everyone who walks in the doors of our Church.

What would our lives be like without Fr. Luke and Pres. Faith and their family? What would we all be missing? I know that everyone could say many wonderful things they’ve experienced since Father and Presbytera have been here. I feel honored to speak on behalf of everyone to express our deep gratitude. Thank you very much Father Luke and Pres. Faith!
Looking Back Over the past 15 years in Webster. Thank you!
THANK YOU TO THE 2019 STEWARDS

To all the faithful Church Family members who have given a financial donation towards their 2019 Stewardship Offering as of Oct 27, 2019

Dhimitra/Angelo
Adamopoulos
Lewis Adamopoulos
Nicholas Adamopoulos
Mike Angelo
Rose Angelo
Constatine/Ethel Anifantis
Ted Avlas
Nike Avlas
Earl/Lorraine Bahl
John/Olga Barakilis
Eric Beland/Rina Sgouritsas
Frederika Beno
Rich/Sophia Bethune
Athena Bilis
Liberty Brassard
Brenda Robillard
George/Debby Carabina
Rita Carabina
Ann Chito
Charlie Chito
Mike/Titi Chito
Anton/Nicoleta Cojocaru
Gary/Christina Colello
Despina Condos
George/Laurie Condos
Barbara Constantine
Chris/Helen Constantine
Arthur/Sara Darlagiannis
Nick/Athanasia Darlagiannis
Norman/Barbara Desrosiers
Leah Didonato
George/Annalisa Dunning
Mary Fatsi
Stephen/Sophia Foisy
Vasili/Thomai Gatsogiannis
Chris Geotis
Paul/Mona Geotis
Robert/ Sharon Hayes
Helen Hazatones
Lisa Healy
Anestis/Evis Jordanoglou
Harry/Tina Jordanoglou
Angeliki Karapanos
John/Maria Karastogiannis
George/Helen Kerbici
Said/Bozhena Khozami
Arthur/Samantha Kiritsis
James Kiritsis
Rena/Thomas Klebart
Mike Kokoszka
Gulapka/Ilija Kostovski
Alexandra Koulax
Gus Koulax
Sandy Kunkel
Scott/Kathy Kunkel
Trish Lareau
Helen Lepine
Garin/Anna Livingstone
Elena Mackenzie
Leslie Manthos
Chris/Alex Massie
Lorna McWilliam
Diana/Alex Megas
Helen Metropoulos
Demetrios/Hariklia Milios
Vasilios/Grace Milios
Bob Mirandola/Lea Koveas
Yanni/Katie Mironidis
Del/Marie Monroe
Pauline/Carl Mueller
Neal/Charlotte Neslusan
John Nikopoulos
Victor/Linda Nizamoff
George Nonis
Evangelia Panagiotou
Kosta Panagiotou
Ted/Gloria Panagiotou
Gregory/Lindsey Panagiotou
George/Mary Papageorge
Barbara Pappas
Chuck/Misty Pappas
James Pappas
Sam/Evelyn Pappas
Stephen Pappas
Glykeria Partsalis
Louise/Richard Pavlech
Melanie/Stephen Philbrick
Olga Poloukhine
Jared/Stephanie Quill
Deb Raymond
Dan/Sue Rivelli
Stephanie Robillard
Sandra Roy
Ron/Sandy Sanderson
Loucia/Michael Scafidi

As of October 27th, only 115 out of our 160 Families have offered something towards their Stewardship Offering to support our beloved Church ministries.

Thus far the average offering is $847/year.

Please Fulfill Your Pledge and Send in your Offering before end of the Year!!! We have collected $97,508 out of our budgeted $121,000.

Help us surpass our goal by year end!
24 HOUR ADVENT PRAYER CHAIN

During the first week of December, we will have a “24 Hour a Day Christmas Prayer Chain.” We are looking for 24 parishioners who will each commit to pray in their homes for one hour a day during the first seven days of December. Each parishioner will commit to pray at a different hour of the day and night. This means that at every moment from December 1-7, someone from our Church Family will be lifting up their voice in prayer, supplication, thanksgiving and praise to God.

The purpose of our Prayer Chain is twofold: First, to help the participants get into the real “spirit” of Christmas - one that helps us prepare to receive our Lord Jesus Christ into our lives anew. Second, to get our Church Family to pray for one another and all those who have any special needs. If you know someone who needs extra prayers, please give their names to Fr. Luke before December 1.

If you are interested in participating in this Prayer Chain by committing to pray for one hour a day in your home during each of the first seven days of December, please contact Fr. Luke. He will provide for you the prayers and the structure of how to pray for one hour.

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE
We have 115 stewards out of our 160 stewardship members who have given to support our church in the year 2019

PACESETTERS ($1000-$2000) - 22 Stewards

TORCHBEARERS ($2001-$4000) - 7 Stewards

GOOD SHEPHERDS (over $4000) - 5 Stewards

THANK YOU
To everyone who helped donate to the St Innocent Orphanage and Project Mexico Pantry. We collected 50 boxes of supplies and aid which will be sent to them!
Come and Join our Church Family for a

Pot-Luck THANKSGIVING Celebration

12:30 pm, Thursday, Nov 28

We will be celebrating a Thanksgiving Meal with guests from our monthly Living Bread Luncheon together with our Church Family!

RSVP Sara Darlagiannis 508-207-3177
and let her know what dish you will bring.

THE CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE

See Leah DiDonato or Mary Seferi to help purchase one of 35 Christmas gifts for children from needy families, or one of 15 Christmas gifts for the elderly residents at Holy Trinity Nursing Home.

Christmas Poinsettia

If you would like to donate a Christmas Poinsettia in memory or in honor of a loved one, or for the Glory of God, please send in $60 to the Church Office. We will purchase the poinsettia and list the names of those honored or commemorated in our Monthly Bulletin.

We are also looking for donors for our outdoor Christmas Wreaths at $75 each.
2019 Annual Church Family Christmas Card

Our Philoptochos Society will offer an opportunity for all our Church Family members to be a part of our annual CHURCH FAMILY CHRISTMAS CARD. The Christmas Card goes to the homes of all our parishioners wishing them blessings during the upcoming holiday season.

A minimum donation of $15 per family is greatly appreciated. All donations will support the various philanthropic ministries of the Philoptochos.

If you would like to be included, please give your donation and the names to Donna Cooney or Debby Raymond by Dec. 1st, or mail them to the Church Office, noting Church Family Christmas Card.

THANKSGIVING BASKETS

Help our Church give away 30 Thanksgiving Baskets to needy families! Pick up a basket on Nov 3, 10, or 17 and with another family, fill it up with delicious goods! Show your gratitude to God by sharing what you have with others!!! See Sophia Foisy or Pauline Mueller to get a basket. Return date Nov 24th

LOCAL OUTREACH OPPORTUNITY

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
8am-4pm
Saturday, December 14

Only 8 Spots Available!

See Fr. Luke if you are interested joining our church in helping to build a home during the holiday season for a local family in need!

FALL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
11:15, Sunday, Nov. 24
Financial Report
Fr. Luke’s Pastoral Report
2020 Budget Proposal
Select PC Nominations

Please come and join us for an update on the State of our Church Family.
PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

We had our monthly meeting on Monday October 7. There were only a handful of women that attended but we still had a good meeting and an enjoyable time! We discussed the success of the festival. We also decided to hold the next spaghetti supper in February with maybe a Valentine's theme.

Our next meeting will be held after church on Sunday, November 3rd. We will discuss whether we want to bake breads for Thanksgiving or Christmas and what we should give to our shut ins for Christmas. Our Christmas party will be on Monday, Dec 2 at 6pm at Point Breeze. Please see Leah DiDonato to sign up for $20. If you wish, a grab bag gift of $10. Thank you very much.

We would like to congratulate Fr. Luke for his 25th Anniversary in the priesthood! We thank him for his spiritual leadership and wish him continued success.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving to you and your families!

With much love and appreciation,

Evelyn Pappas

LIVING BREAD LUNCHEON

12:30-1:30pm, Saturday, Nov 2

The November Luncheon is offered
In Honor of the
Ladies from our Philoptochos Society

The Special Thanksgiving Day Living Bread Luncheon is offered by
An anonymous donor offered for the Glory of God

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

SERVING AS A PARISH COUNCIL MEMBER

Every faithful baptized Orthodox Christian should make some effort of active commitment to the Church. One special way to act as a good steward of your time and talents is by serving on the Parish Council. This two year commitment is a way you can serve in the leadership of our Church Family and work with Fr. Luke in fulfilling the mission statement and vision of our Church.

The role of a Parish Council member is a sacred and spiritual task. Each Parish Council member is to act as an ambassador of Jesus Christ and offer a good witness of their Orthodox Christian Faith. In assisting in the administrative responsibilities of the Church, the Parish Council works hand-in-hand with Fr. Luke in strengthening the earthly ministry of God’s Holy Church.

One should run for the Parish Council out of a conviction that you want to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ through humble service to one another and to His Church. Any steward wishing to serve on the Parish Council, including those who are seeking re-election, should:

- Live his/her life in accordance with the Faith and canons of the Church
- Attend a mandatory PARISH COUNCIL SEMINAR
- Be an UP TO DATE FINANCIAL STEWARD of the parish for at least one year preceding date of elections

If elected, a Parish Council member should:

- Attend divine service regularly
- Participate in the sacramental life of the Church
- Administer the affairs of the Parish in such a way as to work with Fr. Luke in the fulfillment of the Church’s ministry.

Candidates must give in name by Dec 1. Elections will take place December 15,
USHERS & GREETERS SCHEDULE

Nov 3  Neal Neslusun, Jimmy Karapanos, Brenda Rombillard Tatyana Zhuk, Mike Chito
Nov 10  Nicoleta Cojocaru, Chris Dillon, Jared Quill, Bill Thompson
Nov 17  Arthur Bilis, Chris Geotis, Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau
Nov 24  Marie McNally, Matt Benoit, Lisa Healy, Nick Seferi

We are looking for more VOLUNTEERS to serve as ushers or on our coffee fellowship groups, as well as to bring pastries or donuts once every two months. Please let Fr Luke know if you can join a group.

COFFEE FELLOWSHIP SERVING GROUPS

Nov 3  Marie McNally, Christa Benoit, Sandi Kunkel, Mary Seferi, Chris Dillon
Nov 10  Sara Darlagiannis, Christine Kiritsis, Charlotte Neslusun, Stephanie Quill, Brenda Rombillard
Nov 17  Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau, Deb Raymond, Vange Wilson, Alexandra Koulax
Nov 24  Donna Cooney, Leah Didonato, Rena Klebart, Betty Tonna

Coffee Fellowship Supply Pastries/Donuts Groups

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

Nov 3  - Sara Darlagiannis, Sissy Darlagiannis, Helen Constantine Alexandra Koulax
Nov 10  - Lisa Healy, Marie McNally, Despina Condos, Trish Lareau
Nov 17  Charlotte Neslusun, Evis Jordanoglou, Dolly Sosnowski, Annalisa Dunning
Dec 1   - Titi Chito, Rina Sgouritsas, Pres. Faith Veronis
Dec 8   - Sandi Kunkel, Evelyn Pappas, Gulapka Kostovski, Betty Tonna
Dec 15  - Kathy Bilis, Marie Monroe, Eleni Sgouritsas, Tina Collelo
Dec 22  - Leah Didonato, Mary Seferi, Olga Poulokhine, Vasiliki Zahariadis

YOUTH EPISTLE READERS

Nov 3  - Helen Dunning
Nov 10 - Zach Beaudry
Nov 17 - Panayiota Veronis
Nov 24  - Maia Beaudry
Dec 1  - Kiera MacKenzie
Dec 8  - Lily Mueller
Dec 15—Kara Bilis
Remembering Our Church Family

**Important Dates in NOVEMBER:**

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

**BIRTHDAYS:**

- Nov 1: Olga Poloukhine
- Nov 4: Despina Condos
- Nov 6: Natalie Megas
- Nov 8: Stella Pappas
- Nov 9: Alex Massie
- Nov 10: Christopher Grzyb
- Nov 10: Logan Mueller
- Nov 12: Steve Vosnakis
- Nov 13: Charlotte Neslusan
- Nov 13: Victoria McNally
- Nov 13: Sapho Kapsounis
- Nov 14: Ann Chito
- Nov 15: Georgia Beland
- Nov 15: Victor Enache
- Nov 18: Spiro Pappas
- Nov 20: Said Khozami
- Nov 22: Sophia Mackenzie
- Nov 22: Alexandra Koulax
- Nov 26: Elena Mackenzie
- Nov 27: Chris Constantine
- Nov 27: Maria Zagoras
- Nov 30: Leah Didonato
- Nov 30: James Pappas

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES:**

- Nov 6: Christie & Helen Constantine
- Nov 10: Chris and Joan Geotis
- Nov 12: Steve and Kelly Vosnakis
- Nov 19: Arthur & Kathy Bilis
- Nov 19: Sandi & Gerry Kunkel
- Nov 27: Eric & Katerina Beland

**NAMEDAYS:**

- Nov 8: Archangel Michael
  - Michael Angelo
  - Michael Awad
  - Michael Chito
  - Michael Belanger
  - Mike Kokoszka
- Nov 11: St. Menas & St Victor
  - Michel (Mina) Pappas
  - Victoria McNally
- Nov 16: St. Matthew
  - Matt Benoit
  - Matt Neslusian
  - Matthew Weiss
  - Matthew Zhuk
- Nov 25: St. Katherine
  - Katerina Beland
  - Kara Bilis
  - Kathy Bilis
  - Catherine Jordanoglou
  - Kathy Kunkel
  - Katerina McWilliam
  - Katie Mironides
  - Katerina Quill
- Nov 26: St Stelianos
  - Steliane Thompson

**SIGN UP FOR PROJECT MEXICO**

Our Church reserved 25 SPOTS for next summer’s trip!

**July 16-23, 2020**

Give a $100 deposit and talk with Fr. Luke to reserve your spot.
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!

O give thanks to the Lord for He is good, His steadfast loves endures forever.

Psalm 136:1

In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

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!

Dudley - Auburn - Blackstone

Shaw-Majersik
Funeral Home
48 School Street
Webster, MA 01570
tel: 508-943-6278
Because We Care
Richard D. Majersik, Director
www.shaw-majersik.com

Robert J. Miller, Inc.
Funeral Services
366 School Street
Webster, MA 01570
Tel. (508) 943-0045
ROBERT J. MILLER Toll Free 866-360-0045
Funeral Director Fax (508) 943-3163
Email: miller.funerals@verizon.net www.rjmillerfunerals.net

Point Breeze
Your Restaurant on Webster Lake
114 Point Breeze Road
Webster, MA
508-943-0404
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<td>24 28 Happy Thanksgiving!!! Glory to God for All Things!!! 12:30 Living Bread Luncheon Thanksgiving Meal</td>
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GIVING THANKS

Gratitude ... goes beyond the "mine" and "thine" and claims the truth that all of life is a pure gift. In the past I always thought of gratitude as a spontaneous response to the awareness of gifts received, but now I realize that gratitude can also be lived as a discipline. The discipline of gratitude is the explicit effort to acknowledge that all I am and have is given to me as a gift of love, a gift to be celebrated with joy.

Henri J. M. Nouwen

An inability to say “thank you” is a spiritual sickness. The heart filled with God is a heart filled with gratitude.

Archbishop Anastasios

God gave each of us 86,400 seconds in a day. Have we used one to say “thank you?”

William Ward

Gratitude is a sign of a noble soul.

Aesop

The Pilgrims made seven times more graves than huts. No Americans have been more impoverished than these who, nevertheless, set aside a day of thanksgiving.

H.U. Westermayer

Some people complain because God put thorns on roses, while others thank Him for putting roses among thorns."

Anonymous