



Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts
www.stmichaelorthodox.com
November 2017



Liturgical Schedule

Sunday

9:00am Matins

10:00am Divine Liturgy

Wednesday

6:00pm Paraklesis

Saturday

8:30am Divine Liturgy

6:00pm Vespers

Look at calendar at end for
full schedule of services for
this month

Feast Days

Nov. 1st - St. Cosma and Damian

Nov. 9th - St. Nectarios

Nov. 8th - Synaxis of the Archangel
Michael

Nov 11th - St. Great Martyr Minas

Nov 13th - St. John Chrysostom
and his mother Antuza

Nov 14th - St. Apostle Philip and
St. Gregory Palamas

Nov 14th - Beginning of Advent

Nov 20th - St. Gregory Decapolitul

Nov 21st - Entry of the Mother of
God in Temple

Nov 25th - Great Martyr Ecaterini

Nov 30th - St. Apostle Andrew, the
protector of Romania and
St. Andrew Shaguna, the
metropolitan of Transilvania

Synaxis of the Archangel Michael & the other Bodiless Powers: Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Salaphiel, Jegudiel, & Barachiel

All the Angels, according to the Apostle Paul, are ministering spirits, - sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation - (Heb. 1:14). God set them as overseers of every nation and people, and guides to that which is profitable (Deut. 32:8); and while one Angel is appointed to oversee each nation as a whole, one is also appointed to protect each Christian individually. He commands them to guard them that hope on Him, that nothing should harm them, neither should any evil draw nigh to their dwelling (Ps. 90:10-12). In the Heavens, they always behold the face of God, sending up to Him the thrice-holy hymn and interceding with Him in our behalf, seeing they rejoice over one sinner that repents (Esaias 6:2-3; Matt. 18:10; Luke 15:7). In a word, they have served God in so many ways for our benefit, that the pages of Holy Scripture are filled with the histories thereof. It is for these reasons that the Orthodox Catholic Church, wisely honoring these divine ministers, our protectors and guardians, celebrates today the present Synaxis that is, our coming together in assembly for their common feast to chant their praises, especially for the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, who are mentioned in the Scriptures by name. The name Michael means "Who is like God?" and Gabriel means "God is mighty." The number of Angels is not defined in the divine Scriptures, where Daniel says that thousands of thousands ministered before Him, and ten thousands of ten thousands attended upon Him -(Dan. 7:10). But all of them are divided into nine orders which are called Thrones, Cherubim, Seraphim, Dominions, Powers, Authorities, Principalities, Archangels, and Angels.



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to have the monthly bulletin
emailed to you!

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2017 Parish Council

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

2017 Ladies Society Committee

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

Clergy

Fr. John Downie fr.john_downie71@yahoo.com

Parish News & Events

Church Beautification projects for 2016-2017 successfully completed. We want to thank everyone who helped and supported these beautification projects.

Happy Name Day

Nov. 14th - St. Gregory Palamas – Gregory Downie

Nov. 25th – Great Martyr Saint Catherine – Katie Mironidis

Nov. 30th - St. Apostle Andrew, St. Andrew Shaguna – Andrew Tanacea

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

Nov. 9th – Sam Yanka

Nov. 10th – Tom Dowling

Nov. 11th – Max Yanka

Nov. 12th – Brett Thomo

Nov. 24th – Gregory Downie

**Please Pray for our
Parish Members**

Alexandra Malisory

Matthew Dowling

Vasilios Nhan

Nancy Collazo

Peter & Lauren Smith

Symeon Downie

Annual Banquet

Sunday Nov. 5th

Following Church Service

Catered Meal

\$25 (children eat FREE)



Happy Thanksgiving to All

Glory to God for All Things!

Jesus Christ, my Lord and God, I give thanks for your loving kindness and all the blessings You have richly bestowed upon me. I fall down in worship and adoration before You, the King of Glory. I praise You, I glorify You, I bless You and I give thanks to You for Your great goodness and tender mercy. To You I come, my sweet Lord and loving Master. Shine in my heart the light of Your grace. Enlighten my mind, that I may walk uprightly all my life by keeping Your commandments. Glorified and exalted is Your holy name, now and forever. Amen.



Ladies Society Adopted Two Southbridge Public Schools

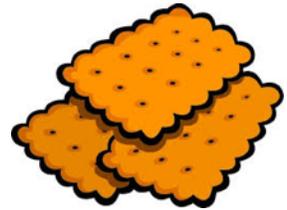
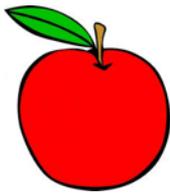
Charlton Street School & West Street School

We donate healthy snacks for foster care children who often missed their snacks during school.

We alternate each school every month.

Everyone is welcomed to donate either money to buy healthy snacks or you can bring healthy snacks (fruit, crackers, goldfish etc.) Any help is greatly appreciated!!

Contact Sandra Nasto for more information.



Our Sunday School



Simplicity: The First Child of Humility and the Key to Experiencing the Mysteries of God

“Once we cleanse our guileful heart, ‘For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies...’ [cf., Matt. 15:18-19, Mark 7:21-23], we will become pure and humble vessels of divine Grace. And the Holy Trinity will evermore find solace in us. I shall be praying for you, and you should be praying for me, so that Christ and Panaghia will help our hearts become pure, so that we can see God. ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’ [Matt. 5:8]. Amen.”

By: Papa Demetri

Ladies Lunch

Saturday, December 2nd

Public House in Sturbridge



Fr. Johns Sunday Sermons are Now Recorded and on YouTube!

If you would like to listen to the sermons they are on the website on the page “Sermons”



Let us Welcome Metropolitan Nicolae Condrea to Our Church

He will be visiting us for Archangel Michael Feast day Nov. 4th & 5th.
Please try to make it to vespers on Saturday the 4th and Liturgy on the Sunday the 5th.
Here is a small biography of the Metropolitan.

Nicolae Condrea, the son of Nicolae and Victoria Condrea, was born in Constanța, Romania, on April 15, 1967. He felt a calling to serve the Orthodox Church at a very early age.

Nicolae attended the Andrei Saguna Faculty of Theology in Sibiu, Romania with the plan of becoming a priest and later entering into the monastic life. After successfully completing four years of study, Nicolae successfully submitted his thesis entitled "The Eucharistic Theology of Metropolitan John Zizioulas" and thus received his Licentiate degree in Theology.

From 1992 to 1994, Nicolae was a professor of theology in Bucharest. He also continued his education during 1993 and 1994 in the doctoral program at the Andrei Saguna Faculty of Theology, concentrating his studies in the area of Moral Theology. In 1994, he received a scholarship to study at the Faculty of Theology. He then entered the Marc Bloch University in Strasbourg, France, and received a diploma from the D.E.A (intensive study) program. He continued his doctoral studies at Marc Bloch University where he received the degree of Doctor in Theology on November 10, 2001.

While studying in Strasbourg, he combined theory with practical experience, leading to his entry into the clergy. In the spring of 1997, he was ordained a deacon and then later a priest by Metr. Serafim of Germany and Central Europe. With the Metropolitan's blessing he also founded and served the parish of the Lord's Nativity in Stuttgart, Germany.



After receiving his doctorate, Fr. Nicolae, returned to Romania. On December 18, 2001, Fr. Nicolae took his monastic vows at the Monastery of Radu Voda in Bucharest.

Additionally, he held the position of Patriarchal Secretary.

On March 9, 2002, Fr. Nicolae was elected by a special Congress of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada to fill the vacant archiepiscopal throne of the Archdiocese.

On March 13, 2002, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church confirmed unanimously his election. At that time the Synod raised Fr. Nicolae to the rank of Archimandrite.

The consecration and installation of Archbishop Nicolae was held at the St. John the Baptist Church in Montreal, Canada, on July 14, 2002.

On April 30 2017, the Sunday of the Myrrh bearing Women, His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae (Condrea) was enthroned as the first Romanian Orthodox metropolitan of the Americas. The event took place after the Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral of Sts. Constantine and Helen in Chicago.

The delegation of the Romanian Patriarchate was led by Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște. The Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church established the new metropolis on October 28, 2016. A divine liturgy was held at the Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest, with his Beatitude Patriarch Daniel presiding, in conclusion of the liturgy, Archbishop Nicolae was elevated to the rank of Metropolitan on Sunday 30, 2016.

Photos from the Pilgrimage

Romanian Monastery St. Dimitrios, St. Tikhons Monastery and Holy Protection



St. Dimitrios Romanian Monastery



Inside St. Dimitrios Romanian Monastery



Memorial Service for Fr. Vasile Vasilachi



Fr. Vasile Vasilachi Grave



St. Tikhons Monastery



St. Tikhons Monastery Bells



St. Tikhons Monastery inside church



Holy Protection Monastery



With the Nativity Fast (Advent) upon us, what's the point of this season?

The six weeks prior to Christmas (the Nativity of our Lord) is a fasting period that many call Advent. Advent means “coming.” It is that period of time when we find ourselves waiting for the coming of the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ. (All three terms mean the same thing.) For this reason, it has a different character than other fasting periods. Although there is an element of preparation involved, it is not the same as the Great Fast that precedes Holy Week and Pascha.

The liturgical preparation is limited to the two Sundays before the Nativity and the five days leading up to the feast. Those two Sundays we are reminded of the Holy Ancestors of God and the Holy Fathers, Patriarchs, and Prophets who played a role in the coming of the Messiah. In the hymns of the Sunday cycle of services, we hear of their great faith and are called to build our own.

For most of us, we are anxious to get to the feast — we want the days to rush by. Our preparation usually consists of shopping and decorating, not to speak of the endless parties that we are invited to attend. Here is where the notion of waiting comes into play. We must discipline ourselves through self-control and patience. We are to read the Scriptures, specifically the prophecies that speak of the coming of the Messiah. We are to turn our focus to a Godly way of life that calls for sacrificing and almsgiving (acts of mercy). Let us think of charity and the giving of our time, talents, and resources to others who may be in need. There is no better way to imitate Christ than to be loving and charitable towards others.

A word to the wise — put Christ back into Christmas. Find the meaning of the feast by understanding the importance of the Son of God taking on human flesh. Remember the real reason for the season is that Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, came into the world and dwelt among men, taking on Himself the sins of the world so that we might have life in Him.

“God is with us! Understand O nations and submit yourselves, for God is with us!” (Isaiah 8:9)

- from Antiochian.org



Congratulations Dave and Briana Haddad ~ May God Grant, You Many Years Together!



The Entrance of the Theotokos to the Temple

November 21st

The Feast of the Entrance into the Temple of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is celebrated on November 21 each year. The Feast commemorates when as a young child, the Virgin Mary entered the Temple in Jerusalem.

The birth and early life of the Virgin Mary is not recorded in the Gospels or other books of the New Testament, however this information can be found in a work dating from the second century known as the Book of James or Protevangelion.

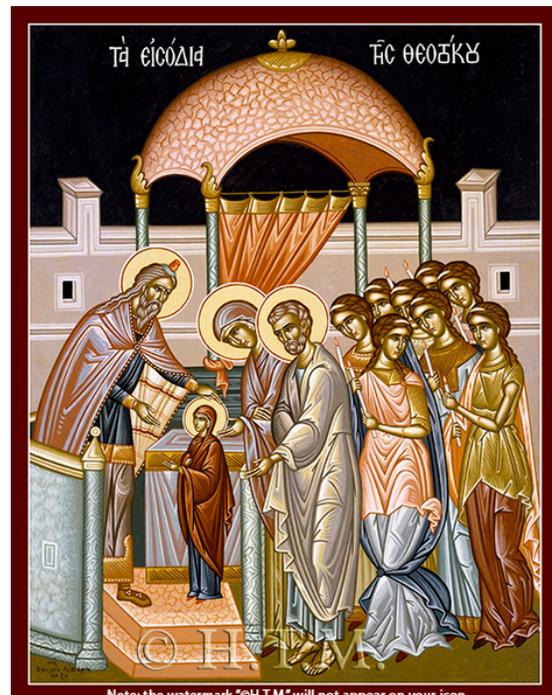
When Mary was three years old, Joachim and Anna decided that the time had come to fulfill their promise and to offer her to the Lord. Joachim gathered the young girls of the neighborhood to form an escort, and he made them go in front of Mary, carrying torches. Captivated by the torches, the young child followed joyfully to the Temple, not once looking back at her parents nor weeping as she was parted from them.

The holy Virgin ran toward the Temple, overtaking her attendant maidens and threw herself into the arms of the High Priest Zacharias, who was waiting for her at the gate of the Temple with the elders. Zacharias blessed her saying, "It is in you that He has glorified your name in every generation. It is in you that He will reveal the Redemption that He has prepared for His people in the last days." Then, Zacharias brought the child into the Holy of Holies—a place where only the High Priest was permitted to enter once a year on the Day of Atonement. He placed her on the steps of the altar, and the grace of the Lord descended upon her. She arose and expressed her joy in a dance as wonder seized all who saw this happen.

The Virgin Mary dwelt in the Temple for nine years until, reaching an age for marriage, she was taken from the Temple by the priests and

elders and entrusted to Joseph as the guardian of her virginity.

The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple signifies her total dedication to God and her readiness for her future vocation as the Mother of the Incarnate Lord. This is a feast of anticipation. As honor is shown to Mary, the faithful are called to look forward to the Incarnation of Christ, celebrated in a little more than a month by the Feast of the Nativity on December 25.



~ Movie & Book Corner ~

Movie: Bless You Prison – True Story of Nicoleta Valery Grossu

Based on Nicole Valery-Grossu's European best seller autobiographic novel "Bless you, prison", the film is a true story, with real events and characters. "Bless You Prison" is a remarkable and inspiring film! It tells the true story of Nicoleta Valery Grossu and her imprisonment in a communist prison from 1949 to 1953.

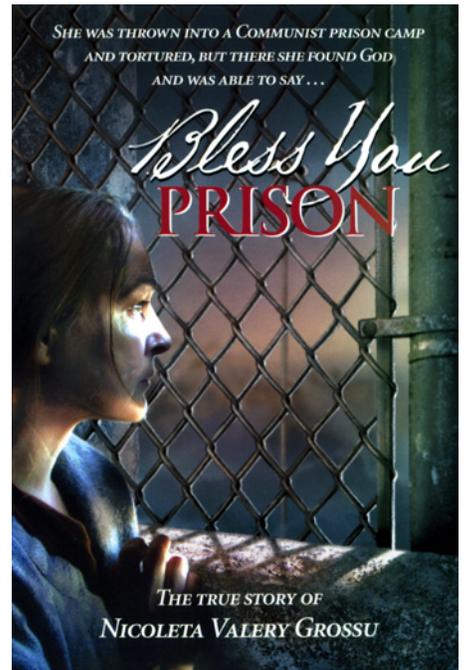
A young intellectual woman, Nicole, is arrested in the years of Stalinism simply for being an active member of an opposition party. There follow three months of exhausting interrogation and isolation. Alone in a cell, she undergoes a spiritual experience similar to that of the great mystics. She proceeds to an in-depth soul-searching that helps her discover the power of faith and steels her to put up resistance. The inhumane treatment she endured is mind boggling, but her steadfast faith in Christ carried her through as she became a beacon of light to other inmates.

During a voiceover in the film Nicoleta says she never felt closer to God than when she was in prison. Despite being beaten on the feet and rear with a club, almost starving at times, enduring taunts from the guards, and many other injustices she stayed faithful. She helped others, getting into trouble once for making sure food was tossed to those in solitary. In one scene Nicoleta feigns a toothache in order to

check on a friend who was taken to the infirmary. The guard pulls her tooth out without giving her anything for the pain, but she does find her friend and speaks with her. In the first prison she was in, cell 24, she scratched various Psalms on the walls. Later, at another prison, she meets a woman who was held in cell 24. The woman tells her she was comforted by the scriptures and wants to find the woman who wrote them so she can thank her. Nicoleta smiles.

Nicoleta is finally released and the film concludes with a synopsis about the rest of her life. Due to a few graphic scenes with beatings and some blood, and a woman hanging after committing suicide, we are awarding the movie our "Faith-Based" Seal. It is a powerful film and "Bless You Prison" will remind every viewer to be grateful for freedom. It serves as a reminder that God is with us in all situations.

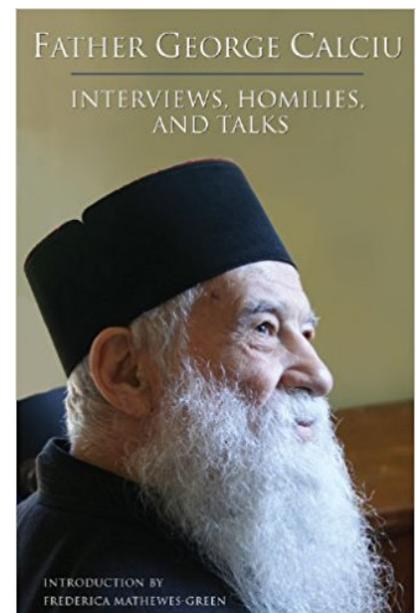
Movie Night Nov. 17th at 7pm



Book: Father George Calciu : Interviews, Talks, and Homilies

Father George Calciu (1925-2006) was one of the great confessors of Christianity in the twentieth century. Having survived the diabolic prison experiments of Communist Romania, Fr. George went on to become an apostle to spiritual seekers in Romania and, eventually, throughout the world. He was able to speak authoritatively of God's love and forgiveness because of his own experience of God's mercy. As a priest in America, Fr. George maintained a strict ascetic life of fasting and prayer, while at the same time pastoring his flock as a joyful and loving father. Here we present a collection of his interviews, homilies, and talks. In them he shares his thoughts on his imprisonment, how to pray, his own experience of God's Uncreated Light, and the Orthodox Christian's battle against temptations in America. Included in this volume are the Seven Homilies to the Youth that he gave in Bucharest in 1978. These homilies, in which he fearlessly called Romanian youth to turn from atheism and materialism to Christ, led to his second imprisonment by the Communist regime. Here, as in his other writings and talks, the common thread of God's mercy and forgiveness is woven into the fabric of man's need for repentance and union with his Creator.

<https://orthodoxyinottawa.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/homilies-to-the-youth-fr-george-calciu.pdf>



Why should I confess? I'm a good person.

By: Fr. John Downie

When Adam and Eve had first tasted of the forbidden fruit, The Word of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, came to them in the garden to speak with them. They saw their nakedness - that is their weakness, and hid from God. He called to them and said,

"Where are you?" 10 So he [Adam] said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" 12

Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." 13 And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is

this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (Gen 3:9-13 NKJ)

So the primordial fall and the tragic history of man's descent into fratricide (Cain and Abel), floods, war, disease, and genocide, in short, all of the suffering of mankind down to this very hour could have been stemmed if Adam or Eve would have humbled themselves and tried to understand what the Word of God was trying to persuade them to do: confess their sins. The Logos asked them four questions. If at any point Adam or Eve would have said, "Lord, I have sinned. I ate from the only tree I was not to eat from, though there were so many other beautiful and enchanting trees. I am ashamed to say I broke the only commandment You gave me. Please forgive me, I am so sorry, I have no excuse. Do with me as You see fit, since You are holy," no death, no destruction would have entered into the cosmos. Instead, Adam blamed Eve and

Eve blamed the Devil, so now we live in a world that is perpetually on the brink of destruction. And the Word of God gave us the gift of death, so that we would not enter immediately into the second death, eternal death, hell – eternally cast out of the divine presence.

So too, restoring our own personal relationship with Jesus Christ is impossible without confession. Our sins don't only affect ourselves, but the entire Christian community, and the entire cosmos, because we are not less human than Adam and Eve. Faith in Jesus Christ and being a member of His immaculate Body isn't just a subjective event. We belong

to the public ministry of Christ grafting us into His body in this world, and we hope and pray in the next as well. We are members of His Body that was publicly crucified, and publicly rose from the dead and appeared to over

500 people! Therefore, the confession of ritualistic impurities to priests of the Old Testament, touching a dead body and so forth, are now fulfilled in the New Covenant where we confess our spiritual deaths to the New Testament priests of the only High priest, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ so that we can escape the second more fearful death – spiritual death, hell.

Only through confession can we gain access again to the secret garden, the mysterious Garden of Eden. Only through confessing our sins to Christ can we enter into the splendor of the inner garden of the heart. Can't we confess directly to Christ? Why yes, of course – directly to His body. Christ hasn't left us orphans. He has left us His Body, the Church,



and the Holy Spirit. We confess directly to Christ in the presence of a priest as the representative of the body of the Church. Since sin affects not just ourselves, we must confess them to one another. Christ chose to grant His Church the authority to administer His forgiveness. Speaking to the 12 apostles He said:

“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 ‘Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.’” (Mat 18:18-20 NKJ)

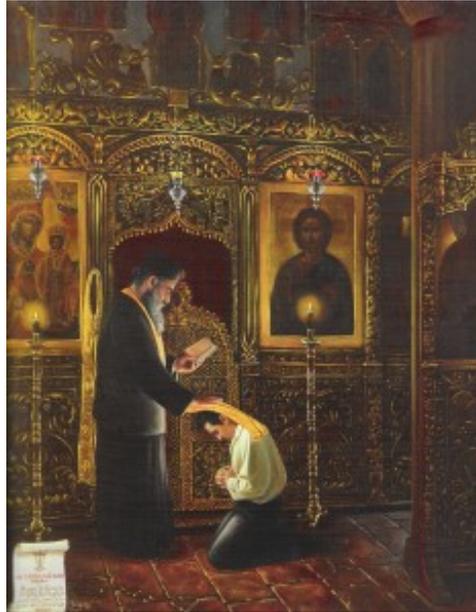
“And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’” (Joh 20:22-23 NKJ)

Honest and sincere confession is painful because through it we realize that only we ourselves are responsible for our tragedies, pain, limitations, evil inclinations, lack of zeal and sin. To the saints, false accusations, injustice torture and horrific death are glory! How far we are from a healthy conscience!

If we were to see the reality of our spiritual state, we would die twice. Once we would die seeing the horror of the magnitude of our errors and the consequences of our personal evil and lack of holiness upon the world, on the future, on our family, loved ones and friends. And then we would die a second time observing the great humility of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He stretches out His hand to offer us all of His love despite our deplorable state. Stretching out His hand to give us now in this

hell on earth what had been forbidden in Paradise, His Body, His Eucharist; forgiving Adam and Eve’s breach of His command and forgetting His previous commandment out of love and condescension. So easily and graciously forgiving every conceivable sin if only we take personal responsibly, ask forgiveness and confess.

Since confession is an art, take the time to read the small guide to confession that will be made available at a link on our website and as pamphlets on the candle dispenser in St. Michael’s Church. It will help to understand how to think about our shortcomings as Christians and how to approach this great mystery with seriousness and joy since it is primarily through confession that we overcome our human limitations and allow the grace of God to guide us back into the joy of paradise.



Visit our website under “Resources” for more information about confession.

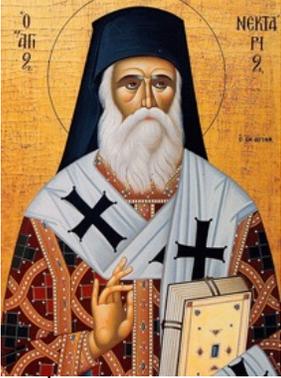
www.stmichaelorthodox.com

Contact Fr. John if you would like to schedule a time for confession.

Saints of The Month of November

November 9th – St. Nektarios

Saint Nektarius was born in Selyvria of Thrace on October 1, 1846. After putting himself through school in Constantinople with much hard labour, he became a monk on Chios in 1876, receiving the monastic name of Lazarus; because of his virtue, a year later he was ordained deacon, receiving the new name of Nektarius. Under the patronage of Patriarch Sophronius of Alexandria, Nektarius went to Athens to study in 1882; completing his theological studies in 1885, he went to Alexandria, where Patriarch Sophronius ordained him priest on March 23, 1886 in the Cathedral of Saint Sabbas, and in August of the same year, in the Church of Saint Nicholas in Cairo, made him Archimandrite. Archimandrite Nektarius showed much zeal both for preaching the word of God, and for the beauty of God's house. He greatly beautified the Church of Saint Nicholas in Cairo, and years later, when Nektarius was in Athens, Saint Nicholas appeared to him in a dream, embracing him and telling him he was going to exalt him very high.



On January 15, 1889, in the same Church of Saint Nicholas, Nektarius was consecrated Metropolitan of the Pentapolis in eastern Libya, which was under the jurisdiction of Alexandria. Although Nektarius' swift ascent through the degrees of ecclesiastical office did not affect his modesty and childlike innocence, it aroused the envy of lesser men, who convinced the elderly Sophronius that Nektarius had it in his heart to become Patriarch. Since the people loved Nektarius, the Patriarch was troubled by the slanders. On May 3, 1890, Sophronius relieved Metropolitan Nektarius of his duties; in July of the same year, he commanded Nektarius to leave Egypt.

Without seeking to avenge or even to defend himself, the innocent Metropolitan left for Athens, where he found that accusations of immorality had arrived before him. Because his good name had been soiled, he was unable to find a position worthy of a bishop, and in February of 1891 accepted the position of provincial preacher in Euboia; then, in 1894, he was appointed dean of the Rizarios Ecclesiastical School in Athens. Through his eloquent sermons his unwearying labours to educate fitting men for the priesthood, his generous alms deeds despite his own poverty, and the holiness, meekness, and fatherly love that were manifest in him, he became a shining light and a spiritual guide to many. At the request of certain pious women, in 1904 he began the building of his convent of the Holy Trinity on the island of Aegina while yet dean of the Rizarios School; finding later that his presence there was needed, he took up his residence on Aegina in 1908, where he spent the last years of his life, devoting himself to the direction of his convent and to very intense prayer; he was sometimes seen lifted above the ground while rapt in prayer. He became the protector of all Aegina, through his prayers delivering the island from drought, healing the sick, and casting out demons. Here also he endured wicked slanders with singular patience, forgiving his false accusers and not seeking to avenge himself. Although he had already worked wonders in life, an innumerable multitude of miracles have been wrought after his repose in 1920 through his holy relics, which for many years remained incorrupt. There is hardly a malady that has not been cured through his prayers; but Saint Nektarius is especially renowned for his healings of cancer for sufferers in all parts of the world.

November 11th – St. Great Martyr Minas



Saint Menas, who had Egypt as his fatherland, contested in Cotyaeion of Phrygia in 296 during the reign of Diocletian and Maximian. A soldier distinguished for his valour in war, he renounced his rank and withdrew to devote himself to ascetical struggles and prayer in the mountains. Filled with zeal and more than human courage, he presented himself in the midst of a pagan festival in Cotyaeion and declared himself to be a Christian. After terrible torments which he endured with astonishing courage, he was beheaded. His martyrdom in Egypt became a place of universal pilgrimage; evidence of ancient journeys to his shrine have been found as far away as Ireland. The glory and refuge of the Christians of Egypt, he has been revealed to be a worker of great miracles and a swift defender for all who call on him with faith; besides all else, he is also invoked for help in finding lost objects.

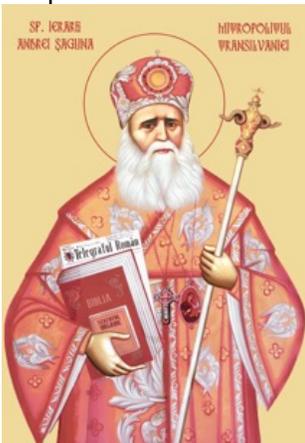
Nov 14 - St. Gregory Palamas



This divine Father, who was from Asia Minor, was from childhood reared in the royal court of Constantinople, where he was instructed in both religious and secular wisdom. Later, while still a youth, he left the imperial court and struggled in asceticism on Mount Athos, and in the Skete at Beroea. He spent some time in Thessalonica being treated for an illness that came from his harsh manner of life. He was present in Constantinople at the Council that was convened in 1341 against Barlaam of Calabria, and at the Council of 1347 against Acindynus, who was of like mind with Barlaam; Barlaam and Acindynus claimed that the grace of God is created. At both these Councils, the Saint contended courageously for the true dogmas of the Church of Christ, teaching in particular that divine grace is not created, but is the uncreated energies of God which are poured forth throughout creation: otherwise it would be impossible, if grace were created, for man to have genuine communion with the uncreated God. In 1347 he was appointed Metropolitan of Thessalonica. He tended his flock in an apostolic manner for some twelve years, and wrote many books and treatises on the most exalted doctrines of our Faith; and having lived for a total of sixty-three years, he reposed in the Lord in 1359. His holy relics are kept in the Cathedral of Thessalonica.

Nov 30 - St. Andrew Shaguna, the metropolitan of Transylvania

Metropolitan Andrei was a true “founder” of the Romanian education and culture of Transylvania. He re-organized the old theological school of Sibiu as Theological Pedagogical Institute, with two “sections”, where the future priests were prepared, as well as the teachers of about 800 primary schools of Transylvania, supervised by the Church (more than half set up in his time). He has also organized the eight forms secondary school of Braşov (the present “Andrei Şaguna” College), a secondary school in Brad, county of Hunedoara, a “real-commercial” school in Braşov, and courses for the illiterate people of every parish. He set up a “diocesan publishing house” in Sibiu, where he printed “Telegraful român” newspaper (uninterruptedly published from January 1853 until today), the eparchial “Calendar” (today’s “Îndrumătorul bisericesc”, since 1852 until today), a series of manuals for the primary schools, as well as for the theological education (some of them drafted by himself), all the liturgical books, some of them in several editions, a new edition of the Bible, in 1856-1858, etc. It was also Şaguna who obtained the agreement of the authorities to set up the Transylvanian Association for the Literature and Culture of the Romanian People (ASTRA). He granted scholarships from the Archdiocese’s funds to the young people who were attending secondary and academic studies, who formed the intellectual elite of Transylvania of the time.



He organized the present metropolitan residence of Sibiu, founded the church of Guşteriţa (a district of Sibiu today) and urged the priests and faithful to contribute with money and physical work to the construction of churches and school buildings. He was going to build a cathedral in Sibiu, but he could not collect the money necessary for beginning the construction. He was a great man of prayer and fasting, a perfect celebrant, preacher and shepherd of souls, who has always been in touch with the clergy and faithful.

He passed away on 16/28 June 1873, and he was buried near the big church of Răşinari, as he mentioned in his will, the funeral service being officiated by only one priest, “without sermon and pomp”. In spite of his true monastic humbleness, the righteous people properly honored him also after his death, considering him one of the most outstanding hierarchs of Transylvania. The Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church placed him among the saints on 21 July 2011, celebrated on 30 November.

We have a piece of Andrei Saguna relics in our church and our Lady Society took its name "Andrei Shaguna Lady Society" in order to honor this Aromanian (Macedonian) Saint.

Our Heavenly Friends

By: Fr. Constantin Sturzu, Iasi, Romania

Have you ever had the feeling that somebody is discreetly guarding and helping you, especially in heavy times? Did some "coincidences" shake you up, were you put on a thought by meaningful "happenings" clarifying the meaning of your life?

You are not mistaken if you intuited that you have unseen friends, not from this world, always ready to come to your aid. We learn from childhood that we have a guardian angel or that we are under the protection of the saints whose names we bear. But no one teaches us that the number of friends in Heaven, that are so close to us, is far greater than we can imagine. We have the impression that we have discovered a saint - as in the last few years, the example with Saint Ephraim the New - and, gaining godliness in him, we earn him as a friend. In fact, even before we have admiration for a saint, he has admiration for us. The convert has the impression that he has discovered God or has journeyed to Him, although the reality is that God has revealed Himself to him. We are not the ones running to God, but He is the one always running to us. Then we open our eyes - "**we come to our senses**" (cf. Luke 15: 17) - seeing His movement, and we meet Him. That is also the case with saints. They are our friends even before we discover them as such. We do not "ask them for friendship", we just wake up to reality and notice their fellowship, their astonishingly humble and discreet love.

I wrote the above lines inspired by the Great Martyr, Saint Demetrius. Last year, around this time, while in the small cell that I had received from the Viller Monastery in the Pyrenees, I suddenly experienced the feeling of an overwhelming, extremely familiar presence. In a fraction of a second I could "see" the many difficult moments of my life when I have had beside me the protector of the city of Thessaloniki and also the protector of the church of the village I grew up in (where I took the Holy Communion so many times and where I had my first confession). I saw myself "adopted" by this great saint, who watched over me even in the moments when my deeds and my existential struggles had transformed me into a rather bad example for those around me. I understood that, providentially, my steps have taken me twice



through Greece, having the chance to worship his holy relics. When my family and I had no place to live, by his intervention I received a dwelling space in a house of the Saint Dimitrie (Bals) parish from the Metropolitan Church. After I was ordained, my first "resurrection" serving as a priest was in a church in Iași that has the patron saint called the "**spring of myrrh**" saint, and in which serves a priest named Dumitru (Boboc), a close friend of my

family. There are many other moments in my life in which I felt the benevolent and protective hand of the Holy Martyr Demetrius.

Reading his life story, I realized that, like all **"God's worshippers"** (cf. Ephesians 2:19), St. Demetrius assumes those who are entrusted to him, like a devoted mother who never gives up on her infants, no matter what paths they embrace at maturity. It is even recorded a moment when, although God wanted to let the city of Thessalonica in the hands of the pagans, the saint refused to leave that place with his relics and persisted for the forgiveness of his countrymen. But only a delay was succeeded, because the time came when Saint Demetrius himself received, with much pain and tears, to leave Thessalonica, which thus falls for a long time in the hands of the Ottomans. It seems that the Thessalonians had fallen into severe sins and strayed far away from the faith. Even the priests, from the cathedral which sheltered the relics of St. Demetrius, were selling the streaming myrrh that sprang from his fragrant body for great profit instead of giving it away. This moment causes Father Ilie Cleopa to exclaim, in a homily on October 26: **"My brethren, as I have told you, St. Demetrius and all the saints pray for us. However, if we don't straighten our life, even God and His saints leave us after a while."**

Do saints really leave us? Are we left orphans from any help and protection? A correct answer to these questions is given to us by the spiritual life. The stages leading to sainthood also include a moment of **"the grace of desertion"**. It is the paradoxical situation in which man perceives that God has forsaken him (v. Psalm 21: 1; Matthew 27:46), but in which God actually continues to be present. Objectively speaking, the grace of the Lord does not leave us in such moments, but subjectively, we perceive this "interval" of freedom and this "place" of spiritual growth as abandonment. On the contrary, where **"sin was multiplied, grace abounded"** (Romans 5:20).

It is the same thing with us being "abandoned" by the saints. We can forsake them, and by deeds and by unclean thoughts, we can push them away. In fact, we are the ones who move away from them, while the saints are waiting with pain and hope for our return and the moment when we will willingly receive their help again. We ruin our friendship with them, binding ourselves to the spirit of darkness. But the saints cannot unfriend us. They respect our decisions, but nothing can get us out of their hearts. And how sad is the man who, being surrounded by so many saints (i.e. his friends) chooses to live alone! The agonizing convulsions of today's world are fed by sadness. No, we cannot complain that we are alone, helpless, misunderstood, or unfulfilled. We don't suffer from lack of friends, but from the lack of friendly hearts.



November 2017

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts

www.stmichaelorthodox.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 <u>St. Cosma and Damian</u> Paraklesis 6:00pm	2	3	4 Divine Liturgy 8:30am Vespers 6:00pm
5 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	6	7 Vespers, Litia, Matins 6:00pm	8 <u>Archangel Michael & Gabriel Feast Day</u> Divine Liturgy 9:00am Vespers, Litia, Matins 10:00pm	9 <u>St. Nektarios</u> Divine Liturgy 12:00am	10	11 <u>St. Great Martyr Minas</u> Divine Liturgy 8:30am Vespers 6:00pm
12 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	13	14 <u>St. Gregory Palamas</u> Divine Liturgy 9:00am	15 Paraklesis 6:00pm	16	17 Movie Night 7:00pm	18 Divine Liturgy 8:30am Vespers 6:00pm
19 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	20 Vespers, Litia, Matins 6:00pm	21 <u>Entrance of the Holy Theotokos into the Temple</u> Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	22 Paraklesis 6:00pm	23	24	25 <u>St. Catherine</u> Divine Liturgy 8:30am Vespers 6:00pm
26 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	27	28	29 Vespers, Litia, Matins 6:00pm	30 <u>St. Apostle Andrew & St. Andrei Saguna</u> Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am		