



Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts

www.stmichaelorthodox.com

February 2023



LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday

9:00am Divine Liturgy

5:00 pm Vespers

Sunday

9:00am Matins

10:00am Divine Liturgy

Wednesday

6:00pm Paraklesis

**Find the Calendar with the
full schedule of services at pag
14**

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. 13rd – Sunday of the Publican
and the Pharisee – Triodion Begins

Feb. 17th – Great Martyr Theodore the
Tyro

Feb. 19th - Judgement/Meatfare
Sunday;

Feb. 20th – Sunday of the Prodigal
Son

Feb. 24th – First and Second Finding
of the Head of St. John the Baptist

Feb. 27th – St. Raphael of Brooklyn

Triodion

TRIODION – (Greek: three odes or modes). A Liturgical book containing the hymns, prayers and services of the movable feast before Easter, and a Liturgical period beginning ten weeks before Easter with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, until Easter Sunday. This includes the four weeks proceeding Great Lent, Great Lent, and Holy (Passion) Week.

Every act of physical hardship requires preparation.

The Orthodox Church takes the idea of preparation to a whole new level. The Triodion period, a three-week season of readying ourselves for the 40 days of Great Lent, followed by the seven days of Holy Week.

The Church understands human nature and our need to reorient ourselves for the ascetic work that we are about to undergo. *Ascesis* is Greek for “exercise,” and the Church’s Triodion warm-up gives us the time we need to stretch hearts and minds that have become stiff and neglected throughout the year.

Presentation of Christ to 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.

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

2022 Parish Council

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

2022 Ladies Society Committee

President: Genevieve Boilard
Vice President: Katie Mironidis
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
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 Yanka, Theodore Rapsomanikis

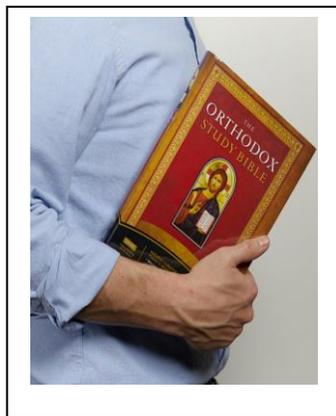
Feb. 10th – Hieromartyr Haralambos – Harris Pitsillides

Bible Study

Thursday
February 2nd, 2023
7:00 pm

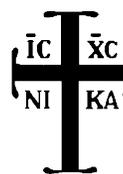
St. John Gospel

Zoom for the entire
Archdiocese.
The link will be sent



Please Pray for:

Louise
Theodor
Henrietta
Sandra
Mary



School Snack Drive

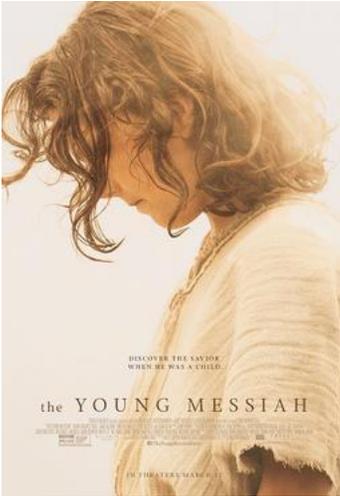
We will donate snacks for three schools in Southbridge now. We added Eastford rd. School too. Please bring **individually-wrapped** snacks for our local schools.



~ Movie & Book Corner ~

Dinner & Movie Night January,

Movie: *The Young Messiah*



The Young Messiah is a 2016 American biblical drama film directed by Cyrus Nowrasteh, based on the novel *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt* by Anne Rice.

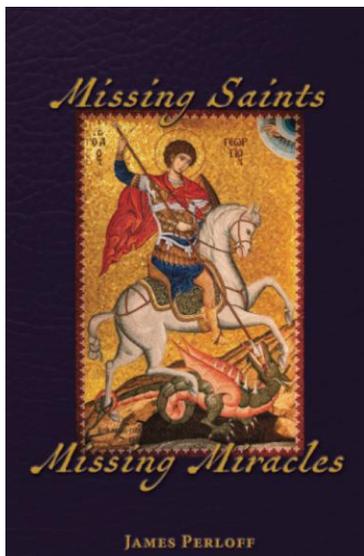
The film is an apocryphal story about Jesus Christ as a child. And revolves around a fictional interpretation of a seven-year-old Jesus, who tries to discover the truth about his life when he returns to Nazareth from Egypt. Told from his childhood perspective, the story follows young Jesus as he grows into his religious identity.

Most of the film seems inspired by non-canonical Christian scriptures, which present some interesting questions but don't have a lot to say spiritually.

The film stars Adam Greaves-Neal, Sean Bean, David Bradley, Lee Boardman, Jonathan Bailey, and David Burke.

Filming began on September 15, 2014, in Matera and Rome, Italy.

Book: *Missing Saints, Missing Miracles* by James Perloff



The Synaxarion: The Lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church is drawn from hundreds of manuscripts from countries around the world from many centuries. After reading its 4,000 pages, James Perloff explores the question: What did Jesus mean by “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do.” Are miracles possible at a time when America and the West so greatly need them? The answer is a definite “yes.” Unknown to most people today, nearly all the miracles Jesus performed were duplicated by the Orthodox Church’s commemorated Saints—but all the miracle-workers had one thing in common.

Missing Saints, Missing Miracles also recounts many facts of early Christian history largely unknown in the West, mostly due to Martin Luther’s rule of sola scriptura (Scripture—Bible—only).

Prior to publication, Missing Saints, Missing Miracles was reviewed for theological integrity by a theology instructor at a major Orthodox seminary, as well as by an Orthodox chaplain in the United States Army. Combined with other resources, it may help serve as an introductory book to Orthodoxy.

Women retreat – March 11th, 2023

Abbess (Gerontissa) Gabriella (Ursache)

Please save the date!!!

Event Theme: *How to prepare properly to receive our Lord Jesus Christ in Holy Communion*

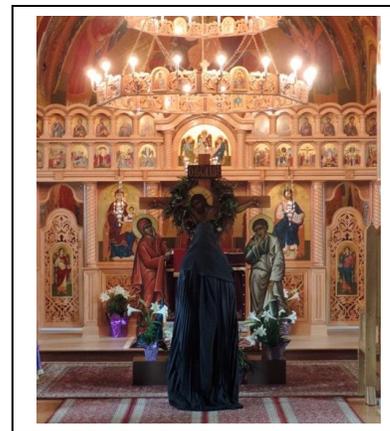
Schedule:

Friday, 10th – Vespers 6:00pm followed by a informal talk in the church about the beginning of the Romanian monastic life in the USA – Princess Ileana of Romania, later Mother Alexandra's monastery, Fr. Roman Braga personality and Holy Dormition Monastery

Dinner 7:50 pm – Parish Hall

Saturday, 11th – Divine Liturgy – 9:00 am – 10:15 am

- **Breakfast** – starting 10:15 am
- **Registration and admission** – 10:45 am
- **Main Talk** – 11:00 am – 12:00 am
- **Q & A Session** – 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm
- **Lunch** – 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm
- **Groups Work** – 1:30 pm – 2:15pm
- **Groups reunion & presentations** – 2:15 pm – 2:40 pm
- **Conclusions** – 2:40 pm – 3:00 pm

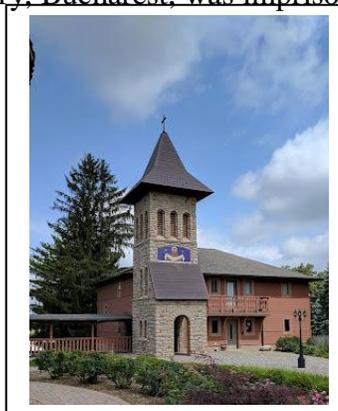


Who is our speaker: Mother Gabriella (Ursache)

Mother Gabriella (Ursache) is the Abbess (Gerontissa - Greek, Stareța - Romanian) of the Holy Dormition Monastery , MI, since 1989.

She was tonsured as a nun in 1977 in Varatec Monastery (Romania). In 1978 Mother Gabriella joined The Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Elwood City, PA, the monastery founded by Princess Ileana of Romania, later Mother Alexandra.

In 1987 Mother Gabriella together with sister Apolinaria and their spiritual mother, Schimonahy (Great Schema Nun) Benedicta got the blessing to build a new monastery in Northern part of the US. In 1989 Fr. Roman Braga (member of the movement Burning Bush from Antim Monastery, Bucharest, was imprisoned by the communist authorities, together with all members of this movement in 1952) moved from Elwood City and joined the nuns at Rives Junction, MI.



After Elder Benedicta retired in 1989 she passed the herald onto Mother Gabriella, who was installed as the new and second Abbess of the monastery by His Grace Bishop Nathaniel on the Feast Day of the Dormition, same year.

Mother Gabriella was a devoted spiritual daughter of Fr. Roman Braga, and she inherited his joy and love for people. She generously and humble shares her spiritual experience and wisdom being invited as a quest speaker to conduct spiritual retreats for adults and youth groups to the parishes around the United States and Canada.

DINNER & MOVIE NIGHT

February 9th 2023
The Young Messiah



Dinner: 6:00 pm

Movie: 7:00 pm

Menu: Chicken noodle soup, rice pilaf and baked chicken.

Donations for Africa February 12 - February 19

LS "Andrei Shanguna" organized collection - money, clothes and shoes for Africa on February 12 & February 19.

For details please contact Preoteasa/Presbytera Camelia

Lady Society "Andrei Shaguna" invite you to

"Pita, and Cozonac tasting Party"

Sunday, February 26th, during Coffee hours

The winner's recipe will be considered *St. Michael's bake sale signatures* and will be used by all the baking volunteers for the baking sale events.

We need baker volunteers. Please contact Genevieve Boilard or Katie Mironidis to sign in for the competition.

The winners will get some prizes!!!



The Struggle of Great Lent

By Elder Ephraim of Arizona (a transcribed homily).

At this time, we are entering the great spiritual arena of the blessed Great Lent. Holy and Great Lent is a time of compunction, repentance, and tears; it is time for a change in ourselves, for a new stage in our spiritual life. Like an affectionate mother caring for Her children (us, Orthodox Christians), the Church has designated this time of Lent to the struggle, in order to help us fight harder, so that we can purify ourselves, and thus draw closer to God; it is the time that the Christians undergo these trials so that they can be counted worthy of celebrating the great day of the radiant Resurrection.

... There is the struggle of fasting, the struggle of vigils, the struggle of purification and the struggle to fulfill one's spiritual duties which are many more than at any other time of the year. There is a spiritual "defragmentation" and people pay greater attention to the voice of their conscience in order to correct what they have perhaps neglected and to improve spiritually.

The Church assists us with Her penitential hymns and services, as well as with a myriad of teachings. These serve so as to "oil" us up for the fight towards the purification of our souls.

We have the penitential evening divine liturgies of the Presanctified Gifts. The Presanctified Liturgy is extremely beneficial. Its Cherubic Hymn is full of spirituality, contemplation, and angelic presence. That is why we should come to these liturgies during Great Lent with even greater compunction. We, who consume the Body and Blood of Christ, must be pure and clean, straight in both body and soul so that divine grace can have its effect. For this

reason we must lead very careful lives. Both in our homes or cells and in church we must wet our face with tears so as to wash our souls and be worthy to take Holy Communion.

Of course, the devil often brings us various temptations and desires during these moments of compunction. This intensifies the struggle and it means that we cannot have both tears and concurrent evil thoughts. Evil thoughts and the sinful images that accompany them must be rejected as soon as they make their appearance. And when we have wicked thoughts or our soul is cold towards one of the brethren, let us not approach the God of true love, Who is so pure and beyond holy.

Throughout this period, at every service in Great Lent, we say the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian, which is as follows: *Lord and Master of my life, do not give me the spirit of sloth, inquisitiveness, lust for power or idle talk, but give rather the spirit of sobriety, humility, patience and love to me, your servant. Indeed, Lord King, grant me to see my own errors and not to judge my brother, for you are blessed to the ages of ages. Amen.*

With these words, the Saint wishes to make us understand very clearly, that, apart from our pursuit of various virtues we also need to address our self-censure and eliminate criticism of our brethren, because without true love for our fellow human beings there is no chance of making even the slightest progress towards our spiritual purification. If we do not pay vigilant attention towards our thoughts, our words and our heart, there is no benefit in fasting. Fasting is of benefit when it is combined with love for our neighbor and when we do not criticize others. When we do not criticize our fellows and instead criticize ourselves, then we are marked by love for others and love for our

soul, concern for purification and the fulfillment of the great commandment, that of love of God and one's neighbor. Love for God and our fellow brethren are the two great virtues which support the whole of our Lenten spiritual structure; if they are absent, then others virtues cannot take form in us. For *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* (1 Jn 4:16).

Another area which demands that we push ourselves as hard as possible is prayer. We should continually pray in the name of Christ, without neglecting any opportunity and without any waste of time. During our personal vigil within our bedroom or cell, we should push ourselves to new limits, not letting sleep overcome us, and with neither any neglect nor any sign of idleness; we should willingly engage in deeds that enhance and support our spirituality. As soon as we wake up, prayer should command first place, accompanied with awareness of our Lenten prayer rule, our prayer-rope, spiritual study and the continuous contemplation of God. We need to attend Church services with great readiness and we shall thus reap the best possible results from our presence within the arena of spiritual struggle and purification.

Apart from this, fasting together with bodily exertion supports awareness of and the forgiveness of our sins. *Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.* (Pss 24:18). When we labor while fasting, with kneeling, with prayers, with a true effort from our heart and mind, such godly exertion is holy and is richly rewarded by God because it makes people worthy of the crown of glory and honor. The demons fear the fast greatly, because it keeps them laying low: *Howbeit this kind (of demon) goeth not out but by prayer and fasting., said the Lord.* (Mt 17:21). This is why the holy fathers always began any godly task with a fast. They considered a fast to be very

powerful and they (rightfully) believed that the Holy Spirit does not provide His protection to people when they are replete with food and their stomachs are full. And any Christian who desires purification has to start from this same foundation which is fasting, prayer and vigilance. When these three are combined, many people of God have acquired great stature.

In olden times, the Church's fathers had a holy custom. On the eve of Lent, they would leave the monasteries and go deeper into the desert, where they lived in great asceticism until Lazarus Saturday, when they returned in order to celebrate Palm Sunday all together. Some would take a few of the basic essentials as far as food was concerned, others would eat only green plants, in order to struggle more fiercely in the desert. Thereafter they would spend all the days of Holy Week together in church, existing on just a piece of rusk and a few nuts per each day. We were also afforded the great blessing and the grace of knowing other, more extreme ascetic elders who spent not only Great Lent in such fasting and spiritual struggle but also their entire life!

Our departed elder, Elder Joseph the Cave-Dweller, kept an extremely strict fast during Great Lent. And, of course, he imposed such a fast upon us as well. From Monday to Friday, five days of the week, there was no real food to be consumed except a handful of flour, from which we made a batter with just water. ...A small flour batter plate every twenty-four hours. Concurrently, we worked hard, lifting loads on our back during the day and during the whole night we performed hundreds of prostrations and many hours of prayer, getting minimal rest. Such a struggle so that we be given the opportunity to purify the inner person, to make ourselves cleaner, more honorable in the eyes of God, in order to acquire boldness before God and thus be able to pray for the whole world. This is because the world at

large, people everywhere, need the prayers of saints, particularly those of ascetic saints. St. Anthony the Great supported the whole world with his prayers.

Of course, we must keep the fast only as far as we are able, with discretion, as we are not all the same. *Unless the good be done well, it is not good.* In other words, unless good is done in a good way, method, time and amount, but instead is done without discretion, then it will do more harm than good. Fasting is certainly extremely necessary, it is good, but it is a means rather than an end to a goal. The means has an end and that is humility. This is why we need to arrange everything in accordance with the discretion of a spiritual father, someone illumined by the Holy Spirit. Your spiritual father will tell you how much to fast, how often to receive Holy Communion, where to strike at the enemy, what you should do here and what you must do there. And then, through the discretion of your spiritual father, you can put your spiritual house in order. We should not do more than is appropriate, we need moderation in all things, because immoderation cancels out any benefit. So fasting is holy, but it is a means. We should adjust it according to what our spiritual father says and what our psychosomatic powers allow and only as long as there is good will. St. Basil the Great says there is as much difference in resilience among people as there is between iron and grass.

St. Synklitiki fell ill towards the end of her life with a throat disease. Her blessed throat, which had always spoken the word of God, festered on the inside. Her mouth had saved countless people. The devil had asked permission to test her and God had granted it. The stench from her rotting flesh became so bad that the nuns had the greatest difficulty in seeing to her needs. They used the most pungent perfumes to try and bring her a little rest in her sickness. When her

mouth and throat had been healthy, she had spoken and brought benefit to many, but when she fell ill, she was able to preach even more strongly. How could a silent and rotting mouth possibly preach? She noiselessly declared her great patience and endurance in God's trial. She made a titanic effort to deal with the devil of impatience, of complaint, of the labor and toil of sickness. What reason then could she possibly have in following the need for fasting?

This is exactly why illness is regarded as involuntary asceticism. One person has cancer, another diabetes, and somebody else has various troublesome health problems. How will these people purify themselves? How will they see God's light? Through patience and giving thanks to Him. These make up for the fast which, because of their illness, they are unable to keep, and, in fact, often struggle in their physical pain ten times harder than if they were fasting.

During this period, we really have to struggle to purify ourselves. From the ascetic tradition we have hermits who spent the whole of their lives in the desert, with labors, toil, fasts, tears, sleeping on the ground and deprivation of every other kind of pleasure. And all this effort, together with the struggle of the soul against all kinds of thoughts concerning the rebellions of the flesh, engendered sanctity. Thus, every Orthodox Christian or monk who wishes to experience purification has the right to labor and to, in turn, not be deprived of his equitable reward. Purity brings great boldness towards God, because He Himself is pure, the Mother of God is most pure and St. John the Theologian lived his life as a virgin, as did so many other saints. The whole beauty of the Church is founded on purity and spotlessness. When our heart is pure and beautiful it will exude fragrance and loveliness. But if people have filth in their hearts, filth is what they will expel. Let us struggle to cleanse the inside of our glass,

our heart, so that we can it turn be pure and pleasing in God's eyes.

We have instances from Church history of many people "in the world" (not monastics, that is), who pleased God and became great. Abba Paphnutius of Thebes, an ascetic of great gifts (and disciple of St. Antony the Great), once prayed to God:

— God, who have You placed me with? With whom do I share the same measure of virtue?

And he heard a voice, saying to him:

— Down in Alexandria there is a poor man, a cobbler, down in a basement. You have the same amount of virtue as he does.

He responded:

— But I have been a hermit in the desert from childhood and I am equal in virtue with a lay person, a married man?

God responded:

— Yes, you are equal to him.

Next day, the saint picked up his bag, put in some dry rusks, and set off for Alexandria. He went down into the city, found the layman and said to him:

— What do you do here, friend?

The layman responded:

— What should I do, father? I am a sinner, the worst person in the world.

— Can we talk?

— Certainly.

— What is the virtue that you're working on acquiring?

— Virtue, me? I live "in the world" and am completely mixed up. Now you, you have got virtues.

— No, you are doing something.

— I am not doing anything.

— God showed me, so you cannot tell me lies. I prayed and He told me that we share

the same measure of virtue. There must be something about you.

— Sorry, Father. If what I do can be considered something, I'll tell you. I married, and from the moment I put on the crown, I said to my wife: "If you love me, we'll live apart, like brother and sister and work for the sanctification of our souls. Do you agree?" She responded "I agree." And since then we have lived in purity and virginity.

In the desert, Blessed Paphnutius tried to cleanse himself through the ascetic life, and restraint, in which he was greatly assisted by the condition of his way of life. The other man lived "in the world," with a wife, with all the challenges of secular life and, with God's help, he had reached the stature of a saint. And his struggle was greater than that of the hermit. Proof that he was indeed great in the eyes of God.

After that, something else happened which has to do with this cobbler. One day a Christian went to the Blessed Paphnutius and said:

— Father, I quarreled with a priest and I do not know how he reacted, whether he cursed me or swore at me, but he is now departed this life and we were not reconciled. What do I do now?

— There is nothing I can do in this case, but there is a holy man to whom I shall send you to and he will help you. Go down to Alexandria, to a basement where there is this cobbler. Tell him I sent you, mention the problem and he will help.

The Christian said to himself: "For goodness' sake. A hermit cannot help and a layman can?" Nevertheless, out of obedience to the hermit, he did as he was told. The cobbler told him to wait until night fell and then took him to a church in the city. After again telling him to wait, the cobbler went up to the large door made the sign of the cross and it opened. The inside of

the church was bathed in light and there was heavenly music. The cobbler told the man:

— Go in there and look at the choirs on the left and right. You'll see the priest there.

The man went in, saw the priest in the left choir and knelt down and received his forgiveness...

Do you see what a true ascetic effort can achieve? What the soul's true and honest struggle can do? What did that layman do to purify his soul? When he told the girl he had married that they should live like brother and sister, was that an end to it? No, they fasted and kept vigil together, they made prostrations and read the Gospel. They read Patristic books, went to church, confessed, took Holy Communion, chased away evil thoughts and struggled assiduously. And that is how they became saints "in the world."

So here is proof that even "in the world," when Christians take on the struggle with good will, the grace of God does not exclude anyone. But we all make excuses for ourselves and say that because we are "in the world," we cannot. Desires and passions get the best of us. What do we need to do? Fight in the body and in the soul. In other words, control our thoughts. Thoughts come, sinful fantasies, images, faces, idols and scenes. We must get rid of them immediately with Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me. When the mind is careful not to accept all of that and has the divine weapon ready to use, the name of Christ, then every enemy of our soul is slain, whether it be the devil, sordid fantasies or repulsive thoughts. Then, if we guard our soul, mind and heart in this manner, our inner self will remain clean and pure.

Let us struggle now, and the rewards shall be great. Nobody finds grace unless they make the effort. When our fast is accompanied, reinforced and flanked by prayer, study, vigilance, church attendance, Confession, Communion, good works—

especially almsgiving—then the beauty of the preparation of the soul for the reception of Holy Week is complete. Then we shall truly experience the Holy and Sacred Passion of Christ more intensely, because our heart will soften, it will alter and it will realize how great God's love for mankind is. Then, within us, we shall experience very forcibly the Holy Resurrection, we shall celebrate it in a way befitting to God and we shall celebrate Holy Pascha together with the angels. Amen.

Modern Judas portrait by + Metrop. Bartolomeu Anania

"Judas walked unhindered through society, through human history, but also through Christianity. His greatest achievement is that, from one Church, he made several. From several he made thousands. And he continues to this day, through his own greed, envy and pride. He adapts easily, he has refined his methods. It works by night light and communicates by Hertzian waves. He is a skilled importer of religion, offering it competitively on the consumer goods market. Otherwise, he is a convinced ecumenist. When he is not working behind your back, he invites you to a fraternal dialogue. If you refuse or if you defend yourself, he calls you intolerant, conservative, fundamentalist, backward thinking.

He knows the Bible well, has a university education, speaks several foreign languages. He knows that the Iscariot was one of the twelve who listened to and memorized the teaching of Jesus. If he had purity and talent, he could write a Gospel as rich as Matthew's.

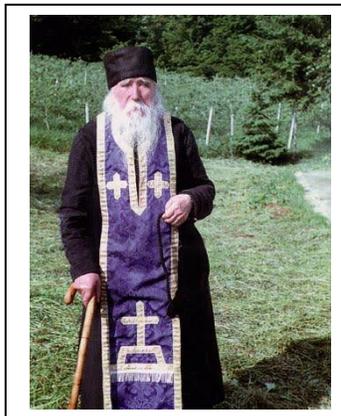
He wrote it posthumously, in the key of the perverted kiss. Judas is an excellent theologian, as is his master from Mt. Quarantania (the evil one), who tempted Jesus with quotations from the Scripture.

Judas is just a zealot among his people, since the instinct of division mobilizes him everywhere, wherever he is. The partner must first be seduced, dominated and only then destroyed. Judas approaches his fellow with the grace of the cobra who, encountering a viper in the jungle, invites it to an aerial dance, mesmerizing, dizzying, during which it precisely calculates the second of its fatal bite. Judas is a master of the perfect crime."

On Sin and Confession By Blessed Elder Cleopa of Sihastria (+1998)

“If someone wants to sin, he sins; if he does not want to sin, he doesn’t. The devil only puts the ideas in our minds, so if someone is foolish and deceived, he commits sin. Can you say on the day of judgment, ‘Lord, the devil took me into the bar, the devil made me sin with that woman, the devil made me a drunkard, the devil made me have an abortion, etc.’

If so, then the devil will say, ‘Lord show me a witness who saw me drag this person into a bar, or into the fornication or murder’... However, through frequent confession, the devil’s nest is destroyed. The first benefit of frequent confession is that sin does not have time to put down roots in us, and the nest which the devil seeks to weave in us is destroyed. The devil, seeing that you confess often, that you repent, pray, and disclose his wiles, says, ‘It is useless for me to work on him since he is constantly going to the priest and confessing, receiving absolution, and thus I gain nothing. It is better for me to go to those who are lazy spiritually, who don’t care about their salvation, who confess rarely, if at all, because those do not work against me as this one does!’ When someone confesses often, he is more aware of his sins and does not become careless about them. When he has not confessed for a few days, he says, ‘What have I been doing!’ Immediately he remembers. But when he lets a month or two, or maybe a year go



by, how can he remember all his sins? When someone confesses often, all he has to do is remember his shame before his spiritual father and the penance that he will surely be given, and he will do all he can to keep himself from sin. Man has so much strength to use against sin; even if all the devils from hell were to come, they would be powerless to do anything to him if he would just oppose sin. This

strength to overcome the temptation of the devils is given to each of us by God at the time of our baptism. If man did not have this strength to oppose sin, then hell would not exist to punish sin. In God’s immeasurable goodness, He knows our weaknesses and that we transgress both willingly and unwillingly, in

knowledge and in ignorance. There is not a single moment in which we do not err before the Lord. But, no one knows the nature of man better than God, for He created us out of nothing. When we turn to Him with tears, with a sorrowful heart, and with a pure confession, He forgives us. Whoever has more serious sins has to have a penance, for God is always ready to receive us and forgive us since we are His creation. “



**St. Siluan Young Adults Retreat –
Spring Edition
May 26th-27th**

Please saved the date!!!

The full program is dedicated to ages 18-35 (we will make exception too up to 40) but for the guest speaker **all ages are welcomed.**

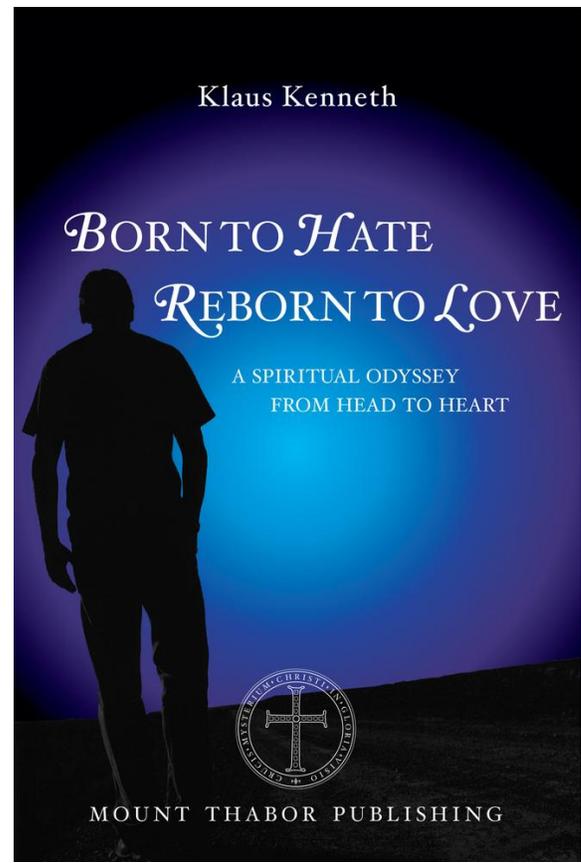
Our special guest speaker: Fr. Dr. Josiah Trenham, St. Andrew Antiochian Church, CA.



For most of you he does not need further introduction. However, we will send you his biography, the full YAR schedule, and other event details by the end of the next week (February the 4th).

We are very honored and happy to have Fr. Josiah in our church. He is a parish priest, a college Professor, an author, a very well known speaker, and radio and TV quest. And above all he is a very spiritual person.

**BOOK CLUB
February 23rd, 2023
6:30 pm Parish House**



Please read or review Chapter 1 to 8 prior to the meeting.

We will have another meeting for the Chapter 9-16 in March. The date TBD.

Note: Some snacks and beverages will be served.

Saturday of the Souls, February 18

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.



PARENTS' CORNER

Raising Them Right by St. Theophan the Recluse- Chapter 4 Forming attitudes

...The heart is the capability of tasting and feeling satisfaction.

When man was in union with God, he found delight in divine and sacred things by the grace of God. After his fall he lost this taste and began to thirst for what is sensual. The grace of baptism has removed this, but sensuality is again ready to fill the heart. One must not allow this; one must guard the heart.

The most effective means for the education of true taste in the heart is a church-centered life, in which all children in their upbringing must be unfailingly kept. Sympathy for everything sacred, pleasure in remaining in its midst for the sake of quietness and warmth, separation from what is bright and attractive in worldly vanity – all this cannot better be imprinted in the heart (than by a church-centered life). The church building, church singing, icons – these are the first objects of fine art in content and power.

One should remember that it is in accordance with the taste of one's heart that the future eternal mansion will be given, and that the taste in one's heart there will be the very one that is formed here. It is evident that theaters, shows, and similar things are not suitable for Christians.

A soul that has been calmed and ordered in this way will not, in accordance with its natural disorderliness, hinder the development of the spirit. The spirit develops itself more easily than the soul's.

To the spirit belong: 1) The fear of God (corresponding to the mind); 2) Conscience (corresponding to will); 3) Prayer (corresponding to feeling). The fear of God gives birth to prayer and makes the conscience clear.

There is no need to direct all this to the other, invisible world. Children already have a predisposition for this, and they assimilate these feelings. Especially is prayer in grafted very easily and acts not through the tongue, but through the heart. This is why children willingly and without fatigue participate in prayers at home and in the church services and are happy to do so. Therefore, they should not be deprived of this part of their education, but little by little they should be led into this sanctuary of our feelings. The earlier the fear of God will be imprinted and prayer arouse, the more solid will piety be for the rest of one's life.

In some children this spirit has been manifested of itself, even among evident obstacles to its uncovering. This is very natural. The spirit of grace received at baptism, if it has not been quenched by an improper development of body and soul, cannot but give life to our spirit, and what can prevent it from being manifested in its power?

Conscience, however, demands the closest guidance. Sound concepts, together with the good example of the parents and other means of teaching the good, and prayer illuminate the conscience and imprint in it sufficient foundations for subsequent good activity. But the chief thing is that one should form in children an attitude of conscientiousness and awareness. Awareness is something extraordinary important in life; but however easy it is to form it, it is just as easy to stifle it in children.

The will of the parents for small children is the law of conscience and of God. Let parents, in accordance with their best understanding, give their commands in such a way that children are not forced to be transgressors of their will; and if they have already become such, they should be disposed as much as possible to repentance.

What frost is for flowers, so is the transgression of the parents' will for a child; he cannot look you in the eyes, he does not desire to enjoy kindnesses, he wishes to run away and be alone; but at the same time his soul becomes crude, and the child begins to grow wild. It is a good thing to dispose him ahead of time to repentance, so that without fear, with trust and with tears, he might come and say, 'I did something wrong.'

It goes without saying that all this will concern only ordinary things; but what is good is that here a foundation is placed for a future constant and truly religious character – to rise up immediately after a fall – and there is formed the capability of speedily repentance and cleansing or renewing oneself by tears.

We have given here the order of a child's life. Let a child grow in it, and the spirit of piety will develop more in him. The parents should follow all the movements of the child's awakening powers and direct everything to a single end.

This is rule: begin with the child's very first breath; begin everything at once, and not just one thing; do this all unceasingly, evenly, by degrees, without jumps, with patience and expectation, observing a wise gradualness, taking note of the sprouts and making use of them, considering nothing unimportant in such an important matter.

February 2023

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts

www.stmichaelorthodox.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 St. 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	3 Synaxis of the Righteous Symeon and Prophetess Anna	4 Divine Liturgy 9:00am Vespers 5:00pm
5 Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee - Triodion Begins Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	6 St. Photios the Great	7	8 <i>Non fasting day</i> Great Martyr Theodore the Commander 6:00pm Paraklesis	9	10 <i>Non fasting day</i> Hieromartyr Haralmabos	11 Divine Liturgy 9:00am Vespers 5:00pm
12 Sunday of the Prodigal Son Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	13	14	15 Paraklesis 6:00 pm	16	17 Great Martyr Theodore the Tyro	18 Saturday of the Souls Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:15am) Vespers 5:00pm
19 Judgement/Meatfare Sunday (last day to eat meat before Lent); Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	20 + <i>Cheesefair week - No meat allowed</i>	21 + <i>Cheesefair week - No meat allowed</i>	22 + <i>Cheesefair week -No meat allowed</i> Paraklesis 6:00 pm	23 + <i>Cheesefair week -No meat allowed</i>	24 + <i>Cheesefair week -No meat allowed</i> First and Second Finding of the Head of St. John the Baptist	25 + <i>Cheesefair week -No meat allowed</i> Divine Liturgy 9:00am Vespers 5:00pm
26 Sunday Cheesefair (last day to eat dairy and eggs) Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am 7:00 pm Forgiveness Vespers	27 St. Raphael of Brooklyn The Beginning of Great Lent + <i>Strict Fast</i>	28 + <i>Strict Fast</i> 6:00pm Great Canon of Saint Andrew				