Sometimes they add to this understanding a touch of mysticism, according to which holiness is manifested in someone who has special experiences, who communicates with the “divine” and has ecstatic visions that other people don’t have. In short, holiness is understood as being located in people who are on a higher plane and who do supernatural things. Thus, in the popular conception the notion of the “holy” is seen solely as an ethical and psychological phenomenon. The more “virtuous” someone is, the more “holy” he is.

This widespread conception of holiness, however, is problematic when we examine it under the criteria of our faith, tradition and the gospels. This is so because:

1. If holiness is to be identified with the following of moral principles then why was the religiously blameless Pharisee judged by the Lord while the sinful Publican was justified in the well-known Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee?

This month Great Lent begins. Since the goal of Great Lent is holiness, before embarking on this journey, we need to know what holiness actually means for the Church. It turns out that holiness is a misunderstood concept. I gather here some thoughts based on an article by the Metropolitan of Pergamon John Zizioulas.

Misunderstood Holiness

If you were to ask a random person on the street what “holiness” means, the answer given most probably would be something like: holiness is expressed in a person who doesn’t stray from the good path, who follows the law of God, who is morally upright in all things, in short, it is connected with “not sinning.”
2. A similar question arises regarding holiness in St. Paul’s epistles. Addressing the Christians of Corinth, Thessaloniki and Galatia, etc., Paul identifies them with the holy: he calls them “saints.” However, as we read a few lines down in these same epistles, he names and criticizes severely a multitude of moral failings of those same Christians.

Holiness as an Ecclesiastical Experience

Based on the above it seems that the concept of “holiness” involves more than meets the eye. Let us see how the Church actually understands the meaning of “holy.”

Regarding the holy it is clear that Scripture goes way beyond the psychological understanding of this term that we find in the ancient Greeks (i.e., awe, fear, respect towards some kind of a “higher power”) and connects it rather with absolute otherness: the absolute “Other” is the “Holy.” Thus, Holy Scripture identifies the “holy” with God Himself, i.e., with an absolute transcendence vis-à-vis the world. Only God is holy, and from Him and only in relation with Him does holiness exist. Indeed, in order to underline this belief, in the Old Testament the Prophet Isaiah emphasizes the holiness of God in a threefold manner: “Holy, holy, holy Lord is the Lord of Hosts” (“Lord Sabaoth”) (Isaiah 6:3). This kind of a triple repetition, according to Jewish numerology, means “infinitely holy.” Thus, in Holy Scripture holiness is identified with God and not with human beings or “holy things” as was the case in ancient Greece; indeed, holiness is to be found in the person of God. Indeed, the Fathers of the Church identify the threefold “holy” of Isaiah with the three persons of the Trinity. So holiness in the Christian faith is not anthropocentric, it is Theocentric; it does not depend on the moral accomplishments of people, however great they might be, rather it issues forth only from
the glory and grace of God, it comes from the degree of our personal relationship with the personal God. Therefore, every holiness that is based on our own virtues, morals, qualities, ascetical efforts, etc., are actually demonic because they have no relation with the holiness of God and our Church. From these observations it is clear why the par excellence source of holiness is to be found in the Holy Eucharist. Let us examine this position.

Perhaps there is no more of a revealing moment in the life of a Christian regarding what “holiness” in the Church means than when, in the Divine Liturgy, the priest lifts up the Body and Blood a little before the distribution of Holy Communion and exclaims: “The Holy gifts for the holy people of God!”, that is to say, the Body and Blood of Christ are holy and are offered to the “holy ones,” i.e., to the members of the Church for communion. The answer given by the people (through the chanter in today's practice) is very stirring and meaningful: “One is holy, one is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.” In other words, only one is holy and He is Christ – we are sinful – and His holiness, within which we sinful are called to participate, aims towards the glory of God. In that moment the Church experiences holiness in its fullest. With the confession “One is holy,” all pride in our “virtues” and values are nullified in front of the holiness of the only Holy one. This doesn’t mean that we should approach Holy Communion without preparation and struggle for “worthy” approach. It means, rather, that no matter how much we prepare, we are not holy before communion. Holiness does not precede Eucharistic communion, it follows. If we are already “holy” before communion then what’s the use of it? Only participation in the holiness of God makes us holy, and this is what Holy Communion offers us.

The case of St. Mary of Egypt, which the Church offers us at the very end of Lent as a sort of culmination of the Lenten struggle, speaks to this eloquently. For forty-eight years she struggled intensely in the desert to be cleansed of the passions, but only when she received Holy Communion from St. Zosimas did she end her life having been sanctified. The goal of her ascetic struggle was Eucharistic communion. Would St. Mary have been considered a saint of the Church if she cleansed herself of the passions but never received communion? The answer is no. Holy Communion is the height of holiness, not only because it offers to the human being the most perfect and complete union (physical and spiritual) with the only One who is holy, but also because it comprises the most perfect image of the Kingdom of God, that is to say, that situation in which all of creation will be sanctified and be glorified eternally and unceasingly by the “Holy, holy, holy, Lord Sabaoth.”

St. Mary of Egypt
Ἡ Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή ξεκινᾶ στὶς 15 αὐτοῦ τοῦ μήνα. Ἐφ'ὅσον ὁ σκοπὸς τῆς Τεσσαρακοστῆς εἶναι ἡ ἁγιότητα, πρίν μπούμε σ'αὐτὴν τὴν πορεία ἄς δοῦμε τί σημαίνει αὐτή ἡ παρεξηγημένη ἐννοια τοῦ «ἄγιου» σύμφωνα μὲ τὴν ἀντίληψη τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Οἱ παρακάτω σκέψεις βασίζονται σὲ άρθρο τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Περγάμου Ἰωάννου Ζηζιούλα μὲ τίτλο «Ἡ παρεξηγημένη ἁγιότητα».

Ἡ παρεξηγημένη ἁγιότητα

Ἅν ρωτήσει κανεῖς τυχαῖα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους στὸν δρόμο τί ἀποτελεί κατὰ τὴ γνώμη τους «ἁγιότητα», ή ἀπάντησή που θα λάβει κατὰ κανόνα εἶναι περίπου ἡ ἑξῆς: ἅγιος εἶναι ἐκεῖνος που δὲν κάνει ἀμαρτίες, που τηρεῖ τὸν νόμο τοῦ Θεοῦ, εἶναι ἰδικός ἀπὸ κάθε ἄποψη, μὲ μία φράση: «δὲν ἀμαρτάνει». Σὲ ὅρισμένες περιπτώσεις στὴν ἕννοια τῆς ἁγιότητας προστίθεται ἕνα στοιχεῖο μὲ χροιὰ μυστικισμοῦ, σύμφωνα μὲ τὴν ὁποία ἅγιος εἶναι ἐκεῖνος που ἔχει ἑσωτερικὰ βιώματα, ἐπικοινωνεῖ μὲ τὸ «θεῖον», περιέρχεται σὲ ἐκκτασία καὶ βλέπει πράγματα ποὺ δὲν τὰ βλέπουν οἱ ἄλλοι ἄνθρωποι, μὲ λίγα λόγια ζεῖ ὑπερφυσικὲς καταστάσεις καὶ ἐνεργεῖ ὑπερφυσικὲς πράξεις. Ἡ ἁγιότητα φαίνεται νὰ συνδέεται στὴ σκέψη τῶν ἀνθρώπων μὲ κριτήρια ἠθικολογικά καὶ ψυχολογικά. Ὅσο πιὸ ἐνάρετος εἶναι κανεῖς, τόσο πιὸ ἅγιος εἶναι.

Ὡστόσο, ἡ κοινὴ καὶ διαδεδομένη αὐτὴ ἀντίληψη γιὰ τὴν ἁγιότητα εἶναι προβληματικὴ ὅταν τὴ θέσουμε στὸ φῶς τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς παραδόσεώς μας. Αὐτὸ ἀκριβῶς διότι:

1. Ἀν ἡ ἁγιότητα συνίσταται κυρίως στὴν τήρηση τῶν ἡθικῶν ἄρχων, τότε γιατὶ ὁ θρησκευτικὰ ἃμεμπτος Φαρισαίος κατακρίθηκε ἀπὸ τὸν Κύριο, ἐνώ δικαίωθηκε ὁ ἁμαρτωλός Τελώνης στὴ γνωστὴ σὲ ὅλους μας παράβολη;

2. Παρόμοιο ἐρώτημα προκύπτει καὶ ἀπὸ τὴ χρήση τοῦ ὅρου «ἅγιος» ἀπὸ τὸν Ἀπόστολο Παῦλο στὶς ἑπιστολὲς του. Ἀπευθυνόμενος στοὺς χριστιανοὺς τῆς Κορίνθου, τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης, τῆς Γαλατίας κ.λπ., ὁ Παῦλος τοὺς καλεῖ «ἅγιους». Στὴ συνέχεια ὡς ὅσα τῶν ἑπιστολῶν αὐτῶν κατονομάζει μύρια ὅσα ἡθικὰ ἐλαττώματα τῶν χριστιανῶν αὐτῶν, τα ὁποία καὶ ἐπικρίνει δριμῶτα.

Ἡ ἁγιότητα ως ἐκκλησιαστικὴ ἐμπειρία

Ἄρα, φαίνεται ὅτι ὁ ὅρος «ἄγιος» κρύβει περισσότερο ἀπ’ὅτι νομίζουμε. Ἀς δούμε, λοιπὸν, πῶς ἀντιλαμβάνεται ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας τὴν ἁγιότητα.
Η Αγία Μετάβαση είναι ένα από τα μεγαλύτερα και σημαντικότερα εμπειρικά θέματα της Θρησκείας. Το θέμα είναι συναρπαστικό, επειδή οι ιστορικές περίπτωσες της Αγίας Μετάβασης έχουν επηρεάσει την τροπή της Εκκλησίας σε πολλές γενιές. Με την επεξεργασία της θέσης αυτής, θα μπορούσαμε να αναλύσουμε κάπως την αναλογία της Αγίας Μετάβασης στη Θεία Ευχαριστία. Η Αγία Μετάβαση είναι ένα από τα κύρια θέματα της Θρησκείας, και οποιαδήποτε επεξεργασία της θα έπρεπε να περιλαμβάνει την επεξεργασία της θέσης αυτής.

Συνοψίζεις όσα έγιναν πιο πάνω: "Είναι άγιος, ένας Κύριος, Ιησοῦς Χριστός, είναι δόξα του Θεού Πατρός". Ένας είναι μόνον άγιος, ο Χριστός -εμείς είμαστε άμαρτωλοι- και η άγιοτάτα Του, στην όποια καλούμεθα να συμμετάσχουμε και έμεις οι άμαρτωλοι, δεν αποβλέπουμε σε τίποτε άλλο από τη δόξα του Θεού (είς δόξαν Θεού Πατρός). Την ώρα έκεινη η Εκκλησία βιώνει την άγιοτάτα στο άποκορύφωμα της. Με την ομολογία "Είναι άγιος", κάθε άρετή μας και κάθε άξια μας εκμηδενίζονται μπροστά στην άγιοτάτα του μόνου Άγιου. Αυτό δεν σημαίνει ότι πρέπει να προσερχόμαστε στη Θ. Κοινωνία χωρίς προπαρασκευή και άγωνα για την άξια προσέλευσή μας. Αν είμαστε άγιοι πριν κοινωνήσουμε, τότε πρέπει να καθαριστούμε, δεν γνώριστε άγιοι προτού κοινωνήσουμε. Η άγιοτάτα δεν προηγείται της ευχαριστικής κοινωνίας, αλλά έρχεται. Αν είμαστε άγιοι πριν κοινωνήσουμε, τότε πρέπει να προσέρχομαστέ. Αυτό δεν σημαίνει ότι πρέπει να προσερχόμαστε στη Θ. Κοινωνία χωρίς προπαρασκευή και άγωνα για την άξια προσέλευσή μας. Αν είμαστε άγιοι πριν κοινωνήσουμε, τότε πρέπει να προσερχόμαστε. Αυτό δεν σημαίνει ότι πρέπει να προσερχόμαστε στη Θ. Κοινωνία χωρίς προπαρασκευή και άγωνα για την άξια προσέλευσή μας. Αν είμαστε άγιοι πριν κοινωνήσουμε, τότε πρέπει να προσερχόμαστε.
**EURIPIDES’ MASTERPIECE “HIPPOLYTUS”**

**ADULT CLASS SEMINAR (Studies in Greek Civilization)**

Mondays from 7 PM to 8:30 PM  
February 22 to March 29  
6-Week Class

For More Information  
John Lyssikatos 401-728-4452

Due to pandemic restrictions, classes will be conducted online via Zoom

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**The Most Traditional Rituals of Clean Monday in Greece** (Καθαρά Δευτέρα)

Greece is a country full of cultural and religious traditions – and one celebration which is a bit of both is Clean Monday, or “Kathara Deftera.” Let’s take a look at some of the ways that Greeks celebrate one of the most important days of the year.

Clean Monday involves eating a feast which commences the 40-day period of Lent, or “Sarakosti” for the Eastern Orthodox church. The celebrations for Clean Monday always coincide with the first day of the 7th week before Orthodox Easter Sunday. The preceding Sunday people start off by attending a special evening service, asking for forgiveness to start off the Lent period with a clear conscious and clean soul.

Also, Clean Monday brings to an end the Carnival celebrations that take place for around one month throughout the country in the time period leading up to the beginning of Lent. Food is also an important part of the Clean Monday celebration as Greeks participate in the traditional Orthodox Lent during which time they do not consume meat, fish, eggs and dairy products.

Most households celebrate the beginning of Lent with a spread of shellfish, octopus and “taramosalata” which is a traditional dip made from salted roe, breadcrumbs, lemon and oil – which goes great with the special “laguna” bread that is also consumed on Clean Monday. Also the traditional dessert made from tahini called “halva” is served with the alcoholic drink “tsipouro.”

Greeks do many things to celebrate the coming of spring, such as wearing the Martis bracelet and, on Clean Monday, they also fly kites. Many people will set up shop along the roadsides selling kites as people head off to the parks and the seaside to fly them. The tradition of flying kites on Clean Monday takes place throughout the entire country.
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Assumption of the Virgin Mary
Greek Orthodox Church

2021 Saturdays of Souls
March 6th, March 13th, and March 20th

Your Name: ______________________

Names of Departed for Eternal Memory and Blessed Repose

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Print and fill in the names of your departed loved ones. Then either mail to the Church Office, email to secretary@assumptionri.org or give to Fr. Philip in church on Sunday, March 7th or 14th.
WATCH LIVE STREAM OF OUR CHURCH SERVICES

Visit Assumption of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church homepage of our website:

https://www.assumptionri.org/

You will find the following options on our website homepage:

1. To watch live stream of church services, click button that says: "WATCH NOW"
2. To light a red glass candle, click button that says: "VIRTUAL CANDLE"
3. To make an offering, click button that says: "VIRTUAL TRAY"

Contributions are crucial to the survival of our church. Despite the pandemic, these contributions can still take place thanks to options made readily available on our website. On the homepage of our website, there are buttons that make such donations very easy. Please avail yourselves of this opportunity while following the services online or any time you wish so that this year can be just like any other year despite the pandemic. Thank you to our Parishioners for your continued support.

GOYA News

This past weekend, GOYA gathered together and went ice skating in Providence. We all had an amazing time and everyone was excited to see each other again while following COVID-19 safety protocols. Ice skating was a new activity for many of our GOYAns, so guiding each other definitely made the experience a memorable one! By having experienced and inexperienced ice skaters, our GOYAns got to learn from one another and many laughs were shared throughout the day. Finally getting together as a group for the first time this year really strengthened our bond with each other and we all can't wait to get together again sometime soon!

Respectfully Submitted,
Recording Secretary,
Athanasia Dafulas
Greek School
2021 Greek Independence Day Program

Τὸ Ἑλληνικὸ Σχολεῖο σᾶς προσκαλεῖ στὸν ἐπίσημο ἑορτασμὸ τῆς Ἐθνικῆς μας ἑορτῆς που θα γίνει τὴν Κυριακὴ 28η Μαρτίου στὴν Ἐκκλησία ἀμέσως μετὰ τὴ Θεία Λειτουργία. Τὰ παιδιά μας περήφανα γιὰ τὴν ἐνδοξή καταγωγή τους, θὰ σᾶς παρουσιάσουν ένα σύντομο πρόγραμμα μὲ πατριωτικὸ δράμα, ποιήματα, καὶ τραγούδια γιὰ νὰ τιμήσουμε γιορτάσουμε τὴν 200η επέτειο τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως. Ἐλὰτε (μὲ κράτηση) νὰ τὰ καμαρώσετε καὶ νὰ πλημμυρίσουν καὶ οἱ δικὲς σας καρδιὲς ἀπὸ ἐθνικὸ παλμὸ καὶ ύπερηφάνεια.

There will be a short presentation in honor of Greek Independence Day and in celebration of the 200th Anniversary of the Greek Revolution on Sunday, March 28th, after Divine Liturgy. Our Children, who attend the afternoon Greek School, will present a short program depicting the spirit and ideas of our forefathers in their heroic fight for freedom. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the presentation will take place in our Church immediately following a short doxology. What better place to have this presentation since the church led the fight for liberation. We will be full of pride for our children as we watch this short presentation honoring the heroes of 1821. There will be no reception after the presentation due to pandemic restrictions.

City of Pawtucket & State of Rhode Island Recognition of 2021 Greek Independence Day

In lieu of our usual celebrations that take place at Pawtucket City Hall and the Rhode Island State House in honor of Greek Independence Day, recognition of this special day will be extremely limited this year due to the continuing pandemic restrictions. City and State commemoration of Greek Independence Day will be limited to the raising of the Greek Flag sometime during the week of March 25th.

If restrictions are lifted and limitations are raised before the week of March 25th, we will revisit discussions.
Dear Parishioners and Friends,
In order to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Greek Independence this year, the St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine in St. Augustine, Florida, under the auspices of Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos, has organized the first ever Greek language essay contest for our youths from 13 to 19 years old. They are asking for a 1000 word essay in Greek for an award of $1000. The subject will be the life and actions of one of the following Philhellenes in their support of the Greek revolution:

- Samuel Gridley Howe
- Congressman Daniel Webster
- Congressman Henry Clay
- George Jarvis
- Capt. Jonathan Miller
- William Townshend Washington

Those who participate should send their essays in the Greek language to:

Polexeni Maouris Hiller, Executive Director
St. Photios National Shrine
philler@stphotios.com (for the $1000)

Anastasia Moragianni, Greek School Principal
Boston Cathedral
anastasia@bostoncathedral.org (for the possibility of also being awarded $500 locally)

The due date is March 14, 2021. For further information and contest details, go to the St. Photios Shrine website at https://stphotios.org/. Our Metropolitan Methodios highly recommends participation in this important competition!

Καλή επιτυχία στους συμμετέχοντες!
Sincerely,
Fr. Philip Zymaris
2020 Philoptochos Donations

Each year St. Barbara Philoptochos Society provides donations and financial support to many organizations in need throughout the year. With help from all of you, we are able to continue our philanthropic work. The following is a list of donations that were made in 2020:

**National Philoptochos and Metropolis of Boston**

- Vasilopita
- Social Services
- Cancer Fund
- Autism
- St. Photios Shrine
- Orthodox Christian Mission
- Support a Mission Priest
- Hellenic College/Holy Cross — Lenten Event
- St. Basil
- IOCC
- 75th Anniversary Funders Fund
- Orthodox Christian Fellowship
- Hellenic College/Holy Cross — Scholarship Fund
- Widowed Presbyteres Benevolent Fund
- National Philoptochos Emergency Fund
- Patriarchate Fund
- National Sisterhood of Presbyteres
- Unicef
- General Medical Fund
- Doorways Inc. Food Pantry — Seekonk
- Blackstone Valley Emergency Food Ctr. — Pawt.
- Philoxenia House
- Metropolis of Boston Camp — 2 Children

**Meeting Street School**
**Amos House**
**Multiple Sclerosis — RI Chapter**
**Crossroads**
**The Samaritans**
**RI Food Bank**
**Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of RI**
**Covid-19 — National**
**Compassion International**
**St. Spyridon Church — Memorial Fund**

### Donations to Our Church

- Landscaping
- Church Decorations for Christmas
- Church Decorations for Easter
- Easter Egg Bags
- Two Coffee Pots
- Repair Fund
- Memorial Fund
- Greek School Graduation
- Maria Lyssikatos Scholarship Fund — Memorial Fund
- Parishioner in Need

**Total Donations for the Year 2020: $6,056.00**

We would like to thank everyone in our community for their dedication, talent, and support of the Philoptochos Society. May 2021 be a Healthy, Happy, and Successful New Year.

Elaine Sioras
Let Us Help Our Endowment Fund Grow

As church membership dwindles in many places while ever-growing maintenance fees rise, many parishes are establishing endowment funds to meet their needs and secure their financial survival. Here at Assumption in Pawtucket, thanks to the foresight and vision of past parishioners and parish councils, we are blessed because we already have established such an endowment fund many years ago.

We are also blessed here at Assumption in that, having established our Endowment Fund, many parishioners generously contributed to it in the past and to this day. Indeed, some parishioners were even kind enough to endow sizable funds through their wills to our community in order to guarantee the continuity of our beloved parish. We are where we are today thanks to such people and we should never let their generosity be forgotten. So that we don’t forget them, their names are:

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GREAT BENEFECTORS: Demetrios B. & Betty Englis Haseotes

At this point, our Endowment Fund’s value is $796,279.35 as of February 15, 2021. The operational policy of this fund stipulates that half of its annual return goes towards the budget expenses of our community and the other half is re-invested.

In realizing the needs of our community and sharing the great vision of these benefactors, it behooves us to imitate them and to make whatever contribution we can – small or great – to continue their tradition and to help the fund grow. In this way we will secure the future of our beloved Assumption Church. For this purpose, each month we will include this new column dedicated to the Endowment Fund in our monthly newsletter. We will be posting the current value of the fund to keep you abreast regarding its growth and we will list the names of past parishioners as well as new donors who contribute to the fund in memory of loved ones. For the sake of confidentiality, names will be included but not the monetary amounts.

Let us all honor our benefactors by imitating them, sharing in their dreams for the future and by fostering with them the continuation of our church into perpetuity.
Judgment Sunday (Meatfare Sunday)

The foregoing two parables — especially that of the Prodigal Son — have presented to us God's extreme goodness and love for man. But lest certain persons, putting their confidence in this alone, live carelessly, squandering upon sin the time given them to work out their salvation, and death suddenly snatch them away, the most divine Fathers have appointed this day's feast commemorating Christ's impartial Second Coming, through which we bring to mind that God is not only the Friend of man, but also the most righteous Judge, Who recompenses to each according to his deeds. It is the aim of the holy Fathers, through bringing to mind that fearful day, to rouse us from the slumber of carelessness unto the work of virtue, and to move us to love and compassion for our brethren. Besides this, even as on the coming Sunday of Cheese-fare we commemorate Adam's exile from the Paradise of delight — which exile is the beginning of life as we know it now — it is clear that today's is reckoned the last of all feasts, because on the last day of judgment, truly, everything of this world will come to an end. All foods, except meat and meat products, are allowed during the week that follows this Sunday.

Forgiveness Sunday

The Holy Fathers have appointed the commemoration of Adam's exile from the Paradise of delight here, on the eve of the holy Forty-day Fast, demonstrating to us not by simple words, but by actual deeds, how beneficial fasting is for man, and how harmful and destructive are insatiety and the transgressing of the divine commandments. For the first commandment that God gave to man was that of fasting, which the first-fashioned received but did not keep; and not only did they not become gods, as they had imagined, but they lost even that blessed life which they had, and they fell into corruption and death, and transmitted these and innumerable other evils to all of mankind. The God-bearing Fathers set these things before us today, that by bringing to mind what we have fallen from, and what we have suffered because of the insatiety and disobedience of the first-fashioned, we might be diligent to return again to that ancient bliss and glory by means of fasting and obedience to all the divine commands. Taking occasion from today's Gospel (Matt. 6:14-21) to begin the Fast unencumbered by enmity, we also ask forgiveness this day, first from God, then from one another and all creation.
Sunday of Orthodoxy

For more than one hundred years the Church of Christ was troubled by the persecution of the Iconoclasts of evil belief, beginning in the reign of Leo the Isaurian (717-741) and ending in the reign of Theophilus (829-842). After Theophilus's death, his widow the Empress Theodora (celebrated Feb. 11), together with the Patriarch Methodius (June 14), established Orthodoxy anew. This ever-memorable Queen venerated the icon of the Mother of God in the presence of the Patriarch Methodius and the other confessors and righteous men, and openly cried out these holy words: "If anyone does not offer relative worship to the holy icons, not adoring them as though they were gods, but venerating them out of love as images of the archetype, let him be anathema." Then with common prayer and fasting during the whole first week of the Forty-day Fast, she asked God's forgiveness for her husband. After this, on the first Sunday of the Fast, she and her son, Michael the Emperor, made a procession with all the clergy and people and restored the holy icons, and again adorned the Church of Christ with them. This is the holy deed that all we the Orthodox commemorate today, and we call this radiant and venerable day the Sunday of Orthodoxy, that is, the triumph of true doctrine over heresy.

Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas

This divine Father, who was from Asia Minor, was from childhood reared in the royal court of Constantinople, where he was instructed in both religious and secular wisdom. Later, while still a youth, he left the imperial court and struggled in asceticism on Mount Athos, and in the Skete at Beroea. He spent some time in Thessalonica being treated for an illness that came from his harsh manner of life. He was present in Constantinople at the Council that was convened in 1341 against Barlaam of Calabria, and at the Council of 1347 against Acindynus, who was of like mind with Barlaam; Barlaam and Acindynus claimed that the grace of God is created. At both these Councils, the Saint contended courageously for the true dogmas of the Church of Christ, teaching in particular that divine grace is not created, but is the uncreated energies of God which are poured forth throughout creation: otherwise it would be impossible, if grace were created, for man to have genuine communion with the uncreated God. In 1347 he was appointed Metropolitan of Thessalonica. He tended his flock in an apostolic manner for some twelve years, and wrote many books and treatises on the most exalted doctrines of our Faith; and having lived for a total of sixty-three years, he reposed in the Lord in 1359. His holy relics are kept in the Cathedral of Thessalonica. A full service was composed for his feast day by the Patriarch Philotheus in 1368, when it was established that his feast be celebrated on this day. Since works without right faith avail nothing, we set Orthodoxy of faith as the foundation of all that we accomplish during the Fast, by celebrating the Triumph of Orthodoxy the Sunday before, and the great defender of the teachings of the holy Fathers today.
Annunciation of the Theotokos

Six months after John the Forerunner's conception, the Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth, a town of Galilee, unto Mary the Virgin, who had come forth from the Temple a mature maiden (see Nov. 21). According to the tradition handed down by the Fathers, she had been betrothed to Joseph four months. On coming to Joseph's house, the Archangel declared: "Rejoice, thou Full of Grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." After some consideration, and turmoil of soul, and fear because of this greeting, the Virgin, when she had finally obtained full assurance concerning God's unsearchable condescension and the ineffable dispensation that was to take place through her, and believing that all things are possible to the Most High, answered in humility: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And at this, the Holy Spirit came upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her all-blameless womb, and the Son and Word of God, Who existed before the ages, was conceived past speech and understanding, and became flesh in her immaculate body (Luke 1:26-38). Bearing in her womb the Uncontainable One, the blessed Virgin went with haste from Nazareth to the hill country of Judea, where Zacharias had his dwelling; for she desired to find Elizabeth her kinswoman and rejoice together with her, because, as she had learned from the Archangel, Elizabeth had conceived in her old age. Furthermore, she wished to tell her of the great things that the Mighty One had been well-pleased to bring to pass in her, and she greeted Elizabeth and drew nigh to her. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, she felt her six-month-old babe, Saint John the Baptist, prophesied of the dawning of the spiritual Sun. Immediately, the aged Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and recognized her as the Mother of her Lord, and with a great voice blessed her and the Fruit that she held within herself. The Virgin also, moved by a supernatural rejoicing in the spirit, glorified her God and Savior, saying: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," and the rest, as the divine Luke hath recorded (1:39-55)

Apolytikion of Annunciation of the Theotokos (Fourth Tone)

Today marks the crowning of our salvation and the revelation of the mystery before all ages. For the Son of God becomes the son of the Virgin, and Gabriel proclaims the grace. Wherefore, we also cry out with him, "Hail, O full of grace, the Lord is with you."

Kontakion of Annunciation of the Theotokos (Plagal of the Fourth Tone)

To you, Theotokos, invincible Defender, having been delivered from peril, I, your city, dedicate the victory festival as a thank offering. In your irresistible might, keep me safe from all trials, that I may call out to you: "Hail, unwedded bride!"
AHEPA A121, Pawtucket Chapter Announces Community Webinars!

During these challenging times of the pandemic, our community engagements as an AHEPA chapter are even more important and even more needed than before! We are happy to announce that we will be starting a series of online Webinars to our community which will cover many areas including Financial matters, Health matters, Hellenic Affairs, General topics, Community online discussions!

Most will be in English however some will be in Greek. Reservations will be required, and attendees will be able to use a smartphone, tablet, laptop, or desktop computer. Internet access (Wi-Fi) connection will be required.

Keep an eye for our email blasts announcing our specific dates and topics!

From the desk of our Supreme President of AHEPA, Brother George Horiates!

I am pleased to announce and share with you a release from our very own AHEPA Brother Senator Robert Menendez. All of us at AHEPA are honored to have a bipartisan resolution entered on the Senate Floor. AHEPA works to maintain and promote Hellenic issues in Washington, DC. Thank you both Senators Menendez and Barrasso for their understanding and support of the close ties between the United states and Greece. ZETO H ELLAS. AHEPA will update on the resolution and keep all our members informed.

Fraternally,

George G. Horiates, Supreme President, Order of AHEPA, Defenders of Hellenism

Menendez, Barrasso Introduce Bipartisan Resolution Honoring Greece’s 200th Independence Day

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was joined by Senator John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) in introducing a bipartisan Senate resolution commemorating the 200th anniversary of Greek Independence Day, March 25, 2021. The bipartisan resolution celebrates the commitment to democracy that Greece and the United States share as well as the two nations’ lasting partnership and rich history of friendship.

“It is with great pride that I stand with Greek Americans in New Jersey and across the country in celebrating a momentous anniversary: Greece’s 200th Independence Day,” Senator Menendez said. “As I walk the halls of the Capitol, I am reminded of Greece’s lasting imprint on American society, and that the United States and Greece are forever linked by their shared admiration for and devotion to democratic governance. The relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Adamantios Korais set a foundation for a dialogue on democracy and freedom that continues to this day. I am proud of the roles played by individual American philhellenes who provided support to the Greek revolution – people like Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, Jonathan Peckham Miller, and George Jarvis. I extend my warmest wishes to the members of the Hellenic community during this bicentennial year and join in honoring their rich cultural heritage and immense contributions around the world.”

“The United States extends a heartfelt congratulations to the people of Greece as they celebrate 200 years of independence. This year’s bicentennial marks a significant milestone for Greece, our strong partner and important ally,” said Senator Barrasso. “From the very beginning of Greece’s struggle for independence, Americans supported and fought alongside the Greek people. Together, our two nations continue to strive to advance the principles of liberty, freedom, and democracy. The United States looks forward to celebrating another 200 years of close cooperation and friendship.”
The resolution:
Recognizes the 200th anniversary of Greek Independence Day, Celebrates Ancient Greece as the birthplace of democracy and the enduring commitment of the Greek people to democratic principles, and Acknowledges the important role that Greece has played on the global stage in addition to the country’s strong relationship with the United States.

March 25th, 1821 – March 25th, 2021 – 200 Years of Greek Independence!
In 1821, after nearly 400 years of Ottoman oppression, the Greeks bound together under a flag bearing the cross to fight for freedom and justice in the land which gave the world democracy. Like the revolution which took place in America 45 years earlier, Greece would embark on a journey forever linking our two countries in their struggle for freedom and independence. The Founding Fathers of the United States of America drew upon the ideals and principles forged in ancient Greece in constructing our nation. Thomas Jefferson said of the ancient Greeks, "to whom we also are all indebted for the lights which originally led ourselves out of Gothic darkness." All who cherish a free and democratic government are beneficiaries of Greece's legacy and thus should consider themselves Philhellenes. This is why Americans fought and died alongside the Greeks during their struggle for freedom in the Greek War of Independence. The Greeks received the support of Jefferson, President James Monroe, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, and U.S. Representatives Daniel Webster and Henry Clay.

On March 25, 1821 the bishop Germanos of Patras raised the Greek flag at the Monastery of Agia Lavra in Peloponnese and the War of Independence against the Turks started.
The Greek War of Independence, also known as the Greek Revolution, was a successful war waged by the Greeks between 1821 and 1827 to win independence from the Ottoman Empire. The Greek War of Independence was a fiercely fought and destructive war against the Ottoman Empire for independence, which started in 1821. The Greeks were the first of the subject peoples of the Ottoman Empire to secure recognition as a sovereign power, a status which they achieved in 1832. Greeks celebrate their Independence Day annually on March 25th. The day of March 25th, 1821, was the rebirth of modern Greece after 400 years of brutal occupation by the Ottoman Turks.

We Must Preserve the Legacy We Inherited!
We need you to join our AHEPA A121 (Pawtucket) Chapter!
We ask all of you to join and support your AHEPA Pawtucket chapter. You can get as much involved as you have time or desire. Please keep in mind, that just by becoming a member and through your yearly membership fee you help us to . . .

• Support AHEPA activities and publications
• Support our Chapter’s activities and representation
• Give strength to our Pawtucket chapter though membership counts
• Provide academic and athletic scholarships
• Make our voice heard for things that matter
• Make a difference in every community and in the country as well

This is an invitation to everyone – we need all of you! Your opinion will always count, whether you are attending our meetings in person, or you are submitting your ideas via email, phone, text or personal conversation. For membership information, applications please see Yianni Apostolakis, Tom Andrikopoulos or Nick Bitsakis.

For more information, please visit www.ahepa.org.
Finding Resilience in Times of Crisis - Tools for Emotional and Spiritual Care

The damage from a disaster or crisis extends far beyond shattered homes and businesses. There are emotional injuries, too: the wounds of losing a home, a livelihood, or maybe even loved ones. That’s why IOCC developed Care Compass, a suite of tools designed to map ways individuals and communities can create a path toward resilience, digitizing elements of IOCC’s emotional and spiritual care work.

Featuring modules on self-care, grieving with hope, family dynamics, and building resilient communities, Care Compass offers downloadable resources, including short videos by IOCC Frontliners. Frontliners — a group of disaster counselors, clergy, and other trained professionals — share their hard-won experience to help communities recover spiritually as well as physically. As we enter the new year — especially with the pandemic still a part of daily life — it’s important that we help each other weather any kind of disaster. IOCC’s Care Compass represents new and creative ways to help us care for each other. To find out more, please visit iocc.org/carecompass.

In an incredibly challenging season, a few stories of faith, love and fellowship can always put a smile of hope in our face!

Volunteers in Action: Washington DC

Assembling health kits is a hands-on way to make a difference through IOCC for someone in need. As a Christmas season activity, children and young adults at Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral assembled 201 IOCC hygiene kits. Volunteers from throughout the community collected items and assembled them at home, coming together on Christmas Eve to drop them off at church. Participants even used extra supplies to help prepare small kits containing tissues, hand cream, and toothpaste to distribute to local residents in need. Thank you to IOCC parish representative Maria Paleocrassas and all who helped make this kit drive possible!

Creating Opportunities for Greece

While Give for Greece helps small business scale up production (Pandora’s Box Souvenirs pictured), it also serves those in need with food assistance, education, and more. The effects of the long economic crisis continue to impact the daily lives of the people of Greece. Since 2013, IOCC’s signature Give for Greece program has been helping pave the way toward economic recovery and self-sufficiency. Working closely with Apostoli, the humanitarian arm of the Archdiocese of Athens under the Orthodox Church of Greece, Give for Greece administers programs that have helped small businesses flourish, taught young adults marketable tech skills, prepared students for Greece’s university entrance exams, offered food assistance, and provided lifesaving supplies to public hospitals.
Hope after Disaster in Lebanon
School principal Sister Joseph and IOCC staff survey extensive damage caused by the Beirut explosion. IOCC is repairing several schools and hundreds of homes with donor support. The road to recovery following the massive explosion in Beirut last August is a long one, but thanks to the generosity of IOCC donors — including a generous grant from National Philoptochos — the people of Beirut are making progress. IOCC teams have been working alongside the community to offer relief and to help rebuild. One of many projects underway is the restoration of Saint Vincent de Paul School. The school, which provides low-cost education and free lunches for around 500 children, suffered severe damage during the explosion. In addition to Saint Vincent de Paul School, IOCC is working with partners to help rebuild homes, small businesses, and health centers, and provide meals for families in need.

Here is How YOU Can Help More!

• Become a monthly donor to IOCC
• Send a donation to IOCC for a cause that touches your heart!
• Give a donation to Ioannis Apostolakis, payable to IOCC, for any occasion you would like to make a difference!

Help Us Provide For Those in Need!

And remember, 92 cents of every dollar you give goes to our humanitarian work. The other 8 cents is for administration and fundraising costs. Charity Navigator gives IOCC a 4-star rating (highest possible) for financial health, accountability and transparency. Plus, every dollar you give helps us secure $7 more in support from governments, foundations, and other sources.

IOCC is the official humanitarian aid agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. Since its inception in 1992, IOCC has delivered $650 million in relief and development programs to families and communities in more than 50 countries. IOCC is a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of churches and agencies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance and advocacy. To learn more about IOCC, please visit our website at iocc.org

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### Cemetery Fund (as of 2/28/2021)

Assumption Church is in the process of having work performed by landscapers on our grounds at Walnut Hill Cemetery on Armistice Boulevard in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. It would be greatly appreciated if you would consider making a donation to help with the upkeep and beautification of the grounds where so many of our deceased loved ones are buried. If you have not already done so, please contribute to the Cemetery Fund so that completion of the work can take place. Special thanks are expressed to the following parishioners for their very generous donations:

**Dr. & Mrs. Vasili Amfilo**

**Mr. & Mrs. George Dafulas in Memory of Aristidis Triantafilou**

**Dr. & Mrs. Thomas Andrikopoulos in Memory of Aristidis Triantafilou**

**Mrs. Vasiliki Andrikopoulos**

**Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Bianchi in Memory of Aristidis Triantafilou**

**Mr. & Mrs. George Foussekis in Memory of Aristidis Triantafilou**

**Mr. & Mrs. Charles Lehourites in Memory of Aristidis Triantafilou**

**Mr. & Mrs. George J. Lyssikatos in Memory of Aristidis Triantafilou**

**Mrs. Marion Manickas in Memory of father and husband, Harry Sioras**

**Mr. & Mrs. Paul Microulis in Memory of father, Harry Sioras**

**Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Mudge in Memory of father and husband, Harry Sioras**

**Mr. & Mrs. Haralambos Papavasiliou in Memory of Aristidis Triantafilou**

**Ms. Elaine Sioras and Mrs. Irene Sioras in Memory of Aristidis Triantafilou**

**Mr. George Sioras in Memory of father, Harry Sioras**

**Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Mudge in Memory of father, Harry Sioras**

**Mrs. Eleni Katsios in Memory of father, Harry Sioras**

**Mr. George Sioras in Memory of father, Harry Sioras**

**Miss Anastasia Vellopoulos in Memory of father, Harry Sioras**
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Providence, Rhode Island
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You can help to beautify our church grounds. Donations towards our church grounds are always very much appreciated so that our property can remain beautiful year round. Appreciation and many thanks to Roula Vellopoulou, Nick Vellopoulos, Anastasia Vellopoulou, Ioanna Wright, and Charoula Xoulei Campos who are our church gardeners spending endless hours cutting the grass, planting, watering, and trimming the beautiful flowers and shrubs surrounding our premises.
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