



Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts

www.stmichaelorthodox.com

August 2019



LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

See calendar at end for full schedule



Feast days

August 1st - 15th – Dormition Fast

August 5th – St. John the Hozevite

August 6th – Holy Transfiguration

August 7th – St. Theodora of Sihla

August 15th – Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos

August 16th – Holy Martyr Constantin Brancoveanu and his four sons, Constantin, Stefan, Radu, and Matei, and his counselor Ianache

August 21st – Apostle Thaddeus

August 29th – Beheading of St. John the Baptist

The Most Glorious Dormition of Our Most Holy Theotokos

The Feast of the Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is celebrated on August 15 each year. The Feast commemorates the repose (dormition and in the Greek kimisis) or "falling-asleep" of the Mother of Jesus Christ, our Lord. The Feast also commemorates the translation or assumption into heaven of the body of the Theotokos. The Holy Scriptures tell us that when our Lord was dying on the Cross, He saw His mother and His disciple John and said to the Virgin Mary, "Woman, behold your son!" and to John, "Behold your mother!" (John 19:25-27). From that hour, the Apostle took care of the Theotokos in his own home. Along with the biblical reference in Acts 1:14 that confirms that the Virgin Mary was with the Holy Apostles on the day of Pentecost, the tradition of the Church holds that she remained in the home of the Apostle John in Jerusalem, continuing a ministry in word and deed. At the time of her death, the disciples of our Lord who were preaching throughout the world returned to Jerusalem to see the Theotokos. Except for the Apostle Thomas, all of them including the Apostle Paul were gathered together at her bedside. At the moment of her death, Jesus Christ himself descended and carried her soul into heaven. Following her repose, the body of the Theotokos was taken in procession and laid in a tomb near the Garden of Gethsemane. When the Apostle Thomas arrived three days after her repose and desired to see her body, the tomb was found to be empty. The bodily assumption of the Theotokos was confirmed by the message of an angel and by her appearance to the Apostles.

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church
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2019 Parish Council

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

2019 Ladies Society Committee

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

Clergy

Fr. John Downie fr.john_downie71@yahoo.com

Parish News & Events

Happy Name Day

August 7th – St. Theodora –
Theodora Railean

August 15th – Dormition of the Theotokos –
Mary Dowling, Mary Andreea, Mary Grabosky



Happy Birthday!!

God Grant You Many More Years!!

August 7th – Vasi
August 8th – Ioana Pitsillides
August 10th – Charles Panu
August 12th – Louise Boillard
August 17th – Costa Penna
August 21st – Yannis Penna
August 29th – Henrietta Panu

Coffee Hour Volunteers

Needed

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

Please contact Deb Thomo to sign up.

12th Annual Romanian Golf Tournament

Saturday, September 14th, 2019

12 pm Shotgun Start

Cohasse Country Club in Southbridge

18 Hole 4 Man Scramble
\$120/golfer (dinner included)
\$480/foursome
Hole Sponsorship \$100/hole
Dinner only (if not playing) \$25/person



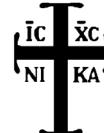
Please Pray for:

Preoteasa Camelia

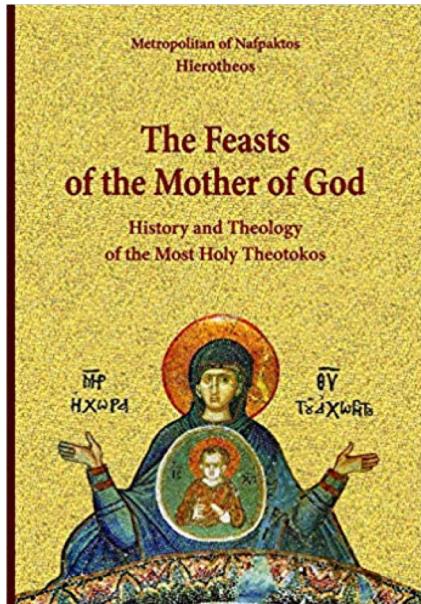
Bill & Laureen Smith

Mary Grabosky

Henrietta Panu

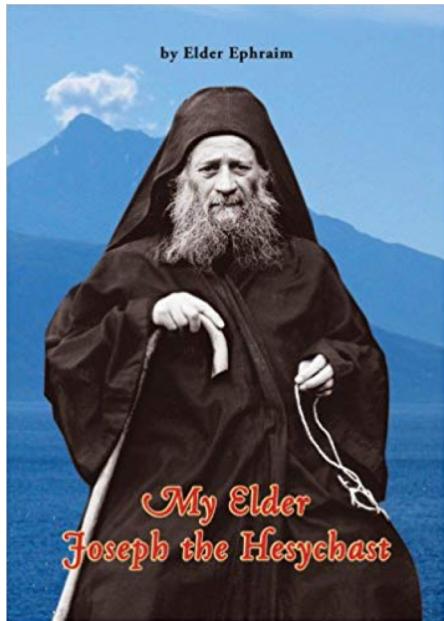


~ Book Corner ~



Book: The Feasts of the Mother of God: History & Theology of the Most Holy Theotokos

From her Conception until her glorious Dormition, the latest English book by Metropolitan Hierotheos presents the theology and history of the feasts of the Mother of God. Drawing on the Old and New Testaments, the Church's tradition, liturgy and iconography, and the writings of the saints, it is a unique theological biography of the Most Holy Mother of God, focusing on her role in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation.



Book: My Elder Joseph the Hesychast

This book contains the very personal account of Elder Ephraim telling the life of his Elder Joseph the Hesychast, whose holiness made him one of the most influential monks on the Holy Mountain in the twentieth century. Many of these fascinating stories have never been published before, including delightful anecdotes about Elder Joseph's brotherhood, moving accounts of his spiritual struggles, insightful spiritual counsels from his deep wisdom, and amazing miracles.

Parish Life

Church Festival & Textile Art by Silvia Bicki



The Significance of the Lord's Transfiguration

Fr. Seraphim (Rose) of Platina

Forty days before He was delivered to an ignominious death for our sins, our Lord revealed to three of His disciples the glory of His Divinity.

...This was the event to which our Lord was referring when He said, "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in His Kingdom" (Matt. 16:28). By this means the faith of the disciples was strengthened and prepared for the trial of our Lord's approaching passion and death; and they were able to see in it not mere human suffering, but the entirely voluntary passion of the Son of God.

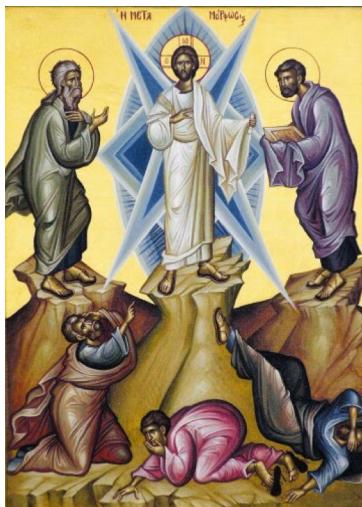
The disciples saw also Moses and Elijah talking with our Lord, and thereby they understood that He was not Himself Elijah or another of the prophets, as some thought, but someone much greater: He Who could call upon the Law and the Prophets to be His witnesses, since He was the fulfillment of both...

The Transfiguration, counted by the Church as one of the "Twelve Great Feasts," had an important place in the Church calendar already in the fourth century, as the homilies and sermons of such great Fathers as Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Ephraim the Syrian, and Saint Cyril of Alexandria attest; its origins go back to the first Christian centuries. In the fourth century also, Saint Helena erected a church on Mount Tabor, the traditional site of the Transfiguration, dedicated to the Feast. Although the event celebrated in the Feast occurred in the month of February, forty days before the Crucifixion, the Feast was early transferred to August because its full glory and joy could

not be fittingly celebrated amid the sorrow and repentance of Great Lent. The sixth day of August was chosen as being forty days before the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14th), when Christ's Passion is again remembered.

Orthodox theology sees in the Transfiguration a prefiguration of our Lord's Resurrection and His Second Coming, and more than this - since every event of the Church calendar has an application to the individual spiritual life - of the transformed state in which Christians shall appear at the end of the world, and in some measure even before then. In the foreshadowing of future glory which is celebrated in this Feast, the Holy Church comforts her children by showing them that after the temporary sorrows and deprivations with which this earthly life is filled, the glory of eternal blessedness will shine forth; and in it even the body of the righteous will participate.

It is a pious Orthodox custom to offer fruits to be blessed at this feast; and this offering of thanksgiving to God contains a spiritual sign, too. Just as fruits ripen and are transformed under the action of the summer sun, so is man called to a spiritual transfiguration through the light of God's word by means of the Sacraments. Some saints, (for example - Saint Seraphim of Sarov), under the action of this life-giving grace, have shone bodily before men even in life with this same uncreated Light of God's glory; and that is another sign to us of the heights to which we, as Christians, are called and the state that awaits us - to be transformed in the image of Him Who was transfigured on Mount Tabor.



Approaching the Panagia (Mother of God) on a Daily Basis According to Saint Paisios

Saint Paisios, when he wanted to go pray to the Panagia, would cut a few flowers from outside his hut and would take them to her icon.

"How can I go empty-handed to supplicate her?" he would say.

The Holy Elder wanted us to bring offerings to the Panagia, whatever a person had. He would even bring up someone who went to Iveron Monastery to venerate the Panagia Portaitissa. This icon is full of coins. This certain pilgrim was scandalized by this, and said when he was leaving: "My Panagia, I wanted to see you simple and not with coins." On his way out, however, such strong pain came over him that he stayed there, in the middle of the road, asking help from the Panagia. "My Panagia," he said, "make me well and I will bring you two coins." Then the Panagia appeared to him, made him well, and said to him: "This is how they brought me coins, without me asking!"

The Holy Elder Paisios wanted us to be akin with the Panagia. And we are akin with the Panagia, he would say, through humility, because the Panagia was humble.

Just consider: When the Archangel Gabriel told her she would give birth to the Son of God, the Messiah, she called herself the "servant of the Lord". "Behold, the servant of the Lord," she said to the Archangel Gabriel, "be it done to me according to your word." And she further magnified the Lord, saying: "For He looked down upon the humility of His servant." Because of her humility, the Panagia holds second place to the Holy Trinity.



Saint Andrew of Crete says in one of his hymns about her: "Rejoice, the god after God, having second place to the Trinity!"

My Christians, we must pray to the Panagia, opening our hearts to her, speaking freely, because she is our Mother. For, along with this heartfelt prayer of ours, we must also say to the Panagia the prayers and hymns composed by the Holy Fathers for her. The best prayers to the Panagia are in her Supplication (Paraklesis) Service and Salutation (Akathist) Service.

The Holy Elder Paisios very much urged Christians to read daily the *Theotokarion*. The *Theotokarion* is a large collection of 62 Canons to the Most Holy Theotokos, brought together by Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite from Athonite manuscripts. The hymns of these Canons are wonderful, my Christians, and they very much help our soul by reading this collection, as much as we could, daily.

Saint Paisios told a certain nun: "Read the *Theotokarion* every day. This will help you very much to love the Panagia. And then you will see what the Panagia will do for you! She will give you great consolation!"

"And when should I read the *Theotokarion*," the nun asked him. "At night or in the morning?"

"The morning hours are best," responded the Elder, "so that what you read you can have in mind throughout the day. The *Theotokarion* helps a lot. It brings warmth to the heart and touches it."

And the Holy Elder Paisios would commemorate the Athonite Father Cyril, Abbot of Koutloumousiou Monastery, who could not contain his sobs and tears whenever he read the *Theotokarion*!

- Translated by John Sanidopoulos

The Life and Wisdom of Elder Joseph the Hesychast (1897-1959)

Life

Elder Joseph, known in the world as Francis Kottis, was born in Lefkes in the island Paros on the 12th February 1897. His parents, George and Maria were ordinary but righteous people. He was destined even from “his mother’s tummy” to follow in the footsteps of Christ and become His aide in the deliverance of men. When his mother gave birth to him, she had a vision where an angel was trying to take the baby away from her. When she protested, the angel showed her a note in which it was written that he must take the baby away.

His father died when he was a teenager and thus he had to leave for the port of Piraeus in order to work and help out his impoverished family with the many children, since he was the second oldest brother... After marrying his sister off, he gave away a lot of money, dispersing [a] small fortune. Then during the early 1920's, burning with “the immaterial fire” which is unheard of for the many, [he came] to the Holy Mountain to live the most perfect life. Initially he lived for a short time in Vigla near the Great Lavra monastery, looking for spiritual guides to introduce him to the niptic work. Later on, he was receiving spiritual guidance from the discrete Elder Daniel of Katounakia for eight months. Elder Daniel, seeing the unstoppable and fierce zeal which young Francis was showing in favor of the ascetic life and foreseeing his future success, advised him to place himself under the obedience of a simple, elderly monk, named Efrem, who lived at the hut of the Annunciation of the Virgin at Katounakia. He



asked him to take with him another one of his spiritual children, Fr Arsenios and after they receive the blessing of obedience from their elder to begin legitimately their great ascetic efforts. Indeed this is how it happened and Fr Arsenios became Francis' inseparable companion.

During their stay at Katounakia, Elder Efrem tonsured Francis giving him the Great Schema with the name ‘Joseph’ at the cave of St Athanasius...

He reposed to the Lord on the feast-day of the Dormition of the Mother of God- as it was his wish and in accordance with the promise the Virgin gave to him- on Friday morning, 15th August 1959, after the Divine Liturgy and having taken the Holy Communion...

Elder Joseph the Hesychast was the modern Hagiorite monk, who had experienced and redrawn the monastic way of life, expressively and with detail. Numerous other righteous Elders have indeed been distinguished nowadays. But they have not left the fine points of monastic life as a legacy neither did they influence those with good will- “those able to receive”- towards the path of monasticism like Elder Joseph did... It is estimated that more than a thousand monks and nuns are direct spiritual descendants of Elder Joseph. Six monasteries, one Skete and many cells in the Holy Mountain, eighteen monasteries throughout Greece, six in Cyprus, twenty in the United States, two in Canada and one in Italy own their spiritual paternity to Blessed Elder Joseph, the Hesychast. Since the Elder was able to foresee this happening, eight months before his repose in December 1958, he divided his

disciples into four groups. This is unusual in the Holy Mountain, since the first to join the brotherhood routinely takes on the succession. However, he already knew that his disciples would later become Abbots and Elders in large coenobiums.

Elder Joseph, however, as an ascetic and a hesychast, was not unaware of the afflictions of this world just because he lived away from people. He would do his utmost to console, mitigate the pain, help and benefit all those who visited him, wrote to him or asked for his prayers. The very few of the letters he wrote, which have been preserved, attest to the missionary aspect of his life...

In summing up, we may say that blessed Elder Joseph the Hesychast, the one who stayed away from the world and worldly worries, who was seeking seclusion in the most ascetic and isolated places of the Holy Mountain in the Skete of St Basil and the caves of Little St Anne, was able to influence his immediate circle of people and all those who were asking for his advice. During his last few years at the New Skete, his influence and authority as a spiritual bearer of divine Grace was more pronounced and obvious to monks and laity alike. However after his repose, the glowing crop of his ascetic struggles have become especially evident throughout the entire planet through his few published writings- which were, nevertheless, brimming with divine Grace and through his successors and his spiritual descendants. His writings have already been translated into eight languages. In Elder Joseph, the words of the Scriptures "you shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7, 16) have been fulfilled. That is, the quality of the tree is revealed through the fruit it produces. We believe that this particular tree will not stop supplying the Church with the succulent fruits, which are the bearers of the genuine and perfect spiritual life in Christ. Amen.

- From *Pemptousia*

From the Letters of Elder Joseph

Our Panagia hastens everywhere. She bestows her grace abundantly upon anyone who fervently cries out to her. She is a mediatrix to Christ for everyone, because she was deemed worthy to give birth to the Lord and to become the Mother of God. She carries Him in her arms and continuously entreats Him. Since we sinners do not have the boldness to run directly to God from the start, we cry out to His Mother. She regenerates us; she intercedes; she anticipates all our afflictions. She is our protectress and helper, more honorable than all the angels, beyond compare more glorious than the Cherubim and Seraphim, second in rank only to the Holy Trinity. Oh, but she is so good, so sweet, that you want to embrace her at every moment and obtain consoling grace. The more you love, the more you are loved.

Man's purpose, from the moment he is born, is to find God.

God always helps. He always comes in time, but patience is necessary. He hears us immediately when we cry out to Him, but not in accordance with our own way of thinking.

If you want to see, to taste the love of Christ, endure whatever the Lord wants to test you with. What we suffer voluntarily is absolutely nothing in comparison with the trials the Lord sends us against our will.

The sufferings here are small in comparison to the future compensation. "Therefore," tell your soul, "have patience."

There is nothing more beautiful or sweeter than to love the Lord Jesus.

I cannot describe to you how much our Panagia likes chastity and purity

- From *Monastic Wisdom: The Letters of Elder Joseph the Hesychast*

Recipe for the Dormition Fast (August 1st – 15th) Stuffed Grape Leaves

Herb Rice Filling

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 2 cups sweet white onions, chopped very fine
- 4 cups long-grain riced, uncooked
- 6 cups fresh herbs – measured before chopping, chopped fine (I use equal parts dill/mint/parsley)
- 3 tsp salt
- 2 tsp fresh ground black pepper
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- grape leaves – 1 large 16 ounce jar (approx 60-80 leaves, rinsed well) or hand-picked and boiled

Cooking liquid

- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 1/3 c olive oil
- juice from one lemon

Filling – make up to 3 days ahead

Heat olive oil over low/medium heat (#3 on my glass stovetop) and add onions and cook for 5 minutes.

Add uncooked rice and stir well to combine completely. Cook for 5 minutes.

Add herbs, salt and pepper and cook for 5 minutes.

Add broth, cover and cook for 15 minutes.

Remove from heat, uncover and mix well to combine all ingredients. Rice should be a bit more than half cooked.

Rolling

Canned or jarred grape leaves should be rinsed first in a large bowl of very hot water and then in cold water. Lay to dry on kitchen or paper towels.

Fresh grape leaves must be rinsed well and boiled for 10 minutes to soften the leaves.

Place leaf, ribbed side up with the stem side pointing to you. Place spoon of filling at the stem end, see photo above.

Turn up 2 pieces of leaf below the filling then tuck in each side and roll up – gently and carefully – until you run out of leaf. Lay each leaf aside – or directly in pan, with tip of the leaf side down.

Cooking

Line bottom of 13×9" pan with 2 flat layers of ripped/weird shaped/sized grape leaves.

Snugly fit 2 dozen rolls in first layer with second layer directly on top of the first one.

Combine cooking liquid ingredients (2 c broth/1/3 c olive oil/ juice from one lemon) and pour over top.

Cover pan tightly with foil paper and bake for 1 hour at 350 degrees. Turn oven off, leave pan covered and in the oven for another hour.

Makes approximately 4 dozen dolmathes. Recipe can very easily be doubled OR halved, depending on your preference.

Serve warm or at room temperature. Garnish with fresh dill, a drizzle of olive oil and fresh lemon wedges.

- From *The Greek Vegan*



August 2019

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Dormition Fast Begins Paraklesis 6:00pm	2 Paraklesis 6:00pm	3 Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
4 Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am Paraklesis 6:00pm	5 St. John the Hozevite Vespers, Litia, & Matins – Holy Transfiguration 6:00pm	6 Holy Transfiguration Divine Liturgy 9:00am	7 St. Theodora of Sihla Paraklesis 6:00pm	8	9	10 No services at St. Michael's
11 No services at St. Michael's	12	13	14 Vespers, Litia at Holy Dormition Albanian Church in Worcester 6:00pm	15 Holy Dormition of Our Lady the Theotokos; Dormition Fast Ends Divine Liturgy at Holy Dormition Albanian Church in Worcester 8:00am	16 Holy Brancoveni	17 No services at St. Michael's
18 Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am	19	20	21 Apostle Thaddeus	22	23	24
25 Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am	26	27	28 Vespers & Litia – St. John the Baptist 6:00pm	29 Beheading of St. John the Baptist – Strict Fast Divine Liturgy 9:30am	30	31 Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm