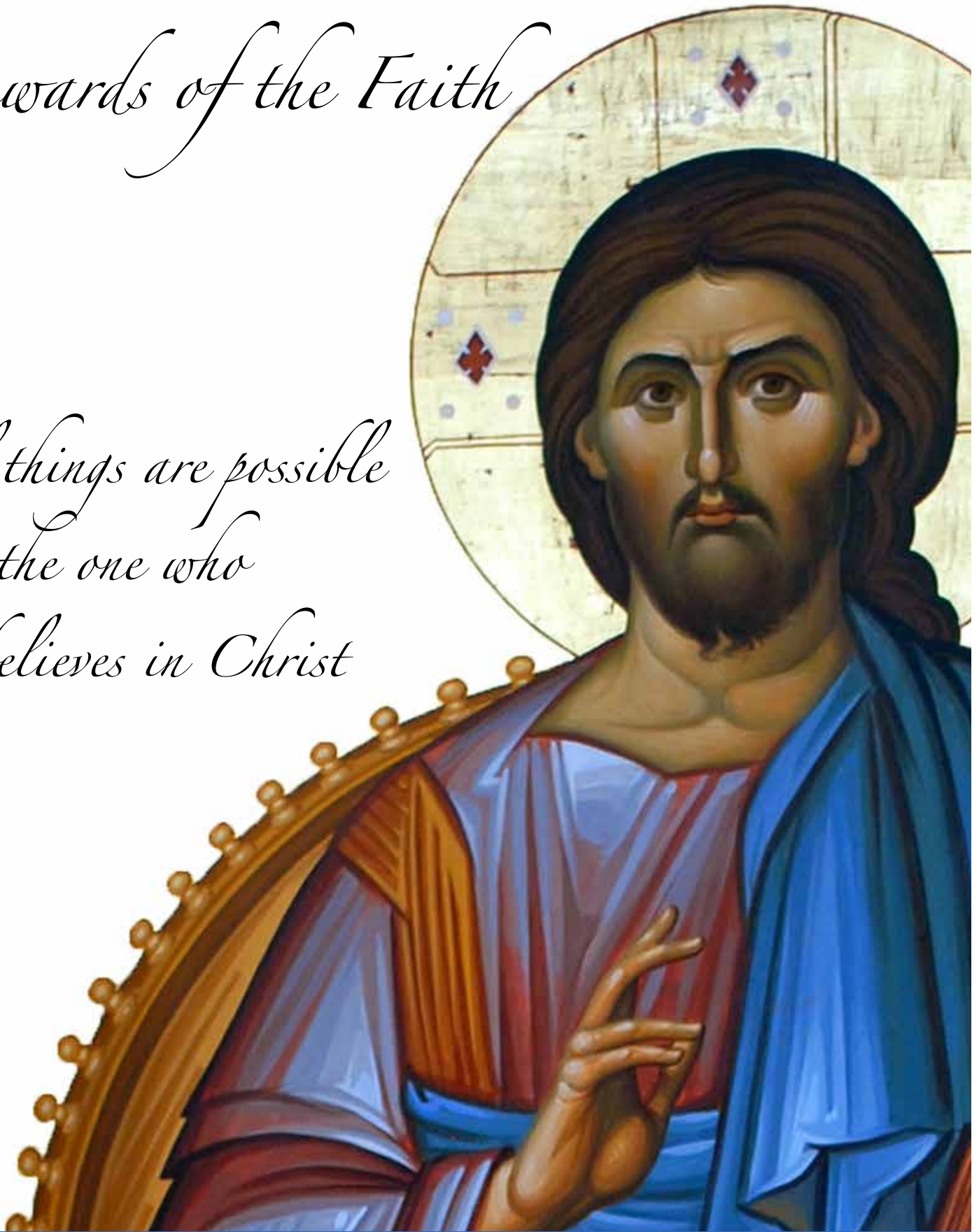


Stewards of the Faith

*All things are possible
to the one who
believes in Christ*



SAINT BARBARA GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
Stewardship 2019

All things are possible to the one who believes in Christ.

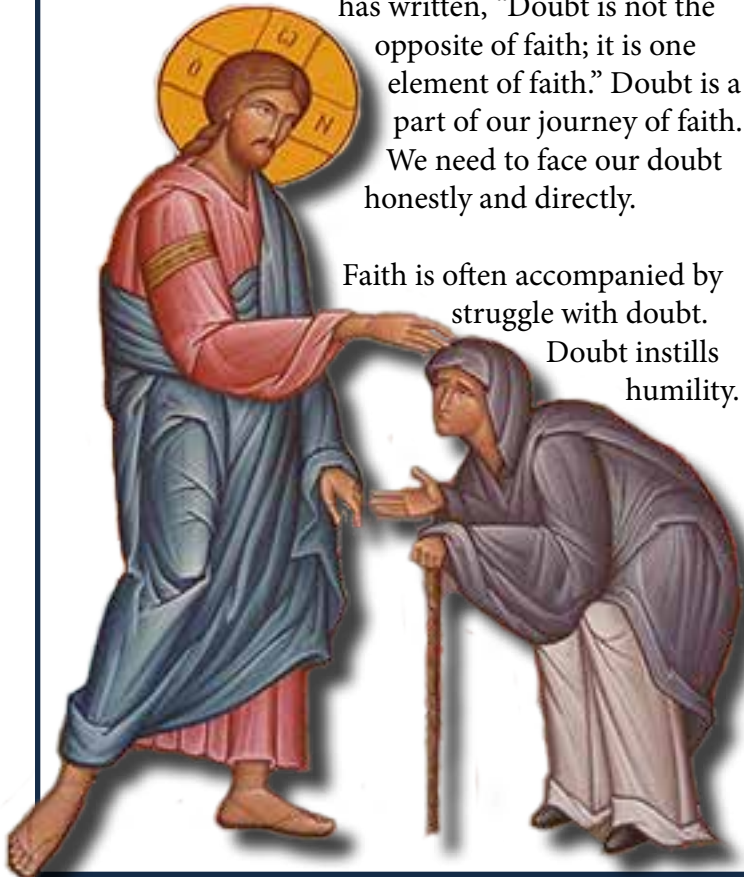
Having faith can be difficult. Keeping faith in the face of doubt is the ongoing struggle of every Christian since the earliest days of Christianity. We dedicate the first Sunday after Easter to Thomas the Apostle, forever remembered as “Doubting Thomas” because he doubted the first reports of the Resurrected Christ.

In the Gospel of Mark (9:22 NKJV), we read that when the disciples can't help him, a father brings his epileptic son to Jesus in desperation, saying, “...if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” Jesus replies to the father's lack of faith, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” The father's response is a prayer we can pray every day: “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

Faith is our trust in God. Faith is our trust that He watches over us and has a plan for us: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11 NKJV). Living with the uncertainty of daily life requires faith. Uncertainty also invites doubt. But doubt does not indicate a lack of faith. As theologian and philosopher Paul Tillich

has written, “Doubt is not the opposite of faith; it is one element of faith.” Doubt is a part of our journey of faith. We need to face our doubt honestly and directly.

Faith is often accompanied by struggle with doubt. Doubt instills humility.



Doubt motivates us to learn and to grow. In spite of his doubt, the Apostle Thomas remained open to the truth of the Resurrection. When he saw the Risen Christ, he immediately believed and became a great apostle of the faith. His doubt led him to a greater faith.

Stewardship of our faith in Jesus Christ calls us to do those things that protect and strengthen the faith that lies within us. Taking time to learn about our Orthodox Christian Faith, praying to God for understanding and guidance, and worshiping with others as the Body of Christ – all these things protect and strengthen our faith. As stewards of the faith, Saint Peter instructs us to “...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you...” (1 Peter 3:15 NKJV).

Faith is not a big rule book of “dos and don'ts.” It is about loving and seeing Jesus Christ in others. Stewardship of our faith in Jesus Christ calls us to do those things that reflect our faith to others, living our faith through our actions. Jesus tells us, “By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35 NKJV). There is no better way to share the faith that lies within us than to see Jesus Christ in others and to love and care for them.

Through faith, God's will is accomplished in the world. Our great example is Mary, the Theotokos, the Mother of our Lord. When Archangel Gabriel came to her at the Annunciation, tradition and hymnology hold that all creation awaited her response. In faith and obedience to the will of God, Mary replied to the angel, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be according to your word” (Luke 1:38 NKJV). Mary responds with faith and fulfills God's will for all the world.

Research has shown that as Christians we seek three things from our church: Transcendence, Significance and Fellowship (Lost in America, Clegg & Bird 2001).

Transcendence is to know God and to experience His presence. This we do through prayerful participation in Liturgy and the sacraments.



Significance is the desire to have a purpose – to do something meaningful – most often in service to our fellow man.

Fellowship is connecting with others through meaningful relationships.

The Church offers opportunities for Transcendence, Significance and Fellowship, and in their pursuit, we also serve and support the Church and fully become members of the Body of Christ. To be stewards of the faith we are also called to be stewards of our local church which nurtures our faith and the faith of others. Stewardship is an act of faith.

When we believe, stewardship follows. Stewardship is faith in action; action motivated by humble gratitude to God for his blessings in our life.

As Saint John tells us about all that is written in his Gospel, “...these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31 NKJV).

“As Christian Stewards we are called to give back to God from the ‘first fruits’ of our labor. We are called to support our parish and her ministries in an intentional way and not with only what it left after everything else has been taken care of”

What is a stewardship program?

Stewardship is a system of proportional giving to the Church in which the members examine their conscience and offer their support in accordance with their individual means and circumstances. This often confuses people because a

specific amount is never solicited. This system is fair because it acknowledges the reality that the pensioned widow and the prosperous business owner do not have the same resources at their disposal. One has less, the other has more; to ask them both to support the Church equally as we did under the antiquated “dues” system

Is stewardship just about money?

Of course not. We do not support our Church simply by mailing a check. That has never been our message at Saint Barbara Church. That is not who we are as a community. In addition to our material resources, we also have been given time and talents. The Church prospers with people who also donate their time and skills to the service of the parish. We can serve on boards

is terribly unfair. It burdens the pensioner unbearably, and discounts the generosity of those who are more prosperous. With Stewardship, therefore, we do not give in accordance with an artificially set amount, but rather in accordance with our true ability to share.

For those who insist in having some guidelines: The average Stewardship pledge in the United States is \$1,200 per married household. As a suggested guide, families should work towards initially pledging 1%-2% of their gross income and eventually working up to 5% over a three to five year period. Some families find it easier to start by pledging \$25/week. Give in proportion to what you have been given.

and committees; we can volunteer to help with the bulletin mailings; we can paint and do carpentry; we can sing in the choir; we can work at the festival and various parish functions; we can keep the parking lots spotlessly clean and tidy. The opportunities are as endless as the talents of our people and their willingness to be involved and engaged in the life and ministries of our Church.

Remember: building our parish's volunteerism in time and talent and enhancing our parish ministries has

been the explicit and publicly stated strategic goal of our community for many years.

What about my children?

We need to teach our children to be good stewards of the Church, so that they understand that our offerings of time, talent and treasure help the Church with her mission in this world. We need to begin encouraging our children to become stewards at a young age so that they understand the Christian concept of giving. We need to encourage our children to give a portion of their

allowance or a percentage of their birthday or Christmas gifts to the Church so that they can develop the understanding that it is 'not all about us.' Paying a child's stewardship for them doesn't help them to understand the basic Christian concept of giving; of offering a portion of what we have freely received from God back to Him and His ministry through the Church.

At what age should we become stewards of the church?

We should strive to become stewards of the Church on the day of our 18th Birthday.

I am one person. Can I make a difference?

Yes, you can. History is full of individuals who acting alone made all the difference in the world. Your good example, multiplied by hundreds of others acting together, will be the catalyst that will revitalize the parish.

Become a donor, but more important, become a disciple and apostle of God's truth by encouraging others, friends, children, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, and godchildren to also become stewards. A positive word of encouragement, together with your own personal example of generosity, can perform miracles of change.

Why does the Orthodox Church encourage annual stewardship commitments from its parishioners?

The philosophy of the Orthodox Church is to take as much of the daily focus off finances as possible. By making an annual commitment, you provide the security that operating expenses of the Church will be underwritten through stewardship. This will allow us to move forward with our real work of being disciples of Christ, which includes not only evangelization and community service, but also the education, nurturing, and support of our own parish community.

What is the best way to fulfill my stewardship pledge?

Stewardship is most appropriately understood as an obligation not unlike utilities and rent. So we encourage you to make



regular, weekly or monthly payments at the same time you sit down to pay your other bills. The Saint Barbara Parish has made fulfilling your pledge easy with a variety

of payment methods: online through our web site, automatic bank withdrawal, or credit card. Of course, you may always pay by check.

What if my circumstances change?

God asks only that you enter into a good-faith commitment, not a legal contract. You can make changes to your stewardship pledge affected by new

circumstances (positive or negative) simply by contacting the church office and speaking with Father Peter.

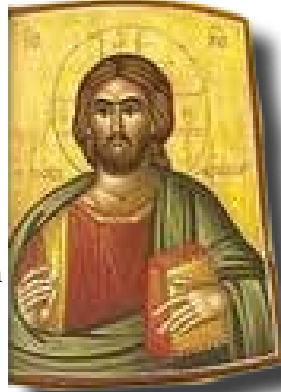
Is my commitment that important?

Absolutely. We all want the Church to be there for us. If our Orthodox community is to remain healthy, we each need to contribute our fair share, understanding that the expenses and work of the church go on whether or not

we are in attendance. More importantly, demonstrating thanksgiving to God in a concrete way is the best way of going through life with an "attitude of gratitude" for all that He has given us.

A final reflection

The Saint Barbara Parish Council continues to do a remarkable job monitoring the monthly expenses of our parish. Through its various committees they continue to identify cost-saving measures which in the long run have allowed our community to save thousands of dollars in annual expenses. Our parish is also blessed to be supported by a battalion of parishioners who selflessly volunteer their time and talent to assist the Church in its mission to shine the Light of Christ in the world.

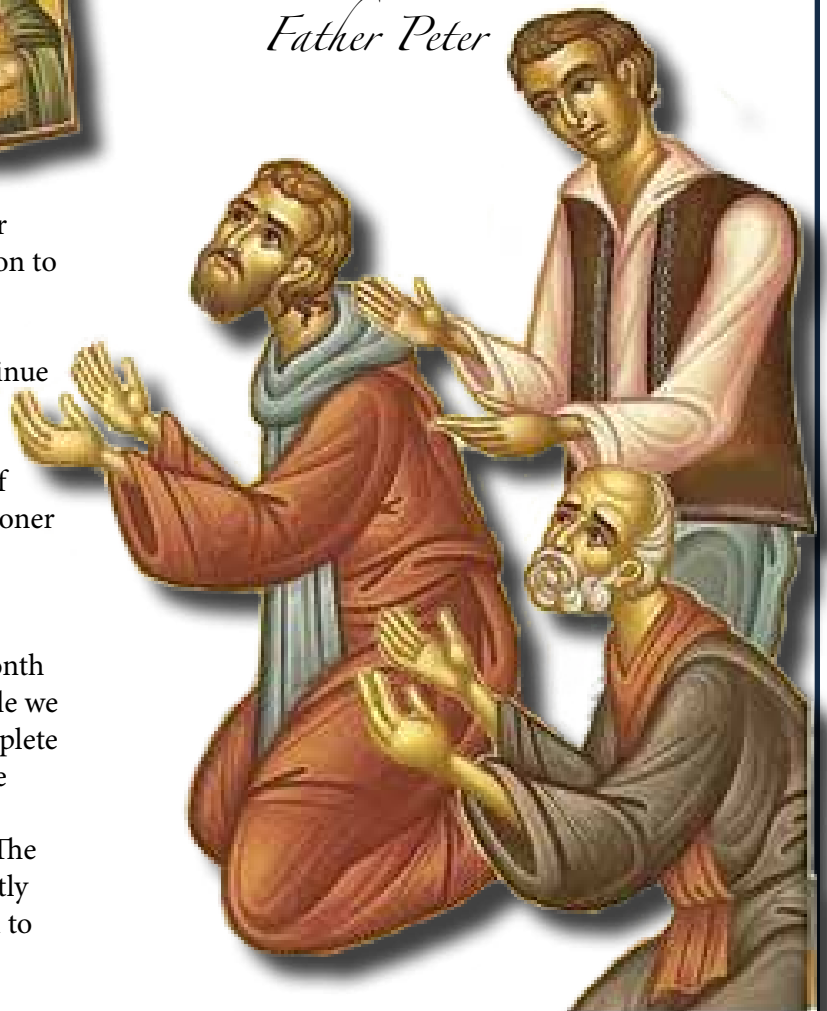


As we begin the Centennial celebration of our parish we ask that you please take the time and make a prayerful commitment to support the continuing mission and ministry of our parish. Thank you.

Father Peter

Even so, just as in our homes - annual expenses continue to rise. As parishioners, we are all called to offer financial assistance to the Church to insure that our parish doors remain open and that the community of Saint Barbara can continue to minister to her parishioner families as well as to the surrounding community.

Including our General Fund (daily expenses) and Mortgage Expenses it currently costs \$76,576 per month or \$2,518 per day to keep our parish operating. While we beginning our next Building Fund Campaign to complete the construction of the gymnasium and eliminate the existing mortgage on the education and community centers, the Stewardship Goal for 2019 is \$387,000. The monies from your stewardship contribution go directly to the General Fund and are necessary for our parish to meet our daily expenses.

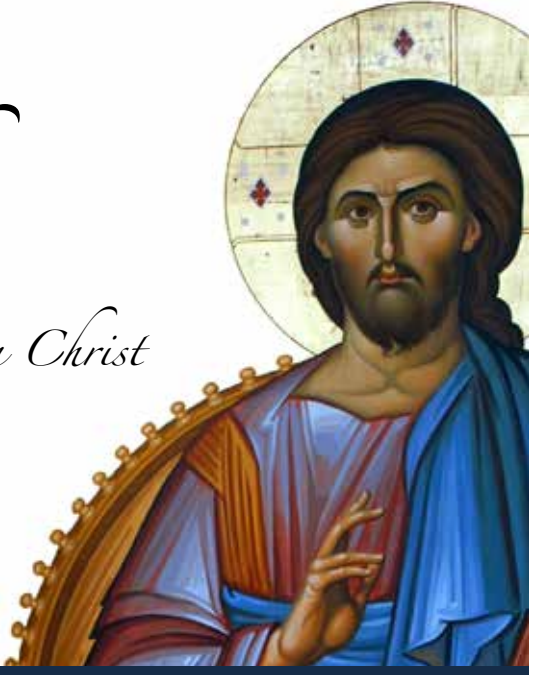


Stewards of the Faith

All things are possible to the one who believes in Christ

Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church

480 Racebrook Road Orange, Connecticut 06477



My Commitment of Treasures - For Christ and the Ministries of His Church

Yes! I want to support God's work through my Church of Saint Barbara. Here is my Commitment of Faith for 2019 representing my best efforts to return to God a portion of that which belongs to Him.

Name: (please print) _____

This represents my individual stewardship commitment for 2019

I pledge to give: ___\$250/month ___\$200/month ___\$150/month ___\$100/month
 ___\$75/month ___\$50/month ___\$25/week ___\$20/week
 ___\$1,200/year (The National Average per couple) \$___more/other

I will make my donations:

 ___ weekly ___ monthly ___ quarterly ___ yearly

Υπόσχομαι να προσφέρω:

 ___\$250/μήνα ___\$200/μήνα ___\$150/μήνα ___\$100/μήνα
 ___\$75/μήνα ___\$50/μήνα ___\$25/βδομάδα ___\$20/βδομάδα
 ___\$1,200/χρόνο (Ο Μέσος Όρος) \$___περισσότερο/άλλο

Θα εκπληρώσω τη δωρεά μου:

 ___εβδομαδιαίως ___μηνιαία ___τριμηνιαία ___ετήσια

Cut here and return 

Name: (please print) _____

Home Phone: () _____

Mobile Phone: () _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Work Phone: () _____

Payment Options:

- I will mail or bring my monthly stewardship contribution directly to the Church Office.
- I will pay my stewardship contribution by credit card online through the Church's web site at **<http://www.saintbarbara.org/stewardship>**.

Note: This is a promise of intentions. It can be changed at any time by contacting the Priest or Stewardship Chairperson.

Please complete this form and return it in the enclosed confidential envelope within 30 days



SAINT BARBARA GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
480 RACEBROOK ROAD
ORANGE, CONNECTICUT 06477