

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts
www.stmichaelorthodox.com

February 2020



LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday

9:00am Divine Liturgy
10:00am Memorial Service
5pm Vespers

Sunday

9:00am Matins
10:00am Divine Liturgy

Wednesday

6:00pm Paraklesis

**Look at calendar at end for
full schedule of services for
this month**

FEAST DAYS

- Feb. 1st** – Tryphon the Martyr
- Feb. 2nd** – Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple
- Feb. 3rd** – Synaxis of Righteous Symeon and Anna the Prophetess
- Feb. 6th** – St. Photios the Great
- Feb. 8th** – Great Martyr Theodore the Commander
- Feb. 9th** – Triodion Begins – Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee
- Feb. 10th** – Hieromartyr Haralambos
- Feb. 11th** – Martyr Blaise of Sebastia
- Feb. 16th** – Sunday of the Prodigal Son
- Feb. 17th** – Great Martyr Theodore the Tyro
- Feb. 22nd** – Saturday of the Souls
- Feb. 23rd** – Judgement Sunday
- Feb. 24th** – First and Second Finding of the Head of St. John the Baptist

Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple

On the 2nd of February, our Holy Church celebrates the Feast of the Presentation of Christ to the Temple. The Church also refers to this Feast as the Synaxis (or meeting) of our Lord in the temple. In accordance with the Mosaic law, 40 days after the birth of a male child the mother is required to present the child in the tabernacle and offer as a sacrifice either a lamb or a pair of doves or pigeons for her purification. The presentation of a first-born son also signified redemption or buying back, for all first-born creatures (both humans and animals) were considered to belong to God.

The Holy Mother and St. Joseph obeyed this precept of the law. They brought Jesus to the Temple where he was met and blessed by a very old Holy man. On that day in the Temple, both St. Simeon and a woman by the name of Anna, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recognized the infant Jesus as the Messiah and Savior of the world. Simeon had been promised by God that he would live to witness the coming of the Messiah to the world. (Luke 2:22- 40) The Church today calls each one of us to make our Soul a Temple of God, where the Holy Virgin can bring her Divine Child. And each one of us should, like Simeon, take the Child in our arms and say to the Father: "My eyes have seen your salvation, now let your servant depart in peace". This Prayer of Simeon is used every day in the Vespers services of the Orthodox Church. But this prayer should be more to us than a description of someone who has been allowed to see and hold the Christ child requesting a peaceful departure. It should also mean for us, in particular, that having seen and touched the Savior, we are released from the hold that sin has on us, and in peace, we can leave the realm of evil.



Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church
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2020 Parish Council

President: Luke Yanka
Vice President: Spiro Thomo
Secretary: Debby Thomo
Treasury: Paul Yanka

2020 Ladies Society Committee

President: Alexandra Nasto
Vice President: Louise Boilard
Secretary: Debbie Thomo
Treasurer: Mary Andreea

Clergy

Fr. John Downie fr.john_downie71@yahoo.com

Parish News & Events

Coffee Hour Volunteers Needed

We need more volunteers for each Sunday. If you volunteer, you can dedicate the coffee hour to the memory of a loved one. Any help would be greatly appreciated!

Please contact Deb Thomo to sign up.

Happy Birthday!! **God Grant You Many More Years!!**

February 1st – Richard Silva
February 6th – Gloria Giavara and Melania Collazo
February 10th – Joshua Collazo
February 11th – Sandra Nasto
February 15th – Vasilios Nahn
February 16th – Jennifer Silva
February 24th – Paul Myers
February 26th – Mary Dowling
February 29th – Spiro Thomo

Happy Name Day

Feb. 3rd – Righteous Symeon and Anna the Prophetess – Symeon Downie, & Anna Tanka

Feb. 8th & 17th – Great Martyrs Theodore the Commander and Theodore the Tyro– Theodore Yanka

Feb. 10th – Hieromartyr Haralambos – Harris Pitsillides

Schedule a Time for a House Blessing

It is important that our homes receive the blessing of Holy Water. You can contact Father by telephone, e-mail, or in person to arrange a time that is best for your family.



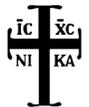
Stewardship Forms

Stewardship forms have been sent out in the mail. Please fill them out and return them to the church in the mail or in the tray on a Sunday.



Please Pray for:

Preoteasa
Camelia
Carol Porra
Bill & Lauren
Smith
Mary Grabosky
Henrietta Panu
Jennifer Silva



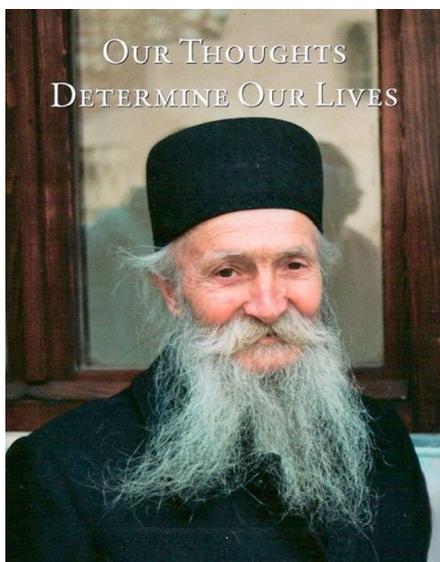
~ Movie & Book Corner ~



Movie: *The Wonderworker Woman*

For the first time in the history of television, the film crew conducted a large-scale journalistic investigation. Selected unique eyewitness accounts, evidence of miracles performed through the prayers of St. Matrona. The results of 9-year work in the archive of Matrona are collected. Some facts are announced for the first time. This series is about a unique gift and the difficult fate of the blind paralyzed village girl Matrona, who devoted herself to serving people. In any weather, on weekdays and holidays, there is a turn in the Pokrovsky nunnery: hundreds of women come here to the relics of St. Matrona, hoping for a miracle. And miracles happen! Even more than 60 years after the death of Matrona, Moscow does not miss a single request: incurable patients are recovering, and those who have given up giving birth become mothers.

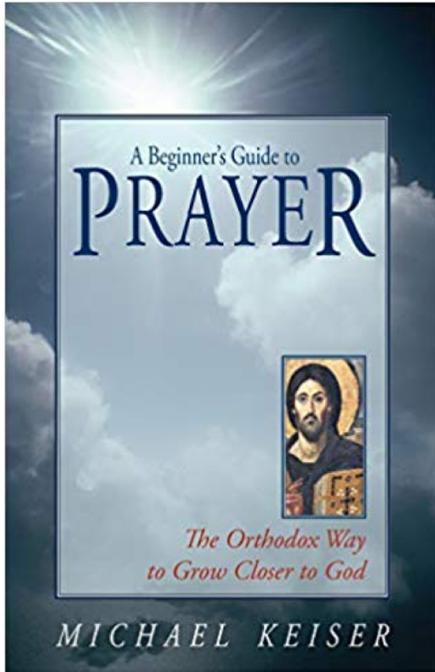
URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYPW7I3rG4Y>



Book: *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives*

Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica was one of the most renowned spiritual guides of Serbia in the twentieth century. As a novice he lived in obedience to Elder Ambrose of Miljkovo Monastery, a disciple of the Optina Elders. From him Fr. Thaddeus learned the Prayer of the Heart and the selfless love that came to characterize his whole ministry to the suffering Serbian people. Born in 1914, Elder Thaddeus lived through all the suffering endured by Serbia in the twentieth century. Over the course of two World Wars, during the Communist takeover, and through the NATO bombings of 1999, he co-suffered with his people. He taught, counseled, and prayed for all who came to him in pain and sorrow. His words of love and hope provided spiritual balm for people from all classes of society. In 2002 Elder Thaddeus reposed, leaving behind a large collection of his teachings, preserved by his faithful spiritual children. His life, teachings, and spiritual conversations are here presented for the first time in English.

~ Movie & Book Corner Continued ~



Book: A Beginner's Guide to Prayer

This is a book for those of us who are struggling to establish an effective prayer life. Written neither for monastics or scholars, *A Beginner's Guide to Prayer* speaks to the average man or woman on the street who desires a deeper relationship with God but is unsure how or where to begin. Drawing from nearly 2000 years of Orthodox spiritual wisdom, the author offers warm, practical, pastoral advice whose genius is to be found in its homespun simplicity and straightforward style. If you want to make prayer a meaningful and regular part of your life, *A Beginner's Guide to Prayer* will help set you on your way.

President's Corner

02/01/2020

Happy New Year! Hopefully everyone had a blessed holiday season and a wonderful start to their New Year and New Decade! It's hard to believe how fast time has flown by and we are now starting a new decade. Saint Michael's Church was truly blessed last year in 2019! We experienced record fundraising at all our events, we have seen an increase in attendance at Liturgy, and the number of kids who attend church is sometimes in the double digits. I want to personally thank each and every member and friend of our parish for your hard work, commitment, and support of our community in 2019 and over the last decade. We look forward to an awesome 2020 and we thank YOU and we thank our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for all He has delivered and will deliver for our community.

“God is a fire that warms and kindles the heart and inward parts. Hence, if we feel in our hearts the cold which comes from the devil - for the devil is cold - let us call on the Lord. He will come to warm our hearts with perfect love, not only for Him but also for our neighbor, and the cold of him who hates the good will flee before the heat of His countenance.”

~ St. Seraphim of Sarov

Many Confess, Few Repent **Monk Moses the Athonite**

Confession is a God-given commandment, and it is one of the Sacraments of our Church. Confession is not a formal, habitual (“to be on the safe side”, or, “in view of upcoming feast-days”), forced and unprepared act, springing from an isolated duty or obligation and for psychological relief only. Confession should always be combined with repentance. A Holy Mountain Elder used to say:

“Many confess, but few repent!”
(Elder Aemilianos of the Simonopetra Monastery, Mt. Athos)

Repentance is a freely-willed, internally cultivated process of contrition and sorrow for having distanced ourselves from God through sin. True repentance has nothing to do with intolerable pain, excessive sorrow and relentless guilty feelings.

That would not be sincere repentance, but a secret egotism, a feeling of our “ego” being trampled on; an anger that is directed at our self, which then wreaks revenge because it is exposing itself and is put to shame – a thing that it cannot tolerate.

Repentance means a change in our thoughts, our mentality; it is an about-face; it is a grafting of morality and an abhorrence of sin.

Repentance also means a love of virtue, benevolence, and a desire, a willingness and a strong disposition to be re-joined to Christ through the Grace of the almighty Holy Spirit.

Repentance begins in the depths of the heart, but it culminates necessarily in the

sacrament of divine and sacred Confession.

During confession, one confesses sincerely and humbly before the confessor, as though in the presence of Christ. No scientist, psychologist, psychoanalyst, psychiatrist, sociologist, philosopher or theologian can replace the confessor.

No icon – not even the most miracle-working one – can provide what the confessor’s stole can: the absolution of sins. The confessor takes the person under his care; he adopts him and ensures he is reborn spiritually, which is why he is called a “spiritual father”.

Normally, spiritual paternity is lifelong, sacred and

powerful – even more powerful than a family bond. Spiritual birth is a painful process. The confessor must keep track of the confessing soul, with a fear of God (as one who is “accountable to God”), with understanding, humility and love, and guide him with discretion in the ever-upward course of his in-Christ life.

The confessor-priest has been given a special blessing by his bishop for the undertaking of his confessional opus. However, the gift of “binding and unbinding” sins is initially acquired through his ordination as presbyter, when he is rendered a successor to the Apostles. Thus, validity and canonicity in Apostolic succession, through bishops, is of central and great importance. Like all the other holy sacraments of our Church, the sacrament of Confession is performed (and it bestows Grace on the faithful), not in conjunction with the skill, the

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scientism, the literacy, the eloquence, the energy and the artfulness of the priest – not even with his virtue and holiness – but through the canonicity (validity) of his priesthood and through the “Master of Ceremonies” – the Holy Spirit.

The possible sins of the priest do not obstruct divine Grace during the Sacraments. Woe betide, if we were to doubt (on account of the unworthiness of the priest) that the bread and the wine actually become the Body and the Blood of Christ during the Divine Liturgy! This of course does not mean that the priest should not have to constantly concern himself with his own “cleanliness”.

Thus, there is no such thing as “good” or “bad” confessors. Each and every confessor provides the exact same absolution. However, we do have the right to choose our confessor; and of course we have the right to turn to the one who truly makes us feel at ease with him, spiritually. To constantly change our confessor however, is not a very sober decision; this kind of tendency does not reveal spiritual maturity. But confessors should, respectively, not fret excessively -or even create problems- when a spiritual child of theirs happens to depart from them.

This may mean that they were morbidly attached to each other (sentimentally, to the person. and not to Christ, nor to the Church). They may also regard that departure as an insult; one that is demeaning to them and makes them think there is no-one better than them, or,

it may give them a feeling that the other “belongs” to them exclusively and they can therefore dominate them and in fact even behave forcibly towards them, as if they are repressed and confined subordinates.

We did mention that the confessor is a spiritual father, and that spiritual fatherhood and spiritual childbirth entails labor.



Thus, it is only natural for the confessor to feel sorrow upon the departure of his spiritual child. However, it is preferable for him to pray for his child’s spiritual progress and its union to the Church, even despite its disengagement from him. He must wish for, and not against that child.

The confessor’s opus is not just the superficial hearing of a person’s sins and the reciting of the prayer of absolution afterwards. Nor is it restricted to the hour of confession. Like a good father, the confessor continuously cares for his child; he listens to it and observes it carefully, he counsels it appropriately, he guides it along the lines of the Gospel, he highlights its talents, he does not place unnecessary burdens on it, he imposes canons with leniency only when he must, he consoles it when it is disheartened, weighed down, resentful, exhausted, and he heals it accordingly, without ever discouraging it, but constantly pursuing the struggle for the eradication of its passions and the harvesting of virtues; constantly shaping its eternal soul to be Christ-like.

The Period of the Solemn Triodion

P.B. Paschou (Translated by John Sanidopoulos)

The faithful of the Orthodox Church await with great joy and nostalgia every year the solemn Triodion. Fasting, temperance, repentance and spiritual joyful-sorrow are the experiences of the Orthodox, who are refreshed and renewed by the liturgical cycle of the feasts of the Triodion. We sense the roots of our tradition nourishing us and irrigating us with devoutness and holiness, much more so in the period of the Triodion.

Whoever studies carefully the Triodion, will see with how much wisdom is its whole harmonious architecture from the Holy Fathers. One cannot find perhaps a better path for the Orthodox Christian to arrive at Pascha than from the Triodion - not just as a passenger through time, but like a pious pilgrim of the Passion and Resurrection. And this is why: its constitution is dictated by the general principal, that the Triodion is a ladder for the believer, on which the last step brings us to the bright atmosphere of the luminous Resurrection of the Lord.

The period of the Triodion invites all of us, to leave behind our slothful and sinful lives and fight the good fight of temperance as shown by our Church, with fasting and prayer, which cleanse our souls and present us before Christ. And let no one say, that without this fight and without these virtues we can be cleansed and attain to the most-holy Christ. The holy and rich experience of so many saints of the Orthodox Church shows us the path, the only unerring path, that we must follow, with the physical and spiritual purification of our passions, that we may humbly arrive at the glory of the Bridegroom.

And indeed within the Triodion, we see the sinful Publican groaning within himself, beating his chest in repentance. We see the venerable Mary the Egyptian becoming sanctified after living a most-sinful life. We see the harlot of the Gospel having a sound mind. We see the thief next to Christ theologizing. We also hear the solemn hymns of the holy and inspired hymnographers. The faithful Christian is pricked at heart, decisions are changed for the best, the path is taken for the confessional, where they leave behind the shame that burdened their souls until now, and afterwards they "drink from the source of immortality" - the "cup that cheers me like the best wine" - the Body and Blood of our Lord and God and Savior Christ.

This is the Pascha which is the destination for the faithful in the Triodion. "Shining with fasting of the soul, let us become white as snow, and as pure brides of Christ, let us participate in the secret Pascha and the bright and divine Resurrection."



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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Tryphon the Martyr Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
2 Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	3 Synaxis of the Righteous Symeon and Prophetess Anna	4	5 + Strict Fast Paraklesis 6:00pm	6 St. Photios the Great	7 + Strict Fast	8 Great Martyr Theodore the Commander Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers 5:00pm
9 Triodion Begins – Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	10 Hieromartyr Haralambos	11 Martyr Blaise of Sebastia	12 + Fast Free Paraklesis 6:00pm	13	14 + Fast Free	15 Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers 5:00pm
16 Sunday of the Prodigal Son Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	17 Great Martyr Theodore the Tyro	18	19 + Strict Fast Paraklesis 6:00pm	20	21 + Strict Fast	22 Saturday of the Souls Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers 5:00pm
23 Judgement Sunday Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	24 + Fast Day – No meat First and Second Finding of the Head of St. John the Baptist	25 + Fast Day – No meat	26 + Fast Day – No meat Paraklesis 6:00pm	27 + Fast Day – No meat	28 + Fast Day – No meat	29 + Fast Day – No meat Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers 5:00pm