

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts
www.stmichaelorthodox.com

July 2020



The Glorious Prophet Elias (Elijah)

Elias of great fame was from Thisbe or Thesbe, a town of Galaad (Gilead), beyond the Jordan. He was of priestly lineage, a man of a solitary and ascetical character, clothed in a mantle of sheep skin, and girded about his loins with a leathern belt. His name is interpreted as "Yah is my God." His zeal for the glory of God was compared to fire, and his speech for teaching and rebuke was likened unto a burning lamp. From this too he received the name Zealot. Therefore, set aflame with such zeal, he sternly reproved the impiety and lawlessness of Ahab and his wife Jezebel. He shut up heaven by means of prayer, and it did not rain for three years and six months. Ravens brought him food for his need when, at God's command, he was hiding by the torrent of Horrath. He multiplied the little flour and oil of the poor widow of Sarephtha of Sidon, who had given him hospitality in her home, and when her son died, he raised him up. He brought down fire from Heaven upon Mount Carmel, and it burned up the sacrifice offered to God before all the people of Israel, that they might know the truth. At the torrent of Kisson, he slew 450 false prophets and priests who worshipped idols and led the people astray. He received food wondrously at the hand of an Angel, and being strengthened by this food he walked for forty days and forty nights. He beheld God on Mount Horeb, as far as this is possible for human nature. He foretold the destruction of the house of Ahab, and the death of his son Ohozias; and as for the two captains of fifty that were sent by the king, he burned them for their punishment, bringing fire down from Heaven. He divided the flow of the Jordan, and he and his disciple Elisseus passed through as it were on dry land; and finally, while speaking with him, Elias was suddenly snatched away by a fiery chariot in the year 895 B.C., and he ascended as though into heaven, whither God most certainly translated him alive, as He did Enoch (Gen. 5:24; IV Kings 2: 11). But from thence also, after seven years, by means of an epistle he reproached Joram, the son of Josaphat, as it is written: "And there came a message in writing to him from Elias the Prophet, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the way," and so forth (II Chron. 21:12). According to the opinion of the majority of the interpreters, this came to pass either through his disciple Elisseus, or through another Prophet when Elias appeared to them, even as he appeared on Mount Tabor to the disciples of Christ.

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday

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

Sunday

9:00am Matins
10:00am Divine Liturgy

Wednesday

6:00pm Paraklesis

Feast days

July 1st – Sts. Cosmas and Damian
July 2nd – Deposition of the robe of the Theotokos in Blachernae/St. John Maximovitch
July 5th – St. Athanasios of Mt. Athos
July 8th – St. Procopios the Martyr
July 11th – St. Euphemia the Martyr
July 12th – St. Paisios the Athonite
July 19th – Holy Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Synod
July 20th – Glorious Prophet Elias
July 22nd – St. Mary Magdalene
July 25th – Dormition of St. Anna, mother of the Theotokos
July 26th – St. Paraskeve the Martyr
July 27th – St. Panteleimon the Martyr

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2020 Parish Council

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

2020 Ladies Society Committee

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

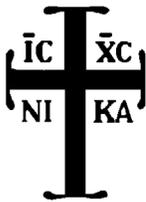
Clergy

Fr. John Downie fr.john_downie71@yahoo.com

Parish News & Events

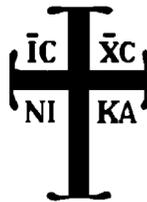
Happy Birthday!!
God Grant You Many More Years!!

July 7th – Sophia Penna
July 21st – Harris Pitsillides



Happy Name Day

July 25th – St. Anna – Anna
Tanka



Coffee Hour Volunteers
Needed

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

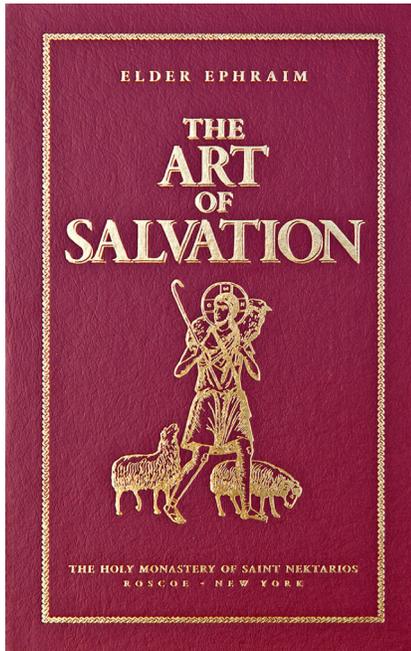
Please contact Deb Thomo to sign up.

Please Pray for:

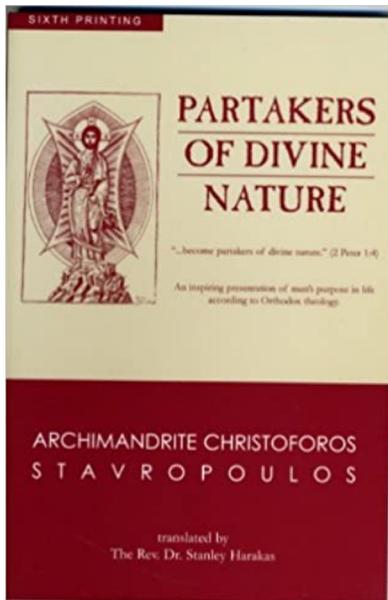
Preoteasa
Camelia
Carol Porra
Bill & Lauren
Smith
Mary
Grabosky
Henrietta Panu
Jennifer Silva
Alexander

~ Book Corner ~

The Art of Salvation



The text contained in this book *The Art of Salvation* are homilies to the monks of the Holy Monastery of Philotheou and Mount Athos, as well as to laypeople, primarily of the United States, who are his spiritual children and whom he guides in the spiritual life. The characteristic feature of these homilies is their combination of theology with pastoral care. Indeed, when I speak of theology, I am not referring to academic knowledge, which of course is necessary in certain instances in the Church's historical life, but rather the theology that is a gift, which manifests itself as the experience of God as well as knowledge of the uncreated words and ideas that are perpetually transmitted as a teaching via created words and meanings. Elder Ephraim himself was obedient to a sanctified elder: Elder Joseph the Hesychast. He lived with noetic prayer, as he was instructed by this ascetical elder and hesychast...and later he acquired the ability to discern the spirits, which is the true gift of theology. This theology then becomes a pastoral science that is used to shepherd and guide spiritual children.



Partakers of Divine Nature

An inspiring and plainly written presentation of man's purpose in life according to Orthodox theology, "...become partakers of divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

The Antichrist: An Orthodox Perspective from the Church Fathers (Part 2)

Fr. Andrew J. Anderson

Antichrist will be a mockery and parody of the true Christ

The Antichrist will be a mockery and parody of the true Christ, the Lord Jesus. Early Church saints such as St. Irenaeus, St. Jerome, and St. Ambrose and others hold that the Antichrist will be a Jew, as Jesus was, but will be born from the wrong tribe, not from the Tribe of Judah, but from the Tribe of Dan. Both St. John of Damascus and St. Ephraim the Syrian believe that the Antichrist—"the offspring of fornication"—will be born, not of a holy virgin, but "of prostitution" from an immoral, sinful, "defiled maiden".

Just as Jesus Christ was raised quietly, before making His public appearance to begin His ministry at the age of 30, so too the Antichrist will be raised in obscurity, until the day of his public appearance (as St. John of Damascus said—quoted above—that the Antichrist will be "nurtured in secret".)

Unlike the Lord Jesus Who had the Holy Spirit descend upon Him to work with Him in His earthly ministry, the Antichrist will be possessed by the Devil himself, and will operate using the Devil's own power (see 2 Thess. 2:9 and Rev. 13:2). St. John of Damascus points out in his quote (in his *Exact Exposition*) that the Devil will NOT incarnate as a human. Only the Son of God became incarnate. Instead, the Devil will "take up his abode in him [*the Antichrist*]." In other words, the Devil will possess a man through the "strangeness of the choice that he would make" and will live in him, thereby making him to be the Antichrist.

St. Paul made it clear to the Thessalonians that before the Antichrist can make his public appearance, there first must be a **massive apostasy**, or falling away, from the Christian Faith. "The falling away comes

first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition." (2 Thess. 2:3) St. Paisios of Mount Athos (d. 1994), a modern day saint who lived through most of the twentieth Century was of the opinion that this requirement has been fulfilled. Commenting upon our times, he said that "The situation is horrible. Madness has gone beyond all bounds. **Apostasy** is upon us, and now the only thing left is for the 'son of perdition' (2

Thess. 2:3) to come. The world has turned into a madhouse."

Global war as the catalyst for desire for a global "savior"—

"Take heed that no man deceive you," said Jesus. "For many shall come in My name, saying, 'I am Christ' and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:4-5).

the Antichrist

But what would be the catalyst that would draw the world and the Antichrist together? Several twentieth Century Russian Orthodox staretzii (Holy Spirit-filled elders)—such as St. Lavrenty (Laurence) of Chernigov (†1950), St. Seraphim of Vyritsa (†1949), and St. Paisios of Mt. Athos (†1994)—believe that the world will yet again be embroiled in another huge global war, which will remove peace from the earth. They suggest that such international turmoil will be the motivation for the citizens of the world to seek an ultimate political peacemaker who will unify them in an effort to bring peace back again into the world. As Jesus stated, when describing the world situation just prior to the End, that first there will be "wars and rumors of wars" (Matt. 24:6). The Book of Revelation opens with a colossal war (chapters 6-9). The Antichrist will make his appearance on this troubled world scene and offer peace on earth. He will entice and seduce the world with the help of demons. "He will offer a plan for the successful resolution of the world crisis, based on social and political wisdom—the establishing of a uniform political and social

structure over the whole world”—in other words, a single government for the whole world with himself as the king.

Once the Antichrist makes his first public appearance, evil spirits will generate a global excitement over him. Says St. Ephraim the Syrian (fourth century): “Evil spirits dispersed over the universe will excite in men a universal, most exalted opinion of Antichrist; a general... and irresistible attraction to him.” (Thus, some Orthodox elders have strongly advised against even looking at the face of the Antichrist, lest you get seduced by his charm.) As a result of this demonic stirring up of excitement over the Antichrist, according to St. Ignatius Brianchaninov (nineteenth century), there “will arise a demand for an invitation to Antichrist. A voice of appeal will issue forth in human society, expressing the urgent need for a ‘genius of geniuses,’ who would elevate material development and progress to a higher plane and bring about prosperity on earth.” He will be hailed as the ultimate political savior. Most everyone will be placing all their hopes on him, looking to him to solve the world’s political and financial turmoil. People will be supremely impressed with him and will think that he is the best leader ever, the ultimate man. They will say, “Who is like unto the beast [the Antichrist]? Who is able to make war with him?” (Rev.13:4).

The Great Pretender who deceives the world

At first, while he goes about increasing his popularity, the Antichrist will feign (fake) the attributes of the Lord Jesus Christ—love, compassion, meekness; he will NOT show to anyone that he has the Devil living inside of him. St. John of Damascus says that the Antichrist, “in the beginning of his rule, or

rather tyranny, he assumes the role of sanctity.” St. Ephraim (fourth century) states that the Antichrist will come in such a manner as to deceive all. He will appear humble, meek, a hater (as he will say himself) of unrighteousness, shunning idols, showing a preference to piety, good, a lover of the poor, beautiful to the extreme, steadfast, affable to all and especially esteeming the Jewish people because the Jews will await his coming. He will take cunning measures to please everyone in order that the people will quickly come to love him; he will not accept gifts nor speak in anger nor show a gloomy appearance, but with a decent exterior he will set about deceiving the world, until he is enthroned.



St. Cyril of Jerusalem (in about 350 A.D.) comments that “at first he [*the Antichrist*] shall feign mildness,—as if he were a learned and discreet person,—and sobriety and loving-kindness.”

This fake, pretend sanctity will deceive many. Says St. Ephraim, “When the nations and peoples see such virtues and powers (in the Antichrist), all will have one thought—to pronounce him ruler, saying to each other; ‘Will another man so good and so truthful be found?’” As prophesied in Rev. 13:4—People will cry out in amazement and awe: “Who is like unto the beast?”

At this point, Christians much watch out! “Take heed that no man deceive you,” said Jesus. “For many shall come in My name, saying, ‘I am Christ’ and shall deceive many” (Matt. 24:4-5). St. John Chrysostom (fourth century) taught that the Antichrist will deceive people and “will violently usurp everything that does not belong to him and call himself ‘God’. This is what Christ meant when He said that Antichrist ‘will come in My name’.”

To be continued.

On the Plague (Part 2) St. Cyprian of Carthage

But for the rest, what else in the world than a battle against the devil is daily carried on, than a struggle against his darts and weapons in constant conflicts? Our warfare is with avarice, with immodesty, with anger, with ambition; our diligent and toilsome wrestle with carnal vices, with enticements of the world. The mind of man besieged, and in every quarter invested with the onsets of the devil, scarcely in each point meets the attack, scarcely resists it. If avarice is prostrated, lust springs up. If lust is overcome, ambition takes its place. If ambition is despised, anger exasperates, pride puffs up, wine-bibbing entices, envy breaks concord, jealousy cuts friendship; you are constrained to curse, which the divine law forbids; you are compelled to swear, which is not lawful.

So many persecutions the soul suffers daily, with so many risks is the heart wearied, and yet it delights to abide here long among the devil's weapons, although it should rather be our craving and wish to hasten to Christ by the aid of a quicker death; as He Himself instructs us, and says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." John 16:20 Who would not desire to be without sadness? Who would not hasten to attain to joy? But when our sadness shall be turned into joy, the Lord Himself again declares, when He says, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you." John 16:22 Since, therefore, to see Christ is to rejoice, and we cannot have joy unless when we shall see Christ, what blindness of mind or what folly is it to love the world's afflictions, and

punishments, and tears, and not rather to hasten to the joy which can never be taken away!

But, beloved brethren, this is so, because faith is lacking, because no one believes that the things which God promises are true, although He is true, whose word to believers is eternal and unchangeable. If a grave and praiseworthy man should promise you anything, you would assuredly have faith in the promiser, and would not think that you should be cheated and deceived by him

whom you knew to be steadfast in his words and his deeds. Now God is speaking with you; and do you faithlessly waver in your unbelieving

mind? God promises to you, on your departure from this world, immortality and eternity; and do you doubt? This is not to know God at all; this is to offend Christ, the Teacher of believers, with the sin of incredulity; this is for one established in the Church not to have faith in the house of faith.

How great is the advantage of going out of the world, Christ Himself, the Teacher of our salvation and of our good works, shows to us, who, when His disciples were saddened that He said that He was soon to depart, spoke to them, and said, "If you loved me, you would surely rejoice because I go to the Father; " John 16:28 teaching thereby, and manifesting that when the dear ones whom we love depart from the world, we should rather rejoice than grieve. Remembering which truth, the blessed Apostle Paul in his epistle lays it down, saying, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain;" Philippians 1:21 counting it the greatest gain no longer to be held by the snares of this world, no longer to be liable to the sins and vices of the flesh, but taken away

"My son, when you come to the service of God, stand in righteousness and fear, and prepare your soul for temptation." (Sirach 2:5)

from smarting troubles, and freed from the envenomed fangs of the devil, to go at the call of Christ to the joy of eternal salvation.

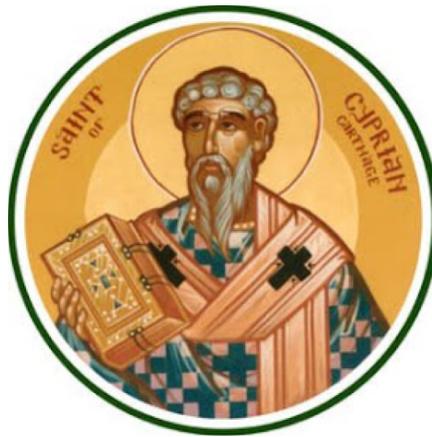
But nevertheless it disturbs some that the power of this Disease attacks our people equally with the heathens, as if the Christian believed for this purpose, that he might have the enjoyment of the world and this life free from the contact of ills; and not as one who undergoes all adverse things here and is reserved for future joy. It disturbs some that this mortality is common to us with others; and yet what is there in this world which is not common to us with others, so long as this flesh of ours still remains, according to the law of our first birth, common to us with them? So long as we are here in the world, we are associated with the human race in fleshly equality, but are separated in spirit. Therefore until this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal receive immortality, and the Spirit lead us to God the Father, whatsoever are the disadvantages of the flesh are common to us with the human race. Thus, when the earth is barren with an unproductive harvest, famine makes no distinction; thus, when with the invasion of an enemy any city is taken, captivity at once desolates all; and when the serene clouds withhold the rain, the drought is alike to all; and when the jagged rocks rend the ship, the shipwreck is common without exception to all that sail in her; and the disease of the eyes, and the attack of fevers, and the feebleness of all the limbs is common to us with others, so long as this common flesh of ours is borne by us in the world.

Moreover, if the Christian know and keep fast under what condition and what law he has believed, he will be aware that he must

suffer more than others in the world, since he must struggle more with the attacks of the devil. Holy Scripture teaches and forewarns, saying, "My son, when you come to the service of God, stand in righteousness and fear, and prepare your soul for temptation." And again: "In pain endure, and in your humility have patience; for gold and silver is tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation." Sirach 2:5

Thus Job, after the loss of his wealth, after the death of his children, grievously afflicted, moreover, with sores and worms, was not overcome, but proved; since in his very struggles and anguish, showing forth the patience of a religious mind, he says, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, naked also I shall go under the earth: the Lord gave, the Lord has taken away; as it seemed fit to the Lord, so it has been done. Blessed be the name of the Lord." And when his wife

also urged him, in his impatience at the acuteness of his pain, to speak something against God with a complaining and envious voice, he answered and said, "You speak as one of the foolish women. If we have received good from the hand of the Lord, why shall we not suffer evil? In all these things which befell him, Job sinned not with his lips in the sight of the Lord." Job 1:8 Therefore the Lord God gives him a testimony, saying, "Have you considered my servant Job? For there is none like him in all the earth, a man without complaint, a true worshipper of God." Job 2:10



July 2020

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Southbridge, Massachusetts

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Sts. Cosmas and Damian the Holy Unmercenaries Paraklesis 6:00pm	2 Deposition of the Robe of the Theotokos, St. John Maximovitch	3	4 Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
5 St. Athanasios the Athonite Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am	6	7	8 St. Procopios the Great Martyr Paraklesis 6:00pm	9	10	11 St. Euphemia the Great Martyr Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
12 St. Paisios the Athnoite Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am	13	14	15 Paraklesis 6:00pm	16	17 Akathist 5:30pm	18 Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
19 Holy Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Synod Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am	20 Glorious Prophet Elias	21	22 St. Mary Magdalene the Myrrh-bearer and Equal to the Apostles Paraklesis 6:00pm	23	24	25 Dormition of St. Anna Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
26 St. Paraskeve the Martyr Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am Vespers & Litia – St. Panteleimon 6:00pm	27 St. Panteleimon the Great Martyr Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	28	29	30	31	