



Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts
www.stmichaelorthodox.com

March 2023



LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday

9:00am Divine Liturgy
10:00am Memorial Service
5pm Vespers

Sunday

9:00am Matins
10:00am Divine Liturgy

Monday through Friday

Presanctified Liturgies- schedule on
the last page, March calendar

FEAST DAYS

February 26th – Cheesefare Sunday
February 27th – Clean Monday; Lent
Begins
March 5th – Sunday of Orthodoxy
March 9th – 40 Martyrs of Sebaste
March 12th - St. Theodore the Tyro
March 12th – Sunday of St. Gregory
Palamas
March 19th – Sunday of the Holy
Cross
March 25th – Annunciation of the
Theotokos
March 26th – Sunday of St. John
Climacus & Synaxis of Archangel
Gabriel
March 30th – The Great Canon of St.
Andrew of Crete

Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

At the commencement of Lent, as its inauguration, as the “pitch” which is to begin the entire “melody”, we find **the great penitential Canon of St. Andrew of Crete**. Divided into **four parts**, it is read at **Great Compline** on the evening of the **first four days of Lent**. It can best be described as a **penitential lamentation** conveying to us the scope and depth of sin, shaking the soul with despair, repentance, and hope. With a unique art, St. Andrew interwove the great biblical themes – Adam and Eve, Paradise and Fall, the Patriarchs Noah and the Flood, David, the Promised Land, and the ultimately Christ and the Church – with confession of sin and repentance. The events of sacred history are revealed as events of my life, **God’s acts in the past as acts aimed at me and my salvation, the tragedy of sin and betrayal as my personal tragedy**. My life is shown to me as part of the great and all-embracing fight between God and the powers of darkness which rebel against Him. The Canons begins on this deeply personal note: Where shall I begin to weep over the cursed deeds of my life? What foundation shall I lay, Christ, for this lamentation? One after another, **my sins are revealed in their deep connection** with the continuous drama of **men’s relation to God**; the story of man’s fall is my story: I have made mine the crime of Adam; I know myself deprived of God, of the eternal Kingdom and of bliss because of my sins... I have lost all divine gifts: I have defiled the vestment of my body, obscured the image and likeness of God...I have darkened the beauty of my soul; I have torn my first vestment woven for me by the Creator and I am naked.... Thus, for four evenings the nine odes of **the Canon tell me** again and again **the spiritual story of the world which is also my story**. They challenge me with the decisive events and acts of the past whose meaning and power, however, are eternal because **every human soul** – unique and irreplaceable – **moves**, as it were, **through the same drama**, is faced with the same ultimate choice discovers the same ultimate reality.

Scriptural examples are more than “allegories” as many people think, and who therefore find this Canon too “overworked”, too loaded with irrelevant names and episodes. Why speak, they ask, of Cain and Abel, of David and Solomon, when it would be so much simple just to say: “I have sinned?” What they do not understand, however, is that the very **word sin** – in the biblical and Christian tradition – **has a depth**, a density which “**modern**” man is simply **unable** to comprehend and which makes **his confession of sins** something **very different from true Christian repentance**. **Continuation pag 12**

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Email: stmichaelromanianorthodox@gmail.com

Facebook: St. Michael Orthodox Christian Church

2023 Parish Council

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

2023 Ladies Society Committee

President: Genevieve Boilard
Vice President: Katie Mironidis
Secretary: Debbie Thomo
Treasurer: Mary Andreea

Clergy

Fr. John Downie fr.john_downie71@yahoo.com

Parish News & Events

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

March 8th – Mihaela Moscin

March 10th – Preoteasa Camelia and Susan Brogan

March 13th – Tom Andrea, Debbie Yanka, and Theodore Rapsomanikis

March 14th – Nick Thomo

March 17th – Ruth Yanka

March 31st – Paul Goulas

Happy Name Day

March 12th – St. Symeon the New Theologian – Symeon Downie

March 12th – St. Theodore the Tyro – Theodore Yanka, Theodore Rapsomanikis

Please Pray for:

Theodor

Henrietta

Joy's mom – Elpiniki-Sophia



Please keep Louise T. (Tanca) Boilar in your prayers, She passed away on Sunday, Feb. 5th, in the Overlook Masonic Healthcare Center, Charlton, after a long illness.

She was born in North Grosvenordale, CT the daughter of Thanas and Mary (Lara) Tanca. She was a graduate of the former Mary E. Wells High School in Southbridge where she starred on the girls basketball team.

Louise was a legal secretary for Attorney Michael Caplette in Southbridge for many years before retirement. Louise was a devoted member of her beloved church, St. Michael Romanian Orthodox Church in Southbridge, where she served as vice president of the churches Ladies Society and served as secretary for the church council. She was also a member of the Southbridge Women's Club, the Red Hats Society and the Harrington Hospital Auxiliary.

Louise loved her church, and she continued to attend the Divine Liturgy almost by the end, even if she needed to carry the oxygen tank. She was a good Christian, following the commandment: "do not judge, and you will not be judge"

She was an inspiration to all and led her life with a positive outlook and generous heart for everyone.

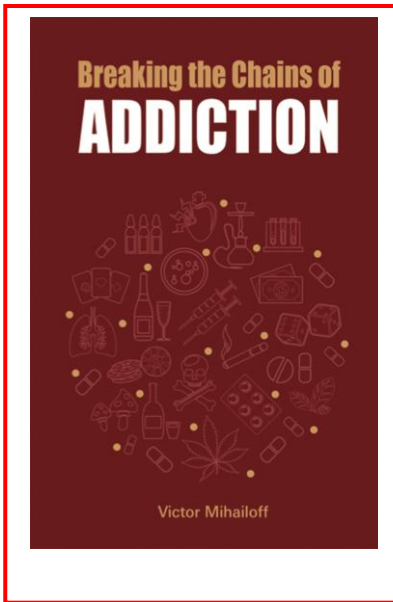


~ Book Corner ~

Book: *Breaking the Chains of Addiction*

Addiction, like many other afflictions that affect us as humans, not only impacts us physically and psychologically but also spiritually. Overcoming addiction requires a two-pronged approach – it requires both spiritual struggle alongside medical and psychological support from professionals.

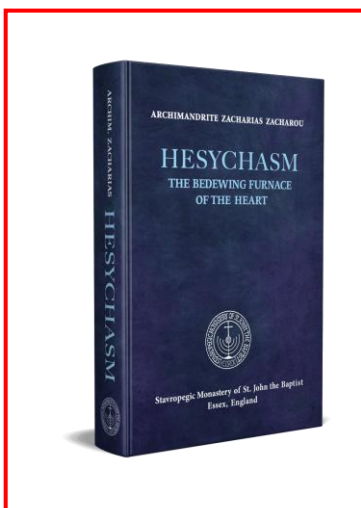
This book is borne from the personal experiences of the author who overcame six addictions and bad habits, which he had come under the yoke of from a young age. Through the use of the God-given spiritual weapons explored in this book the author no longer had a yearning for the six ‘crutches’ which he had ceased to practice. The people who will benefit most from this book are members of the Church who want to conquer addictions such as: smoking, alcohol abuse, and any drug/substance abuse or addictive behavior, including gambling, eating disorders, poor anger management, obsessive-compulsive disorder and other psychological behavioral problems and other bad habits.



Book: *Hesychasm*

The Bedewing Furnace of the Heart

The work of holy stillness is dynamic and so entralling that when the mind is enthroned in the heart, it is captivated and longs for nothing to tear it away. It descends into the deep recesses of the heart and rises to the infinite heights of the divine Will. Purified in its furnace, the mind becomes fit for the contemplation of the judgments of God. Like the apostles after Pentecost, man now lives as if he were ‘full of sweet new wine’, given over to the sober drunkenness of divine love.



President's corner

Dear Parishoners,

We truly hope and pray everyone is having a wonderful start to 2023! There are some big things happening at Saint Michael's as well as some much-needed renovations.

Here are a few quick updates for the early part of this year:

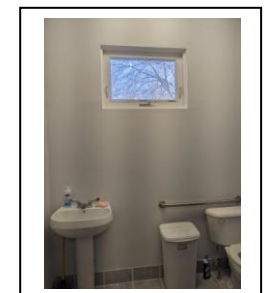
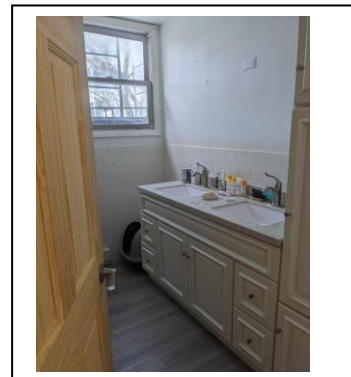
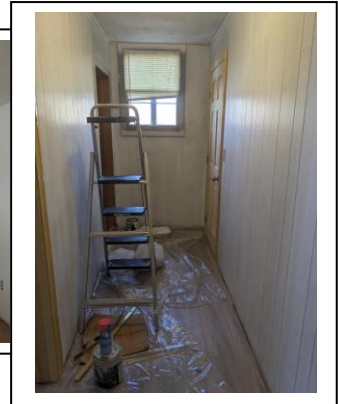
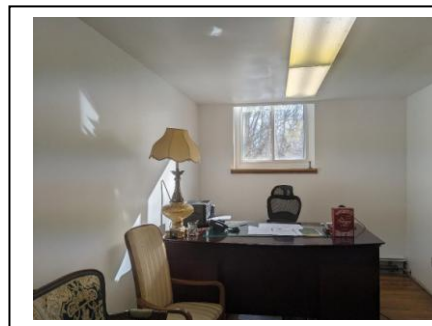
- The entryway roof to the church that was damaged by a windstorm has been fully repaired and reimbursed by our insurance. We are thankful that it was done so quickly. Thank you to Quannah Roofing Contractors for their work.
- The stairway in the hall has been renovated and a new carpet has been placed down. Thank you to Iozzo Carpet and Flooring for helping us get this done. Also, thank you to Presbytera Camelia for her hard work painting the hallway of the stairs to really bring out the new colors.
- A brand-new renovation project has started that will renovate Father John's office, the apartment bathrooms and flooring, the apartment doors, the community bathrooms, and a few other items. This was a huge undertaking and thank you Mihail for helping us find a great contractor to do the work.
- As announced at the General Assembly, we received a very generous \$10,000 donation towards church beautification. Father John is working on locking down some estimates on some needed projects in the church that we had discussed at our last meeting.
- This past Sunday our Ladies Society presented us with a wonderful pita tasting for an upcoming bake sale. Thank you to the Ladies of Saint Michael's; we greatly appreciate the leadership of the new President Jenny Boilard.

- We have two upcoming events, a Women's Retreat, and a Young Adult's Retreat. Please visit our church Facebook page for more information on how to register as well as information on the schedule and guest speakers. Presbytera Camelia is planning these two wonderful events and we hope to see a great attendance.
- Lastly, we are entering the Great Fast and our journey towards Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. This past Sunday was Forgiveness Sunday and I'd like to ask our entire parish community and friends of our community for their forgiveness. I will pray for all of you as we enter this great spiritual journey over the next couple of months, which will culminate in a beautiful Pascha on Sunday April 16th.

Thank you all so much and may God bless you all! We look forward to seeing you in church.

---Luke Yanka, Parish Council President

508-958-4144, lsyanka@yahoo.com



Politics, Orthodoxy, and the Fast

By Fr. John Downie

There are ancient canons that forbid clergy from being involved in politics, but what does that mean? The intent of the canons is that a Metropolitan, Bishop or Priest shouldn't hold public office. They should not be king, president or mayor. But if we look at the history of the Church, we find even here that there have been several striking exceptions to this rule during political upheaval.¹ In modern times, it has also been understood that clergy should not take open and public sides in elections.

The reason for the Church not mixing with politics is simple enough. Christ's Kingdom is not of this world. Christ started no political movement. He didn't save Himself from the horrid political corruption of His time. There was a real conspiracy to crucify Him involving the illegitimate religious and political leaders of His own people and the conquering ruling class of the Romans. Using deception, they stirred up the crowd to kill Him and He died praying for the salvation of His conniving murderers.

However, if we examine things a little closer, we see that Christ and the saints were not indifferent to politics on the whole. Saint John the Baptist denounced King Herod for His immorality. Christ openly criticized the illegitimate religious figures for their lack of understanding about the law. The law was given for man's healing, not that man should be a slave to the law. Christ prophesied to the political city of Jerusalem that if its citizens didn't repent it would fall... and the fall of Jerusalem was terrible. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How

often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Mt. 23:37."

For brevity's sake we will only touch on just a few nuanced passages to investigate how we as Christians are to deal with politics. Pilate sympathizes with Christ. He doesn't want to crucify Christ, but he is put between a rock and a hard place. Doing the right thing and resisting peer pressure to crucify the Lord of Glory would cause a riot, and most likely ruin his career. Before he gave Christ over to be crucified, while dialoging with Truth personified he asked, "What is truth?"

Indifference to truth led to Christ's crucifixion. Pilate's indifference to the truth led to believing a lie. The lie that he believed was that he had no choice but to go against his own conscience. This is our predicament today. Though the Church should remain politically neutral as far as possible, it cannot remain silent and go against its conscience. Sometimes we Christians are put in a situation similar to Pilate's. Christ is the Truth that will set us free; free from slavery, political slavery and slavery to sin and deception. The truth is Christ was guilty of no crime deserving crucifixion. That should have been Pilate's judgment. We, too, cannot go against our own conscience, not for the government, or for science falsely so called or medicine or our job, etc.

Truth is always controversial in this world. There will always be people who are offended by the truth. Truth is offensive to those who are perishing, but freeing and refreshing to those who are being saved. There is always hope, however, that we can

¹ See **Makarios III** bishop and president of Cyprus - there have been other such examples in Orthodoxy.

change, repent, and accept the truth and the Truth.

The devil is the father of lies. When he lies he speaks his native tongue (Jn 8:44). Before the fall, in the Garden of Eden, the ancient serpent lied and deceived Eve, planting a seed of doubt in her mind essentially saying, “did God really say that the day you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you would die?” Paraphrasing, the devil tempted her, placing doubt in her thoughts concerning God’s motivation for his commandments. He commanded them not to eat of the forbidden fruit (according to the devil) because God was afraid of man becoming like Him! He planted the seed of doubt concerning the truth of His word and commandments. Eve’s indifference to or lack of perception of the truth of God’s word and His commandments led her to disobedience and breaking the fast.

I will not go into many historical details, but rather relate real life experience and firsthand knowledge. While in Romania I was good friends and God-father to a Bulgarian Priest who was the right hand man of a Metropolitan who eventually became the current Patriarch of Bulgaria. I was also good friends with a Priest from Macedonia. During my stay in Eastern Europe there were very similar schisms in both of these Orthodox countries. Each country had a traditional Orthodox Church where the pious people went; people who loved Orthodoxy, took their faith seriously and tried to live a Christian life. Similarly, in each of these countries there was a schismatic church, funded by rich politicians and businessmen. The schismatic hierarchs and clergy were appointed regardless of spiritual qualities but rather according to petty political loyalty and zeal for power and financial gain. Fortunately, before I left Romania, both of these schisms were healed with the pious, traditional Church taking its

rightful place and the vast majority of schismatics returning to the mother church.

This scenario is playing out currently in the Ukraine. The historical Church in the Ukraine has been under the Russian Patriarch for around 1000 years. The schismatic one that was un-canonically founded is funded by political intrigue and businessmen and headed by unqualified and worldly people. Unfortunately, for reasons I personally cannot fathom, this schismatic church is being supported by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.² At this point, there is no sign of resolution or healing of the schism on the horizon. This kind of schism has happened in the recent past in the Soviet Union, too. There was a totally corrupt “Orthodox” church that was infiltrated by the NKVD (the precursor to the KGB). The church was called the “Living” church and was in full compliance to the Soviet Union. It was called “living” because it wanted to change and modernize; no fasting, changing the structure of the synod to make it more like the West and less “hierarchical” and most importantly cooperating completely with the Soviet regime.

I am writing these things because it is possible that the political jockeying I heard about first hand in Bulgaria and Macedonia and we witness now in the Ukraine might very well be imported here in our beloved country of America in the near future, if it hasn’t been already. We should realize that where the gentle Orthodox Spirit of love and also fidelity to the Holy Traditions is strong, there will be authentic Orthodoxy. Where there is direct political support, tremendous funding from questionable politicians and businessmen – and eagerness to “modernize” and change

² The so called Kiev Patriarchate is recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarch, the Greek Church and the Patriarch of Alexandria – but this recognition is highly problematic. It has not been recognized by Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Georgia, Antioch, Jerusalem, etc.

the timeless traditions of the Church – there will be whispering lies. We don't know for sure what form these lies will take if these schisms are exported to America, but we do know for certain some of the forms the lies have already taken.

The devil can whisper to us even from those who are Orthodox sometimes. The devil was in the Garden of Eden and so we can be tempted by evil voices from within the Church – the new Garden of Eden - sometimes even by high clergy. These are some of the lies:

Kissing holy icons is dangerous; receiving Holy Communion with the same spoon can give you communicable diseases; People living in overt sin should be able to receive Holy Communion; It's a Christian's moral duty to trust the government and trust the science without questioning them; you don't need to confess your sins to a priest regularly; it is morally repugnant to question elections; we have to limit church attendance to ten participants to "flatten the curve"; experts should have the right to force you to take medical treatments and limit your movement; There are too many people in the world; Men can become women, women can become men; there are more than two genders; it's for your own good that freedom of speech should be censored otherwise you may be deceived by disinformation; all religions are the same; there are no absolutes; America is not under attack³.

³ For those who might find this shocking, in East Palestine Ohio, near where I was born and raised, a horrible train derailment took place spewing toxic chemicals in the air. Over 2000 people have been evacuated under threat of arrest if they did not comply. This took place weeks ago. Where is the mainstream news? Why are they not covering it? Also many other trains have derailed recently. In addition to this hundreds of food processing plants have burnt down in the last two years, not to mention many sudden deaths of athletes and young people. All these things are not coincidences. America is being attacked

The rulers of this world are lying to us now just as they were doing when they Crucified Christ. The health authorities are lying to us. Free speech is being censored. We are being pushed towards supporting a war that is thousands of miles away and could possibly lead to a nuclear war. This is the best time we have ever had to take this Lenten fast and our faith seriously. There is no guarantee we will have another year on the earth. The time is upon us. Let us give it all our strength since we have nothing to lose and everything to gain. What we know is this: put not your trust in princes or the sons of men in whom there is no salvation

The first step in keeping the fast is to not believe the whispering lies of the devil. As adopted children of God we must not be indifferent to the truth, and this will have political implications. Since we are not yet fully perfected, we will have differences of opinions which must be embraced in the freedom that Christ has offered in the spirit of love and non-judgment. Discussion is good, but vitriol and anger won't help anyone; neither will intentionally offending or being offended (it is impossible for a true Christian to be offended or unnecessarily offend).

The little truth is we are in very dire straits, but the greater truth is that our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ is far more powerful and loving than all the evil that could possibly be against us in this world. He has conquered death and the devil. He has overcome the world. Now is the time to keep the fast by keeping our minds pure of lies and pure of evil – purely focused on Jesus Christ who is the purpose and sole meaning of our life. We should focus on the purity and intensity of our prayer. He is our only hope, but there has never been a greater and more dependable hope to be found. He is eager to hear our prayers and grant us His

by someone, perhaps its own deep state, who like Pharaoh did, fears the masses.

True Kingdom! He is fully aware of the times we are living through and it is His good pleasure to award us crowns. He has woven them for us since before our birth. He will grant them to us when we become victorious over the evils in this world by not being deceived and by loving our enemies, even the enemies of the Church. Amen.

Pizza Bible Study March 16th or March 21th, 2023 – 7:00pm

Bible Study for **Young Adults, Orthodox and Non Orthodox** at the new renovated **Central Pizza & Pub**, 55 Central Street, Southbridge, MA.

During the Lenten season the **vegan pizza** will be served and donated by Holy. Arch. Michael Church.

RSVP to Fr. John's email fr.john.downie71@yahoo.com or cell phone: 774 230 2542 by March 14th.



St. Siluoan Young Adults Retreat

Spring Session

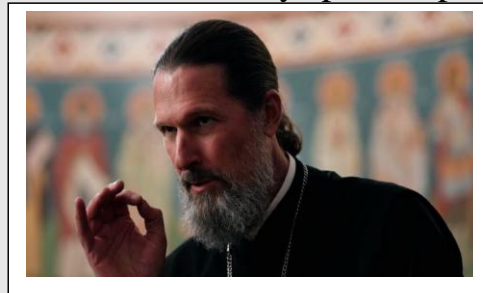
Please saved the date!!!

The full program is dedicated to young adults ages 18-39 but for the guest speaker **all ages are welcomed.**

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

For most of you he does not need further introduction. However, we will send you his biography, the full YAR schedule, and other event details by the end of the next week (March the 14th).

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



The list with items for Pascha will be available at the candle stand and it will be sent to you by email. Please **sign in** for those items you would like to **donate for Pascha**. Ex. – flowers for Epitaphios, palms, rose water, olive oil, etc

Repentance and Confession

Source: "Fountain of Life," issue no. 95, July 3, 2005. Translated from Greek by the staff of the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen.



Among the many **priceless gifts** granted to us by our God and Savior is the **soul-saving sacrament of Repentance**, or, as we commonly refer to it, **Holy Confession**. It is through this sacrament that our sins are forgiven and swept away. **Without Holy Confession, no human being can earn salvation, irrespective of his virtues**, for it is impossible to find even a single person who is sinless.

A humble acknowledgement and confession of our sins is very pleasing to our Lord. If Adam, after his disobedience and subsequent fall, acknowledged in repentance his error, he would have surely received the forgiveness of our Most Gracious God. Even Cain who committed such an atrocious act, the willful and abominable murder of his own brother, could have also been forgiven through real repentance and acknowledgement. This is what King David did; although he was guilty of two deadly sins, murder and adultery; he was the recipient of God's forgiveness and mercy because of his true repentance. I acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord," and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sins. (Psalms 31:5)

our conscience and brighten and turn our soul "whiter than snow," we must neither improvise nor approach this Holy Sacrament without proper preparation. That is unfortunately how most of our Orthodox brethren confess. A mystery such as confession warrants the corresponding preparation and must be approached with the fitting state of our heart.

First, we ought to prepare at least two days before we go to confession. During this preparatory time period we collect our thoughts and nous. We reflect on the length of time since our last confession—can we recall when we last confessed? Or, is this our first time. In this manner, we attempt to recall from that time until now the type and number of times we committed various sins. **Either through word, deed or thought, and whether we intended or we did so through negligence and carelessness.**

Second, when we go to a spiritual father, **you will tell him all of your sins and exactly how they were committed.** We will hide absolutely nothing, we will alter nothing and we will assign blame and fault for all of our sins to no other but our own selves. Furthermore, we will not be content with a "dry, catalog-type" enumeration of our sins but instead, we will also present, in general terms, the overall condition of our soul, our passions, inclinations, tendencies, vices, faults, and weaknesses. In this manner, the spiritual father, as a physician of souls, will be afforded the opportunity to diagnose and form a complete picture of our illness and thus decisively and effectively assign the correct therapy.

Third, the method through which we describe our sins must be especially careful

so that it combines exactness with decency. In other words, on one hand we must state concisely and with few words the conditions and corresponding elements of each sin – the what, how, when, etc. -- so that the spiritual father assesses its proper “weight.” On the other hand, again, we must avoid detailed and wordy descriptions which are tiresome and at times even scandalous. The latter serves no benefit to either us or the spiritual father. It should be especially noted that if a sin was committed with one or more persons (i.e., we stole with some of our friends or committed adultery with a person we know), it is best to not reveal their identity. Let us truly repent for our own sin and leave all others to our Lord’s judgment and mercy.

Fourth, among all various factors, the most important is that we find a spiritual father that is experienced, discrete, wise, prudent, sensible, and capable of healing, through our cooperation and by Gods grace, the sores and wounds of our soul. In the same manner by which we search for a good medical doctor that can heal our physical ailments, it is likewise and even more persistently that we ought to search and discover a spiritual father who is capable of contributing towards our spiritual help. That is because “if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into a ditch.” (Matt. 15:14) When, however, you find this spiritual father, keep him as your spiritual father for life and do not change him. Those who go around from spiritual father to spiritual father find no benefit or profit with any one of them, whether they do this because of ignorance or ego. It is only when a spiritual father follows us systematically and gets to know us well that he can substantially aid in our spiritual struggles for the cleansing of our soul and the path towards our salvation.

A good confession is characterized by the following attributions:

1) **It is brief but substantive.** In other words, it is conducted with no omissions and without superfluous and empty talk, useless repetitions, oblique presentations or even stories and fables.

2) **It is humble.** In other words, it is conducted with the full realization of our sinfulness and guilt a realization which is also reflected both in our words as well as our posture as Christians.

3) **It is honest.** It thus contains nothing more and nothing less than the pure truth, and is fully absent pretenses and excuses. It further assigns zero blame to anybody else, even to the demons or Satan himself!

4) **It is immediate and it thus takes place without any delay or postponement.** At the very moment our conscious censures and reproves us, we must run to our spiritual father for confession as we are always unaware when death will visit us without any warning.

5) **It is discreet.** In other words, it is characterized by good judgment, common sense, and prudence. It is also formulated clearly, plainly, explicitly, carefully, and orderly.

6) **It is complete** and it therefore **contains all of our sins and omits nothing** with the intent of confessing it to a different spiritual father.

7) **It is Publican like;** in other words, it is conducted with extreme devoutness, **piety, and contrition of the heart.** It is no different than what we read in the Gospel, “And the Publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven,

Lord have mercy

*By the Rev. Metropolitan Avgoustinos of Florina,
from the weekly bulletin "Kiriaki," Feb. 13, 2005*

but smote upon his breast, saying , 'God, be merciful to me a sinner'." (Luke 18:13)

8) **It is private.** Thus, other than the priest who is the spiritual father and the confessing Christian, nobody learns and nobody should learn the content of one's confession. If someone should hear one's confession—an unlikely and highly improbable event—he must absolutely never reveal it to nobody whatsoever but to take whatever he heard with him to his grave. This is even more applicable to the priest himself who in no instance is allowed to reveal sins confessed to him, even when his own life is at stake.

9) **It is the beginning of a new life.** Along with our confession we make a solid decision consciously to engage in our personal spiritual struggle and warfare. We thus decide not only never to repeat the sins we just confessed, but to also make good whatever we can from the sins that we committed in the past. Thus, we compensate a person whom we wronged, return something we stole, ask forgiveness from anybody that we insulted, etc. If we do not do so our repentance is not real!

10) **It is accompanied by our acceptance of whatever penance or kanona that may be possibly assigned by our spiritual father** (e.g., fasting, almsgiving, or whatever else he considers suitable). We also must fully comprehend and accept that such penance does not constitute a "sentence" or a "punishment," but it is a therapeutic and pedagogical element of our spiritual healing and means by which our spirituality is increased.

May our Lord guide us all in the most fitting method for each one of us to receive the Holy Sacrament of Confession.

"Lord, have mercy" is the shortest prayer we have; it is nevertheless appropriate for all. Even the uneducated or a young child can say it, the infant that can barely speak as well as the white-haired grandfather. And our Lord keeps on listening to this "Lord, have mercy," and answers it countless times each hour...

I likewise advise and recommend it to all of you. Are you unable to say long prayers? Are you finding it difficult to be in church during all of the services? Take a breath and call it out wherever you are: "Lord, have mercy." Are you sitting down to eat? "Lord, have mercy." Is the night upon you? "Lord, have mercy." Is it morning? "Lord, have mercy." Are you on your way to work? "Lord, have mercy." Are you plowing the earth? "Lord, have mercy." Are you grazing the flock? "Lord, have mercy." Are you a factory worker? "Lord, have mercy." Are you a soldier on guard duty? "Lord, have mercy." Are you a sinner? "Lord, have mercy".

This tiny prayer, "Lord, have mercy," is capable of great miracles. That which we need and ask of God will be granted to us, for He is a father. Christ tells us: "If ye then know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father Who is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matt 7:11, Luke 11:13) If our physical father watches after us, and grants us our material wishes and needs, how much more He Whom we call out in "Our Father, Who art in Heaven..." God will truly grant us all of our wishes, if we truly believe, if we are truly Orthodox Christians!

Continuation from pag. 1 – The Great Canon of St. Andrew

The culture in which we live and which shapes our world view excludes in fact the concept of sin. For if sin is, first of all, man's fall from an incredibly high altitude, the rejection by man of his "high calling", what can all this mean within a culture which ignores and denies that "high altitude" and that "calling", and defines man not from "above" but from "below" – a culture which even when it does not openly deny God is in fact materialistic from the top to the bottom, which thinks of man's life only in terms of material goods and ignores his transcendental vocation? Quotes from GREAT LENT, Journey to Pascha by Fr. Alexander Schememann The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete Sin here is thought of primarily as a natural "weakness" due usually to a "maladjustment" which has in turn social roots and, therefore, can be eliminated by a better social and economic organization. For this reason even when he confesses his sins, the "modern" man no longer repents; depending upon his understanding of religion, he either formally enumerates formal transgressions of formal rules, or shares his "problems" with the confessor – expecting from religion some therapeutic treatment which will make him happy again and well-adjusted. In neither case do we have repentance as the shock of man who, seeing in himself the "image of the ineffable glory", realizes that he has defiled, betrayed, and rejected it in his life; repentance as regret coming from the ultimate depth of man's consciousness; as the desire to return; as surrender to God's love and mercy. This is why it is not enough to say: I have sinned. This confession becomes meaningful and efficient only if sin is understood and experienced in all its depth and sadness. It is precisely the function and the purpose of the Great Canon to reveal sin to us and to lead us thus to repentance, and it reveals sin not by definitions and enumerations but by deep

meditation on the great biblical story which is indeed the story of sin, repentance, and forgiveness. This meditation takes us into a different spiritual culture, challenges us with an entirely different view of man, of his life, his goals, and his motivation. It restores in us the fundamental spiritual framework within which repentance again becomes possible. When we hear for example, I have not assumed the righteousness of Abel, O Jesus, not having offered to Thee either an acceptable gift, or divine deed, or pure sacrifice, or life immaculate... We understand that sin is first of all the rejection of life as offering or sacrifice to God, or in other terms, of the divine orientation of life... We have to learn again how to enter into the world as revealed by the Bible and how to live in it; and there is no better way into that world than by the Church's liturgy which is not only the communication of biblical teachings but precisely the revelation of the biblical way of life. The Lenten journey begins thus with a return to the "starting point" – the world of Creation, Fall, and Redemption, the world in which all things speak of God and reflect His glory, in which all events are referred to God, in which man finds the true dimension of his life, and having found it, repents.



Come join us for a unique prayer experience:
The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete
First week of Lent – the first 4 days (see
Calendar, pag.18

**The Fifth week of Lent – Thursday,
March 30th at 6:00 pm**

Parents' corner

Lessons of St. John Chrysostomos on Raising Children

1. Having children is a matter of nature; but raising them and educating them in the virtues is a matter of mind and will. [1]
2. By the duty of raising them I mean not only not allowing them to die of hunger, as people often limit their obligation toward their children to doing. For this, is needed neither books nor rubrics, for nature speaks of it quite loudly. I am speaking of the concern for educating children hearts in virtues and piety—a sacred duty which cannot be transgressed without thereby becoming guilty of the children murder, in a certain sense.
3. This obligation belongs to fathers as well as mothers. There are fathers who spare nothing in order to secure for their children teachers of pleasure and to pander to their cravings as wealthy heirs. But so that the children would be Christians, so that they would exercise themselves in piety, is of little need to them. O criminal blindness! It is this very crude inattention that is responsible for all the disorder that causes our society to groan. Let us suppose that you have acquired large property for them. However, if they do not know how to conduct themselves sensibly this property will not last long with them. It will be squandered; it will perish with its owners, and will be their most grievous inheritance.
4. Your children will always be sufficiently wealthy if they receive from you a good upbringing that is able to order their moral life and behavior. Thus, strive not to make them rich, but rather to make them pious masters of their passions, rich in virtues. Teach them not to think up illusory needs, reckoning their worth according to worldly standards. Attentively watch their deeds, their acquaintances and their attachments—and do not expect any mercy from God if you do not fulfill this duty.
5. If the Apostle commands us to take more care for others than for ourselves, and if we are guilty when we neglect their benefit, then is it not a much greater guilt when this concerns those who are so near to us? Was it not I, the Lord will say to us, Who gave place to these children in your family? Was it not I Who entrusted them to your care, making you masters, guardians and judges over them? I gave you complete authority over them; I placed all care for their upbringing in your hands. You will tell me that they did not want to bend their necks to the yoke, that they threw it off. But this should have been averted from the very beginning; you should have mastered their first impressions placed the reigns on them before they had the power to break away from them. You should have bent their young souls under the yoke of duty, accustomed them to it, educated them in accordance with it, bound the wound when it first opened. You should have uprooted the tares when they first began to sprout around the young plant, and not have waited until they put down deep roots, when the passions have become uncontrollable and untamable through gradual strengthening in their formation.
6. The wise Sirach says: Hast thou children? Instruct them, and bow down their neck from their youth (Sir. 7:25). But the Lord does not only prompt us with this command through the lips of His prophet; he even takes our side, supporting the fulfillment of this commandment with the fearsome punishment that awaits those children who do not submit to the authority of their parents: Every man who shall speak evil of his father or of his mother, let him die the death (Lev. 20:9). He punishes with death those who become guilty before you, and you look tepidly at these sins that they commit against the highest possible authority. They are rebelling against God Him self, transgressing His commandments, and you look at this without the least displeasure, without the slightest criticism of your children. What does He have to lose from their offense? Nothing. But you, why should you not fear for your own selves? For whoever abandons the Lord will never respect either his own father or himself.
7. Children who are submissive and faithful to God in their obedience to His law will have found an abundant source of happiness, even in this temporal life. A poor man with Christian morals inspires respect and love from others. Meanwhile, with an evil and depraved heart, all your riches will not save you from the displeasure and aversion of everyone around you.
8. The youth to whom you give a good upbringing will not only enjoy general respect, he will also become dearer to you yourselves! Your attachment to him will not be a mere natural attraction—it will be the fruit

of his virtue. For this, during your old age, you will in turn receive from him the services of his filial love. He will be your support. For just as those who do not revere the Lord also have contempt for their own parents, those who revere God, the Father of all men, will have every respect for those who gave them life.

9. Let us suppose that you fulfill the commandment of the law in every other respect, but being unfaithful in this one commandment you will be severely punished. Listen to this proof taken from the history of one ancient people. You will immediately see to what terrible punishment those fathers subject themselves who neglect their children upbringing. Among the Jews was one priest who was respected for his meek character. His name was Eli. This priest had two sons who had given themselves over to every vice. The father did not concern himself with this and paid little attention, or if their depravity, having reached the limit, forced him to reproach them, he did it without the necessary fervor and authority. He should have punished them severely, thrown them out of his presence taken strict measures in order to put a stop to the outrage. He did nothing of the sort. He limited himself to giving them a form of admonition: Nay, my Sons, for the report which I hear is not good; do not so (I Kings 2:24). Is this what he should have said? They offended the One to Whom they owe their existence, and he still accepts them as part of his family? His admonition was useless and vain. No, this demanded not an admonition, but a strong lesson, severe torments, a treatment as strong as the evil. He should have used fear to root their young hearts out of this blindness. An admonition! Elis sons had no lack of

these. O useless words! O criminal meekness by which they became victims! A war began, and the wretches became the spoils of their enemy. When their father learned of their misfortune, he fell to the ground and, smashing his head, died.

10. I have just told you that fathers who do not take care to give their children a Christian upbringing are murderers of their own children. Is it not true? Who should Eli blame for his son's death? Himself. True, the enemies sword slew them, but the neglect of their false father directed the blow. Abandoned by heavenly help, they appeared naked against the arrows of the Philistines. The father destroyed himself and them. Meanwhile, we see the same thing before ourselves daily. How many parents there are who do not want to take upon themselves this labor of correcting their unsubmissive and unruly children! They are as if afraid to upset their children by reigning in with stern words the vicious tendencies to which they have submitted themselves. What is the outcome? Their disorder increases; their impunity leads them to criminal offenses; they are brought to trial; and the wretches die at the hands of the executioner. You refused your personal rights over them and committed them to the severity of civil punishment, and human justice wielded its harsh rights over them. You are afraid to humiliate them with some light punishment in your presence; but what horrible dishonor shall befall you when your son is no longer around, and the father, hounded everywhere by accusing glares, no longer dares to show himself anywhere.

Continuation in April Monthly Bulletin.

Women retreat – March 11th, 2023

Abbess (Gerontissa) Gabriella (Ursache)

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

Schedule:

Friday, 10th – Open for men too - Akatist of Theotokos - 6:00pm, followed by a informal talk in the church about the beginning of the Romanian monastic life in the USA – Princess Ileana of Romania, later Mother Alexandra’s monastery, Fr. Roman Braga personality and Holy Dormition Monastery, and **Dinner 7:50 pm** – Parish Hall

Saturday, 11th

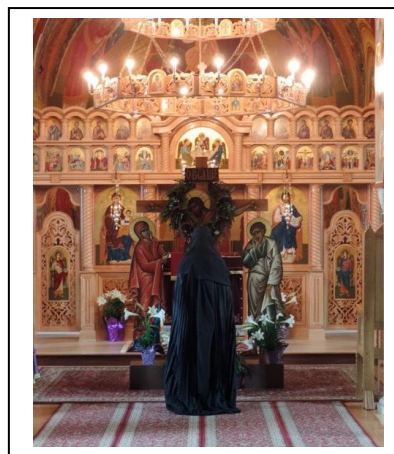
- **Divine Liturgy** – 9:00 am – 10:15 am
- **Breakfast** – starting 10:15 am
- **Registration and admission** – 10:45 am
- **Main Talk** – 11:00 am – 12:00 am
- **Q & A Session** – 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm
- **Lunch** – 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm
- **Groups Work** – 1:30 pm – 2:15pm
- **Groups reunion & presentations** – 2:15 pm – 2:40 pm
- **Conclusions** – 2:40 pm – 3:00 pm

Who is our speaker: Mother Gabriella (Ursache)

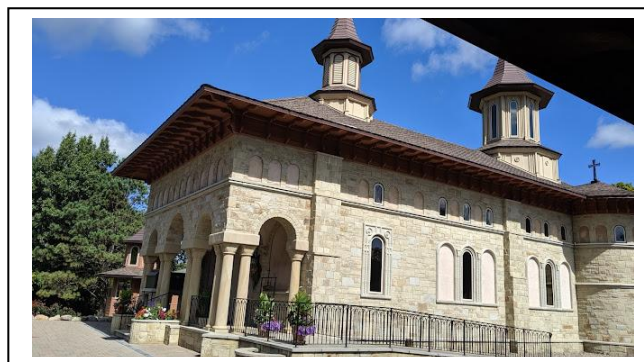
Mother Gabriella (Ursache) is the Abbess (Gerontissa - Greek, Stareța - Romanian) of the Holy Dormition Monastery , MI, since 1989. She was tonsured as a nun in 1977 in Varatec Monastery (Romania). In 1978 Mother Gabriella joined The Holy

Transfiguration Monastery in Elwood City, PA, the monastery founded by Princess Ileana of Romania, later Mother Alexandra.

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



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



Special Lenten Recipes/Prescription

Here is Archbishop **Ignatie Briancianinov's prescription** for how to behave in times of trouble: "I am sending you a spiritual prescription and I recommend that you take the proposed medicine several times a day, especially in moments of severe mental and physical suffering. Isolating yourself, say out loud and without haste, participating in the spoken words and through the attention of the mind, the following: «Glory to you, my God, for the troubles you sent me according to my deeds! Remember me in Your Kingdom!"

The recipe for the Great Lent:

Let the prayer increase!

Let the reading grow!

May virtue increase!

Every night watch more in prayer! Stop the words! Let there be no talk, because through silence you will succeed in everything!

St. Antim of Chios

Another Lenten recipe:

Morning – Morning prayers or 100 times Jesus Prayer, followed by St. Ephrem Prayer (add this prayer to the night prayers too)

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk.

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my

brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen.

Daily Bible Reading: 1 Chapter per day

Full prostration: according to the age (10 or 50 or 100)

Evening: Alternate one Cathisma from Psalter with Canon of Repentance, or Parakisis of Theotokos

Reading: Spiritual Books

Tips - For the best result: wash the heart with the tears of repentance in a confession bowl, spread a pinch of humility, mix a spoon of quietness, and decorate it with love and patience. Enjoy the spiritual feast!!

Volunteers needed for Lenten food for every Wednesday and Sunday

Please let us know if you will bring some food either for Wednesday after the Pre Sanctified Liturgy or on Sunday.

We remind you that during fasting periods we do not have any cakes, pastries from Big Y (Paul & Carol Porra) because they are not Lenten food.

They could be replaced with Lenten cake, fruits, nuts.

March 2023

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts

www.stmichaelorthodox.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 6:00pm Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete 8:00pm	2 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 12:00pm Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete 6:00pm	3 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 10:00am The Akatist Hymn 6:00pm	4 + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am)
5 + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed Sunday of Orthodoxy Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	6 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 10:00am	7 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 12:00pm	8 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 6:00pm	9 + Strict Fast Holy 40 Martyrs of Sebaste Presanctified Liturgy 12:00pm	10 + Strict Fast Women Retreat Presanctified Liturgy 10:00am Vespers or Akatist of Theotokos 6:00pm	11 + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed Women retreat Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers 5:00pm
12 + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	13 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 10:00am	14 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 12:00pm	15 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 6:00pm	16 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 12:00pm	17 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 10:00am	18 + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers 5:00pm
19 + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed Sunday of the Holy Cross Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	20 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 10:00am	21 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 12:00pm	22 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 6:00pm	23 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 12:00pm	24 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 10:00am Vespers 6:00pm	25 + Fast Day – Fish Annunciation of the Theotokos Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 11:30am) Vespers 5:00pm
26 + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed Sunday of St. John Climacus Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	27 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 10:00am	28 Presanctified Liturgy 12:00pm	29 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 6:00pm	30 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 12:00pm 6:00pm The Great Canon of St. Andrew and Great Compline	31 + Strict Fast Presanctified Liturgy 10:00am	