"To be grateful for the good things that happen in our lives is easy, but to be grateful for all of our lives – the good as well as the bad, the moments of joy as well as the moments of sorrow, the successes as well as the failures, the rewards as well as the rejections – that requires hard spiritual work. Still, we are only truly grateful people when we can say thank you to all that has brought us to the present moment. Let’s not be afraid to look at everything that has brought us to where we are now and trust that we will soon see in it the guiding hand of a loving God.”

(Henri Nouwen)

The final words that St. John Chrysostom proclaimed, even as he was on a death march in exile, were “Glory to God for all things.” As Saint Paul languished in a prison cell, he tried encouraging Christians who faced persecution by writing, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice.” He also advised other Christians to “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus.”

God’s will for us is to be filled with joy and thanksgiving. His will is not for us to complain about life, to grumble about what we don’t have, to whine about our circumstances, or to compare how others may have something we don’t have. Our Lord Jesus has blessed us in our own unique way, and He wants us to face life with gratitude.

How pleasant life becomes with an attitude of gratitude. Cultivating such a spirit transforms our entire perspective. Instead of focusing on what we don’t have or what others have, we thank God for every blessing! We express gratitude to God for life itself; for the world around us; for nature and beauty; for the love of family and friends; for health and well-being; for our Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Church; for the meaning of life that our faith gives us; for the opportunity to experience the Kingdom of God here and now. As the author Mary Davis entitled her book, The More Grateful I Am, The More Beauty I See.

Living lives of gratitude means even thanking God when we face unexpected and tumultuous challenges and tragedies of life. When we face life’s most difficult moments with gratitude, we discover new perspectives and grow to new heights.
The mission of Sts. Constantine and Helen Church is to proclaim the Good News of Salvation through the Orthodox Christian Faith for the glory of our Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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

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

Father Luke A. Veronis
Telephone: (508) 949-7623 (h) (774) 230-6985 (cell)
email: frlukeveronis@gmail.com
GRATITUDE AND THANKSGIVING

Remember, an inability, unwillingness, or forgetfulness to express gratitude reflects spiritual malaise. Pride is lurking within. We do not thank others because by thanking them, we acknowledge that they have done something special for us. Too many people allow their hidden pride to hinder expressions of gratitude.

God created us to be creatures of praise – people who continually thank our Creator and bless Him at all times. By forgetting or ignoring this, we reject a fundamental purpose of our lives!

In the Psalms, King David and other writers thank God more than 60 times for His goodness, love, and infinite blessings. One of the most beautiful passages comes from Psalm 103, “Bless the Lord O my soul, and do not forget all that he has done for me!” How can we ever count the innumerable blessings of God and properly express our gratitude to Him without ceasing?

St. Paul condemns the ungrateful when he warns, “Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking.” (Rom 1:21) More than 50 times throughout his letters, the Apostle reminds his spiritual children to thank God! “Give thanks to God at all times” (Eph 5:20) “Devote yourself to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.” (Col 4:2) “In whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God” (Col 3:17).

Even the ancient and traditional worship in the Christian Church celebrates the Eucharist, which is a Greek word for “thanksgiving.” In the middle of our Divine Liturgy, the priest turns to the people and says, “Let us lift up our hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord.” Following this call to gratitude, the priest offers a prayer which enumerates all for which we should thank God, including our very existence, our salvation from sin and death, our entrance into His heavenly Kingdom, the promise of eternal life, and for every blessing seen and unseen. In private prayers also, thanksgiving should play a central part in our prayer rule.

Of course, our gratitude should never be limited to God alone. We should express thanksgiving to all the people God brings into our lives. How often will people do something special for us, and we don’t properly acknowledge their act. Don’t let our pride determine our behavior. Let us continually humble ourselves, and thank all those around us - our parents for giving us life, our families for showing us love, our friends who stay near us during our times of need, our teachers and other special mentors who have inspired us, guided us, and enlightened us. When we pause and reflect on our lives, I am sure that numerous people have influenced our lives in positive ways. What is stopping us from thanking them with our words, by writing a letter, dropping them an email, and expressing our gratitude in concrete ways?

As we prepare to celebrate our national holiday of Thanksgiving later this month, it’s an appropriate time to reflect on what role gratitude plays in our daily lives, and think about how we can make gratitude more central to who we are.

One simple, yet powerful, habit each of us can try is to start out our day with an attitude of gratitude. Before we even get out of bed each morning, let’s make our cross and thank God for five people in our lives. Every morning throughout the week, thank God for five different blessings. Do this every morning until Christmas and see how it changes your perspective. You will notice that as your reflect on gratitude more, you will find many more things for which you will be grateful. Beginning each day in this manner will help cultivate and nourish the blessed spirit of thanksgiving and gratitude.

I thank God for this precious gift of life, and for each of you. May we all have a most blessed and joyous Thanksgiving celebration!

With love and deep gratitude in Jesus Christ our Lord,

+Luke
ORTHODOXY AND POLITICS  

*Father Basil Biberdorf*

Our American political season is reaching a fever pitch in these final days before election day. We can expect to be bombarded with robo-calls and television advertisements, each candidate vilifying the other and attempting to make gold from the base metal of his own career, all in an attempt to sway our votes. We will not be able to open a newspaper without hearing of the daily ebbs, flows, and floods of the campaign.

What perhaps makes this more difficult for us is the desire of many candidates to present their positions as uniquely Christian. America has a long history of organizations arising to defend particular positions as “Christian,” in matters of slavery, alcohol, arms control, tax policy, sexual behavior, and free speech, to name just a few. Consider some of the organizations interested in these causes: the Moral Majority, the Christian Left, Focus on the Family, the Manhattan Declaration, and the Evangelical Climate Initiative.

From an Orthodox perspective, some of these make their cases better than others, articulating points in agreement with Christian belief and our moral tradition. Nonetheless, the reality we face is that the political realm operates according to the rules of a fallen world. It is a world where scarcity prevails and not everyone can have everything, where one wins and another loses, where motives are impure, and where the worst aspects of the fallen human nature—preeminently greed, lust for power, and pride—corrupt the best intentions of many candidates.

The political process itself, in whatever form, is a manifestation of sin in the world. After all, God established the judges to govern ancient Israel, only to see them rejected by his people in favor of kings and princes, with tragic results. “And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day” (1 Samuel 8:18; read the entire chapter). Indeed the kings of Israel are divided into good and bad, with the bad far outnumbering the good.

The Christian encounters this fallen world and must engage it and seek to transform it through the softening of the hearts of men and their return to God. Nonetheless, the Christian must never forget that his own world has little to do with this one. As Christ tells Pilate before his crucifixion: “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). We confuse Christ’s kingdom (of which we are a part) with the world’s at our peril.

In the first place, there is the risk that we confuse the message of the Gospel: God became man, submitted to death, and overcame death in order for all men to live. What can the political process do about this? Surely we must remain free to speak openly and pointedly about sin and redemption. We should fight the political battle to do so. We must also seek to end gross injustice, and the loss of human lives, each one bearing the image of Christ, through willful violence. Yet the Gospel endures in spite of persecution by the state, just as it endured the Jews, Roman emperors, Islam, and the Communists.

We must also not allow an interest in politics to corrupt our mission. Our aim as Christians is not the transformation of the state into some kind of imagined “Christian realm,” but the salvation of souls by uniting them with Christ and his Church. Many contemporary denominations attract members by promoting their political biases using important code words: “We believe in the Bible,” or “God is still speaking.” Orthodox Christians do not “recruit” on the basis of political affinity, but rather guide men, women, and children to pursue and cling to Christ, receiving the life and love that flows from him alone. We must always present ourselves not as conservative or liberal Christians, but as authentic Christians.

Authentic Christians cannot transfer their obligations to the state. If it is our obligation to care for our neighbor (“When did we see you hungry...?”)
Matthew 25:31ff), it does no good to transfer our responsibility to politicians and bureaucrats. It is our calling, not someone else’s, especially if “someone else” isn’t a Christian at all.

Authentic Christians also cannot focus on one issue at the expense of another, as often happens with matters of abortion and war, where a given candidate supports one and deplores the other. Unjustified killing is unjustified killing, after all.

Finally, as authentic Christians, we must be careful not to despise our neighbor on the basis of his political beliefs. While some positions are quite clearly wrong (e.g., abortion), Christ says to “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). Our political discourse often leads us to dehumanizing our opponents, thinking less of them, or considering them stupid.

The Gospel ultimately relates to a world restored in Christ rather than one run by politicians. Our Christian calling does not mean we must be politically apathetic, but it limits our expectations, reminding us “put not your trust in princes, in sons of men, in whom there is no salvation” (Psalm 146). For that, we can give thanks.

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PRAY FOR AMERICA

On Monday Evening, 6:00pm-10:00pm, November 2

We will have a Special Prayer Vigil Service to pray for our Country and pray for a Peaceful Presidential Election. Come for part of the service, light a candle, and say a prayer.

Regardless of who wins the Election, as Orthodox Christians we remember that God is with us and He is the One in control. Let us take time to pray for His mercy and grace to come upon our country and us all, and to ask Him to help us dwell in His peace. May us trust in His Sovereign will and ask Him to make each one of us peacemakers in our bitterly divided society!
ST. NEKTARIOS
THE WONDERWORKER
November 9th

St. Nektarios of Aegina, one of the most beloved and popular modern saints of Greece, is celebrated on November 9th. He is not only loved because many miracles have happened through his prayers since his death in the early 1900s, but also because he offers inspiring lessons in humility, patience, love, holiness!

St Nektarios came from a poor family in 19th century Greece, and yet through a generous benefactor, was able to receive an education, and eventually became a priest. He quickly rose up in the Church and became the Bishop of Pentapolis, serving a large Greek community in Egypt. The love of the people and his popularity grew so quickly though, that some bishops and other church authorities became quite jealous of him. They slandered him to the Patriarch of Alexandria, and he was unjustly sent away from his diocese and exiled from Egypt.

Upon his arrival in Greece, the slanders followed him, and he continued to endure unjust persecution from fellow clergy. He was not allowed to preach or serve in the Church for a long period of time. Eventually, he became the Dean of the Rizario Seminary in Athens, but even there some school trustees slandered him, and eventually got him removed. Even after he moved to the island of Aegina, where he founded a women’s monastery, enemies continued to falsely accuse him with lies, slander and ridicule.

Throughout all his unjust suffering, he never tried to defend himself. He would say, “What did I do that they hate me so? And yet, what did Jesus do that they hated him so much that they even crucified him.” St Nektarios preferred to endure suffering than accuse another, and possibly shame them. “If God allows tribulation, then it is for the salvation of our souls… I shall have patience and trust in the Lord.”

Through these trials and tribulations, St Nektarios attained the gift of extreme humility. His sufferings led him to be a man of continual and fervent prayer. He would often keep all night vigils, and prayed the Jesus Prayer continuously. He was a man of discipline, fasting strictly, living simply, and never allowing himself to indulge in any luxuries.

Once three students at the seminary fought with one another. When they were called in front of the dean, St. Nektarios announced to them that he himself would begin a three day total fast, and if they weren’t reconciled by the end of the three days, he would continue his fast until they all repented.

Another time two janitors had a fight with one another. St Nektarios told them to resolve the issue, or he himself would begin doing their job and cleaning the toilets. “There exists no job beneath a person,” he would say. Years later, one of these janitors was hospitalized for several months. When the man was afraid that he would lose his job due to his absence, St. Nektarios told him not to worry. Then, for following months, St Nektarios himself began doing all the work of the janitor late at night, saving the position of the worker until he would be able to return.

St Nektarios understood that pride was the beginning of distancing oneself from God. Pride enters a person’s heart through the door of irreverence and ignorance. “When you hear praise, turn your thoughts to the Lord and pray that he will erase them from your memory. Remember, nothing is ours.”
The Feast of the Presentation of the Theotokos in the Temple is celebrated on November 21. It recalls the day when her parents, Joachim and Anne, presented her to the Lord in the temple and dedicated her life to Him. Mary had already been chosen by God as a chosen vessel through whom the Incarnate Word would be given for the salvation of the whole world. However, the offering by her parents is a response to the invitation to join our free choice to God's invitation. This exercise of freedom lies at the heart of discipleship, and is the inner core of every vocation, to cooperate with grace.

Here is something St. Augustine wrote on this feastday: "Stretching out his hand over his disciples, the Lord Christ declared: Here are my mother and my brothers; anyone who does the will of my Father who sent me is my brother and my sister and my mother. I would urge you to ponder these words. Did the Virgin Mary, who believed by faith and conceived by faith, who was the chosen one from whom our Savior was born among men, who was created by Christ before Christ was created in her - did she not do the will of the Father? Indeed the blessed Mary certainly did the Father's will, and so it was for her a greater thing to have been Christ's disciple than to have been his mother, and she was more blessed in her discipleship than in her motherhood. Hers was the happiness of first bearing in her womb him whom she would obey as her master."

Today's Feast emphasizes our response to God's gifts. We remember the response of the Virgin Mary's mother and father in their decision to present her in the temple for dedication to the Lord. All parents are called to imitate their response by presenting their children for Baptism.

We reflect on the mystery of Mary's own continuing response from her very earliest days to the Lord's invitations of grace. Yes, Mary was called to continually give her "Yes" to God's invitations of love. She shows us the way we are all called to respond to the invitations of grace in our own lives as we grow in holiness.

She was the first evangelizer and the first disciple of her own Son Jesus. She gave the first Gospel testimony to her cousin, Elizabeth, without words, as the Redeemer in her womb drew the child in her womb, John the Baptist to Himself. Jesus did so from the Throne he had established in Mary's womb, a living Tabernacle. Jesus, Love Incarnate, drew John from the very first home of the whole human race, a mother's womb, into eternal communion.

There are very few records of Mary's explicit words in the texts of the New Testament of the Bible. However, there is no lack of her presence at the most significant events in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and therefore in the great events of salvation history. She always encountered God - in profound ways - from the beginning to the end of her life. In every encounter, she surrendered to Love and was changed.

Mary understood all of this because she was a woman in love - with God. Mary was a woman of prayer, an ongoing conversation and intimate communion with God. We are invited into her prayer because we are invited into that same relationship with God. Understanding and living the Prayer of Mary is about living a life of surrendered love. She is the first disciple who shows us the way to follow her Son and Lord.

God is not an "add on" to our life. Rather, He is its source and its summit. Authentic and fruitful spirituality is "inside out" rather than "outside in." There is a way, a pattern that all men and women are invited into - not just once, but daily. This is the way of surrendered love. Mary's surrender reveals the deeper meaning of every human life and is the true path to authentic peace.
Jesus spoke of love and showed compassion. He taught us by his example to love one another and to be compassionate toward those in need. In the Gospels, we read of the compassion of Jesus:

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick (Matthew 14:14).

Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him (Matthew 20:34).

...he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:34).

Compassion can often mean kindness and sympathy. In these verses, it means something deeper and much more powerful. “And he had compassion” is translated from the Greek ἐσπλαγχνίσθη (esplachNEEsthee) and comes from the root word in Greek for “guts.” In other words, it is compassion and concern that are felt in one’s guts – a compassion that is felt in a deeply physical way. Compassion felt in this way compels us to respond with love and deep concern.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus says “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him...” (Luke 10:33).

In the parable of the Prodigal Son Jesus says, But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him (Luke 15:20).

These stories reflect the love and compassion that Jesus has for his people. His compassion inspires and challenges each one of us to live compassionately.

This understanding of the full meaning of compassion in the New Testament means that another person’s suffering becomes our own suffering. Compassion in this sense can change the way we live and care for others and for our community. When we feel this physical type of compassion, we are fully and physically engaged. We serve others and care for our community with love.

To love in the way Saint Paul writes to the Christians at Corinth, when he says, “…the greatest of these is love,” means we can’t live without compassion for others. Love and compassion are not expressed only in our offerings of money and other support. Love and compassion are not something we give in order to receive something in return. Pride has no place in acts of love and compassion.

The love that Saint Paul describes in his letter to the Christians at Corinth is an expression of stewardship. Stewardship is everything we do after we say “I believe.” Stewardship is about how we live our lives and make our choices. Stewardship is about love and love is about stewardship.

Love and stewardship are inseparable when we consider God’s blessings in our life. We use God’s blessings with love and compassion for others and to honor, worship and give thanks to him.

"...THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE."
Our parishes can be transformed, becoming beacons of Christian love as we care for one another, face challenges together, and serve our neighbors. We would be known as Christians by the love and compassion we embody as a parish family. We are called to be compassionate stewards, placing the needs of others before our own. Scripture is filled with passages of God’s call for us to be generous, loving, compassionate givers. Saint Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians tells us of God’s call for us to “excel in the grace of giving.” We are “hard-wired” to live as members of the Body of Christ and serve our larger community with compassion and love.

The priority of compassionate stewardship is not to pay the bills. It is about how we, as a community, can do God’s work with love and compassion. It is less about the parish’s need to receive, and more about our need to give. It is our generosity with the gifts and blessings God has entrusted to us. Compassionate stewardship is an attitude and a way of life.

EVERY PORTION MATTERS

Once upon a time, a festival was to be held in a certain village. To ensure there would be enough wine for the celebration, each member of the village agreed to pour one bottle of his best wine into a large cask. “If I fill my bottle with water,” reasoned one villager, “the dilution will be so slight, who will notice?” But when the feast and time for merrymaking commenced, and the cask was tapped, nothing but water poured forth. Every member in the village had reasoned alike: “My portion will not be missed!”

From the Department of Stewardship, Outreach and Evangelism

Help Us Reach Our 2020 Stewardship Goal

During this COVID Pandemic, we have financial challenges as a Church Family. Thank God, we have received $104,247 in Stewardship Giving, which is better than at this point last year. Yet 2020 stewardship goal increased by $20,000 to $143,000. Please help us reach our goal by the end of the year!

118 out of 160 Families have sent in Stewardship Donations. If you have not done so yet, please send in your support for our beloved Church. If you have not fulfilled your pledge, please do so.

The average 2020 stewardship donation is $883.
24 PACESETTERS (Giving Between $1000-1999)
8 TORCHBEARERS (Giving Between $2000-$3999)
4 GOOD SHEPHERDS (Giving Between $4000-$5999)
2 ANGELS (Giving more than $6000)
As of October 26th, only 118 out of our 160 Families have offered something towards their Stewardship Offering to support our beloved Church ministries. Thus far the average offering is $883/year.

Please Fulfill Your Pledge and Send in your Offering before end of the Year!!!

We have collected $104,247 out of our budgeted $143,000. Help us surpass our goal by year end!

Ron/Sandy Sanderson
Nick/Mary Seferi
John/Eleni Sgouritsas
Dimitri/Efkarpia Sidopoulos
Dolly Sozsnowski
Eleanor Teguis
Ted Theodores
John/Ana Thomas
Marion Thomas
Phil/Barbara Thomas
Bill Thompson
Ted/Betty Tonna
Fr Luke/Faith Veronis
Niko/Susan Veronis
Edna Vogel
Steve/Kelly Vosnakis
Tasi Vriga
Danielle/David Weiss
Evangeline Wilson
Eleni Xanthopoulos
Vasiliki Zahariadis
Bill/Helen Zenon
Yuri/Tatyana Zhuk
A SPECIAL RESPONSE TO OUR GOOD & FAITHFUL STEWARD CHALLENGE - A $40,000 GIFT

I recently met with someone who told me they wanted to give our Church a gift. They had been inspired by what we did during our “Good and Faithful Steward Challenge,” when we gave our parishioners $30,000 and asked everyone to use the $100, $200 or $300 gift we gave them to bless someone else. We received many inspiring stories about how our parishioners reached out to help others, while we also learned about and worked with organizations that are helping others. Our goal was to challenge our people to open our eyes and hearts and not only notice but respond to the needs of people that are all around us. As Christians, we have been blessed by Almighty God, and He expects us to share His blessings with others!

As we all know, our own parishioners were inspired by what we did, but our actions also inspired those outside our community. For example, St. Luke’s Greek Orthodox Church in East Longmeadow heard about our challenge, and followed our example. This past year they gave their parishioners $50,000 and then asked them to share the blessings with other people in need! Wouldn’t it be nice if our church started a little movement of churches reaching out into their communities and using their blessings to bless others in this unique manner!

Anyway, back to this friend of our church who wanted to meet with me and give our Church a gift. He told me that he was inspired by what we did, and he wanted to give our Church $30,000 in the hopes that we would use a good portion of that in another creative way to help and bless others. He loved our Good and Faithful Challenge!

I shared with him a new idea I heard about, where churches helped to pay off millions of dollars of crippling medical debt for the neediest families in or near the poverty level. How did they do this? They worked with the organization RIP Medical Debt, a non-profit founded in 2014 by two former debt collection executives. These men used their expertise to create a new way to forgive medical debt. They solicited donations and then buy large bundles of medical debt and proceed to forgive that debt with no tax consequences to donors or recipients. Thus far, this non-profit organization has forgiven more than 2 BILLION dollars in medical debt for needy families. This means, for example, if our church could make a donation of $20,000 to RIP Medical Debt, they would then pay off more than two million dollars of debt for needy families! And we could direct this debt relief to families struggling in central Massachusetts.

Along with this idea, I shared with our friend other charity related ideas I wanted our church to do, like helping out Project Mexico and St. Innocent Orphanage, which has really been struggling during this pandemic, as well as making a donation to our Metropolis of Boston Camp, which has touched many of our youth in such a special way. I also told him about some projects that we want to do for the upkeep and beautification of our Church in celebration of our 100th Anniversary. For example, right now we are in the process of putting a new roof over the church sanctuary as well as installing a new HVAC system. We hope to replace the carpeting in our church and are considering putting marble flooring on the solea and altar area. One other possible idea we are discussing is the feasibility of building a large pavilion in the backyard of our church. Some of these are only ideas. Everything depends on our fundraising goal of $250,000, which we hope to do in honor of our Church’s 100th Anniversary.

This anonymous friend listened to our ideas, repeated how he believes in the vision of our church and how inspired he was by what we have done in the past. By the end of the conversation, he handed our church a check for $40,000!!! And he told me that he hoped that his gift would motivate others in our church to follow his example and give generously so that we could fulfill all our goals in charity and in church upkeep and beautification.
100TH ANNIVERSARY
SHARING THE LIGHT

In honor of our beloved Saints Constantine and Helen Church’s 100th Anniversary (founded in 1919 and celebrating 100 years in 2020/21)

We have set a goal to raise $250,000 to help our Church share the Light of Christ to the local community and the world through certain charitable projects, while also beautifying and upkeeping our Church Building.

Some *POSSIBLE* Outreach Projects and Church Beautification/Upkeep Projects in honor of this event:

**OUTREACH AND CHARITY:**
- Working with “RIP Medical Debt” to pay off $2 million in medical debt for hundreds of families in Central Massachusetts
- Sending St Innocent Orphanage and Project Mexico $15,000 to help them survive this COVID crisis
- Sending our Metropolis of Boston Summer Camp Program $10,000 in gratitude for all they do for our youth.

**CHURCH BEAUTIFICATION AND UPKEEP:**
- New $45,000 HVAC System and Duct Work for Church Sanctuary
- New $30,000 Roof for Church Sanctuary
- LED Lighting for Chandeliers in Church
- Pantocrator Icon on Ceiling of our Church (completed)
- Possible Marble Flooring for Church Solea and Altar
- Possible Outdoor Pavilion and Landscaping for Backyard of Church
- Other Projects???
Please Consider Participating in this once in a Lifetime Celebration

THANK YOU!!!

FUNDRAISING GOAL: $250,000

TOTAL IN CASH AND PLEDGES: $166,300
(as of October 25)

ARCHANGELS ($40,000-$50,000)
♦ An Anonymous Donor Inspired by our Church’s Good and Faithful Steward Challenge

ANGELS ($30,000-$39,000)
♦ Michael and Titi Chito

PRINCIPALITIES: ($20,000–$29,000)
♦ Marion Thomas
♦ Philip and Barbara Thomas

GOOD SHEPHERDS: ($15,000-$19,000)
♦ Neal and Charlotte Neslusan

TORCHBEARERS: ($10,000-$14,000)

BENEFACTORS ($5000-$9000)

PATRONS: ($2000-$4900)
♦ Jared and Stephanie Quill

SUPPORTERS: ($1000-$1900)
♦ Bill and Christine Kiritsis
♦ Leah DiDonato
♦ Ted Theodores

FRIENDS: (Up to $999)
GRATITUDE JOURNALING

Expressing gratitude is a sign of spiritual health. God gives us countless blessings, including the precious gift of Life Itself. Blessings come our way every day, yet too often we don’t have the eyes to see these blessings. We complain about what we don’t have instead of thanking God for what we do have! One way to train ourselves to see God’s beauty and blessings all around us is to keep a Gratitude Journal. Write in a journal all the blessings you experience every day. By practicing gratitude we actually train ourselves to discover more and more blessings all around us. With practice, it will become easier to identify things we’re grateful for and in the process we develop a joyful heart. I’ve often said before getting out of bed each morning, thank God for five people or things in your life. Here’s some questions to reflect upon to help you begin your own

1. Write about a happy memory.
2. Write about a teacher or mentor for whom you’re grateful.
3. Write about a family member that you’re grateful for.
4. Describe a family tradition you’re grateful for.
5. Who is one friend you can always rely on?
6. What are you grateful for in the Church? In your faith? With God?
7. What is some accomplishment you are proud of?
8. Write about someplace you’ve been for which you’re grateful.
9. What’s a simple pleasure that you’re grateful for?
10. What’s something that you grateful to have today that you didn’t have a year ago?
11. What's something about your health for which you’re grateful?
12. Open the door or window and look outside. What’s something you’re grateful for outside?
13. What’s a possession that makes your life easier?
14. Open your phone or photo album and find a photo that you like. Why are you grateful for this photo? What are you grateful for in the photo?
15. What have you been given that you’re grateful for?
16. What’s something or someone that makes you feel safe?
17. What artist, author, or musician are you grateful for?
18. What do you like about your job?
19. How do you feel when you help others?
20. What public service or organization are you grateful for?
21. What book(s) are you grateful for?
22. What piece of clothing or furniture are you grateful for?
23. What’s a tradition that you’re grateful for?
24. What’s one of your personality traits that you’re grateful for?
25. What mistake or failure have you learned much from, and for which you are grateful?
26. What skill(s) do you have that you’re grateful for?
27. What’s something that you bought recently that you’re grateful for?
28. What’s something that you made recently that you’re grateful for?
29. Look around the room and write about everything you see that you’re grateful for.
30. What is the biggest lesson you learned in children?
31. What is the biggest lesson you’ve learned as an adult?
32. Who is someone you have never met, yet you’ve been inspired and blessed by them?
33. What have you learned from books?
34. Describe your favorite pet.
35. Write about someone who makes your life better.
36. List 10 things you take for granted that people in other parts of the world might not have.
37. Write about a time a stranger helped you out in an unexpected way.
Looking for a Donor for Our Newest Icon

“The Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth”

The newest icon that now adorns the walls of our Church is a 5 ft x 3 ft icon of “The Visitation” when the Virgin Mary visited her elderly cousin Elizabeth shortly after the Annunciation, when the Archangel Gabriel told her she would become pregnant with God Himself. For the first time John the Baptist and Jesus meet one another in the womb.

The cost is $3000. If anyone is interested in donating this icon, please contact Fr. Luke.

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
WHEN YOU FEEL EMPTY
Kristine Brown

“Lord, You are my portion and my cup of blessing; You hold my future.”
Psalm 16:5

A dry, parched land stretched out before them. Hagar and her son Ishmael had used up the last of the water given to them by Abraham before he sent them away (Genesis 21:14). Discouragement saw opportunity and came calling. With no water in sight, Hagar knew they couldn’t survive. So she set Ishmael under a tree and walked away.

She couldn’t watch her only son suffer this way. No water, no future, no hope. The emptiness of the water skin reflected the emptiness of her spirit.

Uncertainty and emptiness often walk hand-in-hand. Our concern for the unknown causes us to try and fill our questioning hearts with answers. Find solutions. Because we long to fill the void with something that will satisfy. And the more we try in our own strength to fill the void, the emptier we become.

Only one thing will fill the emptiness when life’s battles leave us depleted.

“Lord, You are my portion and my cup of blessing; You hold my future.” (Psalm 16:5)

Hagar had forgotten God’s promise to fill her cup with abundant blessings. Ishmael would have a future, greater than anything Hagar herself could’ve planned. But she needed to trust God to be the portion to fill the emptiness with the fullness of His presence. “Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well full of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.” (Genesis 21:19)

When we remember to turn our focus to our everlasting Father and seek Him as our portion, He supernaturally becomes whatever we need to fill that void. It may be strength to face another day, joy in a time of loss, or peace instead of panic. Whatever we need, God is the sustaining portion.

If you’ve forgotten to ask God to be your portion lately, take heart. Then take your uncertainty to Him. Let’s turn to Him in prayer and find satisfaction as God fills our cup with blessings today.

O Heavenly Father,
Thank You for Your precious promises. Thank you for the encouragement they bring me in difficult times. Lord, I’ve been sensing a void lately that I can’t quite explain. It seems like I’m facing one challenge after another, and when I look at my struggles I feel empty. Hopelessness and discouragement threaten me. Help me to remember that You are my portion. You fill my cup and are the only One who will satisfy my parched soul.

Help me to hold onto this truth. The Psalmist says “You hold my future.” I can rest in peace knowing even in my uncertainty that You are in control, and You have good plans for me. Psalm 73:26 assures me that You are “the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” When I’m tempted to search for temporary things to fill the void in my heart, help me recall this promise. You are my portion. Not only today, not only tomorrow. Forever. I pray as You fill my cup to overflowing, I will discover the strength, joy, and peace that comes from You alone.

Amen.
PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

Hi ladies! We haven’t been together for a long time. It is sad where we are today in this crazy world. I just want to fill you in on what we plan on doing in the next couple of months. We haven't done any fundraisers so subsequently we have no money in our treasury to fund our normal charitable donations for the holidays or give to our youth for camps, etc. So we decided to do the calendar raffle again for December. We will sell the tickets in November and draw the 31 raffles in December. We will be sending 2 tickets to each parishioner in the mail. Please support us and return the tickets at $10.00 each. If you want any more to buy or sell please see one of the officers. Thank you everyone who donated the gift cards for the raffle!

I want to thank everyone who helped with the food fest and the gyro fest. Both fundraisers for the Church did very well. Thank you ladies for contributing to this success!

I spoke to Eleni and she said she might be able to make sweet breads for either Thanksgiving or Christmas, but preferably Christmas. She will get her crew together and plan when she will do this, and I will let you know. We will all help because this is a great moneymaker and also it will add to our Christmas dinner table. Many were asking for it during the food fest.

Since we haven't seen one another during these last couple of months we decided to have a small get together for our Christmas party in our church hall. It will be on December 6th from 12 to 4. We will social distance and everyone is required to wear a mask. We will have petas and we ask that everything bring something, whether it be an appetizer, a salad, or a dessert! There will be no charge. We will play bingo and exchange gifts if you so want. Please try to come and join us!

May God keep us all safe and healthy! Happy Thanksgiving to all of you and your families!

With love and appreciation,
Evelyn Pappas

24 HOUR ADVENT PRAYER CHAIN

From December 1-7, 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 two-fold: 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.
The Light - November 2020

THANKSGIVING BASKETS

This year, during this challenging crisis of COVID, we are planning to give out 70 Thanksgiving Baskets and Turkeys to families in need!!!

We are getting numerous requests. We already have 25 requests from families in Webster Middle School and 20 from Park Ave.

Please consider filling up a basket that we can give away. Or if it is easier, you can make a donation and we will buy what is needed for the baskets and the turkeys.

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.

2020 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 Debbi Raymond by Dec. 1st, or mail them to the Church Office, noting Church Family Christmas Card.

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.
THANK YOU for the GYRO FEST

Thank you to our co-chairpeople Mike Chito and Joey Gliniecki, our Philoptochos women, and all our volunteers for helping to make our GYRO FEST a success.

Thanks to the entire community for coming out and supporting this event.

It was a delightful weekend, and we made almost $7000, close to our budgeted amount despite the pandemic!

THANK GOD and THANK YOU!!!

YOUTH EPISTLE READERS

Nov 1 - Helen Dunning
Nov 8 - Panayiota Veronis
Nov 15 - Maia Beaudry
Nov 22 - Helen Dunning
Nov 29 - Panayiota Veronis

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

Nov 1 - Marie McNally, Matt Benoit, Lisa Healy, Debby Raymond
Nov 8 - Arthur Bilis, Chris Geotis, Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau
Nov 15 - Neal Neslusan, Mike Chito, Jimmy Karapanos, Brenda Romillard
Nov 22 - Nicoleta Cojocaru, Chris Dillon, Bill Thompson,
Nov 29 - Marie McNally, Matt Benoit, Lisa Healy, Debby Raymond

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

Please Continue Stewardship Support With Online Giving

During these uncertain times, we want every member in our Church Family to know they are not alone, but we are there for one another. If there is anyone in our Church Family that has a need, please contact Fr. Luke. If you want to donate toward our Church COVID Fund, which Fr Luke will give to those in need, please send a check to the Church office.

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

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

Important Dates in 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 17 Drew Kladas
- Nov 18 Spiro Pappas
- Nov 20 Said Khozami
- Nov 22 Sophia Mackenzie
- Nov 22 Alexandra Koulax
- Nov 24 Dan Neeland
- Nov 26 Elena Mackenzie
- Nov 27 Chris Constantine
- Nov 27 Maria Zagoras
- Nov 30 Leah Didonato
- Nov 30 Chris Dillon
- 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 Neslusan
  - Matthew Weiss
  - Matvey 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
IS OUR CHURCH IN YOUR WILL?

Remember Christ’s Beloved Church in your Estate Planning and Legacy Giving!

What a beautiful way to remember the Church that has blessed you and nourished you throughout your life.

Even after you have gone to be with the Lord and join the Church Triumphant in the company of the saints, you can still help the Church here on earth continue her sacred ministry of love and hope to the world!

Learn your Orthodox Faith from Orthodox podcasts, music, teachings at www.myocn.net

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

COMMIT TO 20 MINUTES WITH GOD EACH DAY

Use Fr. Luke’s Daily Email to help you spend 20 minutes every day connecting with God through Meditation and Scripture.

Sign up to the daily email at www.schwebster.org and go to bottom right column of homepage.

www.AncientFaith.com
Thank You to those who sponsor our monthly bulletin!

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114 Point Breeze Road
Webster, MA
### NOVEMBER 2020

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<th>Sun</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tue</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thu</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> Daylight Savings Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30 Matin</td>
<td>6:00pm - 10pm VIGIL SERVICE for our National Elections</td>
<td>National Elections May God Have Mercy on our Country</td>
<td>10:00 Zoom Bible Study</td>
<td>6:30 Paraklesis</td>
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<td>1:00 Baptism</td>
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<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td>9:30 Matin</td>
<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>9 St Nektarios</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30 Matin</td>
<td>8:45 Matins 9:30 Liturgy</td>
<td>10:00 Zoom Bible Study</td>
<td>6:30 Paraklesis</td>
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<td>13 St John Chrysostom</td>
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<td><strong>15 Christmas Fast Begins</strong></td>
<td>16 St Matthew</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>21 Presentation of Virgin Mary</td>
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<td>8:30 Matin</td>
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<td>10:00 Bible Study on Zoom</td>
<td>6:30 Paraklesis</td>
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<td>8:45 Matins 9:30 Liturgy</td>
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<td>25 St Katherine</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 Matin</td>
<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>6:30 Thanksgiving Service “Glory To God for All Things”</td>
<td>8:00 Matins 8:45 Liturgy 10:00 Bible Study on zoom</td>
<td>Glory to God for All Things! Happy Thanksgiving!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td>30 St Andrew</td>
<td>Dec 1</td>
<td>Dec 2</td>
<td>Dec 3</td>
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<td>Dec 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 Matin</td>
<td>11:30 Parish Council Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 Bible Study on Zoom</td>
<td>6:30 Paraclesis</td>
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<td>Drive Thru Living Bread Luncheon</td>
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<td>9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
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<td>5:00 Vespers</td>
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GRATITUDE AND THANKSGIVING

“At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.”

Albert Schweitzer

“Gratitude helps you to grow and expand; gratitude brings joy and laughter into your life and into the lives of all those around you.”

Eileen Caddy

“As with all commandments, gratitude is a description of a successful mode of living. The thankful heart opens our eyes to a multitude of blessings that continually surround us.”

James E. Faust

“Wise is the one who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has.”

Epictetus

“If you concentrate on finding whatever is good in every situation, you will discover that your life will suddenly be filled with gratitude, a feeling that nurtures the soul.”

Rabbi Harold Kushner

“When it comes to life the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or you take them with gratitude.”

G.K. Chesterton

“Gratitude turns what we have into enough.”

Anonymous

“Thankfulness is the beginning of gratitude. Gratitude is the completion of thankfulness. Thankfulness may consist merely of words. Gratitude is shown in acts.”

Henri Frederic Amiel

“Joy is the simplest form of gratitude.”

Karl Barth

“In ordinary life, we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give. It is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“The more grateful I am, the more beauty I see.”

Mary Davis

“Gratitude and Thanksgiving”