



# Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts  
www.stmichaelorthodox.com  
September 2020



## 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

**September 1st** - Church New Year; St. Symeon the Stylite

**September 6th** - Miracle Wrought by the Archangel Michael at Colossae

**September 8th** - Nativity of the Theotokos

**September 9th** - Sts. Joachim and Anna

**September 14th** - Elevation of the Holy Cross

**September 16th** - St. Euphemia the Great Martyr

**September 23rd** - Conception of St. John the Baptist

**September 24th** - St. Silouan

**September 26th** - St. John the Theologian

## **The Exaltation of the Honorable Cross**

Constantine the Great and Equal to the Apostles, first among the emperors of ancient Rome, accepted Christianity. While in the midst of battle, according to some against Magnentius in Rome, or according to others against the Scythians at the Danube River, he saw that the armies of the enemy were greater in number than his own, and this caused distress and fear. Finding himself in this situation, there appeared in the afternoon the form of the Cross in the sky, marked by stars. And encircling the Cross were letters, also inscribed by stars in Roman, namely Latin letters, which said the following: "Conquer by this."

Straightway there was fashioned a Cross, like the one that appeared in the sky, and he ordered for it to go before the army. Engaging the enemy, they mightily conquered, to the point that most of them were killed. The others left in fear. The power of the Crucified One was therefore understood by this miracle, and he believed that He was the true God, and he was baptized with his mother.

He then sent his mother Helen to Jerusalem, first of all, to venerate and honor with more brilliance the life-giving Tomb of the Lord, and the rest of the Holy Land. Also, to hastily seek and find the honorable Cross of the God-man Savior. For this she investigated with fervent longing, and she found it hidden. Likewise she found the two crosses on which the thieves were crucified. She also found the nails. The empress was confused, however, as to which of three was the Cross of the Lord. She discovered which it was by a miracle, when it raised a dead widow woman after the Cross of the Lord touched her. The other two crosses of the thieves did not perform the miracle.

Then she kissed and venerated the honorable Cross with great reverence and faith, not only the empress Helen, but also all the officials with her. Because all the Christians sought to kiss and venerate it, it was not possible to fulfill their desire due to the large crowd, so they sought alternatively to merely see the sweet vision of the honorable Cross, and so by this vision their longing would be satisfied. Wherefore the then blessed Patriarch of Jerusalem Makarios went up onto the ambon, and lifted high with his two hands the honorable Cross, showing it to all the Christians found below. Straightway when they saw it, together they cried out from their heart: "Lord have mercy." From then on it was established by the most divine and God-inspired Fathers of the Church, for all Christians to celebrate on this day, this honorable and universal Exaltation of the divine Cross, to the glory of Christ our true God for Whom they gather.

**Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church**  
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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: Debby Thomo  
Treasurer: Mary Andreea

**Clergy**

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

**Parish News & Events**

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

Sep. 3<sup>rd</sup> – Debby Thomo  
Sep. 7<sup>th</sup> – Shirley Ann Marcian  
Sep. 10<sup>th</sup> – Kristina Mironidis  
Sep. 14<sup>th</sup> – Liana Burren  
Sep. 15<sup>th</sup> – Paul Porra  
Sep. 27<sup>st</sup> – Susan Bellerose

**Happy Name Day**

**September 1st** – St. Symeon –  
Symeon Downie

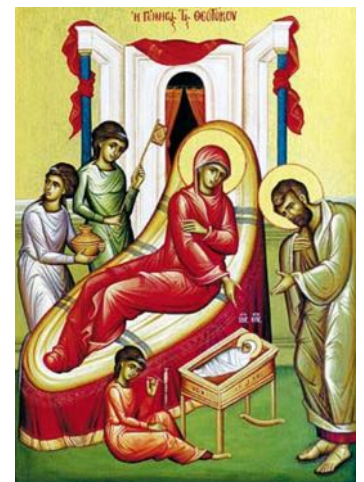
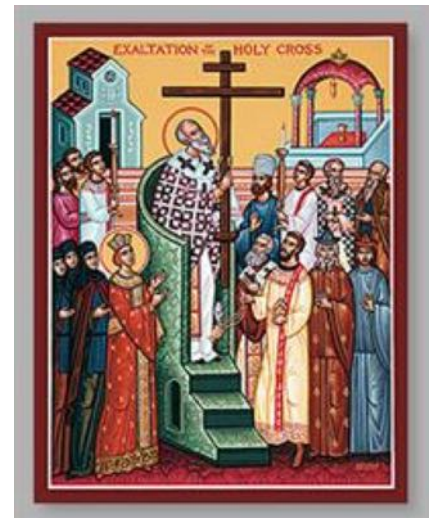
**September 8th** – St. Mary -  
Mary Dowling, Mary Andreea,  
Maria Naddad, Mary  
Grabosky, Maria Mironidis

**September 9th** – St. Anna –  
Ana Tanka

**September 17th** – St. Sophia  
– Sophia Penna, Sophia  
(daughter of Teodora)

**September 26th** – St. John the  
Evangelist – Fr. John, Yannis  
Mironidis, Yannis Penna, John  
DeAngelis

**September 30th** – St. Gregory  
of Armenia – Gregory Downie



**Please Pray for:**  
Preoteasa Camelia  
Carol Porra  
Bill & Laureen Smith  
Mary Grabosky  
Henrietta Panu  
Jennifer Silva  
Alexander



## Our U.S. Archdiocese during the Time of Pandemic

A short reflection as an introduction to the report of His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae at the Virtual Congress on September 4-5, 2020

At the beginning of March 2020, the world as we know it came under the grip of a terrible virus, a pandemic that has caused multiple changes in our daily life, including our religious life. We have often heard that “the world will not be the same anymore,” words emanating from a fear of sickness and death, a fear that is magnified by the many scenarios about how the world will be “after CoVid19.”

It is true that the world has changed in many ways: isolation and distancing, the result of public health regulations, have become mankind’s codes during the pandemic. Schools and many other types of activities have moved exclusively online, and even religious services were, for a while, restricted only to virtual participation. What used to be promulgated by science fiction books became our everyday reality, forcing us to ask important questions about our future and the future of the world. Had we been asked before the pandemic how it would be to work and learn “from home,” with goods being delivered to our door, we would have probably answered positively, accepting this scenario because of the comfort such a life implies. But when we actually experienced this, we discovered it impossible to accept such a life lived in isolation, fear, and uncertainty.

Some of us have tried to ignore this new reality, while others have seen it as a sign of the end of the world. All of us who call ourselves Christians have discovered

that our survival is closely tied to a spiritual life which now, in isolation, we can practice without invoking “earthly cares” as an excuse. Isolation has impelled us towards more personal and family prayer. Even if we could not participate in person at church services, we have been able to use the technology of the internet, and even more, we’ve had the chance to organize a spiritual life in our private “prayer closet.” And this has become an opportunity to reflect on ourselves, to look differently at our neighbor, to ask ourselves meaningful questions about things of value in our lives. Our Lord’s question:

***In God’s pedagogy, this trial, this test of maturity for today’s humanity, can be an opportunity for a deep searching of our conscience and of spiritual renewal in our time...***

“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt 16:26) has had a special resonance in the minds of every Christian during these times of the pandemic.

It has also been a chance for us to watch nature as it has continued its life without isolation, fear, or uncertainty. Let us remember the words of Christ: “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (Matt 6:26). And from this general question about faith in the Providence of God, we’ve begun to ask ourselves what is each one’s response, on a personal, family and community level.

After consultations with our priests via Zoom (we have adapted quickly), we decided what needed to be done in our parishes: to follow the rules/recommendations of the state governors, to increase our service schedule in order to offer to the faithful a more intense connection with the liturgical life, to develop our program of biblical and catechetical studies (The Way program already presented). During Great Lent we were allowed to have fewer people present at services (according to the regulations) but increased net attendance by having more services during the week. To the personal prayer rule we sought to add this virtual liturgical program, and to keep in constant contact with the faithful by phone, email, etc. We tried to encourage everyone and call them to prayer, faith, and hope. We sought out those who were infected and helped them in any way we could. We endeavored to express the Christian's understanding of being an example of a balanced attitude that comes from hope in God's providence in these times of fear and concern about the future.

We celebrated Pascha and many of our patronal feasts in isolation, with the faithful participating only online but with living hope, as I said in my Pastoral Letter for the Lord's Resurrection, "for Christ the Lord has conquered death and granted Resurrection to us. The One Who left the empty tomb and entered through locked doors now comes to every home and

family and cannot be stopped by the isolation in which we now find ourselves. The One who conquered death now overcomes every restriction and comes down to bring peace in all our souls." And our hope and faith in God's care for us was rewarded because at the end of May many of the restrictions began to relax. But the pandemic is not over yet.



During this time, we have discovered the strong faith of many of the faithful, but also the deep fear of sickness and death in others. We have seen all kinds of reactions among the hierarchs, priests and faithful, when faced with this pandemic. The most striking example is that of Holy Communion, from the question of whether we should participate at the Divine

Liturgy and receive Holy Communion, to the passionate discussion, which has become Pan-Orthodox, about the mode in which we should offer it. The Communion Spoon has become a subject of controversy and of accusations against the clergy. Although on a Pan-Orthodox level there has been only one answer—that we maintain the traditional mode of partaking with only one spoon, in the U.S. there have been a great variety of ways of accommodating Communion during the pandemic among the several jurisdictions and even within each jurisdiction. A test and an important question for the future!!!

Meanwhile, the persecution of Christians in Asia and Africa has continued even during the pandemic.

According to the Open Doors organization, 2983 Christians were killed in 2019 for reasons related to their Christian faith, 1200 in Nigeria alone between January and June 2020, and 9488 churches were attacked. Isolation and fear have exacerbated racial frustrations, leading to unimaginable violence, outbreaks, and conflicts on multiple levels in the USA.

We can say that the world has changed during the pandemic. But how have we, who call ourselves Orthodox Christians, changed? The world has always been troubled by pandemics and catastrophes. The Flood in Noah's time cleansed the world of sin and offered the opportunity for the birth of a new world. Noah built the Ark and saved a part of the world from the Flood. For us to pass through the "flood" of the new world, we have to take care to build "houses of virtue" in our souls (Abba Dorotheos), to "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering" (Heb 10:23), knowing "that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom 8:28). In God's pedagogy, this trial, this test of maturity for today's humanity, can be an opportunity for a deep searching of our conscience and of spiritual renewal in our time, exhausted by consumerism, selfish interests, and conflict. St. Paul wrote to the Christians of Rome, already persecuted by the Roman emperors: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Rom 8:35). If until now we have avoided the answer to this question, the time has come for us to forsake the three giants that precede sin:

ignorance, forgetfulness and inactivity (St. Mark the Ascetic). And we hope to hear these words from the Apocalypse: "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (3:10).

† Metropolitan Nicolae

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### Pictures from the Baptism of Savvia Pitsillides



## ~ Video & Book Corner ~



### **Video: The “Jesus Prayer” Explained by Fr. Aimilianos (Three Part Series)**

In the first part of the video interview, Fr. Aimilianos of Simonopetra (+2019) talks about the Jesus Prayer as the essence of all prayers which exist in our Church, a living memory, not a 'magical formula', nor a psycho-somatic exercise related to some kind of gnostic or syncretic knowledge.

In the second part, he talks about why monks pray the Jesus Prayer.

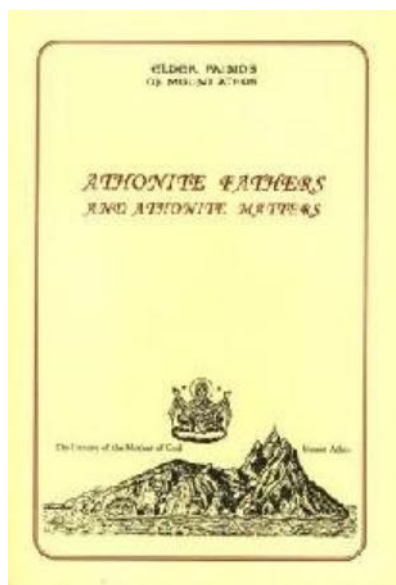
In the third part, he talks about the purpose of Jesus Prayer, a powerful and transformative prayer of the Orthodox Church.

Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Av4Eg5D3OFk>

Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3NaCjs PHw>

Part 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaxWHBFzXuA>

### **Book: Athonite Fathers and Athonite Matters**



The author, Elder Paisios, was blessed in being able to associate with many righteous Athonite fathers, “athletes” of Christ, or to hear others tell of them. He was deeply impressed by their holy simplicity, their unshakeable, genuine faith; he was moved by the generosity of spirit in which they struggled; he admired their self-denial unto death and their devotion to the ascetic ideal; he tasted and was sweetened by the honey of their virtues; and, being animated by the same spirit of Christian struggle, he imitated their godly achievements. "The Elder's countenance was luminous; he was enveloped by the grace of God. Just looking at him was enough to make you forget every care; he spread joy with his inner kindness. His external clothing, his patched old habit, was worse than the clothes that gardeners use to make scarecrows to keep the birds away. If anyone happened to give him something good, he gave it at once to someone else."

## The Antichrist: An Orthodox Perspective from the Church Fathers (Part 4)

Fr. Andrew J. Anderson

The Antichrist will be annoyed with what these two great prophets are saying and doing, but at first will do nothing against them because he is trying to look so nice. But finally, in rage, when he begins his egotistical tyranny as world king, the Antichrist will show his true inner evil self and will kill these two prophets and launch a fierce persecution against all who oppose him, particularly Christians (Rev. 11:7, and 13:7).

### St. Cyril of Jerusalem on the Antichrist's quest to be the global king

Even though God will send Enoch and Elijah to warn humanity (which convinces some people and some devout Jews), most men and most Jews will be deceived by the false “Christ”—the Antichrist—and will run after him. The nations will desire that this “wonderful” man rule them all, and he will therefore easily grab the power of global rule. St. Cyril of Jerusalem taught that the “Antichrist is to come when the times of the Roman Empire shall have been fulfilled and the end of the world is drawing near.” He “shall seize for himself the power of the Roman Empire, and he shall falsely style himself ‘Christ.’” The Roman Empire will have ended (“shall have been fulfilled”). At the time when the end of the world “is drawing near”, the Antichrist shall grab—“shall seize for himself”—the “power” of the old Roman Empire, which was a huge, powerful political machine that united nations under the one throne of one

emperor, whose worship as a god was a required part of politics (and this was also the reason why so many Christians became martyrs, refusing to worship the emperor or his image). The Antichrist will have global power because “authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation” (Rev.13:7).

St. Cyril's Catechetical Lectures (written in mid-300s AD) state:

And now, in this same way, since the true Christ is to come a second time, the adversary [the devil] makes use of the expectations of the simple, and especially of those of the circumcision [i.e., the Jews]; and he brings in a certain man who

***“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21).***

is a magician, and who is quite expert in sorceries and enchantments of beguiling

craftiness. This one shall seize for himself the power of the Roman Empire, and he shall falsely style himself Christ. By this name Christ he shall deceive the Jews, who are expecting the Anointed [i.e. the Messiah]; and he shall seduce the Gentiles by his magical illusions.

This aforementioned Antichrist is to come when the times of the Roman Empire shall have been fulfilled and the end of the world is drawing near. There shall rise up together ten kings of the Romans, reigning in different parts, perhaps, but all reigning at the same time. After these there shall be an eleventh, the Antichrist, who by the evil craft of his magic shall seize upon the Roman power. Of the kings who reigned before him, three shall he humble, and the remaining seven he shall have as subjects under him.

At first he shall feign mildness,—as if he were a learned and discreet person,—and sobriety and loving-kindness.

Having beguiled the Jews by lying signs and wonders of his magical deceit, until they believe he is the expected Christ, he shall afterwards be characterized by all manner of wicked deeds of inhumanity and lawlessness, as if to outdo all the unjust and impious men who have gone before him...[quote is continued below]

Most people of the world will love this Antichrist and will want him to rule them. From our own Church hymnbook, the Lenten Triodion—we hear in the Synaxarion reading for Meat-Fare Sunday that the Antichrist “will be constrained by men and will be proclaimed king and the multitudes of the Jewish people will love him; he will restore Jerusalem and will erect the temple for them” (Apostasy and Antichrist, p.30).

### **Solomon’s Temple will be rebuilt**

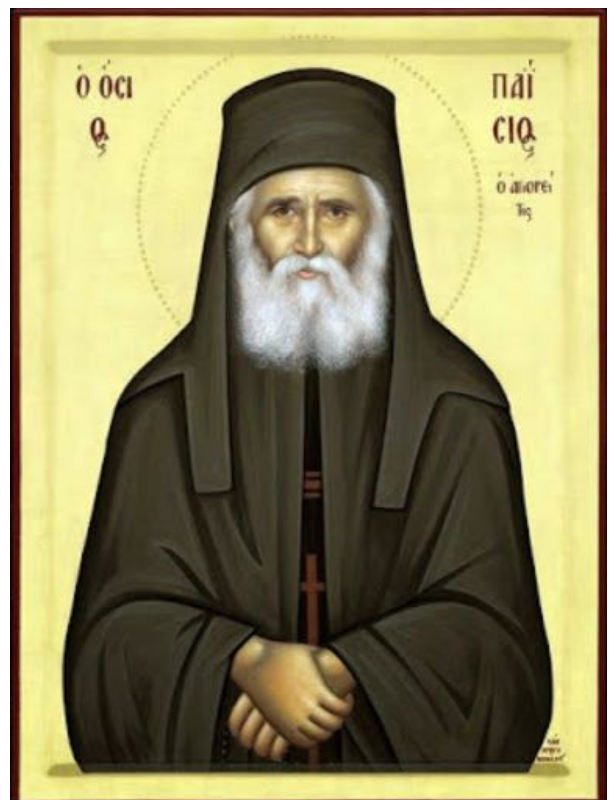
St. Ephraim (d. 373AD) in his sermon, “On the coming of the Lord, the end of the world, and the coming of the Antichrist,” says the Jews will accept the false “messiah”—the Antichrist—and he will rebuild for them their Temple in Jerusalem.

“The Jews will rejoice and give honor to the reign of the antichrist more than anyone else. And he, under pretense of preference, and being industrious with them, will designate for them all a place and the temple.”

After the Temple of Solomon is rebuilt in Jerusalem, the Antichrist will sit in the Temple to be crowned “king”.

St. Paisios said that a sign that this prophecy is about to be fulfilled is when we see the Mosque in Jerusalem being taken down in order to make way for the re-construction of the Jewish Temple of Solomon on the ancient Temple Mount. This will be the time for the Christians to “flee to the hills” and mountains that the Lord Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24:15-22, because terrible things will start to happen once the evil king is crowned in Jerusalem. The final persecution of Christians will begin: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21).

*To be continued.*



## On the Plague (Part 4) St. Cyprian of Carthage

What sublimity, to stand erect amid the desolation of the human race, and not to lie prostrate with those who have no hope in God; but rather to rejoice, and to embrace the benefit of the occasion; that in thus bravely showing forth our faith, and by suffering endured, going forward to Christ by the narrow way that Christ trod, we may receive the reward of His life and faith according to His own judgment! Assuredly he may fear to die, who, not being regenerated of water and the Spirit, is delivered over to the fires of Gehenna; he may fear to die who is not enrolled in the cross and passion of Christ; he may fear to die, who from this death shall pass over to a second death; he may fear to die, whom on his departure from this world eternal flame shall torment with never-ending punishments; he may fear to die who has this advantage in a lengthened delay, that in the meanwhile his groanings and his anguish are being postponed.

Many of our people die in this mortality, that is, many of our people are liberated from this world. This mortality, as it is a plague to Jews and Gentiles, and enemies of Christ, so it is a departure to salvation to God's servants. The fact that, without any difference made between one another, the righteous die as well as the unrighteous, is no reason for you to suppose that it is a common death for the good and evil alike. The righteous are called to their place of refreshing, the unrighteous are snatched away to

punishment; safety is the more speedily given to the faithful, penalty to the unbelieving. We are thoughtless and ungrateful, beloved brethren, for the divine benefits, and do not acknowledge what is conferred upon us. Lo, virgins depart in peace, safe with their glory, not fearing the threats of the coming Antichrist, and his corruptions and his brothels.

Boys escape the peril of their unstable age, and in happiness attain the reward of continence and innocence. Now the

delicate matron does not fear the tortures; for she has escaped by a rapid death the fear of persecution, and the hands and the torments of the executioner. By the dread of the mortality and of the time the lukewarm are inflamed, the slack are nerved up, the slothful are stimulated, the deserters are compelled to return, the heathens are constrained to believe, the ancient congregation of the faithful is called to rest, the new and abundant army is gathered to the battle with a braver vigour, to fight without fear of death when the battle shall come, because it comes to the warfare in the time of the mortality.

And further, beloved brethren, what is it, what a great thing is it, how pertinent, how necessary, that pestilence and plague which seems horrible and deadly, searches out the righteousness of each one, and examines the minds of the human race, to see whether they who are in health tend the sick; whether relations affectionately love their kindred; whether masters pity their languishing servants;

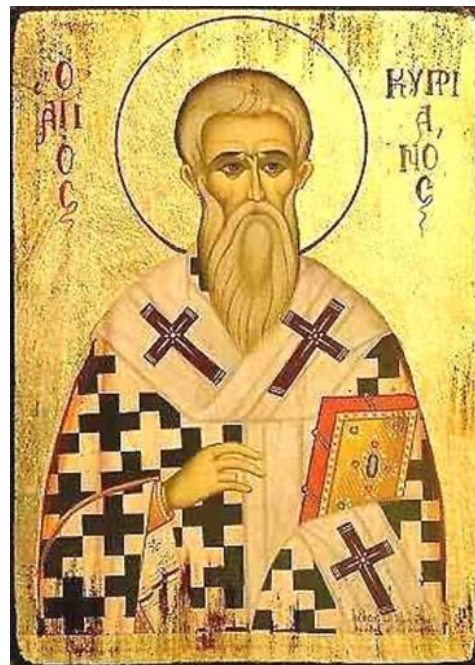
***“The righteous are called to their place of refreshing, the unrighteous are snatched away to punishment; safety is the more speedily given to the faithful, penalty to the unbelieving.”***

whether physicians do not forsake the beseeching patients; whether the fierce suppress their violence; whether the rapacious can quench the ever insatiable ardour of their raging avarice even by the fear of death; whether the haughty bend their neck; whether the wicked soften their boldness; whether, when their dear ones perish, the rich, even then bestow anything, and give, when they are to die without heirs. Even although this mortality conferred nothing else, it has done this benefit to Christians and to God's servants that we begin gladly to desire martyrdom as we learn not to fear death. These are trainings for us, not deaths: they give the mind the glory of fortitude; by contempt of death they prepare for the crown.

But perchance some one may object, and say, "It is this, then, that saddens me in the present mortality, that I, who had been prepared for confession, and had devoted myself to the endurance of suffering with my whole heart and with abundant courage, am deprived of martyrdom, in that I am anticipated by death." In the first place, martyrdom is not in your power, but in the condescension of God; neither can you say that you have lost what you do not know whether you would deserve to receive. Then, besides, God the searcher of the reins and heart, and the investigator and knower of secret things, sees you, and praises and approves you; and He who sees that your virtue was ready in you, will give you a reward for your virtue. Had Cain, when he offered his gift to God, already slain his brother? And yet God, foreseeing the fratricide conceived in his mind, anticipated its condemnation. As in that case the evil thought and mischievous intention were

foreseen by a foreseeing God, so also in God's servants, among whom confession is purposed and martyrdom conceived in the mind, the intention dedicated to good is crowned by God the judge. It is one thing for the spirit to be wanting for martyrdom, and another for martyrdom to have been wanting for the spirit. Such as the Lord finds you when He calls you, such also He judges you; since He Himself bears witness, and says, "And all the churches shall know that I am the searcher of the reins and heart." Revelation 2:23 For God does not ask for our blood, but for our faith. For neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob were slain; and yet, being honoured by the deserts of faith and righteousness, they deserved to be first among the patriarchs, to whose feast is collected every one that is found faithful, and righteous, and praiseworthy.

*To be continued.*



# September 2020

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<b>1</b> <b>Church New Year; St. Symeon the Stylite</b>	2 Paraklesis 6:00pm	3	4	5 Holy Prophet Zacharias  Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am)
<b>6</b> Miracle of the Archangel Michael at Colossae  Matins 8:30am  Divine Liturgy 9:30am	7 Vespers, Litia, Matins – Nativity of the Theotokos 6:00pm	<b>8</b> Nativity of the Theotokos  Divine Liturgy 9:00am	9 Sts. Joachim and Anna	10	11	12 Parish Golf Tournament  Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am)  Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
<b>13</b> Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am  Vespers, Litia, Matins – Elevation of the Holy Cross 6:00pm	<b>14</b> Elevation of the Holy Cross (Fast Day)  Divine Liturgy 9:00am	15	16 St. Euphemia the Great Martyr	17	18	19 Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am)  Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
<b>20</b> Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	21	22	23 Conception of St. John the Baptist  Vespers, Litia, Matins, Divine Liturgy – St. Silouan 10:00pm	<b>24</b> St. Thekla the Martyr; St. Silouan the Athonite	25	26 Falling Asleep of St. John the Theologian  Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am)  Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
<b>27</b> Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	28	29	30 Paraklesis 6:00pm			