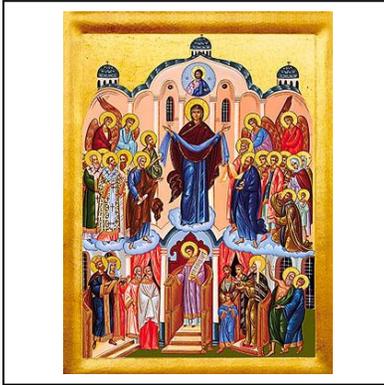


Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts
www.stmichaelorthodox.com

October 2022



LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday

9:00am Divine Liturgy

5:00pm Vespers

Sunday

9:00am Matins

10:00am Divine Liturgy

Wednesday

6:00pm Paraklesis

Feast days

October 1st - Holy Protection of the Theotokos

October 6th - Apostle Thomas

October 14th - St. Paraskeva of Iasi, Romania

October 18th - St. Luke the Evangelist

October 20th - St. Artemius the Great Martyr

October 26th - St. Demetrius the Great Martyr of Thessaloniki

October 27th - St. Demetrius of Basarabov, protector of Bucharest

Holy Protection of Theotokos

From time immemorial, the Church has celebrated the Most-holy Theotokos as the patroness and protectress of the Christian people, who, by her intercessory prayers, implores God's mercy for us sinners. The help of the Most-holy Mother of God has been clearly shown numerous times, to individuals and to nations, in peace and in war, in monastic deserts and in densely populated cities.

The event that the Church commemorates and celebrates on October 1st confirms the Theotokos consistent protection of Christian people. On October 1, 911, during the reign of Emperor Leo the Wise, there was an All-night Vigil in the Vlacheriae Church of the Mother of God in Constantinople. The church was full of people. St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ was standing in the rear of the church with his disciple Epiphanius.

At four o'clock in the morning, the Most-holy Theotokos appeared above the people, holding her omophorion outstretched as a protective covering for the faithful. She was clothed in gold-encrusted purple, and shone with an ineffable radiance, surrounded by apostles, saints, martyrs and virgins. St. Andrew said to Blessed Epiphanius: "Do you see, brother, the Queen and Lady of all praying for the whole world?" Epiphanius replied: "I see, Father, and am struck with amazement!"

The Feast of the Protection was instituted to commemorate this event, and to remind us that we can prayerfully receive the unceasing protection of the Most-holy Theotokos in any time of difficulty."
(from: <http://www.westsrbdio.org/prolog/prolog.htm>)

While most of the Orthodox churches celebrate this feast day on October 1st according to ancient custom, Greeks celebrate the Holy Protection on October 28th as a special holiday in order to invite the secular government to honor the Theotokos for Her special protection over the Greek people during World War 2.



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: 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!!

Oct. 2nd – Susan Silva
Oct. 5th – Stephanie Rapsomanikis
Oct. 11th – Shirley Yanka, Amanda Thomo
Oct. 12th – Richard Marcin
Oct. 15th – Loukas Mironidis, Spiro Kelly
Oct. 21st – Dimitry Downie
Oct. 22nd – Katie Mironidis
Oct. 23rd – Joy Rapsomanikis

Happy Name Day

October 1st – St. Romanos – Roman Alexander
October 6th – Apostle Thomas – Tom Dowling, Tom Andrea, Thomas Burren
October 18th – St. Luke – Luke Yanka, Loukas Mironidis
October 26th-27th – St. Dimitrios – Dimitri Mironidis, Dimitry Downie

Please Pray for:

Theodor
Louise
Henrietta
Alina – pregnancy
Kristina and
Presbyteria
Camelia - job

SAINT MICHAEL THE
SAINT MICHAEL'S ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
PRESENTS

Annual Church Banquet

Tickets are \$25 each

NOVEMBER 6, 2022
AFTER LITURGY
16 ROMANIAN AVE, SOUTHBRIDGE, MA

Our meal for the church banquet consists of the following, baked haddock with a cheese crumb topping, rice pilaf, mashed butternut squash, green beans, and cheese cake with a fruit topping.

Please join us for
our church's
feast day
celebration

Saturday 5th –
Vespers and Litia
5:00pm

Sunday
November 6th
Matins - 9:00am
Divine Liturgy -
10:00am

Banquet to follow

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church
Presents

Annual Turkey Raffle Party

Join us for
fellowship
& fun raffle

28
OCT

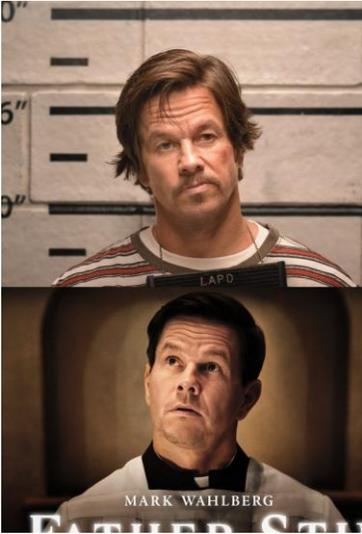
6:00pm
16 Romanian Ave,
Southbridge, MA

SHARE AND BRING A FRIEND!

<https://www.stmichaelorthodox.com/>

~ Movie & Book Corner ~

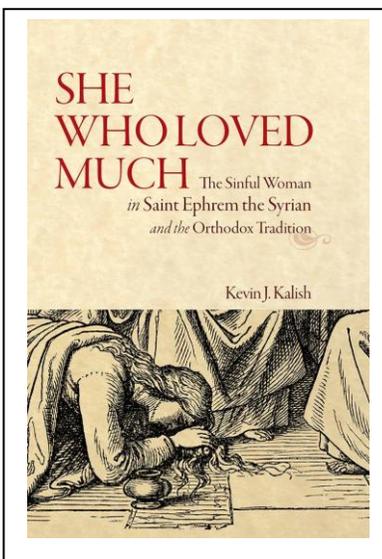
Movie: *Father Stu*



Based on a true story, *Father Stu* is an unflinchingly honest, funny and ultimately uplifting drama about a lost soul who finds his purpose in a most unexpected place. When an injury ends his amateur boxing career, Stuart Long (Mark Wahlberg) moves to L.A. dreaming of stardom. While scraping by as a supermarket clerk, he meets Carmen (Teresa Ruiz), a Catholic Sunday school teacher who seems immune to his bad-boy charm. Determined to win her over, the longtime agnostic starts going to church to impress her. But surviving a terrible motorcycle accident leaves him wondering if he can use his second chance to help others find their way, leading to the surprising realization that he is meant to be a Catholic priest. Despite a devastating health crisis and the skepticism of Church officials and his estranged parents (Mel Gibson and Jacki Weaver), Stu pursues his vocation with courage and compassion, inspiring not only those closest to him but countless others along the way.

Written for the screen and directed by Rosalind Ross, and starring Academy Award Nominee® Mark Wahlberg as Father Stu, along with Academy Award Winner® Mel Gibson, Academy Award Nominee® Jacki Weaver, and Teresa Ruiz (*Narcos*). The film is produced by Mark Wahlberg, Stephen Levinson Foss and executive produced by Miky Lee, Colleen Camp, and Jordon Patrick Peach, Tony Grazia and Rosalind Ross.

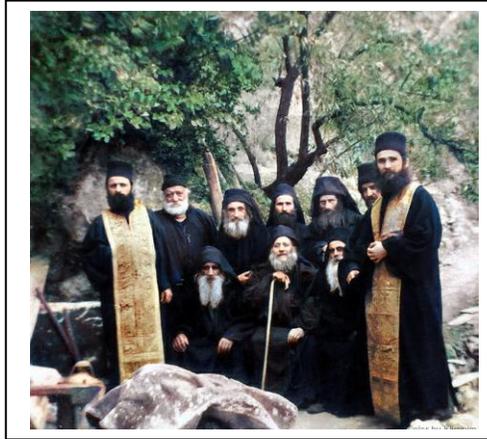
Book: *She who loved much* by Kevin J. Kalish



The stories read in the Bible are commonly explored and elaborated in greater depth in the liturgical hymns, homilies, and patristic writings of the Orthodox Church. Such is the case with the account found in St Luke's gospel of a sinful woman who anoints Christ with precious oil shortly before his Passion and Crucifixion. The woman's story is taken up in the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church in Holy Week, where she is held up as an example of repentance and unconstrained love. In this in-depth but readable study the biblical accounts are elaborated through both the liturgical and oratorical tradition of the Church, as found primarily in Greek and Syriac manuscripts. Previously inaccessible texts of late antiquity, such as homilies by Amphilochius of Iconium and Ephrem Graecus, are found here in English for the first time, together with fresh English renderings of other sermons. The present work unveils the intricate nature of the tradition of the Church, which gives greater scope and application to the biblical record through its hymnography and oratory.

Attaining His Grace By St. Joseph the Hesychast.

My child, if you pay attention to everything I write to you and compel yourself, you will find great benefit. All these things are happening to you because you are not forcing yourself to say the prayer (the Jesus Prayer). So force yourself to say the prayer unceasingly; do not let your mouth stop at all. In this way you will grow accustomed to it within yourself, and then the nous will take over. Do not become overconfident with your thoughts for you will be weakened and defiled. If you pray and continuously force yourself to pray, you will see how much grace you will receive. My child, man's life is full of sorrow because he is in exile. Do not seek perfect rest. Since our Christ bore His Cross, we shall bear ours, too. If we endure all afflictions, we shall receive grace from the Lord. The Lord allows us to be tempted, so that He can test the zeal and love we have for Him. Therefore, patience is needed. Without patience a person does not obtain experience, acquire spiritual knowledge, or attain any measure of virtue and perfection. Love Jesus and say the prayer unceasingly, and it will enlighten you on His path. Be careful not to judge, because then God will allow grace to withdraw and will let you fall and be humbled so that you can see your own faults. Everything that you wrote about is good. The first things that you are feeling are due to God's grace; when it comes, it makes a man spiritual and makes everything seem fine and beautiful. Then he loves everyone and has compunction, tears, and a fervent soul. However, when grace withdraws to test a man, everything becomes carnal and the soul falls. Do not lose your eagerness at this point, but force yourself to cry out the prayer continuously with distress, with might and main, Lord

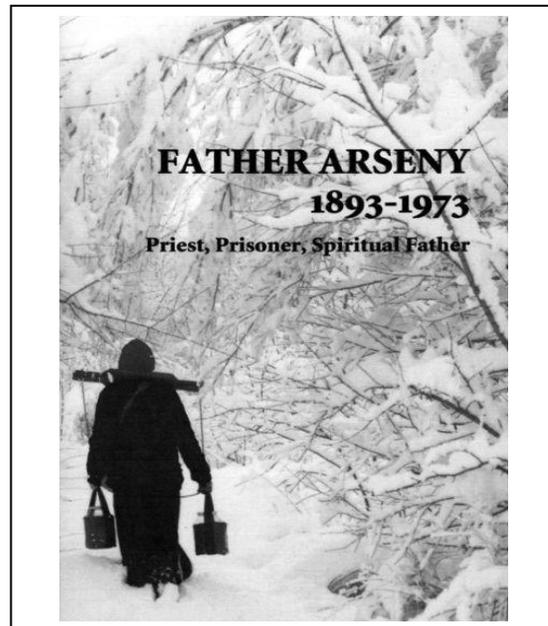


Jesus Christ, have mercy on me! Say the same thing continually, over and over again. And as if you were noetically gazing at Christ, say to Him, I thank Thee, my dear Christ, for all the good things which Thou hast given me and for all the hardships that I suffer. Glory to Thee, glory to Thee my God. And if you are patient, grace and joy will come once more. However, temptations, sorrow, agitation, and irritability will come again; then struggle, victory, and thanksgiving follow. This recurs until little by little you are cleansed from the passions and become spiritual. With time, as you grow older, you attain dispassion. However, you must struggle. Do not expect good things to come by themselves. One does not become a monk through luxury and comforts. A monk must be insulted, derided, tested. He must fall and then get up so that he can become a true person. He must not be cuddled in his mother's arms. Who ever heard of someone becoming a monk by his mother's side? As soon as he cries out, "Oh!" she would say, "Eat, so you do not get sick!" Asceticism, my son, requires deprivation. You cannot obtain virtues through luxury and the easy life. It takes a struggle and much labor. It takes crying out to Christ day and night. It takes patience in all temptations and afflictions. It takes suppressing your anger and desires. You will fatigue greatly until you realize that prayer without attention and watchfulness is a waste of time; work without pay. You must set attention as a vigilant guard over all your inner and outer senses. Without attention, both the nous and the powers of the soul are diffused in vain and ordinary things, like useless water running down the streets. No one has ever

found prayer without attention and watchfulness. No one was ever counted worthy to ascend to the things above without having despised the things below. Many times you pray and your mind wanders here and there, wherever it pleases, to everything that attracts it out of habit. It takes considerable force and a struggle to break the mind away from there so that it pays attention to the words of the prayer. Many times the enemy craftily creeps into your thoughts, your words, your hearing, your eyes, and you are unaware of it. When you do realize it later on, you need to struggle greatly to be cleansed. However, do not give up fighting against the evil spirits. By the grace of God, you will be victorious, and then you will rejoice for all you had suffered. In addition, be careful—and tell the others, too—not to compliment one another in each other’s presence, for if compliments harm the perfect, how much more harmful they will be to you who are still weak. There was once a saint who had a visitor. Three times he told the saint that he was doing his handicraft well. After the third time, the saint replied, “Since you came here, you have driven God away from me!” Do you see how precise the saints were? For this reason, great caution is necessary in everything. Only reproaches and insults benefit a man spiritually, because they give birth to humility. He gains crowns, and by enduring, he crushes his egotism and vainglory. Therefore, when they insult you, “You arrogant egotist, you impatient hypocrite,” etc., it is a time for patience. If you respond, you lose. So always have the fear of God. Have love for everyone and be careful not to sadden or hurt anyone in any way, because your brother’s grief will serve as an obstacle when you pray. Be a good example to everyone in word and deed, and divine grace will always help you and protect you. And be careful, my child; do not ever forget throughout your entire life

that a monk must be a good example to lay people and not behave scandalously, just as angels are an example to him. Therefore, it is his duty to be very careful lest Satan cheat him. If it is necessary for a monk to go out into the world, let him go. However, he must be all eyes and all light: he must see very clearly, so that he does not suffer any harm while trying to benefit others. Young monks and nuns, who are still in the prime of life, are particularly endangered when they go out into the world, since they are walking in the midst of many snares. As for those who have somewhat matured in age and have become withered through asceticism, there is not so much danger. They are not harmed so much as they benefit others, if they have experience and knowledge. But in general, a monk does not obtain any benefit from the world—only praises and glory, which clean him out and leave him bare. And woe to him, if divine grace does not protect him according to the need and purpose for which he went out.

Book Club – October 27th, 6:30pm – 8:30pm
Fr. Arseny 1983-1973 Priest, Prisoner, spiritual father – second part



President's Corner

Dear Parishioners and Friends of Saint Michael's,

Hope everyone had a wonderful summer and with the colder weather rolling in we know that means the end of the year is coming! We wish a blessed end of the year and a great start to the school year!

These past couple of months the church has hosted two very large and successful events. The first being our parish golf tournament which hosted over 54 golfers and broke all-time fundraising records! By the grace of God our church earned over \$19,000 in net profit from the event! Thank you to everyone who participated, donated, and worked the event!

Also, Preoteasa Camelia and Father John planned an incredible youth retreat that was titled, "The Saint Siluoan Young Adults Retreat." This event hosted over 28 full participants and there were nearly 60 people who attended the talk with Father Jeremiah who was visiting our parish as a guest speaker.

God has truly been good to us this year and we are looking forward to hosting more events like our Annual Turkey Party on October 28th and our Feast Day Banquet on November 6th. We look forward to seeing everyone at either or both events!

Please be on the lookout for some upcoming projects and work around the hall, the apartment, and the church.

If anyone has any ideas or questions for us, please don't hesitate to call me or e-mail me at any time.

God Bless You and Have a Wonderful October!

---Luke Yanka, Parish Council President

508-958-4144; lsyanka@yahoo.com

Philocalic Evenings Series

Father Turbo Qualls will start our **Philocalic Evenings Series** on **November 14th, 2022 at 7:00pm**. The link for the zoom meeting will be sent on email. If you know you are not on our church's distribution lists for zoom meetings, ask Fr. John to send you the link. More details will be announced soon.

Fr. Turbo is the rector at St. Mary of Egypt, Serbian Orthodox Church in Kansas City Missouri, where he lives with his wife Juliana and their 8 children.

Fr. Turbo is also a retired professional tattoo artist. Having studied iconography within the Prosopone school of Iconography and most notably under the contemporary master iconographer, Fr. Stamatis Skliris of Athens, Fr. Turbo further augmented his education and skill in iconography by completing the Antiochian House of studies course in theology, with an emphasis in Iconology.

Fr. Turbo is also the former Dean of Chapters for the national chapter of the Brotherhood of St. Moses the Black. He has lectured in various parts of the United States in regard to the work of evangelization and cultural outreach within the United States. As a former youth minister within the evangelical church, Fr. Turbo has dedicated much of his life and work to the pragmatic and tangible articulation of Orthodox spirituality to both young people and spiritual seekers.



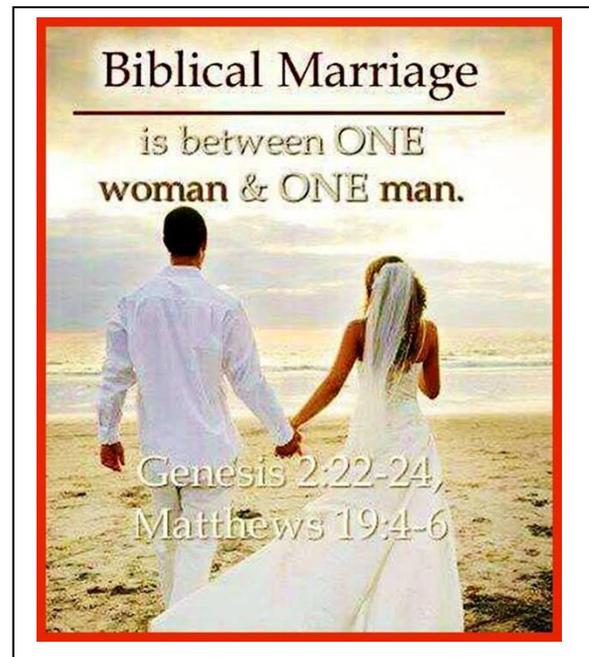
This is the full text of Orthodox Church of America (OCA) Encyclicals - Statement on same-sex relationships and sexual identity - Fourth Plenary Session 20th All-American Council Baltimore, MD July 21, 2022

There was a resolution proposed to affirm the Church's stance on issues of same-sex relationships and sexual identity. This matter, however, falls outside the competence of the All American Council, since, in the words of the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America, "All matters involving doctrine, canonical order, morals, and liturgical practice" are within the competence and jurisdiction of the Holy Synod. Nonetheless, meeting under the presidency of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, the Holy Synod has issued the following statement: The Orthodox Church teaches that the union between a man and a woman in marriage reflects the union between Christ and His Church (Eph. 5). As such, marriage is by this reflection monogamous and heterosexual. Within this marriage, sexual relations between a husband and wife are an expression of their love that has been blessed by God. Such is God's plan for male and female, created in his image and likeness, from the beginning, and such remains his plan for all time. Any other form of sexual expression is by its nature disordered, and cannot be blessed by the Church in any way, whether directly or indirectly. That said, the Holy Synod of Bishops expresses its pastoral concern and paternal love for all who desire to come to Christ and who struggle with their passions, temptations, and besetting sins, whatever those might be. The Church is a hospital for the sick; Our Lord has come as a physician to heal those who are ailing. Imitating our Savior, who stretched his arms wide on the Cross, we welcome with open arms all who desire the life of repentance in Christ.

Over the course of recent years, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon and the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America have made numerous pronouncements affirming the Orthodox Christian teaching on marriage and sexuality. Metropolitan Tikhon, at the 18th All-American Council in Atlanta, Georgia, on July 20, 2015, in his opening address, stated that: "... the Orthodox Church must continue to proclaim what she has always taught: that marriage is the union between one man and one woman and the Orthodox Church in America can in no way deviate from this teaching..." Among the Holy Synod's affirmations of the same teaching are the "Synodal Affirmations on Marriage, Family, Sexuality, and the Sanctity of Life," from the 10th All-American Council, Miami, Florida, taking place from July 26-31, 1992; the "Synodal Reaffirmation of the SCOBA statement titled 'On the Moral Crisis in our Nation,'" issued May 17, 2004; and the synodal "Statement concerning the June 26 US Supreme Court decision," issued June 28, 2015. Therefore, in accord with the timeless plan of God our Creator, the unchanging teaching of Christ the Savior announced through his holy apostles and their successors, and the consistent witness of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, the Holy Synod affirms what the Scriptures clearly and plainly proclaim and the holy fathers unerringly confess, namely: that God made human beings in two sexes, male and female, in his own image, and that chaste and pure sexual relationships are reserved to one man and one woman in the bond of marriage. As such, we affirm that sexual relationships are blessed only within the context of a marriage between one man and one woman. Motivated by love and out of sincere care for souls, we call

those who suffer from the passion of same-sex attraction to a life of steadfast chastity and repentance, the same life of chastity and repentance to which all mankind is called in Christ. We call upon all clergy, theologians, teachers, and lay persons within the Orthodox Church in America never to contradict these teachings by preaching or teaching against the Church's clear moral position; by publishing books, magazines, and articles which do the same; or producing or publishing similar content online. We reject any attempt to create a theological framework which would normalize same-sex erotic relationships or distort humanity's God-given sexual identity. The holy apostle Paul writes that such teachings will "increase to more ungodliness," and that such a "message will spread like gangrene" (2 Tim 2:16-17), misleading the faithful and inquirers seeking the truth. Any clergy, theologian, teacher, or lay person who contravenes our directive thus undermines the authority of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America by disregarding the Holy Synod's consistent and unwavering teaching on these matters. We call on any such persons to cease their disruptive activities, which threaten the peace and tranquility of the Orthodox Church in America, cause scandal and uncertainty, and tempt those who struggle against their disordered passions to stumble. Consequently, those who teach these errors become participants in the sin of those whom they have tempted or whom they have failed to correct, and thus should seek remission of this sin in the mystery of holy confession. Those who refuse correction open themselves to ecclesiastical discipline. Thus, we, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, conclude by once again affirming that all clergy, theologians, teachers, and lay persons of the Orthodox Church in America should teach nothing other than the fullness of the

Orthodox faith, which is the fullness of the saving truth. We remind our faithful and clergy that every person of goodwill is welcome to visit our parishes. However, reception into the Church, and continued communion in Christ at the sacred Chalice, is reserved for those who strive to live a life of repentance and humility in light of these God-given truths, conforming themselves to the commandments of God as the only path of salvation in Christ. All of us are sinners, but it is for precisely this reason that Our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to "Repent and believe in the Gospel, for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk. 1:15).



Parents' school corner

Quotes from *Not of this world – the life and teaching of Fr. Seraphim Rose* by Monk Damascene Christensen; Chapter 97 *Forming Young Souls*

No source of instruction can be overlooked in the preparation for the great battle of life, and there is a certain advantage to be derived from the right use of the heathen writers. The illustrious Moses is described as training his intellect in the science of the Egyptians, and so arriving at the contemplation of Him Who is. So in later days Daniel at Babylon was wise in the Chaldean philosophy, and ultimately apprehended the divine instruction...[But] we must not take everything indiscriminately, but only what is profitable...It would be shameful for us in the case of food to reject the injurious, and at the same time, in the case of lessons, to take no account of what keeps the soul alive, but, like mountain streams, to sweep in everything that happens to be in our way.

- St. Basil the Great (+379)

When you have children, teach them music; of course, real music and not dances and songs. Music aids the development of the acceptance of spiritual life. The soul becomes more refined. It begins to also understand spiritual music.

- Elder Barsanuphius of Optina (+1913)

Not too many years ago, a young monastic aspirant went to Mount Athos. In talking with the venerable Abbot of the monastery where he wished to stay, he told him, "Holy Father! My heart burns for the spiritual life, for asceticism, for unceasing communion with god, for obedience to an elder. Instruct me, please, holy Father, that I may attain

"Read this, son," he said. "But Father!" objected the disturbed aspirant. "This is heterodox Victorian sentimentality, a product of the western captivity! This isn't spiritual; it's not even Orthodox! I need writings which will teach spirituality!" The Abbot smiled, saying, "Unless you first develop normal, human, Christian feelings and learn to view life as little Davey did – with simplicity, kindness, warmth, and forgiveness – then all the Orthodox 'spirituality' and Patristic writings will not only be of no help to you – they will turn you into a 'spiritual' monster and destroy your soul."



.....During a lecture at the 1982 St. Herman Pilgrimage, Fr. Seraphim gave parents some practical advice on how

to use whatever is positive in the world for their children's benefit:

"The child who has been exposed from his earliest years to good classical music, and has seen his soul being developed by it, will not be nearly as tempted by the crude rhythm and message of rock and other contemporary forms of pseudo-music as someone who has grown up without a musical education. Such a musical education, as several of the Optina Elders have said, refines the soul and prepares it for the reception of spiritual impressions"

"The child who has been educated in good literature, drama, and poetry and has felt their effect on his soul – that is, has really enjoyed them – will not easily become an addict of the contemporary movies and television programs and cheap novels that

devastate the soul and take it away from the Christian path”.

“The child who has learned to see beauty in classical painting and sculpture will not easily be drawn into the perversity of contemporary art or be attracted by the garish products of modern advertising and pornography.

“The child who knows something about history of the world, especially in Christian times, and how other people have lived and thought, what mistakes and pitfalls people have fallen into by departing from God and His commandments, and what glorious and influential lives they have lived when they were faithful to Him – will be discerning about the life and philosophy or way of life he encounters. One of the basic problems facing education of children today is that in the schools they are no longer given a sense of history. It is a dangerous and fatal thing to deprive a child of a sense of history. It means that he has no ability to take examples from the people who lived in the past. And actually, history constantly repeats itself. Once you see that, it becomes interesting how people have answered problems, how there have been people who have gone against God and what results came from that, and how people changed their lives and became exceptions and gave an important thing which should be communicated to children.

“In general, the person who is well acquainted with the best products of secular culture – which in the West almost always have definite religious and Christian overtones – has a much better chance of leading a normal, fruitful Orthodox life than someone who knows only the popular culture of today. One who is converted to Orthodoxy straight from ‘rock’ culture, and in general anyone who thinks he can combine Orthodoxy with that kind of culture – has much suffering to go through and a difficult road in life before he can become a

truly serious Orthodox Christian who is capable of passing on his faith to others.

Without this suffering, without this awareness, Orthodox parents will raise their children to be devoured by the contemporary world. The world’s best culture, properly received, refines and develops the soul; today’s popular culture cripples and deforms the soul and hinders it from having a full and normal response to the message of Orthodoxy.

“Therefore, in our battle against the spirit of this world, we can use the best things the world has to offer in order to go beyond them; everything good in the world, if we are only wise enough to see it, points to God, and to Orthodoxy, and we have to make use of it.”

Orthodox School Exploration -Update 9/30/22

On September 15, 2022 there was a meeting at St. Michael’s to begin exploring the idea of creating an **Orthodox Parochial school** as well as ideas to help support Orthodox homeschoolers. Various concerned Orthodox parishioners and Clergy attended from Central MA Orthodox parishes.

The consensus at this meeting was the overwhelming belief we should continue exploring these ideas.

As a result, a **small committee** has developed an **internet survey** and is in process of creating a **website**. Once the website is complete, we will ask all the parishes to share a link so their parishioners and other interested parties can fill out the survey. The survey will help us determine what the level of interest is with parents and the specific demographic statistics needed to estimate possible student population.

Please spread the word!!!

St. Silouan Young Adults Retreat – September 17th, 2022 – Summary of the event, article written by Fr. John and Presbytera Camelia on our Metropolia request

Shortly after we moved to Southbridge a new family joined our community (2016). It was the first family with more than two children, respectively with four, three of which passed through adolescence. Since then we started thinking about the fact that our young Orthodox people need to socialize, and to have fellowship with other young Orthodox in order to survive the pressure from society and their secular peers. The only way to help them (our church was small, with an elderly population) was to organize activities for young people and to invite other parishes.

Unfortunately along with this aspect, we started realizing that Orthodoxy in America is a lot different from what we know in the Romania, Russia and Greece. Putting together these realities, we concentrated all in the Young Adults Retreat mission and the vision:

***Our YAR mission** is to create the right environment and foundation for Pan-Orthodox young adults, where they can rediscover the authentic Orthodox spirit, receive the right teachings, and revive the old ethnic traditions, build sound fellowship, and support each other during these difficult times.*

***Our YAR vision** : The future of the Orthodox Church is not about adapting to the times and being cool; it is about being authentic, living in truth and love, and becoming the temple of the Holy Spirit. Without the right teaching, inspiration, support, and communion with*

other Orthodox Christians our young adults will be confused, weak, and lost. This will impact the whole Orthodox Church in its assembly and jeopardize its future.

We succeeded to launch the first edition of a retreat for young adults between 18 and 35 years old – St. Silouan Young Adults Retreat (YAR) on September 17th, 2022. Twenty eight young adults joined the YAR.

It was intense work, but it was worth doing. We added a special section for the Retreat (<https://www.stmichaelorthodox.com/about-3>) to the church site. We created a mission and vision for this program, a poster, a brochure and we started its promotion. Those who organize events of any kind know that the most difficult part is not the organization of an event, but its effective promotion which brings participants. And above all we asked our patron St. Silouan for help, who sent us abundantly both resources and young people.

Following the mission of the St. Silouan YAR, we tried to create a mix of spiritual activities, relaxation and fun. The Divine Liturgy started our journey, and Fr. John, host of YAR, opened the day with a word about the teaching of St. Silouan, emphasizing the love for enemies, even enemies of the church. Some ice breaker games helped the participants to get to know each other and have some fun. We continued with two interesting workshops (*How to prepare koliva* and *Wood Sculpture* with the famous wood sculptor Dimitrios Klitsas who among many other incredible works sculpted Mariah Carry's wooden mantle piece). The day ended with a bonfire and friendly discussions warmed by the playful

shadows cast by the fire. Although almost twelve hours had passed since starting the program, the youth, inspired by the hosts, joined in Greek and Romanian traditional dances.

The climax of the event was the spiritual talk with the theme *Confession and the Spiritual Father in the Orthodox Church*, delivered by Protosingelos Jeremiah (Berbec), the abbot of St. Dumitru Monastery, from Middletown, NY. Father Jeremiah was a good choice for our young audience, intellectual and desirous of knowledge (he obtained a PhD in Mathematics at the University of Berkley, CA).

The Abbot of Middletown reached the heart of the audience through simplicity, but the spiritual depth of the dialogue was built up gradually around the Holy Fathers and contemporary Saints. The presentation, structured following mathematical logic, began with the explanation of the indisputable truth that we, people, are selfish and that selfishness is so well hidden in our inner being that we need another person to bring it to light. Along the same lines, using the words of the Psalmist, the speaker said "*that every man is a liar* " and that's why we cannot trust our own judgment, and a second person is necessary to observe us from the outside, more clearly and objectively than we can and help us in our spiritual journey. The father went farther in the spirit of St. Silouan and St. Sophrony explaining that

It was through disobedience that Adam cut his umbilical cord, his living connection with God and then was expelled from Heaven. This relationship can only be restored through repentance and obedience. The living connection is only experienced through obedience towards a priest, in the mystery of confession.

Protosingelos Jeremiah introduced the personality of Fr. Arsenie Papacioc (out of the 55 participants only 5 people knew who Fr. Arsenie was, being Romanians) and the relationship he had with the Avva from Techirghiol, as his Spiritual father. He explained that the relationship of trust with the spiritual father, in which you submit completely your heart and will to him, is created in time. The talk ended with a Q & A session, in which those attendees got deep answers to the turmoil of their life.

A Pan - Orthodox Vespers followed, being served by Fr. John together with Fr. Jeremiah, and the chanting was realized through the collaboration of our cantor together with other Albanian and Greek cantors who attended the event.

The participants welcomed and appreciated the organization of such an event and in response they also participated the evening vigil for the feast of St. Silouan – September 23rd - September 24th. After the services they enjoyed having some tea and treats together, even though it was very late.

Our immediate objective, to help the young people build friendships, healthy relations based on common interests and love for God, was fulfilled. On the initiative of our cantor, Loukas Mironidis, several participants from various ethnic groups have already established plans for hiking in the Monadnock Mountains, New Hampshire. Here I have included the link in case that other people would like to join them (<https://forms.gle/99B3ompLRBvqySbK8>).

For our next Evening Vigil for Saint Porphyrios (December 1st-2nd), some of the participants have already expressed their intention to be here and we also committed to welcome them with the same hospitality,

and provide again warm tea and Lenten treats.

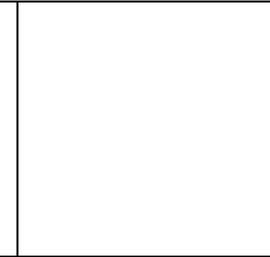
Their youth, enthusiasm and beauty have already inspired us to start working on the second editions of St. Silouan Spring Young Adults Retreat, at the end of May 2023.

But until then, because we do not want to lose our inertia and they to lose their interest, we have planned some more activities we hope will help them to strengthen the bond of fellowship that began timidly, but sure to take shape.

We hope our initiative and example serve as inspiration for other parishes. We are ready to offer support and "know-how" for those who wish.

With love in the our Lord Jesus Christ ,

Father John and Presbytera Camelia Downie



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The 15th Annual Romanian Open In Memory of George Nasto



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Many thanks to Christina Larson and Rob

October 2022

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts

www.stmichaelorthodox.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Holy Protection of the Theotokos Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, 5:00pm
2 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	3	4 Apostle Thomas; St. Innocent of America	5	6	7	8 Apostle James, Son of Alphaeus Divine Liturgy 9:00am Vespers, 5:00pm
9 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	10	11	12	13 Vespers, Litia – St. Paraskeva 6:00pm	14 St. Paraskeva of Iasi Divine Liturgy 10:00am	15 Divine Liturgy 9:00am Vespers 5:00pm
16 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	17 Prophet Hosea	18 St. Luke the Evangelist	19 Prophet Joel	20 Great Martyr Artemius	21 St. Hilarion the Great	22 Divine Liturgy 9:00am Vespers 5:00pm
23 Apostle James, Brother of Our Lord Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	24	25 Vespers, Litia, Matins – St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki 6:00pm	26 St. Demetrius the Great Martyr of Thessaloniki Divine Liturgy 10:00am Vespers – St. Demetrius of Basarabov 6:00pm	27 St. Demetrius of Basarabov Divine Liturgy 10:00am	28	29 Divine Liturgy 9:00am Vespers 5:00p,
30 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am						