



# Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts  
www.stmichaelorthodox.com  
March 2018



## Liturgical Schedule

### Sunday

9:00am Matins

10:00am Divine Liturgy

### Wednesday

6:00pm Presanctified Liturgy

(alternating each week with St.  
Nicholas Church)

### Friday

6:00pm Akatist (starting March 9<sup>th</sup>)

(alternating each week with Akatist  
of Theotokos & Akatist of Our Lord  
Jesus Christ)

### Saturday

9:00am Divine Liturgy

6:00pm Vespers

Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete  
March 22<sup>nd</sup> 6:00pm

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

## Main Feast Days

March 4<sup>th</sup> – St. Gregory Palamas

March 9<sup>th</sup> – Holy Forty Martyrs of  
Sebastia

March 11<sup>th</sup> – Holy Cross

March 18<sup>th</sup> – St. John Climacus

March 25<sup>th</sup> – Annunciation of the  
Theotokos

March 31<sup>st</sup> – Lazarus Saturday

## 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)



facebook. YouTube

Visit the website and subscribe to have  
the monthly bulletin emailed to you!

**Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church**  
16 Romanian Avenue, Southbridge Massachusetts 01550

Telephone: (508) 765-5276

Website: [www.StmichaelOrthodox.com](http://www.StmichaelOrthodox.com)

Email: [stmichaelromanianorthodox@gmail.com](mailto:stmichaelromanianorthodox@gmail.com)

Facebook: St. Michael Orthodox Christian Church

**2017 Parish Council**

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

**2017 Ladies Society Committee**

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

**Clergy**

Fr. John Downie [fr.john\\_downie71@yahoo.com](mailto:fr.john_downie71@yahoo.com)

**Parish News & Events**

**Happy Name Day**

March 3<sup>rd</sup> – St. Martyr Hristina –  
Kristina Mironidis

March 12<sup>th</sup> – St. Symeon the New  
Theologian – Symeon Downie

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

March 5<sup>th</sup> – Ruth Yanka  
March 8<sup>th</sup> – Destiny Collazo  
March 10<sup>th</sup> – Susan Brogan & Camelia  
Downie  
March 13<sup>th</sup> – Tom Andreea & Debby Yanka  
March 14<sup>th</sup> – Nick Tomo  
March 26<sup>th</sup> – Nancy Collazo

**Please Pray for our  
Parish Members**

Alexandra Malisory  
  
Peter & Lauren Smith  
  
Richard Powers (Our  
brother from Albanian  
Church)

**Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete**

**Come join us for unique prayer  
experience the Great Canon of  
St. Andrew Crete**

[View article on Feb. Bulletin](#)

**March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00pm**



**Important Dates for Great Lent**

Lazarus Saturday – March 31<sup>st</sup>  
Palm Sunday – April 1<sup>st</sup>  
Holy Friday – April 6<sup>th</sup>  
Great and Holy Pascha – April 8<sup>th</sup>

*~ Prayer Group for Lent ~*

There is nothing more powerful than the power of prayer. **“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”** We have resume our prayer group and we pray for family, friends, people in need, people who have passed away. Everyone is welcomed to participate and join the group!! There will be available copies of the prayer program in the Church. Ask Fr. John or Presbitera



## ~ Movie & Book Corner ~

### Movie: St. Anthony's Monastery

In the summer of 1995 six monks arrived in the southern Arizona desert to establish St. Anthony's Monastery, carrying with them the sacred, millennial heritage of the Holy Mountain, Athos. Since early Christian history, this steep and rocky peninsula in northern Greece proved to be a haven for ancient Egyptian, Cappadocian, and Constantinopolitan monastics. Thus, it enjoyed a direct link with the greatest monastic establishments of ancient Christianity, preserving intact the wisdom of the holy fathers and the sacred tradition of the ancient Church. Today, the Holy Mountain consists of 20 independent monasteries, and numerous sketes and hermitages, housing Orthodox Christian monks from all over the world. Elder Ephraim, a disciple of Elder Joseph the Hesychast, having restored and repopulated four Mt. Athos monasteries and having established several men's and women's monastic communities throughout Greece and North America, transferred six Athonite monks to the Sonoran Desert to start a new monastery. Upon their arrival the fathers began with the necessary construction work, building first the main church, living quarters for the monks, the dining hall, and guest facilities. A vegetable garden, a small vineyard, citrus orchards, and an olive grove dot the landscape. An elaborate system of gardens, pathways, and gazebos with Spanish fountains truly render the monastery and its extensive grounds an oasis in the desert. The monastery is dedicated to St. Anthony the Great, the father of monasticism, the renowned 3rd century anchorite. There are chapels dedicated to Saints Seraphim of Sarov, Demetrios of Thessalonica, John the Baptist, George the Great Martyr, Nicholas the Wonderworker, and Panteleimon the Healer. The main church is dedicated to Saints Anthony and Nectarios the Wonderworker. The monastery follows the coenobitic rule of monastic life: a brotherhood of monks and novices holding all things in common follow a daily schedule of prayer and work under obedience to the abbot, their spiritual father. The monks' daily program begins at midnight with personal prayer time and spiritual reading, followed by the cycle of morning prayers and the Divine Liturgy. After a light breakfast and a rest period, the monks begin their work day, attending to prayer and their tasks till evening. Tasks include, among others, construction, groundskeeping, vinedressing, gardening, woodworking, publishing, food preparation, and offering hospitality. The day ends with evening Vespers followed by dinner and Compline.

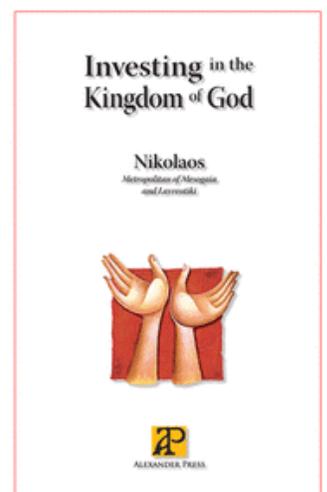


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oR-szRLIBkk>

### Book: "Investing in the Kingdom of God" by Metropolitan of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki

By inspiring us to act, words can be paths that lead us towards the "other discourse", the ethos of the eighth day, the beauty that will save the world . . . Such are Metropolitan Nikolaos's words (his previous book in English, Mount Athos, the Highest Place on Earth, was greeted as a "spiritual gem . . . of eternal value"). Metropolitan Nikolaos's insights have substance and wisdom. He deals in an accessible manner with questions that weigh down our human souls. His pastoral counsel is considerate and discerning, focused on the moment, all-the-while with an eye on the path up The Mountain. They are words for our time.

If only we could invest a moment in the Kingdom of God and realize that the returns are extremely high. So high that in the Kingdom there is no time, no fear, no inhibition, inferiority, insecurity, guilt – none of those things which trouble us in this life. This is the blessing of God's freedom. It is this which we must bring to life within us here on earth, until each one of us will be able to change from being temporal to being eternal, from being only human to being spiritual.



## The Power of The Mother's Prayer

“A mother’s prayer can retrieve a child even from the bottom of the sea”—everyone knows this adage, of course. But how many believe this proverb is said not just as some nice words, but is completely true and has been confirmed over the course of many centuries by innumerable examples?

Fr. Paul, a monk, told me a story that happened to him. He told it as if it was how it all should have been. I was struck by this story, and I will retell it now—I think it will prove amazing not just for me.

A woman came up to Fr. Paul on the street and asked him to go see her son, for confession. She gave him the address.

“I made great haste,” Fr. Paul said, “but I didn’t make it that day; and, to be honest, I had forgotten the address.

The next day, early in the morning, she met me again, very agitated, and earnestly entreated and even begged me to go see her son. For some reason, I didn’t even ask her why she wasn’t coming with

me. I went up the steps and rung the bell. A man opened—quite unkempt, young, and it was immediately obvious he was a heavy drinker. He looked at me defiantly—I was in my cassock. I greeted him and said, ‘Your mother asked me to come see you.’

“He snapped back, ‘Whatever, liar. My mom died five years ago.’ I saw her photo on the wall, among others. I pointed to the photo and said, ‘This is this woman who asked me to visit you.’ He said as if challenging me, ‘So you’ve come from the other world to see me?’ ‘No,’ I said, ‘I’m still from this one. But what I have to say to you, you should do: Go to church tomorrow morning.’ ‘And if I don’t?’ ‘You

will go: Your mother is asking. It’s a sin not to fulfill your parents’ word.’

“So he came. During his [confession](#) he was shaking from so much sobbing, and said that he had kicked his mother out of the house. She went to live with other people and soon died. He didn’t even find out until later, and wasn’t even at her funeral.

“He came that day, and that evening I met his mother for the last time. She was very happy. Her headscarf was white, but before that it had been dark. She was very grateful and said that her son was forgiven because he had [repented](#) and confessed, and that they had already seen one another. In the morning I went to his place, but the neighbors told me he had died the day before and was taken to the morgue.”

That was Fr. Paul’s story. I, a sinner, think that means his mother was given to see her son from that place where she was after her earthly end; it means she was given to know the

time of her son’s death; it means her prayers there were so fervent that she was granted to appear and ask a priest to confess and commune the pitiable servant of God. After all, it is quite fearful to die without repentance, without Communion.

And the main thing is that it means she loved him, loved her son, even such a son, a drunkard, who drove away his own mother. It means she was not angry or begrudging, and that she, already knowing more than all of us about the lot of sinners, did all she could so that this fate would pass over her son. She retrieved him from the depths of sin. It was her and only her, by the strength of her love and prayers.

Source: A mother prayer by Vladimir Krupin Translated by Jesse Dominic



# Guide to Prostrations during Great Lent

By: Frederica Mathewes-Green

During Lent we make more prostrations. That's a process that begins by making the sign of the Cross, then bowing down, resting your knees on the floor and then touching your forehead to the floor. I've collected, below, some photos of people making prostrations from around the internet.

It's a prayer posture that we often see in the Old Testament, when we read that people "fell on their faces." (I don't know if prostrations are ever used in Judaism any more.) Here's a detail of the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser, (827 BC, now in the British Museum), which depicts the Jewish King Jehu (2 Kings 9-10) making a prostration before the conqueror Shalmaneser III of Assyria.

What prostrating most looks like to Western people is Muslim worship; Muslims carried it over from their earlier history as Orthodox Christians, just as Christians continued the practice from their Jewish roots. When Orthodox make prostrations, we don't do them as neatly as Muslims do, all in a row, and men and women worship together.

(A point of confusion can be that the term "prostrate" or "prostration" in English literally means lying flat on the floor. In Western liturgical practice, if a prostration is called for, that's what is meant. In the East the term got applied instead to this act of "falling on your faces.")

People might do prostrations all together during a service, or privately, apart from liturgical worship. If you visited a holy site, you might feel like expressing your awe and gratitude with a prostration. Some people make prostrations when they say the Jesus Prayer, during their private prayer time. When you ask someone to forgive you, it is beautiful (though not required) to accompany the request with a prostration. It represents your recognizing the presence of Christ in the person you have offended.

There is a prayer we say frequently in Lent, and accompany with prostrations. It is the Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian (AD 306-373):

**O LORD AND MASTER OF MY LIFE,  
Take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of  
power and idle talk; but give rather the spirit of  
chastity, humility, patience and love to thy  
servant.**

**Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own  
transgressions and not to judge my brother for  
blessed art thou unto ages of ages AMEN.**

We make a prostration at the end of each line, so three in all. It's not a uniform process, and some do it more quickly, others more slowly. Some can't make a prostration very well (or maybe they can get down easily enough, but have trouble getting back up!), and instead make a "metania," making the sign of the Cross and then bowing and reaching to the floor with the right hand. It's not like everyone is \*required\* to make a prostration; it's meant instead to help you express your sorrow for sin with your whole body, not just your words, and your gratitude for forgiveness.



How-to: Begin by making the sign of the Cross. Begin bending forward, and begin to lower the palms of your hands

to rest on the floor. It's more efficient to focus on what you do with your hands that what you do with your knees, because if you focus on knees, it tends to become an awkward 2-stage camel-like process. But if you instead follow the sign of the cross with a gentle controlled-fall forward, aiming to rest your palms to the floor, and allowing your knees to fall into place—then you can push off lightly from your palms and return to a standing position.

It's a way the Judeo-Christian tradition has expressed awe, documented back to 827 BC (and remember all those who "fell on their faces" from Genesis to Revelation). Why not give it a try? Source:

<http://frederica.com/writings/about-prostrations.html>

## Our Alienation From God

An interview with Father Teofan from Nera Monastery Romania

**"The drama of today's youth is not that they walk a wrong path, because all generations make mistakes, but it is that they do not care anymore."**

Hidden among the forests of the Nera Valley, the monastery of St. Parascheva is one of the largest in Banat (South-West of Romania). Here almost one hundred nuns and sisters live (updated by the translator), according to the Athonite (Mount Athos, Greece) order. The harsh life, with lots of work, all night vigils (night prayer services), constant prayer and little food, turned the nuns into a rare variety of transparent butterflies that, when it passes through the air, spreads the smell of the wild flowers and of the myrrh. An icon of the ascetic life is also their spiritual father, Father Teofan himself, a monk sharpened in hard ascetic endeavour with an eternal smile on his lips. Father Teofan is always full of joy, although he is severe in keeping the tradition of Holy Fathers. A lot of young people are looking for his guidance not only because he himself is a young man (he is now 44 years old (updated by the translator), but especially because he knows to open hearts and find the right medicine for everyone. However Father Teofan quit several years ago to receive confession from people outside the monastery. But he receives people with spiritual problems and try to comfort them as much as possible, with a word of instruction, with advice.

Receiving an atheist education in his family (his parents were professors) and at the Military High School, the future parent Teofan sought other ways of spiritual perfection than the Orthodoxy, trying, like many others in his generation, oriental practices. After the first year at the Military Technical Academy in Bucharest, he abandoned his military career to go to the monastery. He says that this decision was the result of a "process of return from atheism to the church of the Living God. I decided to serve the Lord in the extreme form of monasticism." He was visiting for longer periods of time Frăsinei, Sihastria and Sihla monasteries, but he sat at Crasna in Prahova, where

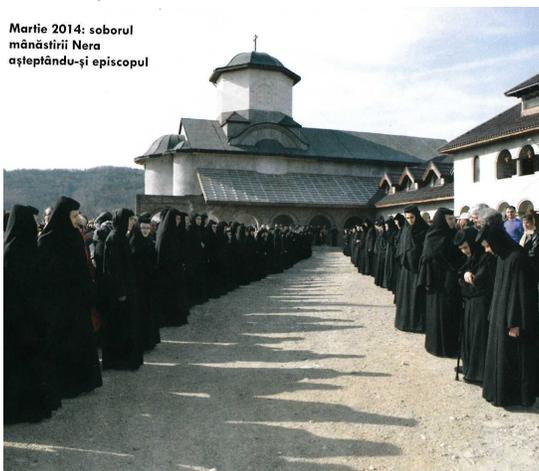
he was tonsured as a monk and ordained as a priest. He was sent to Greece, to learn Greek, becoming one of the best Romanian translators. For a while he stayed at the Vatopedi Monastery in Mount Athos, and he says he found good use in his stay there. After returning from Greece, 19 years ago, he received a blessing to build, together with a few nuns, the monastery of Nera. Humble and desirous of silence, Father Teofan rarely gives interviews. He prefers people to discover him directly by meeting face to face. However, he has agreed to talk to us about the problems of the young generation's problems, that he is obviously preoccupied about.

**Question: Father, the monk runs out of the world to get closer to God. But today it is no longer as easy to isolate yourself, nor if you are hiding on top of the mountain. How do you feel the tremor of the world in the monastery?**

- Saint Siluoan the Athonite once asked his apprentice, Father Sofronie of Essex, how prayer goes to him. And Father Sofronie said, "Sometimes I manage to forget the world, I lose my physical connection, and when I get deeper into

prayer, I forget even my body." And Saint Siluoan said, "But is not the body part of the world?" So, if the body is totally connected to this world, everything that happens in the world affects us. We are deeply aware of the worries of the world, even if we would not meet anyone for months and have no means of information. The echoes of the continual struggling of the world, which run without target, without to stop, reach us too. And, to a certain extent, it also influences us. We all complain that the time is too short, that we have no more peace. We do a lot more in a shorter time than before, but we do not succeed in fulfilling something profound in the depths of our lives.

Marție 2014: soborul  
mănăstirii Nera  
așteptându-și episcopul



**Q: - Why do you think this is happening?**

- Because we live horizontally, not vertically. There are two dimensions of time, and we only prefer the one that goes to the surface of the things, with a higher speed, but without any benefit. Vertically, it is more difficult, but with more joy and greater tranquility, as you are walking towards God. However, it is very difficult to choose the vertical dimension, because you should be able to sneak up, to be lonely. But the man can be lonely with himself anymore. We are being taught since we are little not to accept to be lonely (to remain alone with ourselves). Wherever we are, at work, in the car, at home, at a meeting with friends, we are assaulted by external stimuli and clichés. We listen to music, watch TV, talk on the phone, do anything, just stay "connected" - in fact, disconnected from our inside and, to a great extent, from the real life. We always have a sound background in our lives, and it makes us get out of our inner self and not to be able to have an introspection. This was first said by Abba Dorothei about 1,600 years ago: If you want to discover someone's limits, lock that person in a room with nothing to do, and leave him there alone for a day, two, three and watch his reaction. If now I leave you without a mobile phone, without a computer and internet, without a book, in an absolutely empty room, let's see what you will do with yourself. You will see that you panic. But if you have the power to stay for a while you will find your inner life, you will pray in a different way, you will think and act different.

**Q: - In other words, the mobile phone, the TV and the internet dictate another lifestyle: we live more out of ourselves than inward. What are the consequences?**

- As I said before, this is not a new trend. The Holy Fathers of the Church called it "alienation from God." It means that we have fallen from the grace of the Lord, and we are in "a free fall" - but it is not free at all, it is slavery to sin. We are falling from an abyss into a deeper one, from darkness into deeper darkness. This degradation of the human being is caused by lots of factors: from the wrong education to the lack of serious pastorship.



**Q: - 2000 years ago people were away from God too. This is why Christ came, right? To take us home. Nevertheless, after the Resurrection, we have more instruments of spiritual strengths and more spiritual power. We have received the doctrine of faith and the ministry, the martyrs and the saints, the confession and the sacrament of Communion ... Why is our fall even greater?**

- Because the temptations are bigger, dear brother. And there is another aspect: our sickness is chronic now. In these conditions, it can only be worse. I would say it's the natural course of history. It was prophesied this world will come to an end. We are inherited a corrupted (rotten) nature, from generation to generation. The human being is like a snowball that in its fall get bigger and bigger, generation by generation, through sins. And it is obvious that the modern individual to be more sinful. We cannot be complete aware of that until we see in our own children the level of degradation that they inherited from us.

**Q: - People are looking for your advice. What are their most high-pitched problems?**

- I will say a word I heard from Gheronda Joseph from the Vatopedi Monastery that marked me: the drama of today's youth is not that they walk a wrong path, because all generations make mistakes, but it is that they do not care anymore.

If you draw a young man's attention to his mistakes, he will answer: "So what?" The biggest problem of today's young generation is the lack of direction (meaning) of their own

lives, and this comes as a consequence of our alienation from God. The individual does not know where he comes from, where he is going, he does not even know if it makes any sense for him to find out. All of the other problems derive from the lack of meaning. If you have not clue what you live for, why would you start a family? Why would you do something for someone else? How could you enjoy life? ... The pain that comes from this lack of meaning can become conscious or not, can be expressed or not. But they all suffer because of this. You can see it on their faces: they are sad, lifeless, and mournful, just as the drug addicted who have become entangled with substances that excite their soul and body feelings and then collapse again into a black, hopeless hole. Some people ask for help,

others do not know whom to ask for, some refuse the help, they lock themselves up, or surrender themselves to the excesses (addiction) that make them believe they are alive – they use drug, pornography, or a second life (social networks). They are totally out of themselves and they stop living their own life which brings a lot of suffering.

**Q:- As a Spiritual Father how do you help them?**

- I can only help people as long as the Lord enlightens those who want to be convinced of something. This is one of my painful experiences as a Spiritual Father: we often carry a titanic work with souls who do not really want to be healed. God founded the Church, first of all, as a place where the man heals and afterwards becomes a holy person. In order to become like God, as we are called, we must first cure our passions, as the Holy Fathers of the Church show us. I can help very little the one who does not want to give up his passions. Sometimes people do not even realize that they are sick or how sick they are and that they need help from outside. However, we, the priests, are obliged to offer more things, based on tradition, from which everyone will take something, what will fit him, what he can do. Like our Savior who comes with

His Body and Blood, and who he wants to receive Him receive Him, if not, no. Unfortunately, us, the priests do not do our job properly. We are deficient in all aspects: philanthropic, missionary, catechetical, spiritual. What do we do to bring the young people to the church? Open a disco, an internet room next to the church, a social center? Whatever you try to do is a two-edged work. A good one, that can cut off the chains with which the demon pulls man outside the Church and makes him feel "good" and relatively fulfilled. Whoever tries to make a replica to the offer of the devil one in the Church, but obviously with the opposite effect, runs the risk of falling into a protest-type trap. But we can do other things. For example, a cultural center. We also have one in the project besides the monastery, but only our weaknesses and the lack of fund prevented us from starting it until now. When I say a cultural center, I do not

mean a strictly Orthodox one, but one that teaches young people to learn the deep, generally valid human values, to teach them to be real good people. Then, we should do all kinds of activities to put the girls and boys together in the church. Our young people are no longer get to know each other in the church, but in all other environments, and that it is translated in all kind of misunderstandings and lack of fulfillment when they form couples. I remember Father Emilianos, the abbot of Simonos Petras monastery in Greece and the confessor of the Ormilina monastery of nuns, allowed the young men and the young girls to go together into the monastic camps to learn how to be together. At that time, the more traditional Spiritual Fathers were indignant with such an initiative. And Father Emilianos replied that the "worst" thing that can happen is that the young ones get married, nothing else. The "irony of the fate" was that the vast majority of those young people are today members of the Simonos Petras and Ormilina communities. Our youth do no longer get to know each other in the church, because we have no activities to put them together, to make them communicate and to

acquire the fundamental values of life and a Christian-Orthodox perspective.

Who is to be blamed except us? And

another

problem. Everything the Church offers, from education, to leisure, from media to culture, is insignificant compared to what the rest of the society is offering to a young man. And then, this war is a lost one. That does not mean we have to surrender.

As a parent, I have to give my child the best I have and one day that good seed will flourish. The Lord did not say that all the nations would convert, but sent the Apostles to throw the seed to all nations, to preach the Gospel to all creation. How many of those who have heard the Word will listen and follow it, it is a different problem and it is not ours anymore.



## Father Gheoghe Calciu Seven Homilies for Youth 2<sup>nd</sup> Homily

Fr. Gheorghe Calciu was imprisoned in the worst communist prison, which was referred as “the hell of Pitesti.” He wrote the seven homilies for youth students from Politechnical and Technological Universities and he delivered these homilies starting every Wednesday (starting cheese fair week) during Great Lent. He truly believed God allowed him to deliver all seven homilies before he was imprisoned again. He mentioned he felt these words were inspired by Holy Spirit. Every Monday and Tuesday he didn't have any idea about he would write but Tuesday night when he stayed at his desk the words just flew and he managed to write each homily for the youth.

Let Us Build Churches  
March 15, 1978

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matt. 16:18

Do you remember, young friend, how I told you last time that a new voice is calling and that this is the voice of Jesus? But to where and to what does He call you? What alluring promise to assuage your thirst for knowledge and truth does the Savior make?

The voice of Jesus calls you to His Church.

You live within a family, within a society, within a world. You are bound to your family by the unbreakable bond of blood, which you cannot deny and which seeks vengeance, if ever you betray it through your suffering. You live in the midst of your nation, which you feel to be one metaphysical entity—not a group of isolated individuals, but one immense and united soul in which you are the whole

and in which the whole lives through you. And, finally, you exist in a world of suffering and joys, to which you respond because something in you unites and binds you inextricably to all your fellow human beings.

Where then is the Church of Christ to which you are called?

She is everywhere. She holds within her all human life, and, more, she contains all heavenly beings, too. For the Church knows no history; her history is the spiritual present. Family and society bear within them the tragic fate of their own limitations within the boundary of history. History is, by



definition, the chronology of unhappiness, yet the road to salvation. But you, my young friend, are called to the Church of Christ, which was conceived in God's eternity and which bears within her perfection, just as the world bears within it its own limited nature. Society considers you simply a component part, one brick lined up alongside other bricks. Your freedom in it is to function as a brick, fixed for all time. This freedom is the freedom of constraint, and in this lies your tragedy. For your true freedom lies within you, but you know neither how to discover it in its true meaning, nor how to use it when at last you have found it. You have been told that you are not free, that freedom is the understanding of necessity, and that necessity is

imposed upon you from the outside by factors entirely exterior to yourself, as in a lifeless construction.[1]

The Church of Christ is alive and free. In her we move and live through Christ, Who is her Head, and have full freedom, because we learn the Truth and the Truth makes us free (cf. John 8:32). You are in Christ's Church whenever you uplift someone bent down in sorrow, when

you help someone elderly walk more easily, or when you give alms to the poor and visit the sick. You are in Christ's Church when you cry out, “Lord, help me.” You are in Christ's Church when you are patient and good, when you refuse to get angry with your brother, even if he has wounded your feelings. You are in Christ's Church when you pray, “Lord, forgive him.” When you work honestly at your job, returning home weary in the evenings but with a smile upon your lips, bringing with you a warm and kind light; when you repay evil with love—you are in Christ's Church.

Do you not see, therefore, my young friend, how close the Church of Christ is? You are Peter and God is building His Church upon you. You are the rock of His Church against which no one and nothing can prevail, because you are a liberated rock—a soul that is fulfilled within His Church and not one condemned to stagnation.

Let us build churches, my friend. Let us build churches from the depths of our hearts ablaze with the light of the Sun of Righteousness, Who is Christ Himself, Who has told us that by faith we are free from sin. Let us build the churches of our faith which no human power can pull down, because the ultimate power of the Church is Christ Himself.

Feel for your brother at your side, ever present, and never ask, “Who is this man?”

Rather say, “He is no stranger; he is my brother. He is the Church of Christ just as I am.”

Look back, my friend, and be filled with awe; look forward and rejoice. History is a series of set events out of which arises from time to time living witnesses of princely faith, now embodied in our churches and monasteries. Treasures of the Romanian Christian soul, they represent the spirit which gives life to our national tradition. All which falls

outside this spirituality is destined to perish. Mountains have been leveled, forests have burned, people have died, but churches have remained alive and monasteries continue offering the incense of continuous prayer to heaven. If we destroy the churches which express the national identity, we cannot affirm the continuity of a Romanian spirituality, nor can we maintain that we have preserved unaltered the tradition and soul of Romania. There are no references to Romanian princes destroying the foundation of churches, or of Michael the Brave[2] ordering the disappearance overnight of an Enea Church.[3] There is no wine cellar or Dunarea tavern,[4] old or new, to equal a single stone from the foundation of the Enea Church. Nor can any scientific atheism or scientific argument stop you, dear friend, from inquiring about the meaning of life and about God and salvation.

This search is the proof of your freedom in the face of any constraint and in the face of matter itself. It is your road to the Church, the gate through which

you will enter. Do not waver on the doorstep, friend. Come in! How many years will you stand in the shadows of the Church without knowing her? How many years will you hear the voice of Jesus saying to you: Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37)?

The world will cast you aside; it oppresses and alienates you. Jesus receives you, comforts you, and returns you to yourself. Come and build churches with us. Let us reconstruct in our own souls an Enea Church—princely, Christ-centered, alive, and immortal—until we actually see her raised up again on her site, a steadfast witness to our Christian Faith and to our national identity.

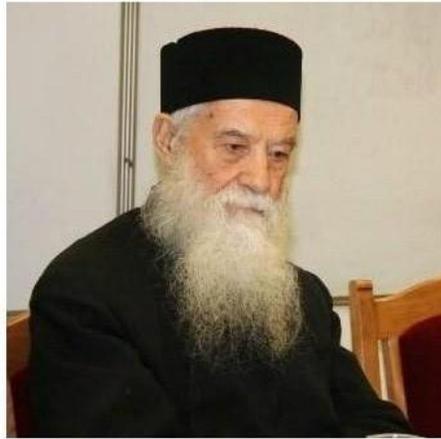
Without churches or monasteries we are aliens. Whoever destroys churches, destroys the very substance of our material and spiritual endurance on this land given to us by God. Young man, you are no longer alone. You are in the Church of Christ.

Radu Voda Church  
First Wednesday of Great Lent  
March 15, 1978

Note:

"To read the remaining three Homilies, please see Fr. George Calciu: Interviews, Homilies, and Talks, published by the St. Herman of Alaska

Brotherhood, and available at: <https://www.sainthermanmonastery.com/product-p/fgc.htm>"



*Pr. Gheorghe Calciu Dumitreasa  
(1925 – 2006)*

[1] The essence of political totalitarianism is underlined here. However, the problem is more general: true freedom does not come from outside, but from within us, its basis being not material but spiritual. Christ represents the supreme freedom which raises us above all worldly enslavement.—Rom. Ed.

[2] Michael the Brave (1558–1601): Prince of Wallachia, Transylvania, and Moldavia. He is regarded as one of Romania’s greatest national heroes for being the first ruler to unite the Romanian principalities.—Ed

[3] A church in Bucharest destroyed by the Romanian Communist government. See p. 71 above.—Ed.

[4] A tavern was built on the site of the destroyed Enea Church. Dunarea is the Romanian name for the Danube River.

# March 2018

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts

www.stmichaelorthodox.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3 Divine Liturgy 9:00am  Vespers, Litia 6:00pm
4 <u>St. Gregory Palamas</u>  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	5	6	7  Presanctified Liturgy (St. Nicholas Albanian Church) 6:00pm	8	9 <u>The Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebastia</u> Pre-sanctified Liturgy 4:00pm  Akatist of Theotokos 6:00pm	10  Divine Liturgy 9:00am  Vespers, Litia 6:00pm
11 <u>Sunday of the Holy Cross</u>  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	12	13	14  Presanctified Liturgy (St. Michael) 6:00pm	15	16  Akatist of Our Lord Jesus Christ 6:00pm	17  Divine Liturgy 9:00am  Vespers, Litia 6:00pm
18 <u>St. John Climacus</u>  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	19	20	21  Presanctified Liturgy (St. Nicholas Albanian Church) 6:00pm	22  <u>The Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete</u>  6:00pm	23  Akatist of Theotokos and of Our Lord 6:00pm	24  Divine Liturgy 9:00am  Vespers, Litia 6:00pm
25 <u>Annunciation of the Theotokos</u>  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	26	27	28  Presanctified Liturgy (St. Michael) 6:00pm	29	30  Akatist of Our Lord Jesus Christ 6:00pm	31  <u>Lazarus Saturday</u>  Divine Liturgy 9:00am  Vespers, Litia 6:00pm