



Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts
www.stmichaelorthodox.com

July 2023



LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday

9:00am Divine Liturgy

5:00pm Vespers

Sunday

8:30am Matins

9:30am Divine Liturgy

Wednesday

6:00pm Paraklesis

For the full Calendar the last page

Feast days

July 1st – Sts. Cosmas and Damian

July 2nd – St. John Maximovitch

July 5th – St. Athanasios of Athos

July 8th – St. Procopios the Martyr

July 11th – St. Euphemia the Martyr;
St. Sophrony of Essex

July 12th – St. Paisios the Athonite

July 18th – Holy Fathers of the
Fourth Ecumenical Synod

July 20th – Glorious Prophet Elias

July 22nd – St. Mary Magdalene

July 25th – Dormition of St. Anna,
mother of the Theotokos

July 27th – St. Panteleimon the
Martyr

St. Paisios the Athonite (1924–1994)

Saint Paisios of Mount Athos, originally from Pharasa, Cappadocia, fled to Greece with his family after the population exchange between Turkey and Greece soon after his birth. He becomes one of the most beloved contemporary Orthodox Saints.

Venerable Elder Paisios was canonized on January 13th, 2015 by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the church commemorates his feast day on July 12th.

While at Mt. Athos, Saint Paisios dedicated his life to helping others; he is also venerated for his deeply spiritual and ascetic life.

In October 1993 Elder Paisios left Mount Athos for medical attention. Despite his wish to be gone for only a few days he never returned to Mt. Athos because he was diagnosed with cancer requiring immediate surgery. After surgery he was transferred to the Monastery of St. John the Theologian, Souroti where he passed away on July 12th, 1994.

His holy relics are to be found in the Monastery St. John the Theologian, Souroti next to the church of St. Arsenios the Cappadocian.

St. Sophrony of Essex (1896–1993)

Saint Sophrony, is best known as the disciple and biographer of St Silouan the Athonite and compiler of St Silouan's works, and as the founder of the Patriarchal Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist in Maldon, Essex, England.

Born into a Russian Orthodox family in Moscow in 1896, Archimandrite Sophrony embarked on a successful career as a painter in Paris. There he delved into Eastern religions for a time, before repenting bitterly of this and returning to the faith of his childhood. After a brief period of theological study in Paris, he left for the ancient Orthodox monastic republic of Mount Athos in Greece, where he spent fifteen years in a monastery and a further seven as a hermit 'in the desert'. On Mount Athos he became the spiritual son of a simple monk of holy life, Elder Silouan. It was under the guidance of Saint Silouan that Fr. Sophrony experienced divine illumination, knowing God..." [Source: Description of *We Shall See Him As He Is*]

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2023 Parish Council Officers

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

2023 Ladies Society Officers

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!!

July 4th – David Aghayev (son of Felicia)
July 6th – Virginia Leahey
July 8th – Savvia Pitsillides
July 12th – Spiro Kelly Jr.
July 13th – Roman Alexander
July 14th – David Alexander
July 20th – George Goulas
July 21st – Harris Pitsillides

**Bible Study – July 6th -
7:00pm**

Bible Study on zoom for the Archdiocese - St.
John Gospel Chapter 14



Night Vigil - St. Paisios the Athonite

Young adults are encourage to attend
July 11th – July 12th

July 11th

- 10:00 pm Vespers & Litia
- 11:00 pm Matins

July 12th

- 12:00 am Divine Liturgy
- 1:30 am coffee, tea & light meal

Accommodation will be provided by
request

Please Pray for
Henrietta, Theodor,
Sophia – good
health
Kristina & Spiro
Kelly; Joy &
George; Julian -
safe trip

St. Sophrony Services

July 11th

8:00 am –Matins

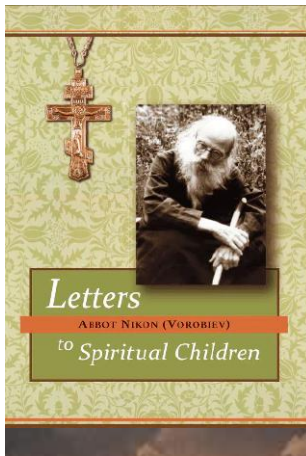
9:00am Divine Liturgy

Extended Coffee hours Pot Luck & Cook out

July 30th – after Divine Liturgy

Invite your relatives and friends for good food and
a relaxing afternoon

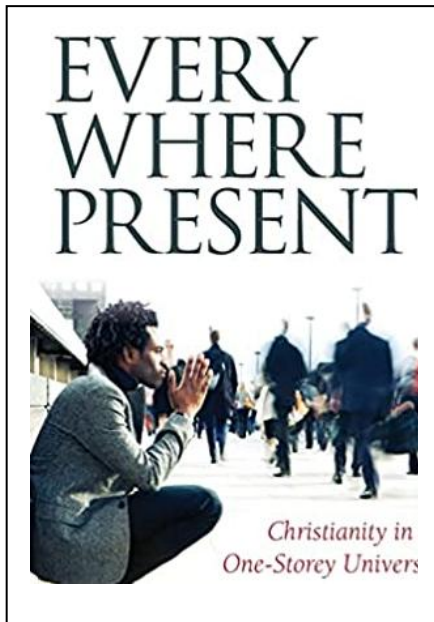
Book Corner



Book: *Letters to Spiritual Children - Abbot Nikon (Vorobiev)*

In addressing his spiritual children, Fr. Nikon (d. 1963) speaks to all those seeking guidance on the difficult path to salvation. He balances exhortation and reproach with encouragement and consolation, instructing the reader in the fundamentals of the Christian struggle: "Recognize your indebtedness before God...submit yourself totally to God's good will...fear a high opinion of yourself...only through humility does a person become as one spirit with the Lord." Here is a volume of enduring value to anyone seriously and sincerely desiring to attain the Kingdom of Heaven.

Book: *Every Where Present – Christianity in a One-Storey Universe* by Fr. Stephen Freeman



Have you ever referred to God as the Man upstairs ? Most Christians living in a secular society have unwittingly relegated God and all things spiritual to the second storey of the universe: a realm we cannot reach except through death. The effect of this is to banish God, along with the saints and angels, from our everyday lives.

In *Everywhere Present*, popular blogger and podcaster Fr. Stephen Freeman makes a compelling case for becoming aware of God's living and active presence in every moment of our lives here and now. Learning to practice your Christian faith in a one-storey universe will change your life and make possible the living, intimate relationship with God you've always dreamed of.

President's corner

07/01/2023

Dear All,

Happy Summer! It is hard to believe we have already sped through Pascha and have moved onto the summer months. We hope and pray everyone enjoys the wonderful weather and any vacations you have planned.

Here are a few quick updates from the Parish Council:

- The Young Adults Retreat and the visit from Father Josiah was an incredible and overwhelming success for our church community. Thank you to everyone that participated and helped/donated in any way towards making this happen. We want to congratulate Presbytera Camelia and Father John for their hard work and dedication to this groundbreaking event for our community.
- The Parish Council has voted to approve some renovations to the church. We received a large donation of \$10,000 towards church beautification and we will be using these funds to repair the closets and paint the inside of the dome.
- We want to send our many thanks to the Dowling's along with Sandra Nasto for their hard work on the calendar fundraiser.
- Sunday July 30th we will be having an extended coffee hour/Summer BBQ for friends and family of Saint Michael's. Invite one and all to join us at Liturgy and then coffee hour afterwards. A sign-up sheet will be made soon for this.
- The Saint Michael's Romanian Golf Open in Memory of George Nasto will be held on Saturday September 16th at Cohasse Country Club in Southbridge. If you are interested in playing or donating, please let me know.
- We are beginning our efforts towards planning the 100th anniversary of the church next year in 2024. If you would like to participate and be on the committee for this, please let us know.

Thank you all so much for everything you do, 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

Father Zacharias, Geronta of St. John the Baptist Monastery (Essex, England), a disciple of St. Sophrony, who was a disciple of St. Silouan of Mount Athos – a short interview about St. Sophrony.

Ms. Olga: My name is Olga. I'm from Russia. I'm a first-year student here. I actually have two short questions, if that's possible. The first one: Could you tell, share with us a story about your spiritual father, Sophrony (Zakharov), if that's possible. Perhaps some memorable moment or something you've learned from him, just a life story, something since you knew him personally. I mean, I would profit from it, I think, at least...Thank you.

Archim. Zacharias: ...About Fr. Sophrony, I will say one thing only. One day, I entered his office. I used to seek for an opportunity always to have a contact with him. I would go two, three, several times every day to see him. I never asked questions, but I knew he would say something to me, and every time he said something, it was an opening of a horizon, of a spiritual horizon. I could tell you many times when **just one word made me understand many things, many things from the lives of the prophets and of the holy apostles and of the saints; just one word.**

But one day, I went to see him in his office, and he says to me, "To all who enter this room"—it was his confessional as well—"to all who enter this room, I put myself under them, in order to be able to help some." And this is the task of the priests. Unless we... We must never have a confidence in the ordination the Church gave us and to walk with authority, but we must try and put ourselves under the people we are trying help, under the people we are trying to serve. If we put ourselves

That was the thing which struck me more than anything in Fr. Sophrony's life. I remember once someone came for prayers. He was suffering from gradual paralysis of his extreme members, and they brought him to pray for him. He was not a man of faith, but his mother-in-law was very pious, his wife hardly believing, and he didn't believe at all. They brought him for Fr. Sophrony to pray for his healing. Many times we saw healings, many times; not every time, but many times, and we

became so used to them that we didn't pay any attention, and he didn't pay attention himself to those things.

And this man Fr. Sophrony wanted to help, and I even went with Fr. Ephrem, your friend, to London to his house, and I performed an unction with holy oil, and they gave him one or two books to read, trying to revive him, because he was not faithful,

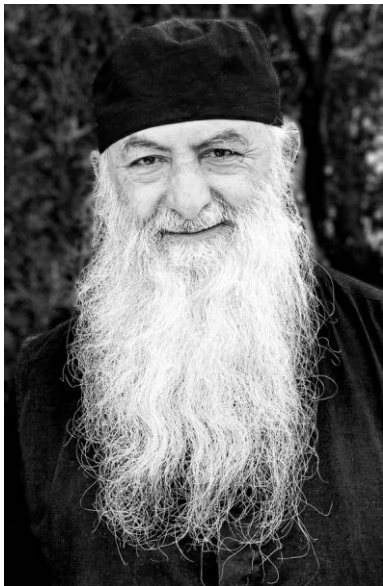
and he was seeking healing from a priest.

Well, he somehow became more soft, more accepting, and they brought him a second time to Fr. Sophrony for prayers. And he told me why the first time he was not healed. Father said he was not healed because of the presence of that person and for that reason: one other person who was there. They brought him the second time. Fr. Sophrony read the three customary prayers from the prayer book, and hardly he finished the third prayer and he lifted up his epitrachelion with sadness, and he says to him, "**We are not wonderworkers. We are just priests, trying to help people to be reconciled with God.**"



St. Sophrony

And this man looked at him with a very nice face, pale and shining, and with a smile, and he said to him, "Yes, my body has not been healed, but **while you were reading the prayers, my soul was healed, and now I believe.**" And Fr. Sophrony, after that, he was so happy and so rejoicing, more than when he saw healings after his prayer, because that was his target. He always said that there is not a greater miracle in the whole universe than the union of man's heart with the spirit of God, **and that was the miracle to which he was ministering, the miracle which he was targeting and to which he was ministering.** That was one thing that struck me the most.



Fr. Zachariah, Geronda of St. John the Baptist Monastery, Essex, UK

**St. Silouan Young Adults Retreat
– Fall Edition
September 22nd - September 23rd**

Save the dates!!!

Main lecture – September 23rd – 11:00am-1:00pm (including Q&A session)

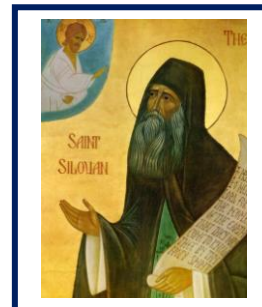
My Journey from Protestantism and Rock Band to the Orthodox Church and Holy Altar, by Fr. John Downie

A special guest on Zoom, Friday night, September 22nd – will be disclosed soon!!!

Prayer ropes workshop and fun activities

**Saturday, September 23rd – Vigil for St. Silouan
7:00 pm – Vespers, Litia and Matins**

**Accommodation will be provided on request
More details soon!**



From Parish life: Congratulations to Dr. Eliza Grigoriuc at the Four Years Neurology Residential Program Graduation (UMass)



BOOK CLUB – July 27th at 6:30pm Parish House

The
GURUS,
the
YOUNG MAN,
and
ELDER PAISIOS
Dionysios Farmasiotis

We will comment the rest of the book *The Gurus, the Young Man, and Elder Paisios*.

This powerful memoir tells the story of a Greek youth who, out of a desire to know the truth empirically, began to experiment in yoga, hypnotism, and various occult techniques. Eventually drawn back to the Faith of his forefathers Orthodox Christianity he visited the ancient monastic republic of Mount Athos in his native Greece, where he was brought to a knowledge of the Truth of Jesus Christ by the saintly Elder Paisios (1924 - 1994).

**Interview with Yelena Popovici, the director of
Man of God movie for *The Orthodox Family* (Romanian magazine)
(translation by St. Michaels' Bulletins editor) Part 2**

Mrs. Yelena Popovici, did you feel the help of Saint Nektarios during the making of the film "Man of God"?

– We experienced more miracles while making the film than we showed in the film script! Making the film itself was a miracle. I'm not Steven Spielberg and I couldn't get the money like him. I was an unknown film director at that time, and the subject of the movie was not considered commercial and attractive. Of course, I don't agree with this; I think people are interested in stories that give them hope. Especially nowadays, they are looking for something that can uplift them spiritually.

The truth is that in the film industry in general, we lack good stories. It's harder than ever to make movies these days. You can ask any director and they will tell you the same thing. To give you just one example, I couldn't raise money for one of my movie about Greta Garbo, even though it has a great script and great actors who want to play it. So it was only after eighteen years in Los Angeles that I got to make a film in Greece – a film about a saint, and a Greek Orthodox saint! It was a miracle. It happened exactly how Elder Ephrem of Arizona told me: "If it is God's will, it will happen!" And I believe that it was, and I also believe that Saint Nektarios helped me from the beginning to the end.

I didn't go to Gerontissa Timothea from Aegina to ask for her blessing until I was sure that the project was feasible. I didn't want to talk to her about a movie that wasn't going to materialize. It was only after I got some funds and started pre-production that I went to ask for her blessing. She gave it to me and told me that the nuns believe

that Saint Nektarios wanted the film to be made. She told me that I would have a lot of obstacles and that it would be difficult, but that I should not worry, because the Saint would help me. And that's exactly what happened! We had many obstacles and many less pleasant moments, but everything worked out in the end.

"Simply, it was a miracle!"

I filmed during the pandemic. Every person was tested every day and no one got sick. There were a hundred people on set, day in and day out, for seven weeks, and not one person contracted COVID! And that was a miracle! If someone had gotten the virus, we would have had to stop production for two weeks and that would have prevented the film from being made. We couldn't have this movie today!

A great miracle happened during the last week of filming. According to me, there are no small or big miracles, but an obvious miracle was the one that Archangel Michael did with us. It happened on September 19th, the day of celebration of the Miracle of the Archangel Michael, according to the old calendar. There was a danger that we wouldn't be able to film then because of the weather. Something fearful was being announced; hurricanes were coming from Italy. At the same time, one of our main actors, Sasha Petrov, who played Kostas, had to return to Russia, so we had to shoot on Friday and Saturday, September 18th and 19th, at all costs, to finish the two scenes before his departure. Even though the weather report predicted heavy rain and wind for Friday, I was able to shoot without any problems. And yet the approaching hurricane had wreaked havoc in the Peloponnese, just south of Athens, and every

weather report was warning that Saturday would be very bad weather. Everyone said we wouldn't be able to film.

On Friday, at the end of the shooting day, on the night of September 18th, a friend from Serbia sent me a message: "Happy Archangel Michael's Day!" I didn't realize what he was referring to. I knew that Archangel Michael was celebrated in November, but then I realized that on September 19th, one of the miracles of the Archangel was celebrated. And then I went and told my producers that we were going to work the next day! They thought I was crazy. Even my cinematographer, who was always by my side, took a long look at me. We knew that if we didn't cancel the Saturday shoot, we would have to pay everyone for that day, whether the weather allowed us to shoot or not. But I had the firm belief that on Saturday, September 19th, a miracle would happen.

And on Saturday morning there was rain, but no wind! The hurricane did not reach Athens; instead, he headed for Turkey. It was an extremely unusual phenomenon. With the rain, we were able to set up and film the first scene, which took place in the church. So we thought that if that scene with Sasha Petrov couldn't be shot outdoors, we would have to find another solution. And, after we finished filming in the church – in a church dedicated to Archangel Michael! – the rain stopped. We managed to shoot for eight hours and finish the scenes with Aris Servetalis and Sasha Petrov without a single drop of rain, while all around us within five hundred meters it was pouring!

Skeptics may say, "It was just a fluke!" But this "happening" happened thanks to the Archangel Michael, who performed the miracle. After we packed everything up and left, if you look at the *making-of*, my producer and one of the collaborators testify:

"When we got back to Athens it was still raining, but where we shot, not a drop fell". I love Archangel Michael! I have a very strong bond with him and my first son is named after him. What can I say? Simply, it was a miracle!

Another miracle was that "The Man of God" was the first Orthodox Christian film about an Orthodox Christian saint to gain a worldwide audience. People in non-Orthodox countries normally don't buy tickets to movies about Orthodox saints they know nothing about. But the film was shown in eight hundred theaters in the United States over two nights and ranked fourth on the chart behind "Batman" for those two consecutive days. The Roman Catholic Church and Protestant churches supported the film's broadcast. The film enjoyed a special release in cinemas in Australia, Canada, France, Russia, Serbia. It also ran in many other countries in Europe. South America has bought the film and will run it in theaters; it will also be shown in the Middle East and South Korea.

This film has gone everywhere – and in Africa! In Romania, it was originally going to run for only two weeks, but because it was so successful, it was broadcast for much longer. Name the continent or country, and you'll find people who have seen the movie! It is the work of Saint Nektarios, not mine. I hope it will open the doors for other people to make such films.

"But you, why are you drinking water?"

– How did you write the script?

– The method I used was formulated by one of my teachers, who said: "Cinematography means living authentically in an imaginary setting." You cannot create true art if that creation does not become a

personal experience for you. Stanislavski spoke about this to his students when they asked him what he should write about. His answer was that they should only write about those things for which they have a personal understanding – nothing else!

When I read the book about Saint Nektarios, I felt that it was a relevant story for our day, because it talks about a man who was persecuted even within the Church. I felt that this kind of story would help some people and bring them to the Church. Since I entered the realm of faith, many people came to me and said, "Why do you go to church?" I always answered them with a question: "But you, why do you drink water?" Later, I started asking others, "Why don't you go to church?". Whether I was in the United States, talking to a taxi driver or anyone else, or in Serbia—including my own father, who was a good man but had a harder time going to church—the answer was invariably, "Because of the priests and of the bishops!"

But my film is not against "popes and bishops"! As me, I could even say that I am ultra-Orthodox; I have always had respect for the hierarchy of the Church. But I understood that they too are human, not angels, and that they live in certain circumstances. I didn't judge anyone. But there are people who would have liked to come to church, only they see a lot of irregularities there and then they give up. The meaning of that line of Saint Nektarios: "Woe to me, if my faith depends on men!" is that we cannot judge anyone. We have so many wonderful priests, so many wonderful bishops! And if one or two are wrong, what do I care? Even if 50% of them are wrong, we still shouldn't miss Holy Communion and the presence of Christ in our lives! We simply need to look for another priest who is on the right track. The problems of the Church belong to the Church and should be

solved by our bishops and metropolitans, not us. Instead, we should pray for them. If a cleric drives an expensive car or owns some kind of mansion, we shouldn't care one bit. Priests and bishops are in a position of power and they can fall. We should have compassion for them. Despise of their weaknesses the Holy Spirit is present in the Church. It is true that there are all kinds of people in the Church, the same people who also persecuted Saint Nektarios. My father could have talked about the Church's passage through communism and the priests who worked for the system. But I would say that we should not stumble in such things, but limit ourselves to what God gives us for our salvation. These situations come and go, and will always return. There will always be people who will go against the Church, as in the time of Christ and as in the time of St. Nektarios; but at the same time there are a lot of spiritual Fathers who are doing a really wonderful work. We can always find a Father whom we can feel close to and who can help us.

If you look in the Western world, there is a huge exodus from the faith; many people simply leave Christian communities. My film is there to tell these people who stay away, "Hey, you're missing the point!". My film is not about a Saint Nektarios who was persecuted in the Church. The point of the film is that Saint Nektarios lived a Christ-like life, regardless of the concrete circumstances surrounding him, and for this reason he did not miss his target.

"For those who suffer a lot"

– What can you tell us about the cast of the film?

– I am an actress and I know how to direct actors. As John Houston would say, "I direct my films from the moment I cast." If you have selected the right actors, you have

50% of the film ready. And we had fantastic actors in this movie! Aris Servetalis, who played Saint Nektarios, is one of the greatest of his generation in Greece. In addition, I was very lucky not only to work with him, but also to learn a lot from him. He was so dedicated - and he is also a true "man of God"! He has a strong faith. And I also think that by giving him this role, I fulfilled my promise to Elder Ephrem of Arizona, who asked me to have an Orthodox Christian actor to play Saint Nektarios. I feel that Aris Servetalis was meant to play this role. I don't think anyone else could have done it better!

And Mickey Rourke! He is such a great actor! He really gave it his all in the scene at the end when he gets up and walks! It was an extremely important moment: to get up from a dying bed and start walking after being paralyzed! Such a real, high-impact scene! He was definitely the most suitable person for this role.

– *What future projects do you have?*

- If God wants, if He gives me health, there would be a few more films... I want to make a film inspired by the life of Saint Moses the Arab; only the story will take place nowadays, in Chicago. I will write the script and direct it. And I got another script about Saint Mary of Egypt - it's called "Repentance" and it looks interesting.

Now we are setting up a company of our own so that we can make such films. I can't go through everything I went through with the movie about Saint Nektarios, it was too hard. We will have certain things in place to take films to another level, with international distribution. I hope I can make one or two more films; but our company also intends to produce other people's films. I would be overjoyed.

Mrs. Yelena Popovici, you are a director, screenwriter, but also a mother of two boys. How can the balance be found between screen addiction and discerning consumption, especially in today's youth and children who are inundated with fiction and virtual often on downright evil topics?

- I believe that parents should have the most important role in raising children. I'm skeptical of situations where parents are never around because they "have to work". And I don't say this out of disrespect to those who work hard to make ends meet. I understand what it means to live a life of hardship because I have lived on my own since I was sixteen. At 25, I was a single mother, living in a foreign country for six years, with no parents or relatives to help me. I had to do everything on my own, but regardless of the circumstances, I was always very close to my son, I was aware of everything he was doing. He never missed Divine Liturgy on Sunday.

Some of my friends joked that my son spent more time in church than on the playground. Now many people ask me, "What is your secret? How did you manage to raise such a good child?" Besides putting the Church at the center of our lives, I think another important thing was sports. Both my children play sports. After school they spend most of their time outdoors, practicing. They have very little time left for mobile phones, television and *iPads*. I didn't give in to the mainstream opinion that a child would need a mobile phone from the age of six or seven, just because all their peers have them. Both of my kids got their cell phones when they turned 12.

I also don't think it's a good strategy to pressure your kids to be the best in school, to always want to be right, to engage in hundreds of different activities so they can be "better than everyone else". I believe that

a healthy soul and mind are among the most important elements in a child's development. Humility is the number one recipe for healthy self-confidence and success on any level, contrary to what many of today's smart people claim.

– *If you were to recommend a list of films for today's man, what would it include?*

- Believe me or not, I'm a big lover of old black and white movies. I still follow them and would recommend them to everyone. These films told great stories - something that contemporary films lack. Many animated children's films of the last ten years, such as "Toy Story" or "Nemo", are very good. Obviously, I would avoid movies with aggressive elements, especially those that contain violence just for the sake of violence.

"Art is meant to inspire"

– *Related to your film, "Man of God", what reactions of the audience moved you the most?*

– I was impressed to learn that there were people who were thinking of ending their lives, but after seeing the film, they changed their minds. Then several people who were on their deathbed asked to watch the film and found meaning in their suffering. There are many examples... A woman who was neither Orthodox nor Christian wanted to send me a message. As part of her *job*, she had to go see the movie to write a review. Her husband had died six months before and she had no motivation to live. She remained alive, however, for the sake of their daughter. She told me that after seeing the film, something happened in her soul - her will to live returned! These are feedbacks that I received directly.

The movie helped a lot of people. It is especially addressed to those who suffer a lot. And today's young people suffer a lot. Many judge them and say: "Young people drink, take drugs..." We must have pity on them. People are different. We all have strengths and weaknesses, but ultimately we all long for peace and love. That's why people turn to drugs. The world can be a very painful place for them. I would like to say to all those who use drugs: "Go find a priest who listens to you, who cares about you, and you will see that you can experience joy without these things that destroy you. Drugs are the devil's playground. The devil knows that we long for peace and love, so he pushes many into a false peace in order to destroy them. People do drugs because they are actually looking for God. That peace you want to find when you use alcohol or drugs can be within your reach and without destroying yourself. You just have to reach out to Him and give Him a chance to help you. Go and confess, take Holy Communion and you will experience a peace that no drug can give you! Your life will change and you will be at the height of happiness".

I have seen people who have succeeded, and at the same time I have also seen brilliant and very talented people who feel neither peace nor love and always ask themselves: "What's the point of it all?..." So in their desperate search for a way out, they end up making the wrong choices. We shouldn't judge them. God loves them too, and with His help they can find a way out.

– *Ultimately, the hypothesis that a film about the life of a saint would not attract the public is false.*

– Yes, it's fake. Even people who like to watch the "other" stuff (entertainment, thrills, sex, etc.) will want to see something that inspires them. If we only watch movies

about "other" things, we are getting old spiritually. Many people who are physically healthy and have everything this world has to offer feel as if they are going to end their lives. Such people will be happy to see such a movie. I know, there is an agenda to remove God and faith from the art world, but it will never work. If it does not inspire, if it does not help people and if it does not give them hope, art is not art! People like to see movies that give them hope and courage.

On the other hand, if you want to make a movie about a saint, it has to be a good movie and it has to inspire. It doesn't have to be propaganda because propaganda is a lie. Let it be Christian too! People only respond to the truth. Personally, I don't believe in preaching and propaganda; that's not what I did in my film. It doesn't have to be a movie about a saint. It can be a film about ordinary people; it can be a simple story. But if we want to call something "art", then it must inspire. It has to move people. It must serve humanity. And it's not just me who says this. Bob Dylan also claims that "If my art doesn't help anybody, then it's not art".

The role of art is very important. It makes our lives better. It is meant to give hope and beauty to the world. Through art we can also do apostolate work. But I don't believe in manipulating people. I believe in telling the truth. Many struggle, many suffer and feel lost, and this is the state of this world. Security measures, entertainment and the chip in the brain that wants to make people super-intelligent will not help them. The one who will really help them is Christ.

Even people who believe in transhumanism, nihilism, etc long for love, peace and joy. I don't judge anyone. Most people do certain things because they believe they are doing something good. Unfortunately they understand this good in a wrong way. They are not filled with the

Holy Spirit; they are full of the spirit of this world. But once the spirit of the world gains ground, God bestows even more grace. I think the younger generations will surprise many of us in a positive way, that's my opinion. It depends on us what we offer them - and we, the artists, have an important role here.

"Art must bring beauty to life"

– We live in a world that seems to be heading towards physical and mental self-destruction. Do you think art can offer solutions to make people more aware of their condition and bring them to repentance?

– Art, by definition, is something that should bring beauty to life. The true artist will always glimpse himself in his art. When Tarkovsky was asked what he thought of one of the famous film directors who was an admirer of his own work, Tarkovsky replied: "I am not impressed by his work. I see he is in love with himself." The true artist understood, like Tarkovsky, the personal relationship between the artist and his art. So art helps us, inspires us, can even call us to repentance; but it can also do the opposite. It all depends on who is producing that art.

– In the making of films, but also of literature, with religious and spiritual themes, there is the risk of slipping into an artificial, affected and even didactic atmosphere. How did you manage to avoid this pitfall?

– Because I decided to make a film with a religious theme, I had to focus on making it as honest as possible in all aspects: cast, direction, make-up, costumes and, of course, image. I had the great chance to work with Panagiotis Vassilakis – not only he is a great cinematographer, but he understood me well, he understood what I

intended to do and communicate. We made a good team. We made a conscious decision to dilute the color of the film to achieve the effect of truthfulness of the story we were telling. I also chose a different, narrower frame that is used in older films to let the audience see the inner world of the character instead of focusing on the details in the background. Basically, everything had to be extremely real and, above all, extremely human.

In my opinion, this is the only way to approach religious and spiritual topics. Faith cannot be dramatized. Only human relationships and the conflicts that arise from them can create real drama. And the most important thing in producing any art is to be honest with yourself.

– *What was the relationship with the collaborators during the filming?*

- Saint Nektarios occupies a very special place in the hearts of many Orthodox Christians, especially in Greece. I have not met a single person in Greece, whether they were believers or not, old or young, who did not know who Saint Nektarios was. Everyone loves Saint Nektarios. That's why one of the best things about making this movie was the enthusiasm of everyone on set. Everyone believed in the film and worked wholeheartedly. *Man of God* was a team effort and I will always be grateful to everyone who believed in me and worked hard in front of and behind the camera.

Excerpt from the article published in the *Orthodox Family* magazine no. 172 (May 2023)



Saintly Elder Ephraim of Arizona - “Counsels from the Holy Mountain, from the Letters and Homilies of Elder Ephraim”

Do not grieve for me, my child, but struggle ardently. Struggle in silence, prayer, and mourning, and you will find the elements of eternal life. Compel yourself: close your mouth both in joy and in mourning. This is a mark of experience, so that both states are kept safely. For the mouth does not know how to guard riches. Silence is the greatest and most fruitful virtue; for this reason the God-bearing Fathers call it sinlessness. Silence and stillness, one and the same thing. The first divine fruit of silence is mourning—godly sorrow, joyful sadness. Afterwards come luminous thoughts, which bring the holy flow of life-streaming tears, through which the second baptism occurs and by which the soul is purified, shines, and becomes like the angels. Where shall I place, child of Jesus, the spiritual visions springing forth from silence? How the eyes of the intellect are opened and see Jesus with sweetness greater than that of honey! What a novel wonder is worked from lawful silence and an attentive intellect! You know these things, so struggle. I have revealed a little to you; compel yourself and you will find yet greater. I keep you in my prayers just as I promised you. I wonder, are you ready?

Bible Study & Pizza Night

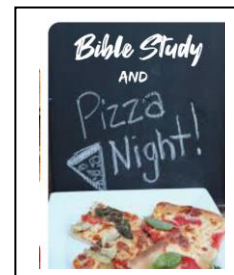
July 25th – 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm

The Revelation of St. John (Apocalypse)

Chapter 3

Free pizza & Bible Study for Young People

Location TBD





July 12th, 2023 (8:00pm) on St. Paisios feast day the Podcast *Miracles among us* hosted by Fr. John Downie will be launched.

Miracles Among Us is a podcast where you can listen to how God is working powerfully in ordinary people's lives. You can also tell your story about how God has worked His miracles in your life; great miracles or small, by writing in or by setting up an interview.

We often think how amazing it must have been to live when Jesus Christ walked the earth preaching, healing and working wonders.

Yet, we now have another Comforter, the Holy Spirit in addition to Christ Himself Who will also be with us to the end of the ages.

First show: **Interview with fr. Remus Bleahu**, Ohio who witnessed a great miracle as a priest and confessor, and with **Mrs. Mariana Vlas**, MA, who experienced the direct miraculous intervention of St. Paisios in her life.

Stay tuned and Let's glorify God for all of His Miracles Among Us!



www.miraclesamongus.net

Excerpts from *Passions and Virtues* book, Chapter *Self – Love and Its Consequences* by St. Paisios of Mount Athos

- *Geronda, what is self-love?*

- Self-love is to do the will of the old man within you, that is, to love that old man within. Gluttony and egoism, obstinacy and envy – all have self-love as their source. And so you see that one person seeks to accommodate only himself out of self-love, without any regard for others. Another person makes meticulous arrangements for his food, his sleep, so that nothing disturbs his well-being. Another desires to be taken into account, to be held in esteem; if he is slighted in the very least, if he doesn't get his way, he reacts badly. He thinks, "Why aren't they taking me into consideration? I'll show them!" Indeed, self-love is a terrible thing!

- *Geronda, how can anyone say, "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long?"*

- If he sacrifices his will for the other's sake. The will contains our self within it; it has self-love. Whoever doesn't investigate whether that which comforts him also comforts someone else, but instead, starts by making demands like: "I want this; I want that," or "Why didn't you do this for me? Why didn't you give that to me?" will, in the end, be found to have been directed by the devil.

- *There are some people, Geronda, who cannot be at peace unless they get their way.*

- How can they ever find peace since they place their self in what they want? If ones place his self in all the things he wants, can he also have room for Christ? When he does not have his own self, and has, instead, the

One, the most important, that is, Christ, then he has everything. One who doesn't have Christ has nothing. If a person throws away his own self, God will give him everything in a marvelous way.

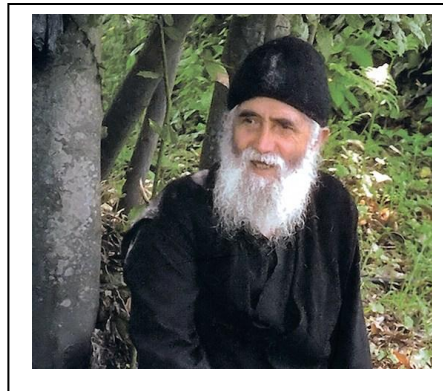
- *Geronda, when you speak to us about throwing away the self, I fear that I will not endure.*

- Oh my, just what is going on with you? It is as if you are saying, "If I throw away the passions, then what will I have?" When I say to throw away the self, I mean to throw away our passions, to be divested of the old man within. For a grown person who is aware of the consequences, it is rather grave to say, "I cannot throw away my own self." If someone were to tell you, "Take a sledge hammer and knock down this wall," when you are only used to using a pen to write, then, it is justifiable for you to say, "I can't do that." But you don't need physical strength for divesting yourself of the old man within – all you need is humility.

.....

- *Geronta, how will I come to know what comforts the other person so that I can do so?*

- If you put yourself in the other's place, then you will understand what comforts him. But if you keep yourself closed up in your own shell, how can you ever understand what comforts others?



In our time, most people look to see how they can take over another's place for themselves, and not how to put themselves in another's place in order to understand him.....

- Geronta, *I am troubled by one of the Sisters.*

- Do you realize what is happening? Many people see how others trouble them, and not how they trouble others. They only have expectations of others, not of themselves. But the logic of the spiritual life is to examine how we, ourselves, trouble others and not how others trouble us, to observe what comforts the other and not what comforts us. Is it for comfort, for convenience, that we are brought into this life? We did not come into this world to lead an easy life; we came to get "dusted off ourselves" and to prepare for the other life, the eternal one.

If we think only to ourselves and do only what comforts us, we then want others to think of us; we want everyone to serve us; we want everyone to help us...In other words, we always want, and so we end up suiting our self. "This is what works for me", says one person;"what suits me is different," says another, and in the end each is comforted by what is suitable for him. They never do attain comfort however, because real comfort comes from providing comfort to the other.

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- Geronda, *what is Hell like?*

- I will tell you a story I have heard. Once there was a simple man who kept asking God to reveal him what Paradise and

"The struggle against the passions is a perpetually sweet martyrdom of observing the commandments for the love of Christ."

"The prideful person is separated from God, because pride is a bad conduit; insular, it prevents the Grace of God from passing through, and it isolates us from God."

Hell are like. Well, one night while he was asleep, he heard a voice telling him, "Come, I will show you Hell." He then found himself in a room where many people were sitting around a table in the middle of which was a pot full of food. Yes, all of them were hungry because they could not eat. Each held a very long spoon, with which they took food out of the pot, but were not able to reach their mouths, and so some complained, others shouted, while others cried...Then he heard the same voice telling him, "Come, I will now show you Paradise, as well." He then found himself in another room where many people were sitting around a table, like the previous one, and, again, there was a pot of food in the middle of it, and the people had the same long spoons. All of them, however, were all well-fed and happy because each person would take food from the pot with his spoon and feed the person next to him. Do you understand how you, too, from this earthly life forward can live the life in Paradise?

Whoever does what is good, rejoices, for he is rewarded with divine consolation. Whoever does what is evil, suffers, turning his earthly paradise into an earthly hell. Do you have love and good will? Then, you are an angel, and wherever you go or stand, you bring Paradise with you. Do you have passions and evil will? Then, you have the devil within you and wherever you go or stand, you bring Hell with you. It is from this earthly life that we begin living either Paradise or Hell.



July 2023

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church
 Southbridge, Massachusetts
www.stmichaelorthodox.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Divine Liturgy 9:00am Vespers 5:00pm
2 Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy united with the Vespers 9:30am	3	4	5 Paraklisis 6:00pm	6 Bible Study - Zoom	7	8 Divine Liturgy 9:00am
9 Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am	10 Vespers & Matins – 7:00pm	11 St. Sophrony of Essex Divine Liturgy 9:00am Night Vigil 10:00pm Vespers, Litia & Matins for St. Paisios	12 St. Paisios Divine Liturgy 12:00am Paraklisis 6:00pm	13	14	15 Divine Liturgy 9:00am Vespers 5:00pm
16 Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am	17	18	19 Divine Liturgy 8:00am Vespers & Litia, Matins 6:00pm (St. Elias)	20 St. Elias Divine Liturgy 9:00am	21	22 Divine Liturgy 9:00am
23 Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am	24	25 Pizza Bible Study – 7:00pm	26 Paraklisis 6:00pm	27 St. Pantelimonos 8:00 am Divine Liturgy Book Club – 6:30pm	28	29 Divine Liturgy 9:00am Vespers 5:00pm
30 Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am Extended Coffee Hours	31					