

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts
www.stmichaelorthodox.com
February 2022



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**

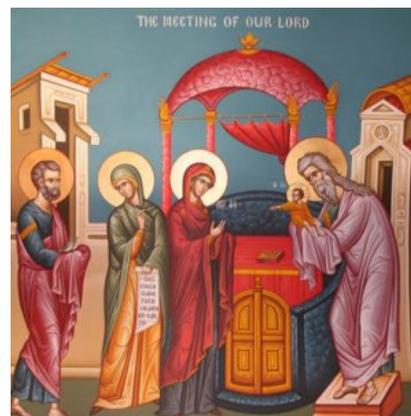
FEAST DAYS

- 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. 10th** – Hieromartyr Haralambos
- Feb. 11th** – Martyr Blaise of Sebastia
- Feb. 13rd** – Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee – Triodion Begins
- Feb. 17th** – Great Martyr Theodore the Tyro
- Feb. 20th** – Sunday of the Prodigal Son
- Feb. 24th** – First and Second Finding of the Head of St. John the Baptist
- Feb. 27th** – Judgement/Meatfare Sunday; St. Raphael of Brooklyn

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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2022 Parish Council

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

2022 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!!

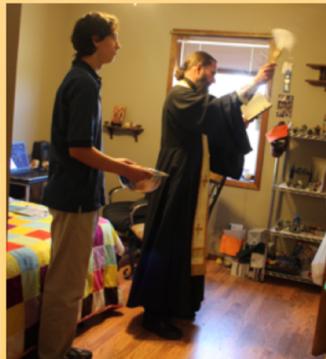
February 1st – Richard Silva
February 6th – Gloria Giavara and Melania Collazo
February 10th – Joshua Collazo
February 11th – Sandra Nasto
February 15th – Vasilios Nahn
February 16th – Jennifer Silva
February 24th – Jordan Goulas, Paul Myers
February 26th – Mary Dowling
February 29th – Spiro Thomo

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 Rapsomanikis, Theodore Yanka
Feb. 10th – Hieromartyr Haralambos – Harris Pitsillides

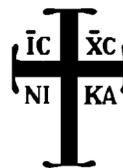
Schedule a Time for a House Blessing

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.



Please Pray for:

Fr. Timothy
Carol
Sandra
Thomas
Mary

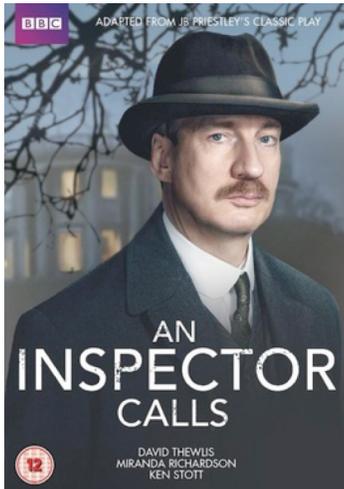


School Snack Drive

Please bring individually-wrapped snacks for our local schools.

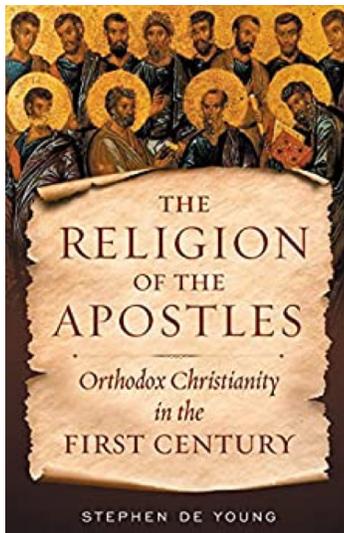


~ Movie & Book Corner ~



Movie: *An Inspector Calls*

The film is set in 1912 and follows the events of a single evening on which the wealthy Birling family is holding a dinner party to celebrate the engagement of their daughter, Sheila, to Gerald Croft. The festivities are then interrupted by a visit from what is taken to be a policeman, Inspector Goole, who is investigating the recent suicide of a local young woman named Eva Smith. Goole's interrogations of each member of the dinner party make it clear that all of them have contributed to the tragedy through individually unjust, selfish or exploitative behavior. The "Inspector" leaves the subdued group with a warning that human beings have shared responsibility for each other and that this lesson will soon be taught "in fire and blood and anguish"—an apparent reference to the outbreak of World War I two years later.



Book: *The Religion of the Apostles*

Rev. Dr. Stephen De Young, creator of the popular The Whole Counsel of God blog and podcast, traces the lineage of Orthodox Christianity back to the faith and witness of the apostles, which was rooted in a first-century Jewish worldview. The Religion of the Apostles presents the Orthodox Christian Church of today as a continuation of the religious life of the apostles, which in turn was a continuation of the life of the people of God since the beginning of creation.

Parish Life

New Parish Council Members (2022-2024) Giving Their Oath



February 26 – Saturday of the Souls

Join us as we commemorate the founders of our church and loved ones.

Kolliva for the parish will be prepared by the ladies of the church. Individual kollivas are also welcome.

A Trip to Romania (Part 2)

Rod Dreher, American Writer and Orthodox Christian

To me, Romania is Ceausescu, but Romania is also Father Calciu, and other confessors and martyrs of the Communist yoke. Here is a passage from *Live Not By Lies* that gives you an idea of the spiritual depth of this country:

In a lengthy 1996 interview, Father George told about his encounter with a fellow prisoner named Constantine Oprisan. They met when Calciu was transferred from Pitești to Jilava, a prison that was built entirely underground. The communists put four prisoners in each cell. In his cell was a man named Constantine Oprisan, who was deathly ill with tuberculosis. From their first day in captivity there, Oprisan coughed up fluid in his lungs.

The man was suffocating. Perhaps a whole liter of phlegm and blood came up, and my stomach became upset. I was ready to vomit. Constantine Oprisan noticed this and said to me, “Forgive me.” I was so ashamed! Since I was a student in medicine, I decided then to take care of him . . . and told the others that I would take care of Constantine Oprisan. He was not able to move, and I did everything for him. I put him on the bucket to urinate. I washed his body. I fed him. We had a bowl for food. I took this bowl and put it in front of his mouth.

Constantine Oprisan—“he was like a saint,” Father George said—was so weak that he could barely talk. But every word he said to his cellmates was about Christ.

Hearing him say his daily prayers had a profound effect on the other three men, as did simply looking at the “flood of love in his face.”

Constantine Oprisan was a physical wreck because he had been so badly tortured in Pitești for three years, reported Father George. Yet he would not curse his torturers and spent his days in prayer.

All the while, we did not realize how important Constantine Oprisan was for us. He was the justification of our life in this cell. Over the course of a year, he

became weaker and weaker. We felt that he had finished his time here and would die.

After he died every one of us felt that something in us had died. We

understood that, sick as he was and in our care like a child, he had been the pillar of our life in the cell.

After the cellmates washed his body and prepared it for burial, they alerted the guards that Constantine Oprisan was dead. The guards led the men out of the windowless cell for the first time in a year. Then the guard ordered Calciu and another man to take the body outside and bury it. Constantine Oprisan was nothing but skin and bones; his muscle tissue had wasted away. For some reason, the skin pulled tight over his emaciated skeleton had turned yellow.

My friend took a flower and put it on his chest—a blue flower. The guard started to cry out to us and forced us to go

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back into the cell. Before we went into the cell, we turned around and looked at Constantine Oprisan—his yellow body and this blue flower. This is the image that I have kept in my memory—the body of Constantine Oprisan completely emaciated and the blue flower on his chest.

Looking back on that drama nearly a half century later, Father George said that nursing the helpless Constantine Oprisan in the final year of his life revealed to him “the light of God.”

When I took care of Constantine Oprisan in the cell, I was very happy. I was very happy because I felt his spirituality penetrating my soul. I learned from him to be good, to forgive, not to curse your torturer, not to consider anything of this world to be a treasure for you. In fact, he was living on another level. Only his body was with us—and his love. Can you imagine? We were in a cell without windows, without air, humid, filthy—yet we had moments of happiness that we never reached in freedom. I cannot explain it.

In terms of sacramental theology, a mystery is a truth that cannot be explained, only accepted. The long death of Constantine Oprisan, which gave spiritual life to those who helped him bear his suffering, is just such a mystery. The stricken prisoner was dying, but because he had already died to himself for Christ’s sake, he was able to be an icon to the others—a window into eternity through which the divine light passed to illuminate the other men in that dark, filthy cell.

This is why I wrote *Live Not By Lies*: to pay tribute to saints like this, to show my American readers the kind of holiness we

are going to need to make it through what’s to come, and to raise interest in connecting with these modern confessors and martyrs. Their experience is a gift to us from God. To be here in the land of Constantine Oprisan, of Father Calciu, and so many others is one of the greatest privileges of my life.

I did one interview after another, for hours. Naturally the reporters wanted to know about my book, but about half the questions were about my journey to Orthodox Christianity. Romania is a predominantly Orthodox country, and the idea of an American Orthodox is so exotic to them. In the evening, as I signed books for nearly two hours, one old woman waited in line for well over an hour, not to buy a book, but to ask me to talk about how I discovered Orthodoxy. “It’s a long story,” said Catalin, on my behalf, trying to move the woman along, because there were scores of people with books still waiting in line. The old woman shot a gimlet glance at me and asked, “Do you wear a cross?” I pulled my cross out from under my shirt to show her. She seemed to leave satisfied.



One of my interviewers was Mihail Neamtu, a writer and public intellectual, whom I had met back in 2017 in New York, at the book launch of *The Benedict Option*. He presented me with a portrait of Solzhenitsyn that he had commissioned for me. I was absolutely stunned. That great Russian face. I will be looking at it in this portrait for the rest of my life, thanks to the generosity of my new Romanian friend, Mihai.

The schedule said that at six pm, I would speak from a table to a gathering of people in the church's garden. After my final interview, I sat quietly in the church hall, making a few notes from which I would speak to the crowd. Five minutes before I went on, I checked my e-mail. There was a letter from an old Dallas friend from St. Seraphim cathedral. He said that he had been going through an old file of photos, and found one of my family with Archbishop Dmitri, who died in 2011. Because I have a policy of not sharing family pictures on the Internet, here's the detail with me and Vladyka Dmitri. I'm guessing this was from late 2009, or 2010, just before we moved to Philly. This would have been the last time we saw him alive.

In 2016, they disinterred his body from the ground for reburial in a tomb



constructed in St. Seraphim, the cathedral he built in Dallas. His body was discovered incorrupt — that is, undecayed, which is considered by us Orthodox as a sign of sanctity. He has not been canonized, but we who knew him and loved him consider him to be a saint.

Now, imagine that you are me, about to address a crowd in an Orthodox country for the first time ever. Just before you go on, a Dallas friend writes out of the blue to share with you a photo of you and your family with the beloved Archbishop Dmitri, from the last time you saw him on this earth. What do you think? I smiled, thinking that I had his blessing, that he was proud of me.

So, I walked out of the church hall and rounded the corner of the church to see who had come. My publishers said that that talk had not really been advertised, but word of it had spread by word of mouth on Orthodox social media in the country. They expected a hundred people, and said that if they sold fifty books, they would be happy.

To my great shock, there were between 400 and 500 people gathered there in the garden, waiting to hear me. Among them was my friend Titus Techera, known to a lot of us online American conservatives for his commentary about film and culture:



With Catalin at my side interpreting, I talked to the crowd about my book. As I was preparing my remarks, I reflected on something I have picked up on a lot in my nearly two months here in Central Europe. The peoples of this part of the world looked to the West for hope and direction when they suffered under Communist dictatorship. They still hold the West in high esteem. Yet they also experience a great deal of Western arrogance, mostly from western Europeans, but also Americans — liberal elites who treat them like primitive children who need to be taught how to be proper moderns. Perhaps the main source today of Western contempt has to do with the natural conservatism in this part of the world vis-à-vis LGBT rights. Billionaire George Soros, among others, has poured money into countries like Romania via his NGOs to try to undermine traditions on the family, and religious authority. I had heard on my first night in Romania, and in various conversations throughout the day, that political elites in Bucharest routinely mock social and religious conservatives, in particular over their views on family and sexuality.

Well, in my talk, I told the audience that they may hear from the West, and from their Western-oriented elites, that they should be ashamed of their faith, of their traditions, and of their moral beliefs. This is one of the big lies that they must reject with all their heart, soul, and mind, I said. You have looked up to America for so long, but look at us now: we are destroying ourselves, because we have forgotten God. With this woke ideology, we have nothing to offer you but destruction. You don't need to learn

anything from us; we Americans need to learn from you, and your saints.

I worried for a moment that I might be flattering the crowd, but I actually believe every word of this, one hundred percent. I felt the anger rising inside me — anger at American and EU elites, their NGO agents, and progressives within institutions and political life here, all doing their best to make these people ashamed of themselves, their history, and their traditions. I'm truly beginning to understand what Ryszard Legutko meant in his great book *The Demon in Democracy*, about how the Communist nomenklatura did an about-face after Communism's fall, and easily re-invented themselves as Eurocrats. They already shared a common faith in materialist modernity, and a contempt for religion and tradition. The Western left is eager to condemn 19th century colonialism, but it hasn't the faintest sense that what it's doing now is a 21st century cultural version of the same. No, it considers what it's up to today as liberation from ignorance and the chains of the past.

I exhorted the crowd in the churchyard to refuse and reject this, and to embrace what God has given them, without apology or shame.

During the question-and-answer period, a Romanian man asked the Orthodox priest sitting next to me, a man who had introduced me, and who wrote the introduction to the Romanian edition of my book, why it was that an American had to come to Romania to say these things. Where are the Romanians saying them? The priest responded at length, telling the man, and the audience, the stories of Father Calciu, Lutheran Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, and other

confessors and martyrs of the Communist era. When he finished, I took the microphone and said that if God has used me to come to Romania and open the eyes of my readers here to the spiritual riches of their own tradition, well then, glory to God!

“You have everything you need right here to resist soft totalitarianism!” I said.

To my shock, the line for people wanting me to sign their books stretched around the building. They kept coming, one by one. A young woman and her father asked for my signature, then gave me a copy of this book, *Cancer, My Love*, by the late Mioara Grigore. Here is a description of the book:

This memoir of personal transformation has changed countless lives in Romania since it was first published there in 2014. Author Mioara Grigore describes how, as a self-absorbed religion teacher with thoughts of becoming a nun, she began an unlikely courtship with an atheistic math teacher. The math teacher found faith, the two were happily married, and within six and a half years five children were born to them, one with Down syndrome. Mioara’s life was full, her home brimming with love. Then came the devastating cancer diagnosis.

With unflinching honesty, a keen eye for detail, and endearing humor, Mioara recounts her intense struggle with cancer. With the help of her husband and children, of her spiritual father, and then of new friends who sacrificed themselves for her and her family, she turned that struggle into a journey of spiritual self-discovery. In the agony of her cross-bearing, she found what it means, at the deepest level, to love and be loved by

others and by God. Ultimately, hers is a story not only of growth but of indomitable joy and triumph.

I had read about this book earlier in the spring, and wanted to get a copy because it reminded me of my sister Ruthie’s story. For some reason, I wasn’t able to. And now, here I was in Romania, with someone handing me a copy.

Then it hit me. “Wait, are you her daughter?” I asked the young woman.

“Yes,” she said, smiling. And that was Mioara’s husband, standing next to her.

I very nearly burst into tears. In fact, as I’m writing this now, tears are filling my eyes. I could have spent the rest of the night talking to them, but they had to move on, because there were scores of people behind them. I took the book, and gave them my e-mail address. I hope to hear from the family, and I will start the book on the flight back to Budapest later today.

I signed books for at least an hour and a half, until past dark. As I was wrapping up, I felt a hand on my left shoulder squeezing it as if to say, “Well done.” I looked to see who it was. Nobody was standing near me at all. I could be wrong about this, but I think it was Vladyka Dmitri.

To be continued.



February 2022

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 Southbridge, Massachusetts
www.stmichaelorthodox.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Tryphon the Martyr 6:00pm Vespers, Litia, Matins – Reception of Christ in the Temple	2 Reception of Christ in the Temple 9:00am Divine Liturgy 6:00pm Paraklesis	3 Synaxis of the Righteous Symeon and Prophetess Anna	4	5 Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
6 Sunday of the Canaanite; St. Photios the Great Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	7	8 Great Martyr Theodore the Commander	9 6:00pm Paraklesis	10 Hieromartyr Haralmabos	11 Martyr Blaise of Sebastia	12 Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
13 Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee – Triodion Begins Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	14	15	16 Paraklesis 6:00 pm	17 Great Martyr Theodore the Tyro	18	19 Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
20 Sunday of the Prodigal Son Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	21	22	23 Paraklesis 6:00 pm	24 First and Second Finding of the Head of St. John the Baptist	25	26 Saturday of the Souls Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
27 Judgement/Meatfare Sunday (last day to eat meat before Lent); St. Raphael of Brooklyn Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	28					