



Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts
www.stmichaelorthodox.com
June 2020



LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday

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

Sunday

9:00am Matins
10:00am Divine Liturgy

Wednesday

6:00pm Paraklesis

Feast days

- June 6th** – Saturday of the Souls
June 7th – Holy Pentecost
June 8th – Monday of the Holy Spirit
June 11th – Apostle Bartholomew, St. Luke of Crimea
June 14th – Sunday of All Saints, Prophet Elisha
June 15th – Apostles' Fast Begins
June 19th – Apostle Thaddeus, St. Paisios the Great
June 21st – American and Romanian Saints
June 24th – Nativity of St. John the Baptist
June 29th – Apostles Peter and Paul
June 30th – Synaxis of the Twelve Apostles

Holy Pentecost

We celebrate this Feast of Holy Pentecost today in commemoration of the coming of the All-Holy Spirit into the world, which took place fifty days after the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

We have received this Feast from the Hebrew Bible; for, just as the Hebrews celebrate their own Pentecost, honoring the number seven, and because they received the Law fifty days after the Passover, so also do we, celebrating fifty days after Pascha, receive, instead of the Law, the All-Holy Spirit, Who gives us laws, guides us into all truth, and decrees what is pleasing to God.

It should be known that among the Hebrews there were three great Feasts: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. They observed Passover in commemoration of their deliverance from Egypt and their passage across the Red Sea; for "Pascha," in the Hebrew language, means "passage." This Feast signifies our own passage and return from the darkness of sin to Paradise.

They celebrated Pentecost in commemoration of the hardships they endured in the desert, where they received the Law, and of the way in which they were brought through many afflictions into the Promised Land, for then it was that they enjoyed fruit, wheat, and wine. It also signifies the hardship that we suffer from unbelief and our entry into the Church; for then it is that we partake of the Body and Blood of the Master.

The third Feast is that of Tabernacles, celebrated after the harvesting of fruits, that is, five months after the Feast of Passover. This Feast was celebrated in memory of the day on which Moses first pitched the Tabernacle that he saw on Mount Sinai in the cloud and which was constructed by the architect Beseleel. Fashioning tabernacles themselves, the Hebrews would celebrate the same Feast: living in the fields and giving thanks to God, they would reap the fruits of their labors. This Feast is a type of our resurrection from the dead, when, after our bodily tabernacles have been dissolved and reconstituted, we will enjoy the fruits of our labors, keeping festival in the eternal tabernacles.

It should be known that on this same day of Pentecost that we are celebrating, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Disciples. Since the Holy Fathers decided to divide up the Feast on account of the majesty of the All-Holy and Life-Creating Spirit, because He is One of the Holy and Life-Originating Trinity, we will speak tomorrow about the Descent of the Holy Spirit.

By the intercessions of Thy Holy Apostles, O Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church
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2020 Parish Council

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

2020 Ladies Society Committee

President: Alexandra Nasto
Vice President: Louise Boilard
Secretary: 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!!**

June 3rd – Stephen Sousa

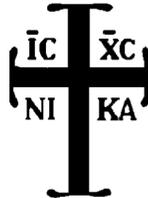
June 25th – Madalina Sousa

June 26th – John DeAngelis

June 30th – Fr. John

Happy Name Day

June 29th – Sts. Peter and Paul
– Peter Boilard, Paul Yanka, Paul
Porra, Paul Myers



**Coffee Hour Volunteers
Needed**

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

**Please contact Deb Thomo to
sign up.**

Please Pray for:

Preoteasa
Camelia
Carol Porra
Bill & Lauren
Smith
Mary
Grabosky
Henrietta Panu
Jennifer Silva
Alexander

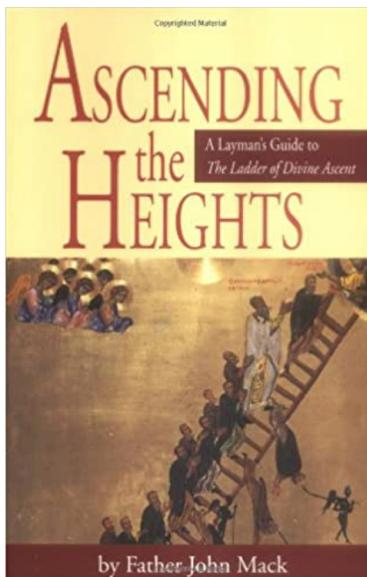
~ Movie & Book Corner ~

Movie: *Elder Joseph the Hesychast*



The film depicts the life of an ascetic monk of Mt. Athos who recently has been canonized a saint by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The title of the film bears his monastic name: Elder Joseph the Hesychast.

Scenes from his early childhood on the island of Paros, his transition and efforts in Athens, lead on to his monastic life on Mt. Athos. Having been offered the invitation by God for an ascetic life, he was tonsured a monk in 1921. He was granted many experiences of the divine but simultaneously great demonic temptations. He lived with prayer, fasting and vigil, and was granted the Grace of the Holy Spirit, while obtaining the spiritual gifts of foresight and prophecy. Elder Joseph very soon took on students, one of whom has also been canonized a saint: Elder Ephraim of Katounakia. Another three of his spiritual students became Abbots of the monasteries of Mt. Athos, just as he himself had prophesied. His spiritual children built up monastic centers in Greece, Cyprus, USA, Canada and all over the world. Elder Joseph is recognized as one of the greatest contemporary ascetic personalities of Mt. Athos, and the Church at large.



Book: *Ascending the Heights*

In the sixth century, a monk named John wrote a book outlining the stages of the spiritual life. He based his entire work on the image of the ladder of thirty rungs, stretching from earth to heaven. Each rung described a step in the pursuit of virtue and the spiritual life. Since it was first written, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* has been an essential formation of Orthodox monasticism, and a mainstay of Orthodox ascetic spirituality. But it is not just for monks and nuns. This book is written to help those in a non-monastic setting, with "ordinary lives" to understand how to apply the Ladder. Each chapter contains many direct quotes from St. John's writings, in addition to commentary on St. John's words. This book, therefore, should be used as a primer to the Ladder as a helpful tool for ascending the spiritual heights.

The Antichrist: An Orthodox Perspective from the Church Fathers (Part 1)

Fr. Andrew J. Anderson

Today's sermon is about the Antichrist, as I continue my sermon series on the Orthodox Christian perspective on the awaited Second Coming of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. The purpose of this sermon is to provide a Patristic understanding of the Scriptures on this timely and important topic. Today one can find on the Internet many voices from various Bible preachers—Protestants, Roman Catholics, and even Orthodox—who all claim to have specific knowledge of End-Time events. There are similarities, but also much confusion, and where there are contradictions, one is left wondering which voice is correct. To solve this dilemma, we will take a look to see how the early Church viewed this matter. If a person wants to gather opinions about the correct interpretation of End-Time Scriptural passages, one would be better off going back deep into early Church history and listening to the opinions of the Apostles and early Church Fathers.

In another sermon we reviewed the sequence of "End-Time" events, according to the Orthodox Church's understanding. We heard of how the first events will be the "beginning of sorrow: wars, great earthquakes, famines, plagues, "fearful sights and great signs from heaven" (Matt. 24:7-8; Luke 21:11). We read the words of Christ, St. Paul, and the teaching of the Holy Apostles, as recorded in the book, "The Didache" (cir. first/second century). We saw clearly that a man is coming in the future who will be the opposite of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will be the "instead-of-Christ", the "Antichrist." With the help of his false prophet, his false teaching, his false miracles and displays of power, this evil man will offer to the world, (especially to the Jews), a kind of earthly

kingdom that is in everything the opposite of Jesus Christ's Heavenly Kingdom.

At first making a gentle, seductive appearance, this man will later reveal his true evil character. St. Paul warned of this evil man when he said, in 2 Thess. 2: 3,4,9,10:

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [*i.e. the Day of the Last Judgment*] will not come **unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed**, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself

above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that

he is God...The coming of **the lawless one** is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

This "man of sin," the "lawless one," the Lord Jesus will "consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming" (2 Thess. 2:8).

Our Lord Jesus Christ referred to this future false "christ" when He warned in Matthew 24:23, "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do **not** believe it."

The teaching of the Holy Apostles, as recorded in the book known as "The Didache" (cir. first/second Century), is summarized similarly:

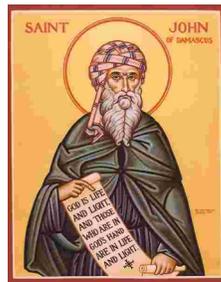
For in the last days false prophets and seducers will increase...and then the **deceiver** of the world will appear as though he were the Son of God, and he shall do signs and wonders and the earth shall be delivered into his hands; and he will do immoralities which have never been done since the age began. Then shall the race of

"Let no one...look for the Lord to come from earth, but out of Heaven, as He himself has made sure."

men will come into the fire of proving trial... (Didache 16:3,4,5)

In today's sermon I hope to answer the following questions: **Did the Father's of our Holy Church support and continue to hold these Apostolic views about the Antichrist?** Do they see him as a future global leader—politically and spiritually? How do they think the Antichrist will come into world popularity? How will he reveal his true evil identity?

For answers to these questions, let us examine quotes from some of the greatest and most famous Fathers of the Church: St. Irenaeus of Lyons (second century), St. Ephraim the Syrian (fourth century), St. John Chrysostom (fourth century), St. Cyril of Jerusalem (fourth century), St. John of Damascus (eighth century), together with St. Ignatius Brianchaninov (nineteenth century Russian Bishop) and the recently canonized wonderworking St. Paisios of Mount Athos (†1994).



St. John of Damascus on the Antichrist

We start with a long quote from St. John of Damascus, the great eighth century Church Father whose writings summarized the apostolic teachings of all the early Church Fathers who had preceded him. St. John is one of the most trusted Orthodox theologians whose inspired hand penned hymns for our Orthodox Pascha Matins service, the Orthodox Funeral Service, and the entire Book of the Eight Tones (the "Octoechos"). He also wrote the classic Orthodox catechism, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, which has been the main catechism of the Church for centuries. In Chapter 26 of Book 4 of this *Exposition* St. John summarizes the early Church's teaching on the Antichrist:

It should be known that the Antichrist is bound to come. First, therefore, it is

necessary that the Gospel should be preached among all nations: And then shall that wicked one be revealed, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, whom the Lord shall consume with the word of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. The devil himself, therefore does not become man in the way that the Lord was made man. God forbid! but he [*the Antichrist*] becomes man as the offspring of fornication and receiveth all the energy of Satan. For God, foreknowing the strangeness of the choice that he would make, allows the devil to take up his abode in him.

He [*the Antichrist*] is, therefore, as we said, the offspring of fornication and is nurtured in secret, and on a sudden he rises up and rebels and assumes rule. And in the beginning of his rule, or rather tyranny, he assumes the role of sanctity. But when he becomes master he persecutes the Church of God and displays all his wickedness. But he will come with signs and lying wonders, fictitious and not real, and he will deceive and lead away from the living God those whose mind rests on an unsound and unstable foundation, so that even the elect shall, if it be possible, be made to stumble.

But Enoch and Elijah the Thesbite shall be sent and shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, that is, the synagogue to our Lord Jesus Christ and the preaching of the apostles: and they will be destroyed by him. And the Lord shall come out of heaven, just as the holy apostles beheld Him going into heaven, perfect God and perfect man, with glory and power, and will destroy the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, with the breath of His mouth. Let no one, therefore, look for the Lord to come from earth, but out of Heaven, as He himself has made sure.

On the Plague (Part 1) St. Cyprian of Carthage

The Plague of Cyprian was a pandemic that afflicted the Roman Empire from about AD 249 to 262. The plague is thought to have caused widespread manpower shortages for food production and the Roman army, severely weakening the empire during the Crisis of the Third Century. Its modern name commemorates St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, an early Christian writer who witnessed and described the plague. The agent of the plague is highly speculative due to sparse sourcing, but suspects include smallpox, pandemic influenza and viral hemorrhagic fever (filoviruses) like the Ebola virus. In 250 to 262, at the height of the outbreak, 5,000 people a day were said to be dying in Rome. Cyprian's biographer, Pontius of Carthage, wrote of the plague at Carthage:

Afterwards there broke out a dreadful plague, and excessive destruction of a hateful disease invaded every house in succession of the trembling populace, carrying off day by day with abrupt attack numberless people, every one from his own house. All were shuddering, fleeing, shunning the contagion, impiously exposing their own friends, as if with the exclusion of the person who was sure to die of the plague, one could exclude death itself also. There lay about the meanwhile, over the whole city, no longer bodies, but the carcasses of many, and, by the contemplation of a lot which in their turn would be theirs, demanded the pity of the passers-by for themselves. No one regarded anything besides his cruel gains. No one trembled at the remembrance of a similar event. No one did to another what he himself wished to experience.

“The kingdom of God, beloved brethren, is beginning to be at hand; the reward of life, and the rejoicing of eternal salvation, and the perpetual gladness and possession lately lost of paradise, are now coming, with the passing away of the world...”

In Carthage the “Decian persecution”, unleashed at the onset of the plague, perhaps inadvertently led to the criminalization of Christian oath refusal. Fifty years later, North African convert to Christianity Arnobius defended his new religion from pagan allegations that a plague was brought upon the earth after the Christian religion came into the world, and after it revealed the mysteries of hidden truth? But pestilences, say my opponents, and droughts, wars, famines, locusts, mice, and hailstones, and other hurtful things, by which the property of men is assailed, the gods bring upon us, incensed as they are by your wrong-doings and by your transgressions. The threat of imminent death from the plague and the unwavering conviction among many of the Christian clergy in the face of it won more converts to the faith.

On the Plague

Although in very many of you, dearly beloved brethren, there is a steadfast mind and a firm faith, and a devoted spirit that is not disturbed at the frequency of this present mortality, but, like a strong and stable rock, rather shatters the turbulent onsets of the world and the raging waves of time, while it is not itself shattered, and is not overcome but tried by these temptations; yet because I observe that among the people some, either through weakness of mind, or through decay of faith, or through the sweetness of this worldly life, or through the softness of their sex, or what is of still greater account, through error from the truth, are standing less steadily, and are not exerting the divine and unvanquished vigour of their heart, the matter

may not be disguised nor kept in silence, but as far as my feeble powers suffice with my full strength, and with a discourse gathered from the Lord's lessons, the slothfulness of a luxurious disposition must be restrained, and he who has begun to be already a man of God and of Christ, must be found worthy of God and of Christ.

For he who wars for God, dearest brethren, ought to acknowledge himself as one who, placed in the heavenly camp, already hopes for divine things, so that we may have no trembling at the storms and whirlwinds of the world, and no disturbance, since the Lord had foretold that these would come. With the exhortation of His foreseeing word, instructing, and teaching, and preparing, and strengthening the people of His Church for all endurance of things to come, He predicted and said that wars, and famines, and earthquakes, and pestilences would arise in each place; and lest an unexpected and new dread of mischiefs should shake us, He previously warned us that adversity would increase more and more in the last times. Behold, the very things occur which were spoken; and since those occur which were foretold before, whatever things were promised will also follow; as the Lord Himself promises, saying, "But when you see all these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand." Luke 21:31 The kingdom of God, beloved brethren, is beginning to be at hand; the reward of life, and the rejoicing of eternal salvation, and the perpetual gladness and possession lately lost of paradise, are now coming, with the passing away of the world; already heavenly things are taking the place of earthly, and great things of small, and eternal things of things that fade away. What room is there here for



anxiety and solicitude? Who, in the midst of these things, is trembling and sad, except he who is without hope and faith? For it is for him to fear death who is not willing to go to Christ. It is for him to be unwilling to go to Christ who does not believe that he is about to reign with Christ.

For it is written that the just lives by faith. If you are just, and live by faith, if you truly believe in Christ, why, since you are about to be with Christ, and are secure of the Lord's promise, do you not embrace the assurance that you are called to Christ, and rejoice that you are freed from the devil? Certainly Simeon, that just man, who was truly just, who kept God's commands with a full faith, when it had been pledged him from heaven that he should not die before he had seen the Christ, and Christ had come an infant into the temple with His mother, acknowledged in spirit that Christ was now born, concerning whom it had before been foretold to him; and when he had seen Him, he knew that he should soon die. Therefore, rejoicing concerning his now approaching death, and secure of his immediate summons, he received the child into his arms, and blessing the Lord, he exclaimed, and said, "Now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation;" Luke 2:29 assuredly proving and bearing witness that the servants of God then had peace, then free, then tranquil repose, when, withdrawn from these whirlwinds of the world, we attain the harbour of our home and eternal security, when having accomplished this death we come to immortality. For that is our peace, that our faithful tranquillity, that our steadfast, and abiding, and perpetual security.

June 2020

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6 Saturday of the Souls Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
7 Holy Pentecost Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am 11:00am Great Vespers (Kneeling)	8 Monday of the Holy Spirit Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	9	10 Paraklesis 6:00pm	11 Apostle Bartholomew; St. Luke of Crimea	12	13 Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
14 Sunday of All Saints; Prophet Elisha Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am	15 Apostles' Fast Begins	16	17 Paraklesis 6:00pm	18	19 Apostle Thaddeus; St. Paisios the Great	20 Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
21 American and Romanian Saints Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am	22	23 Vespers – St. John the Baptist 6:00pm	24 Nativity of St. John the Baptist Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am Paraklesis 6:00pm	25	26	27 Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
28 Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am Vespers – Sts. Peter and Paul 6:00pm	29 Sts. Peter and Paul (Apostles' Fast Ends) Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	30 Synaxis of the Holy Twelve Apostles				