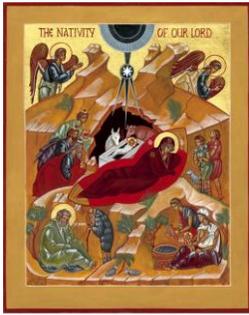


Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church



Southbridge, Massachusetts
www.stmichaelorthodox.com
December 2022



The Nativity Sermon of St. John Chrysostom

Behold a new and wondrous mystery. My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn. The Angels sing. The Archangels blend their voice in harmony. The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised. Nature here rested, while the Will of God labored. O ineffable grace! The Only Begotten, Who is before all ages, Who cannot be touched or be perceived, Who is simple, without body, has now put on my body, that is visible and liable to corruption. For what reason? That coming amongst us he may teach us, and teaching, lead us by the hand to the things that men cannot see. For since men believe that the eyes are more trustworthy than the ears, they doubt of that which they do not see, and so He has deigned to show Himself in bodily presence, that He may remove all doubt. For this He assumed my body, that I may become capable of His Word; taking my flesh, He gives me His spirit; and so He bestowing and I receiving, He prepares for me the treasure of Life. He takes my flesh, to sanctify me; He gives me His Spirit that He may save me. Come, then, let us observe the Feast. Truly wondrous is the whole chronicle of the Nativity. For this day the ancient slavery is ended, the devil confounded, the demons take to flight, the power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is removed from us, error driven out, truth has been brought back, the speech of kindness diffused, and spreads on every side, a heavenly way of life has been planted on the earth, angels communicate with men without fear, and men now hold speech with angels. Why is this? Because God is now on earth, and man in heaven; on every side all things commingle. He became Flesh. He did not become God. He was God. Wherefore He became flesh, so that He Whom heaven did not contain, a manger would this day receive. He was placed in a manger, so that He, by whom all things are nourished, may receive an infant's food from His Virgin Mother. So, the Father of all ages, as an infant at the breast, nestles in the virginal arms, that the Magi may more easily see Him. Since this day the Magi too have come, and made a beginning of withstanding tyranny; and the heavens give glory, as the Lord is revealed by a star. To Him, then, Who out of confusion has wrought a clear path, to Christ, to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, we offer all praise, now and forever. Amen.

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday

10:00am Divine Liturgy
11:00am Memorial Service
5:00pm Vespers

Sunday

9:00am Matins
10:00am Divine Liturgy

Wednesday

6:00pm Paraklesis

Feast days

- Dec. 2nd** – St. Porphyrios
- Dec. 6th** – St. Nicholas the Wonderworker
- Dec. 7th** – St. Filofteia of Romania
- Dec. 12th** – St. Spyridon the Wonderworker
- Dec. 20th** – Bishop Ignatius the Godbearer of Antioch
- Dec. 25th** – Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
- Dec. 26th** – Synaxis of the Most-Holy Theotokos
- Dec. 27th** – St. Stephen the First Martyr

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church
16 Romanian Avenue, Southbridge Massachusetts 01550
Telephone: (508) 765-5276

Website: www.StmichaelOrthodox.com

Email: stmichaelromanianorthodox@gmail.com

Facebook: St. Michael Orthodox Christian Church

2021 Parish Council

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

2021 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

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

December 4th – Maria Rapsomanikis
December 8th – Maria Mironidis
December 10th – Matthew Dowling
December 14th – Carol Porra
December 16th – Michael Pitsillides
December 18th – Thomas Richard Burren
December 20th – Scott Burren
December 23rd – Luke Yanka and Eva Pitsillides
December 31st – Anthony Rapsomanikis

Happy Name Day

Dec. 5th – St. Savvas – Savvia Pitsillides
Dec. 6th – St. Nicholas – Nick Thomo, Nicholas Goulas
Dec. 12th – St. Spyridon – Spiro Thomo, Spiro Kelly, Spiro Kelly Jr.
Dec. 27th – St. Stephen – Stephen Giavara, Stephanie Rapsomanikis

Thank you to all who

donated to the school snack drive!

Please Pray for:

Louise
Theodor
Henrietta



New Year Party!



As the newly St. Michael's tradition, we invite you to join us in a nice celebration on December 31st as follows:

- 7:00 pm - Pot Luck New Year Dinner in the Priest Apartment
- 10:30 pm Vespers and Litia for Our Lord Circumcision and St. Basil feast day
- 11:55 pm Champaing and bell rings
- 12:00 am Thanksgiving services for New Year (New Year Te Deum)



Please join us for our Christmas party after the Divine Liturgy on December 18th. We will have a potluck and Santa Claus will bring presents to the children.



25+ VEGAN
POTLUCK DISHES
PLATTERS, SALADS, & DIPS

Movie and Book Corner

Movie: Gattaca

Gattaca is a 1997 American dystopian science fiction thriller film. It stars Ethan Hawke and Uma Thurman with Jude Law, Loren Dean, Ernest Borgnine, Gore Vidal, and Alan Arkin appearing in supporting roles. The film presents a biopunk vision of a future society driven by eugenics where potential children are conceived through genetic selection to ensure they possess the best hereditary traits of their parents. The film centers on Vincent Freeman, played by Hawke, who was conceived outside the eugenics program and struggles to overcome genetic discrimination to realize his dream of going into space.



The film draws on concerns over reproductive technologies that facilitate eugenics, and the possible consequences of such technological developments for society. It also explores the idea of destiny and the ways in which it can and does govern lives. Characters in Gattaca continually battle both with society and with themselves to find their place in the world and who they are destined to be according to their genes.

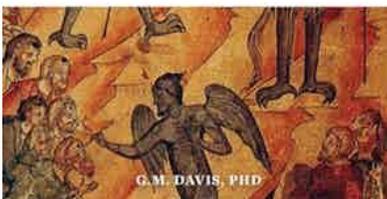
The film's title is based on the letters G, A, T, and C, the four nucleobases of DNA. It was a 1997 nominee for the Academy Award for Best Art Direction and the Golden Globe Award for Best Original Score.

Book: Antichrist – The Fulfillment of Globalization

From economics, to politics, to religion, globalization has shown itself the most significant historical phenomenon of our time. No area of life or culture has gone untouched by the seemingly relentless global centralization of power. Globalization promises an “end” to history when all of the peoples of the world will be united in a single civilization of global reach. But what is the ultimate meaning of globalization? What would an “end” to history look like? Where does the process ultimately lead? Contrary to much contemporary thought, the answer is not to be found in social science text books or political editorials. It is only from a perspective outside of history that the ultimate meaning of history may be found. In this book, G. M. Davis, PhD, provides a powerful analysis of the most significant events of our time from the only perspective capable of making sense of them: the eternal perspective, the timeless wisdom of the Orthodox Christian Church, in which the Alpha and Omega of history have been revealed and received. For twenty centuries, the Church has forewarned her children of the end of history, when the world will be united by a great deception, of a time when mankind will follow a world leader of unprecedented powers and charisma, a man of apparent superhuman abilities who will fulfill all of the world’s most profound, but misguided, hopes and desires: it will be the reign of Antichrist, the fulfillment of globalization.



ANTICHRIST *The Fulfillment of Globalization*



Peace from God. Christ Is Born!

By the saintly Patriarch Pavle of Serbia(+2009), given at the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade at Christmas, 1999

Persons and events come and go with the relentless march of time. That which today seems important and crucial may be completely forgotten tomorrow. Persons regarded by their contemporaries as influential and powerful are forgotten, as if they never existed.... Man can carry on in various ways with the pessimism of history, but it is far more important how God sees history. By His constant presence and action in history God, through what only appears like a meaningless course of events, prepares the way that leads toward a predetermined goal. By His entering into history He has transformed history so that particular events are not relative and temporary, but on the contrary, they are unique, unrepeatable and of crucial importance both for God and for man. God's presence in history cures history itself of its natural pessimism.

And precisely today, here and now, for the two thousandth time we celebrate and remember the event that divides history in two; the event so significant that we count the years from it and now complete the second millennium. Two thousand years have passed since that night when history's greatest miracle took place in that cave near Bethlehem, when the Son of God Himself came and put on flesh and became like one of us and *dwelt among us*. (Jn 1:14). He is none other than the eternal and uncreated Son, the Word or Logos of God, through

Whom all things were made. Since that night nothing in human life and history is as it was before. *The Sun of Righteousness* (Mal4:2) was born to us and all the depths of human fallowness and struggle against God have been filled by His warmth and light. From that night on, all human life and the history of every nation comes down to only one dilemma, to one simple question: **Are you**

for or against Christ? One simple question, but a question so crucial that our entire life and the future of our people hinges upon it. That question overshadows and defines every historical period of the past twenty centuries.

For or against Him? Earlier periods that were, at least for the most part, "for Christ," brought forth fruit that stands as an example and a starting point for all times. That fruit is called Christian culture. It represents an attempt to Christianize every segment of personal, social and national life, so that nothing remains outside or apart from Christ. We call it an attempt, since nothing in history is absolute and final. But the value is truly in the deeply Christian attempt, since a basic characteristic of Christianity is its all-inclusiveness—that Christ be all in all.

Let us simply remember how the writer of the life of the Serbian ruler Stefan Lazarevic said of him, that he wished that "life throughout his land truly be like the Church of God." The fruits of life directed in this way are magnificent. Christianity was poured into the everyday way of life. It Christianized every soul and created the atmosphere in which all personal and social life developed. No matter what area of life in that period we examine, we always find at its core a Christian vision and understanding of life and the world. It was an inexhaustible source of vitality and, most importantly, optimism for the age that declared itself for Christ. Even the tragedies that occurred, such as our Kosovo, could take on a Christian character in the national consciousness. Historical periods cannot be repeated, neither can models from the past be transplanted into the present. But what remains as an example for all times is the creative effort to base all of life on Christ, so

that there are no spheres of life or activities that honor laws or rules other than Christian ones. Epochs that were for Christ well understood His words that no one can serve two masters... *You cannot serve both God and mammon.* (Mt 6:24). But then come dark times, times that struggle against God and Christ, regardless of whether they come from conquering foreign peoples or from the actions of our own people. The goals and methods are always the same: Kill Christ in the souls of the people, throw Him out of every area of life, and erect and proclaim new gods. In every such time Christians answered in the same way—with their blood. In such times the history of the whole Church, as well as of our Serbian Orthodox Church, is written in blood. From Kosovo to Jasenovac all the martyrs and new-martyrs witnessed that there is no life without Christ, and they did not fear those who could kill only their bodies but could not harm their souls. Their blood is our foundation, and we are accountable to it, that we not betray Christ even at the price of our lives, much less for our positions or careers. Their blood will be the measure of our salvation.

For or against Christ? On the basis of this yardstick, how can we grade the century we are leaving behind? Wars and a whole ocean of spilled blood. Suffering and misfortunes characterize the past century, but its grade can be summed up in only one word—failure. So much war, so much blood, and so little peace. Even the peace we did have during the past hundred years was not really peace, since we used those times to create the groundwork for new conflicts and wars. And in the end, what is left is that we are beginning the new century and the new millennium in a state of total crisis. Many are the names and characteristics of the crises in which we find ourselves, but fundamentally what we have is that deepest and most difficult of all possible crises—the crisis of humanity. Wrong has become right

for us, falsehood has become truth, and we can only cry out with the Psalmist David, *Help, Lord, for there is no longer anyone who is godly! For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men. They speak lies every one to his neighbor; with lying lips and deceitful hearts they speak.* (Pss 12:1-2).

The twentieth century constantly preached with the lips of its demonic “wisdom” that human lives are the cheapest of all merchandise. In the number of its victims it far surpassed all other centuries of human history. The tyrannies to which it gave rise have nothing comparable in any other time of history. The ideological dictatorships which arose during this time, especially in Orthodox countries, were unprecedented attacks on human freedom and human life. In the name of ideologies millions lost their lives simply because they wished to think and live differently.

What is man, and what is he worth? The twentieth century said that man is nothing, but this feast today tells us, just as that day two thousand years ago told us, that man is sacred. And that applies not only to his spirit or his soul, but also to his body. The whole of man, body and soul together, is an inviolable shrine of incalculable and eternal worth. Today’s feast tells us this, the day on which the Bodiless becomes embodied and on which the Son of God becomes the Son of man. This precisely is what is radically new in our faith.

That the soul is holy is suggested by other religions, but that the body is equally sacred is found nowhere else. During the whole first eight centuries of Christianity, which were characterized by struggles against heresies, the Church unyieldingly defended this truth: that the whole of man, both body and soul, is holy. And that applies to every human being, regardless of his religion or nationality. Every murder, every disrespect for human personality and

freedom, is sin, even more so when it is justified on ideological or nationalistic grounds.

In contrast to this dismal picture of the twentieth century, today we see before us a young mother holding her newly-born Child to her bosom, and are moved to feel one of the greatest of human virtues and attributes: a warm heart. The motherly love of the Most Holy Theotokos permeates today's entire event and radiates a warm feeling within us. Christmas is the feast of warmth and of warm human hearts. If it seems that there is no place today a person can "warm" himself, it is because human hearts have grown cold. They have become hard and unfeeling even towards the suffering of so many of our brothers and sisters who in recent years have been left homeless, exiled from their birthplaces, and some even without their loved ones. That life is hard is not the exception but the rule. Only the twentieth century has brought the simple-minded dream that life should be easy and leisurely, which it never has been throughout history. *In the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread*, the Lord tells Adam (Gen 3:19), and that is the law of human life. But afflictions and difficulties and limitations are easier to bear when we have warmth in us and amongst us. For in the day of His second coming, the Lord will not ask us what kind of times we lived in, but how we related to our neighbor. Was he our "hell" or our "heaven?" We ourselves build either heaven or hell in our own hearts out of the momentary circumstances we are given, and the warmth of the human heart is able to transform any situation, even to make a cave in Bethlehem the most beautiful palace and birthplace of the King of kings.

It is hard to be a human being who spreads human warmth is even harder, but it is a task to which we are suited and which the Lord Himself has entrusted to us—to be

human, even during inhuman times. Let us look around us. See how many families are governed by coldness, where there is no more love and which are disintegrating. . . . We will be completely immobilized by the ice of discord and intolerance, of disunity and envy, if we do not bring Christ into our hearts and especially into the hearts of our children. He is the only One able to bring together the disunited and reconcile the alienated, to warm our hearts and give peace to our lives.

So what is to be done now, in the new century and new millennium? We pose this question to ourselves. We pose this question to our brothers throughout the world who care about us. The future is hidden and unknown. There are many roads before us, but they are not all the right roads. Some of them lead to destruction. . . . We are responsible for our future no less than for our past. It is revealed to us as a possibility which we must responsibly and consciously create. And overshadowing the future is the same question we have already asked—**For or against Christ?**

If the Lord has not revealed the near future to us, leaving it up to us to create it, He has revealed to us the final and ultimate truth—that no matter what, He will triumph. He revealed that good is far stronger than evil, and that every triumph of evil is temporary and illusory. The weeds and the wheat grow together, but only until the harvest. For or against Christ—this is the question that will determine both our future and the future of all nations. As we gather here today around the Divine Infant Christ celebrating His birth, we hope and we pray to Him that He will be reborn in our hearts, in our neighbors, in our people and our country, and in the hearts of all people and all nations.

Parish Life

Church Feast Day November 6th

Fr. John new vestments. Thank you to all parishioners for his 50th birthday present



Presidents Corner

12/01/2022

Dear parishioners and friends,

I hope everyone is doing well adjusting to the Fall and the cold weather; we are very much looking forward to closing out a great year for our church and our community. We want to wish everyone a blessed Christmas season and a Happy New Year. Thank you to everyone who was instrumental in the Feast Day Banquet, especially Yanni and Katie Mironidis. We want to also congratulate Sandra Nasto on her award for her years and years of dedicated service to our church; may God grant her many years. Saint Michael's would also like to recognize and congratulate Jenny Boilard as the new President of the Ladies Society; we are proud of her and we pray for her in this new role. As we begin December, we are looking forward to heading into another great year of 2023. We also look back on this year and there were so many amazing things that happened: we welcomed in new families, we had record breaking fundraising at our golf tournament, we hosted a young adult's retreat along, we re-started our Sunday school program (thanks Maria) along with many more amazing events. Thank God for all He has blessed us with this year. We hope to see everyone at the church Christmas party on December 18th! Thank you all for your constant support, we are so grateful and thankful for everyone! God bless you!

---Luke Yanka

Parish Council President

1-508-958-4144

"We must always remember that the Lord sees us wrestling with the Enemy, and so we must never be afraid. Even should all hell fall upon us, we must be brave."

Pictures from the Komboskini (prayer rope) workshop December 3rd



St. Porphyrios Night Vigil, December 1st- December 2



Sister Parish Project

Our Metropolia has asked that we partner with a parish in Romania to help each other with various church projects. We have been paired with Holy Theotokos Church in Micsunesti, Romania, under the care of Fr. Caesar Cranta. The church, built in 1743, is a historical monument. It was built in the Brancoveneau style on the site of a wooden church and was founded by King Mihai Viteazul. It is a very active church that runs many different projects, including:

- Free summer and spring camps for children
- Church pharmacy – available for people in need
- Ready for school project – donations of school supplies for parish children
- Pregnant women and new born children project – support for pregnant women and donations for new borns – whatever is necessary
- And many other projects.

Please consider donating for poor children in this parish, and bring some cash with you on December 11th when we have a collection in the Church.



Note: This pictures is not with children from that church.

What Are the Special Characteristics of Humility?

By St. Isaac the Syrian

*From “The Ascetical Homilies
of Saint Abba Isaac the Syrian,”
Homily 71.*

Just as presumption dissipates the soul through imaginings that distract her and gives her free rein to fly among the clouds of her thoughts and to circle round all creation, so humility collects the soul through the stillness of the thoughts and concentrates her within herself. As the soul is unknown and invisible to corporeal eyes, so a humble man remains unknown amid men. As the soul abiding within the body is hidden from the sight and association with all men, so the truly humble man not only does not wish to be seen or known by men (for which reason he is secluded and distant from all men), but more, his will is—if possible—to plunge himself away from himself into himself. He wishes to enter and dwell in stillness, to forsake totally his former conceptions together with his senses, and to become as something that does not exist in creation, that has not come into being in this world, that is totally unknown even to his soul and his senses. And so long as such a man is hidden, locked away and withdrawn from the world, he remains wholly with his Lord.

A humble man is never pleased to see gatherings, confused crowds, tumult, shouts and cries, opulence, adornment, and luxury, the cause of insobriety; nor does he take pleasure in conversations, assemblies, noise, and the scattering of the senses; but above all he chooses to be by himself and to collect himself within himself, being alone in stillness, separated from all creation, and taking heed to himself in a silent place.

Insignificance, absence of possessions, want and poverty are in every wise beloved by him.

He is not engaged in manifold and fluctuating affairs, but at all times he desires to be unoccupied and free of the cares and the confusion of the things of this world, that he may keep his thoughts from going outside himself. For he is persuaded that if he becomes involved with many activities, it is not possible for him to remain without confused and disturbed thoughts. For many activities collect many cares and a swarm of diverse and complicated thoughts. These cause a man to leave the peacefulness of his thoughts (whereby he was superior to all earthly cares, except for the small necessities of life which are inevitable), and a state of mind that has a single concern amid peaceful reflections. And when necessities do not permit him to restrain his mouth from speaking, he is both harmed and causes harm. Then the door is thrown open to the passions, the tranquillity of discernment retires, humility flees, and the door to peace is shut. For all these reasons a humble man unceasingly protects himself from many affairs, and thus at all times he is found to be tranquil, gentle, peaceful, modest, and reverent.

A humble man is never rash, hasty, or perturbed, never has any hot and volatile thoughts, but at all times remains calm. Even if heaven were to fall and cleave to the earth, the humble man would not be dismayed. Not every quiet man is humble, but every humble man is quiet. There is no humble man who is not self-constrained; but you will find many who are self-constrained without being humble. This is also what the

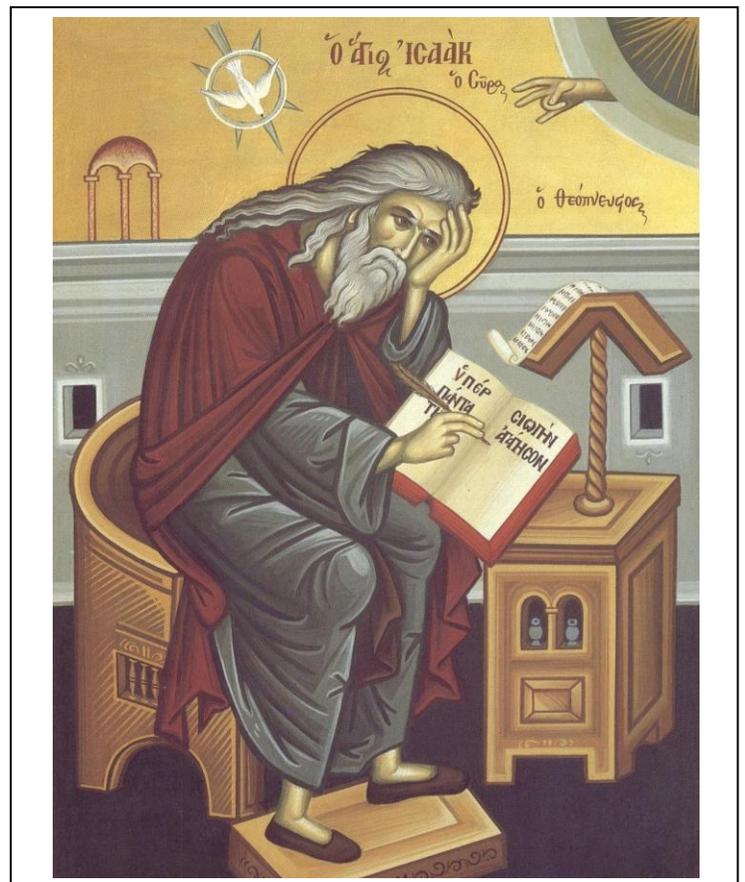
meek and humble Lord meant when He said, Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For the humble man is always at rest, because there is nothing which can agitate or shake his mind. Just as no one can frighten a mountain, so the mind of a humble man cannot be frightened.

If it be permissible and not incongruous, I should say that the humble man is not of this world. For he is not troubled and altered by sorrows, nor amazed and enthused by joys, but all his gladness and his real rejoicing are in the things of his Master. Humility is accompanied by modesty and self-collectedness: that is, chastity of the senses; a moderated voice; mean speech; self-belittlement; poor raiment; a gait that is not pompous; a gaze directed toward the earth; superabundant mercy; easily flowing tears; a solitary soul; a contrite heart; imperturbability to anger; undistracted senses; few possessions; moderation in every need; endurance; patience; fearlessness; manliness of heart born of a hatred for this temporal life; patient endurance of trials; deliberations that are ponderous, not light; extinction of thoughts; guarding of the mysteries of chastity; modesty; reverence; and above all, continually to be still and always to claim ignorance were any truly humble man who would venture to supplicate God when he draws nigh to prayer, or to ask to be accounted worthy of prayer, or to make entreaty for any other thing, or who would know what to pray.

The humble man keeps a reign of silence over all his deliberations, and simply awaits mercy and whatever decree should come forth concerning him from the countenance of God's worshipful majesty. When he bows his face to the earth, and the divine vision within his heart is raised to the sublime gate leading to the Holy of Holies, wherein is He Whose dwelling place is

darkness which dims the eyes of the Seraphim and Whose brilliance awes the legions of their choirs and sheds silence upon all their orders [and when they are waiting for mysteries to shine forth from the Invisible One, in that airless realm through a soundless motion, through bodiless senses, through image less perception of that formless Essence and of revelations which surpass them, the power of their thoughts being too weak to contain the waves of those mysteries]: then he dares only to speak and pray thus, May it be unto me according to Thy will, O Lord. And may we also say the same for ourselves.

AMIN.



Parent's school corner

Teachings from St. Porphyrios

ABOUT PARENTAL EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING

Education, says elder Porphyrios, lasts throughout life (lifelong education) and starts from fetal life, and constantly evolving. The most important educations and upbringing is the one held by the family.

According to elder Porphyrios, the family is the first physical means of upbringing and educating people. In the first 5 years of human life the family with all functions – visible and hidden, conscious and unconscious – helps on shaping the personality. The child and the adolescent observe the family roles played by parents. Children often identify themselves with the roles of parents. Sometimes, however, the children reject their parents and adopt a reactive behavior. This is obvious especially in dysfunctional families.

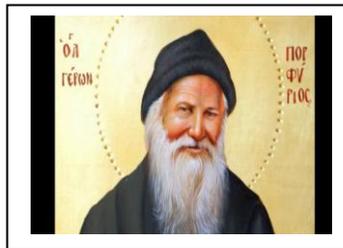
Elder Porphyrios teaches that the core of the personality of young people is organized in the framework of the dynamic relationships in the family. Elder Porphyrios in all the cases that came to him for confession, he studied their background of their intra-familial and marital relationships.

What makes good children, says elder Porphyrios, is the virtuous lives of parents at home. Parents should love God. Parents, according to elder Porphyrios, should become 'saints', 'holy' near their children and have gentleness, patience and love.

They should be always available for their children, with enthusiasm and love for them. Then, with the grace of God, and their 'holiness' they will transfer their good and virtuous feelings to their children.

For the bad behavior of the children, says elder Porphyrios, we should blame the parents. Parents don't help their children with their advices and by 'lecturing'; neither by imposing a strict discipline, nor by controlling their life. If the parents don't 'sanctify' and become 'saints' and virtuous, they make a big mistake and send the wrong message to their children.

Love, unity and cooperation of parents and good understanding between them and their children gives a sense of security and confidence to their children. Otherwise, the children become unsafe and insecure. Often the insecure children can lead to the 'safety' of a gang and/or obtain a violent behavior (as a reaction to a dysfunctional family).



The behavior of the children is related to the situations they experienced in their family. The negative attitude of parents creates wounds in the hearts of the children and leaves scars of injury in their souls that keep during their whole life. These psychological scars are affecting their behavior and their relationship with the others, during the rest of their lives.

In other words, the experiences the children carry from their childhood affect their lives and their behavior in relation to the others (family, sexual relationship, friends). Children, says elder Porphyrios, become older, educated, but do not really change. This is obvious even from the most minor events of their life.

Elder Porphyrios says that when you start from a young age with good memories and experiences, then when you grow up you don't have trouble to get good and virtuous, but you live goodness every day, you have it within you self, it is your property that does not vanish.

The children with psychological problems (such as tantrum, frustration, isolation, violent behavior and other reactive behaviors), elder Porphyrios used to call them 'confused'. Children with psychological problems, says elder Porphyrios, are usually created by negative experiences they lived in a troubled, with many conflicts, family life. Elder Porphyrios used to say that 'confused children come up from confused parents'. The disturbance of homeostasis and balance of family bonds erases the educating and upbringing role of the parents.

Elder Porphyrios says that family has a major responsibility for the mental status of everyone. He believes that the education and upbringing of children starts from the moment of their conception in the belly of their mother. The fetus in the womb hears and feels, understands the movements and emotions of the mother. If the mother feels sadness, fear or anxiety, the feeling is transmitted to the fetus. If the mother does not want her fetus, if she does not love it, this feeling is transmitted to the baby and creates wounds in its soul that carries throughout its life.

Contrary, if the mother has positive emotions (joy, love for the fetus), it transmits them to the fetus. So a pregnant mother needs to pray much, to caress her belly, to love her baby and to live a 'holy', virtuous life. The pregnant mother has a huge responsibility and honour. She is responsible for the development of her kid, even during her pregnancy.

In relation to the teaching role of the parents, elder Porphyrios says that parents – especially the mothers – often know how to get nervous, distressed and also know to 'lecturing' their children, but they have not learned to pray for their children. Advices, suggestions and 'lecturing' are often tiring for their children, says elder Porphyrios. Instead, the prayer goes immediately to their heart.

Prayer, silence and love help better from 'lecturing'. However the parents love their children with human criteria and human means (however human love can often be pathological) and the children become 'confused' and their attitude is negative and reactive. But when the parents love each other and their children, children will not have problems. Elder Porphyrios summarizes his pedagogical teaching in one sentence: <<the 'sanctity' of the parents saves their children>>. But to do this, God's grace should visit the soul of the parents.

Elder Porphyrios says that the parents' life is the only thing that creates good children inside the house. Parents should be very patient and 'saint'. They should truly love their children. And the children will share this love. For the bad attitude of the children, says elder Porphyrios, the parents are usually responsible. The parents don't help their children with their repeating 'advices', the

discipline that they impose and their strict rules.

If the parents don't become 'saints' and truly love their children, if they don't struggle for it, they make huge mistake and they convey to their kids their bad feelings that they have inside their soul. Then their children become reactive and insecure.

Contrary, says elder Porphyrios, if the parents show love and communicate well themselves, then their children feel secure. Their children's attitude is related directly with the attitude of their parents. When the children get hurt from their parents bad attitude (or the bad relationship between their parents), then they lose their strength to progress.

Once, elder Porphyrios met 2 young girls that came to him for confession (to confess their sins). He found out that one of the girls had a dysfunctional life that was related to her bad relations with her mother. The girl confessed that her parents had often arguments between themselves.

Another time a mother with her daughter visited elder Porphyrios. She said that she was desperate with her other daughter, because she expelled her husband from their home and for 2 years she pretended at her parents that her relationship with her husband was fine (however finding every time excuses for her husband for not appearing on the telephone). After conversation, the mother admitted that she had continually arguments with her husband and that had a negative impact on their relationship with their daughter who created a dysfunctional family, perpetuating the problems.

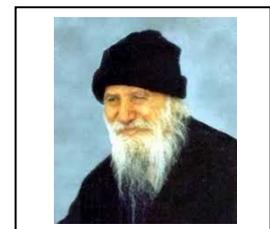
Elder Porphyrios advises parents to knock on the door of the soul of their

children gently, subtly and politely. They should not become tedious and annoying their children with their 'lectures' and their overprotection. So, says elder Porphyrios, most parents need to do a secret prayer for their children and say what they have to tell them secretly, to the soul of their children. The perfect, as elder Porphyrios says, is the parents to talk to God and then God will speak to their children.

Children need people, and especially their parents, to make them a warm prayer. Cuddling and caressing them is not enough. They need better the spiritual touch of a prayer. The child feels in the depths of its soul the spiritual messages that its parents (especially its mother) send, and feels safe and secure from this secret – psychic – embrace with its parents.

Elder Porphyrios believes that the family is largely responsible for the psychological problems and the negative behavior of the children. The 'sanctity' of the parents prevents these problems. The children need beside them 'saint' parents who love them (not in the sense of overprotection that 'chokes' them), and not to tire them with their 'lecturing' about moral issues.

Parents should not be limited to sterile words. Instead of only teaching, they should be themselves a good example. They need to pray for their children and embrace them silently and secretly (mentally). Elder Porphyrios states that even if parents do not quarrel with their child using physical violence, if they show resentment and glare them, then their child will understand their negative feelings.



December 2022

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church
 Southbridge, Massachusetts
 www.stmichaelorthodox.com



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Divine Liturgy 8:00am Night vigil - St. Porphyrios Vespers, Litia, Matins 10:00pm - 12:00am Divine Liturgy 12:00am	2 St. Porphyrios Divine Liturgy 12:00am	3 Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service 9:00am Events: Lady Luncheon – 12:00pm Public house Kombosikini –Workshop 2:00pm -4:30pm Jesus Prayer 4:30 pm - 5:30pm
4 St. Great Martyr Barbara Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	5 Divine Liturgy 4:00am Vespers, Litia, Matins – St. Nicholas 6:00pm	6 St. Nicholas Divine Liturgy 10:00am - St. Nicholas Church - Shrewsbury	7 St. Filofteia Divine Liturgy 8:00am Paraklesis 6:00pm	8 Divine Liturgy 8:00am	9 Conception by St. Anna of the Most- Holy Theotokos Divine Liturgy 8:00am	10 Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service 9:00am Vespers, Litia -5:00pm
11 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	12 St. Spyridon Divine Liturgy 8:00am	13 Divine Liturgy 8:00am	14 Divine Liturgy 8:00am Paraklesis 6:00pm	15 Divine Liturgy 8:00am	16 Divine Liturgy 8:00am	17 Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service 9:00am Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
18 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	19 Divine Liturgy 8:00am	20 St. Ignatius the Godbearer Divine Liturgy 8:00am	21 Divine Liturgy 8:00am Paraklesis 6:00pm	22 Divine Liturgy 8:00am	23 Non liturgical Day* Royal Hours – 3:00pm	24 <u>Christmas Eve</u> 7:30 am Matins 9:00 am Divine Liturgy (St. John Chrysostom) Vespers, Litia, Matins 3:00pm - 5:00pm Carols – 5:00pm-5:15pm
25 <u>Nativity of Our Lord</u> Akatist of Nativity-9:15am Divine Liturgy – St. Basil Liturgy 10:00am	26 Synaxis of the Most-Holy Theotokos Matins-8:00am Divine Liturgy 9:00am	27 Archdeacon Stephen Divine Liturgy 9:00am	28 Paraklesis 6:00pm	29	30	31 Vespers, Litia 10:30pm Thanksgiving Service for New Year! 12:00am

*If the Eve of the Nativity is Saturday or Sunday (and the Christmas is Sunday or Monday), there are changes in the Christmas services: Friday, before the Christmas Eve there is no Liturgy (aliturgal day) and the "Royal Hours" are read. On the day of the Christmas Eve, the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is performed, without being united with Vespers, and on the evening of the Eve, the Great Vespers is performed united with the Litia and, the Matins. On the day of the Christmas, the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great is held.