



# Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts  
www.stmichaelorthodox.com

January 2024



## LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

### Saturday

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

### Sunday

9:00am Matins  
10:00am Divine Liturgy

## FEAST DAYS

- Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>** – Circumcision of Our Lord and St. Basil the Great  
**Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup>** – St. Seraphim of Sarov and St. Sylvester  
**Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>** – Epiphany  
**Jan. 7<sup>th</sup>** – Synaxis of St. John the Baptist  
**Jan. 10<sup>th</sup>** – St. Gregory of Nyssa  
**Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>** – St. Anthony the Great  
**Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>** – Sts. Athanasios and Cyril  
**Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>** – St. Macarius the Great  
**Jan. 21<sup>st</sup>** – St. Maximus the Confessor  
**Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>** – St. Xenia  
**Jan. 25<sup>th</sup>** – St. Gregory the Theologian  
**Jan. 28<sup>th</sup>** – St. Ephraim the Syrian  
**Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>** – Holy Three Hierarchs

## Epiphany

The sixth of January is the feast of the Epiphany. Originally it was the one Christian feast of the “shining forth” of God to the world in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth. It included the celebration of Christ’s birth, the adoration of the Wisemen, and all of the childhood events of Christ such as His circumcision and presentation to the temple as well as His baptism by John in the Jordan. There seems to be little doubt that this feast, like Easter and Pentecost, was understood as the fulfillment of a previous Jewish festival, in this case the Feast of Lights.

Epiphany means shining forth or manifestation. The feast is often called, as it is in the Orthodox service books, Theophany, which means the shining forth and manifestation of God. The emphasis in the present-day celebration is on the appearance of Jesus as the human Messiah of Israel and the divine Son of God, One of the Holy Trinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Thus, in the baptism by John in the Jordan, Jesus identifies Himself with sinners as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1.29), the “Beloved” of the Father whose messianic task it is to redeem men from their sins (Lk 3.21, Mk 1.35). And he is revealed as well as One of the Divine Trinity, testified to by the voice of the Father, and by the Spirit in the form of a dove. This is the central epiphany glorified in the main hymns of the feast:

*When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan the worship of the Trinity was made manifest! For the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee, calling Thee his Beloved Son. And the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the truthfulness of his Word. O Christ our God, who hast revealed Thyself and hast enlightened the world, glory to Thee (Troparion).*

*Today Thou hast appeared to the universe, and Thy Light, O Lord, has shone on us, who with understanding praise Thee: Thou hast come and revealed Thyself, O Light Unapproachable! (Kontakion).*

The prophecies of Epiphany repeat “the God is with us” from Isaiah and stress the foretelling of the Messiah as well as the coming of His forerunner, John the Baptist:

*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make His path straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God (Is 40.3–5; Lk 3.4–6).*

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### 2022 Parish Council

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

### 2022 Ladies Society Committee

President: Genevieve Boilard  
Vice President: Katie Mironidis  
Secretary: Susan Silva  
Treasurer: Debbie Thomo

### Clergy

Fr. John Downie [fr.john\\_downie71@yahoo.com](mailto:fr.john_downie71@yahoo.com)

## Parish News & Events

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

**January 3<sup>rd</sup>** – Philip Economou Jr.

**January 4<sup>th</sup>** – George Rapsomanikis

**January 13<sup>th</sup>** – Jenny Boilard

**January 25<sup>th</sup>** – Symeon Downie

**January 29<sup>th</sup>** – Mary Andrea, Mary Haddad, & Kristina Alexander

### Happy Name Day

**Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>** – St. Basil – Vasilica Tanko & Vasilios Nahn

**Jan. 7<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>** – St. John the Baptist and St. John Chrysostom – Fr. John Downie, Yannis Mironidis, Johnatan Colon, Johnatan Kotch, John DeAngeli, John Mitaras, Ioanna Pitsillides, Johanna Kotch

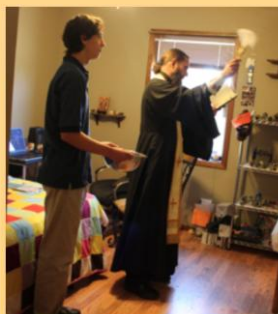
**Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>** – St. Anthony – Anthony Rapsomanikis, Anthonia Pitsillidis

**Jan. 21<sup>st</sup>** – St. Maximus the Confessor – Maxim Yanka

**Jan. 25<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>** – St. Gregory – Gregory Downie

### *Schedule a Time for a House Blessing starting January 6<sup>th</sup>*

It is important that our homes receive the blessing of Holy Water. Great Holy Water is different than Lesser Holy Water. Great Holy Water should be consumed in the morning before eating or drinking anything only 9 days starting January 6<sup>th</sup>. After these days the Great Holy Water should be taken only with the Spiritual Father's blessing and after fasting at least till noon. Instead, all over the year, the Lesser Holy water is recommended.



### Please Pray for:

Carol  
Vasilika

### General Assembly

**February 4<sup>th</sup>, after the Divine Liturgy**

We will elect new parish council members, vote on the budget, and discuss other important topics.

# Movie and Book Corner

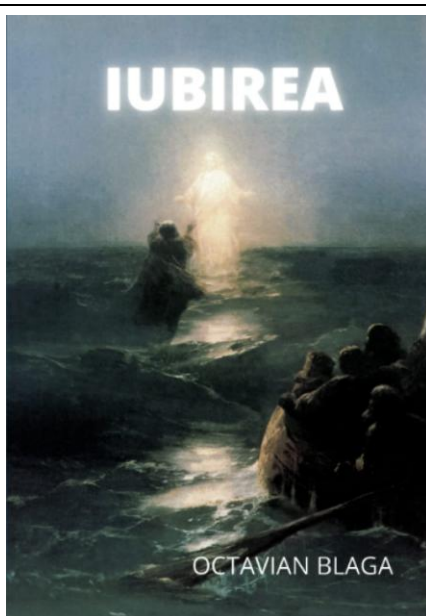
## Movie: 1000 years - Witness of the Light



Documentary film about the Bigorski Monastery - Director & Screen Writer : Ilija Iko Karov; Actor: Blagoi Veselinov

Every thousand years a rare flower blossoms at the Bigorski Monastery, testifying of another kind of beauty – not of this world. This is that exact beauty, that element, the fifth one, which is the very essence and meaning of the well-known four elements. It is that same thing which many enlightened and wise philosophers placed in the center, as the essential meaning of enlightenment, therefore confirming that “Beauty will save the world”. In fact, the film “A millennial witness of the Light” is a bouquet of ever-fresh flowers from the thousand years old garden of St. John the Baptist at the Bigorski Monastery. This film is about that particular “Beauty”, which has already saved the world once...

## Book: Iubirea (Love) by Fr. Octavian Blaga (Romanian Edition)



The perspective from which we look at life changes reality, modifying and coloring its forms. "Love" is a possible view of life from the perspective of those in love with the Love Being. The 73 short stories and meditations present the path of the soul to the state of love, to the dance between man and that You who calls him from the depths of his heart and at the same time from beyond the world.

# PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE FEAST OF THE LORD'S NATIVITY 2023

† **NICOLAE** Metropolitan of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the  
Americas

*“Glory to God in the highest  
and on earth peace,  
goodwill among men!”* (Luke  
2:14).

**Most Reverend Fathers,  
Beloved Faithful,**

The angels' proclamation constitutes the most appropriate *glad tidings* for us to share with one another the joy and peace brought by the Savior's Nativity. And it is right that we Christians should share this with our world, troubled by discord and war between brothers and peoples. **God's descent to earth, the Incarnation of the Son of God, is the message that can bring this world back to understanding, peace, and joy.**

St. Luke the Evangelist describes the event of the joy-filled proclamation of the angel to the shepherds: *“...while they were there (in Bethlehem), the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of*

*the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid”* (Luke 2:6-9). St. Nikolai Velirimovich assures us that great is the glory of God that shines on the angels and the just; and these, being mortal men, were made worthy to see the light of the glory of God,<sup>1</sup> in the vision of the Prophet Ezekiel: *“I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. So when I saw it, I fell on my face”* (Ezekiel 1:27-28). But the glory of God revealed at the nativity of Christ is in no way a cause for concern. Instead, the angel of the Lord brought them the good tidings of the Incarnation of the Savior of the world: *“Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”* (Luke 2:10-11). The Archangel greets the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation with the greeting *Rejoice*, and the angel proclaims to the shepherds *great joy*.

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<sup>1</sup> Sf. Nicolae Velimirovici, *Predici*, Editura Ileana, București, p. 35.

When the magi saw the star above the cave *they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy* (Matthew 2:10).

St. Gregory Palamas clarifies for us what is this great joy for all people: *“listen to the angelic song to the end and understand, for it says: Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men! God... comes now in the flesh, granting His peace to men and reconciling them with the Most High Father... But what does it mean that God’s goodwill is added to peace? ... Goodwill is the will of God well-pleasing of itself, original and perfectly complete. Just as God has called many sons, but only One is the Son in which He is well pleased (Mathew 3:17), He also has often granted His peace, but only one is the peace which has with it also His goodwill: that which through the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ was given as completely perfect and unchanged to all peoples and to all those who want it.”*<sup>2</sup>

As we see, St. Gregory shows us God’s plan for the salvation of the world through the incarnation of His Son. The revelation of the glory of God is not frightening for the shepherds, but brings the joy of the message of salvation. The salvation proclaimed refers in the first place to man’s reconciliation with God, to the proclamation of God’s goodwill, the

revelation of God’s desire to bring man back into communion with Him. In this presentation of the proclamation of the Savior’s Nativity, that of St. Luke the Evangelist, we also discover a call to understand how God works with man. The message of the Nativity brings joy, and the joy is followed by doxology, by words of prayer and of glory that man addresses to God for the gift of salvation. And that doxology itself becomes a source of peace among men.

St. Nikolai Velirimovich reinforces this when he says, *“when people joyfully give first place to glorifying God in the highest, this brings peace on earth and both of these become a source of goodwill among men. The Lord Jesus came to earth precisely so that the earth would lift up God’s glory in the highest and thus there would be peace and goodwill among men.”*<sup>3</sup> After Adam’s sin and his estrangement from God, only the righteous of the Old Testament, like Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were able to glorify God *in the highest*, to have peace and goodwill among themselves. At the Savior’s Nativity goodwill and peace among men are announced to us. And these, according to St. Gregory Palamas, **completely perfectly and unchanged** and to all those who *desire it*.

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<sup>2</sup> Omilia 58 la Nașterea Domnului, în Sfântul Grigorie Palama, *Omilii*, volumul 3, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2021, p. 189-190.

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<sup>3</sup> Sf. Nicolae Velimirovici, *Predici*, Editura Ileana, București, p. 37.

We find the conclusion of these words also from St. Gregory Palamas: *“Let us preserve this peace, brothers! For we have received this as an inheritance from the One now born our Savior, who has given us the spirit of adoption through which we are made heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.”*<sup>4</sup> *Let us therefore be at peace with God, doing that which is well pleasing to Him,*<sup>5</sup> *becoming wise, proclaiming the truth, fulfilling righteousness, steadfast in prayer and supplication,*<sup>6</sup> *praising and singing spiritual songs in our hearts,*<sup>7</sup> *not only with our lips. Let us be at peace with ourselves... Let us be at peace with one another, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, just as Christ has forgiven us,*<sup>8</sup> *showing mercy on one another just as Christ through His love for us had mercy on us and descended to us for us.”*<sup>9</sup>

This hesychast father shows us in these words the Christian’s path toward salvation through achieving reconciliation with God and our neighbor. Such a Christian can proclaim in these days the joy and peace that come from the glad tidings

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<sup>4</sup> Romani 8,17.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Filipeni 4, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Fapte 1, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Efeseni 5, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Coloseni 3, 13.

<sup>9</sup> *Omilia 58 la Nașterea Domnului*, în Sfântul Grigorie Palama, *Omilii*, volumul 3, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2021, p. 190-191.

of the Nativity of the Savior. Today’s troubled world is waiting for us to proclaim peace, to bring joy and hope to those who have suffered and are still suffering on account of war. My thought at this glorious feast is precisely that of invoking heavenly peace upon hearts that *are bereft of love and unity, and full of the thorns of hatred and other sins.*

I pray that God will descend and bless every priest and believer, every parish and monastery of our Archdiocese. May He bring each of us His Peace; may He grant us the joy of proclaiming the Birth of the heavenly Child.

I embrace you with brotherly love in Christ the Lord, and may you celebrate the holy festivals of Christmas, the New Year, and Theophany with health, peace, and spiritual joys!

Your brother in prayer to God,

† Metropolitan NICOLAE  
Chicago, the Feast of the Lord’s  
Nativity, 2023



**Parish Life**  
**Empty Church on Christmas Day, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Where were our parishioners on one of the most important feast days?**



# Parish Life Christmas Party 2023







## President's Corner

From all of us at Saint Michael's Parish we want to wish everyone a very happy, healthy, and blessed New Year in 2024.

Thank you all for your continued support of our congregation in 2023, and we look forward to a great year ahead for everyone. 2023 was quite a successful year for our Parish, and we are so excited at everything we accomplished including all the renovation work and events. Thank you to the Parish Council, Father John & Presbyteria Camelia, and our community and friends. And most importantly, thanks be to God for delivering such blessings to our church.

This coming year in November, Saint Michael's will celebrate its 100th Anniversary (we hope to see you there)!

Our annual **Parish General Assembly** is scheduled to take place on Sunday **February 4<sup>th</sup>** immediately following Liturgy, please plan to attend! There are a few things to consider for the upcoming meeting:

- **2024 Stewardship commitments** (a letter will be going out soon).
- If you are interested in running for a seat on the Parish Council, we will need to know no later than Sunday January 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Any agenda items you would like to see discussed.

We thank our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for all his blessings and once again, to you and your family, we wish you a Happy Blessed New Year!

Luke Yanka, Parish Council President

Cell: 508-958-4144; [lsyanka@yahoo.com](mailto:lsyanka@yahoo.com)

## Lady Society "Andrei Shaguna" announcements for 2024

We are welcoming all ladies, members of St. Michael's parish, to be part of our sisterhood and to work together for our community and church. You are invited to the **General Meeting** on **January 22<sup>nd</sup>**, following the Divine Liturgy. The Agenda of the meeting will be send by email.

### Possible events:

- **February 25<sup>th</sup> - Icon action – Fundraising event**
- **March 10<sup>th</sup> – Tea Party Fundraising** – a delightful afternoon with live classical music and fine tea sandwiches and pastries. Formal dress code is required.
- **March 29<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> – Family and All people Retreat** – speaker, Mother Gabriela, the Abbess of Holy Dormition of Mother of God Romanian Monastery, Rives Junction, Michigan

Note: More details about both events will be announced soon.

## THE NEW YEAR

by St. John Chrysostom

**The whole year will be fortunate for you, not if you are drunk on the new-moon [New Year' Day], but if both on the new-moon [January 1st], and each day, you do those things approved by God.** For days come wicked and good, not from their own nature; **for a day differs nothing from another day, but from our zeal and sluggishness.** If you perform righteousness, then the day becomes good to you; if you perform sin, then it will be evil and full of retribution. **If you contemplate these things, and are so disposed, you will consider the whole year favorable,** performing prayers and charity every day; but if you are careless of virtue for yourself, and you entrust the contentment of your soul to beginnings of months and numbers of days, you will be desolate of everything good unto yourself.

[...]

For nothing is so accustomed to produce contentment and delight, as the teachings of [our] philosophy [wisdom]: [which is] to despise present affairs, to yearn for the things to come, to consider nothing of human affairs to be secure, and if you behold some rich man not to be bitten with envy, and if you fall into poverty not to be downcast by

**For the Christian ought to hold feasts not for months, nor new moons, nor Lord's days, but continually through life to conduct a feast befitting him.** What is the feast that befits him? Let us listen to Paul speaking, **"Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not in the old leaven, nor by leaven of evil and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."** [1 Corinthians 5,8].

If then you have a clean conscience, you hold a feast continually, nourished with good hopes, and reveling in the delight of the good things to come; then just as if you conducted yourself lacking boldness, and you were liable from many sins, and if there be ten thousand feasts and holy-days, you would be in no better state than those grieving. For what is the benefit to me of bright days, if my soul is darkened in its conscience? If then one wishes to gain some benefit from the new moon, do this. **When you see the year ending, thank the Lord, because he had led you into this cycle of years.** Stab the heart ['prick the heart'] reckon up the time of your life, say to oneself: **"The days run and pass by, the years fill-up, we have progressed much of the way; What good is there for us to do? Will we not depart from here, empty and deserted of all**

**righteousness, the judgment at the doors, the rest of life leads us to our old age.”**

These things, [*from the new moon*], contemplate on New Year’s Day, these from the circuit of the years, recollect. Let us reckon the future day, no longer something spoken to us that, which was said to the Jews by the prophet, **“Their days slipped away in vanity, and their years with haste”** [*Psalm 77:33 LXX*]. This is the feast which I mentioned, the continual one, and the one not delayed by the passage of years, not limited by days, both the rich and the poor will be able to celebrate in the same manner: **For here there is no want of wealth, nor provision, but only of virtue.** Do you not have wealth? But you have the fear of God, a treasure more fruitful than all wealth, not consumed, not changed, not spent-up. Look to heaven, and to the heaven of heavens, the earth, the sea, the air, the kinds of the animals, the manifold plants, the whole nature of human-beings; consider the angels, archangels, the powers above; recall that these are all creations of your Master. It is thus not poverty to be the slave of the providential Master, if you have him as your propitious Lord. The observation of days is not of Christian philosophy [teaching, wisdom, *see notes*], but of Hellenic error.

[...]

**To be passionately excited towards these days, and to receive greater pleasure in them, and to kindle lights in the forum, and to weave wreaths, is of childish folly.** But you have been freed from this weakness, and come into adulthood, and been enrolled in the polity of the heavens. **Do not therefore kindle sensate fire in the forum, but kindle spiritual light in your mind.** “For let”, he said, “your light shine before men, so they may see your good works, and they will glorify our Father in the heavens.”

This light brings you much recompense. **Do not crown the door of the house, but display such a way of life so that you will receive the crown of righteousness on your head from the hand of Christ.** Let nothing be done rashly, nor simply; thus Paul enjoins that all things be done for the glory of God. “For whether you eat,” he said, “or drink, or do whatever, do all for the glory of God” [*1 Cor. 10:31. This verse provides the theme for the rest of the sermon*].

And what is it, he says, to eat and drink for God’s glory? **Call the poor man, make Christ a participant of the table, and you eat and drink for God’s glory.** But not this alone does he enjoin us to do for God’s glory, but all the rest as well, as to go into the forum, and to remain at home; let these both be done for God’s

sake [*διὰ τὸν Θεὸν and so throughout*]. And how are these both to be done for God's sake? Whenever you come into church, whenever you partake of prayer, whenever of spiritual teaching, the advance has occurred for God's glory.

[...]

“Whether you eat, whether you drink, whether you do some other thing, do all for the glory of God” [1 Cor. 10:31]. If we pray, if we fast, if we accuse, if we pardon, if we praise, if we censure, if we enter, if we exit, if we sell, if we buy, if we are silent, if we converse, if we do any thing else whatsoever, let us do all for the glory of God, and if something be not for the glory of God, neither let it be done, nor be spoken by us; but in place of a great staff, in place of arms and safeguard, in place of unspeakable treasures, wherever we might be, let us carry around this word with us, having inscribed it upon our understanding, so that doing and speaking and trafficking all things for the glory of God, we shall obtain the glory that is from him both in this world and after the journey here [*i.e. after this life*]. “For those that glorified me”, he says, “I will glorify” [1 Sam 2:30; (1 Reg. 2.30 LXX)]. Not therefore with words, but also through deeds let us glorify him continually with Christ our God, because all glory befits him, honor and worship, now

and always unto the ages of ages. Amen.

**On the New Year 's Eve  
Celebration – part of Fr.  
George Calciu Sermon,  
delivered on January 1<sup>st</sup>,  
2000.**

This end of the year – the New Year' Eve that the world celebrates – not been established or sanctified by the church, cannot be considered sacred, but only a human invention. Do we (Christians) have to celebrate it? Are we to attend the fireworks, the songs and all sorts of scandals, parties? ... No.

We praise our Lord in the church. For it is in the church we're awaiting “the end”. If God would have ordained the end of times tonight, He wouldn't made His Son' Nativity at Christmas! What is the relation between a sacred event and the first of January? Absolutely no connection. And why some say that the end (of the world) is when the world decides – as a new millennium begins – and not when Christ will come? Or at least at the Annunciation!

All these are for the devil' deceit. The overcrowding of people, the delirium seizing all, the craziness, the fireworks, the drinks, the champagne flowing ... I was watching last night what happened in Paris. Someone said that in Rome, where the congregation of the Pope gathered (and I could not understand why he gave blessing to

the world and the city on January 1st 2000 when there is no sacred event to celebrate)... we do not know how many millions of bottles of champagne flowed.... And someone else would announce: more champagne in Paris! Then, more beer in Germany! *So, this is the measure of "sanctity" for the New Year!*

In general, the beginning of the mundane New Year is something diabolical. It was established by the servants of Satan, to tempt us from the Christian path and the truth of the faith. And our Lord revealed the lies of all. God uncovered the sham of those that wanted to murder a mass crowd of people – I'm referring to the Muslim attacks. God proved the delusion of those who would say Jesus will come tonight so we have to commit murder, suicide, to increase the world' suffering so God will have "pity on us" and come to end it! So for the sake of Satan, they proved the deceit. For their inspiration came not from God but from the evil one.

The truth was (here), in the church. Last night we observed Vespers and prayed to the Lord, today we celebrated Divine Liturgy. All those who choose otherwise are far from the Christian truth.

There are people who bear the name of St. Basil the Great and they knew that today is his feast but did not come. We've prayed for them, that God will turn their path away from

drunkenness and parties and towards Christ, so they may come and celebrate their name in the church. We prayed for those present and those absent for good reasons.

My beloved, I'd like you to know that the life of the church was so stroked by worldly prejudices and satanic influences, so as the saints have prophesized, *there will come a time when churches will be everywhere you look, when the name of Christ will be on everyone's lips, some churches will even be full, but the true faith and sanctity will be lacking.* It will be a false, a deception of Satan. And we live those times [...]



Fr. George Calciu body is not decomposed after 16 years and miracles happen at his grave. He was imprisoned by communists in Romania. He was released because of the international pressure and especially by the American Government. He was a priest in Washington DC, and he was buried in Romania in 2006.

## Elder Cleopa – words of wisdom

68. A faithful woman told us how her father was healed by Father Cleopa's prayers.

"It was the end of the year 1995. I had been a few times to Sihăstria and I had already met Father Cleopa. My father was very sick and for about 40 years he was tormented by the passion of drinking. After many attempts I arrived with him one day to Father. He was sitting in field under a hornbeam tree with a few other Christians. We sat on a bench exactly in front of Father Cleopa, who was speaking a few useful words for those who were present.

He immediately stopped for a moment, looked above our heads and began to speak about the passion of drinking. It seemed like my father became dumfounded on the bench. Father's useful word lasted a while, then he dismissed us and gave each of us a blessing, as he usually did. I drew close with my father and when he bowed his head, Father took his head with both hands, made a big sign of the cross and told him, 'So, beloved, make a clean confession and the Mother of God will help you. May we see each other in heaven!'"

We left in peace. What happened then, I don't know. For nearly 30 years I had not seen my father make

any Holy Cross, but now when we got home, he entered in to the living room and made three great prostrations. I looked at my mother and she at me and we were amazed. From that time my father was saved from the passion of drinking. He confesses and goes to Church."

75. "Hey, tell me folks, how many hours a day do you pray?"

Some would say five minutes, a quarter an hour etc.

"I feel sorry for you, dear ones. If I were to go to the Mother of God she would ask me, 'What did you do there monk?'"

'Did you teach people about prayer?' Since Saint John Chrysostom says that a good Christian should pray at least four hours a day. I don't tell you that much, but at least one hour in the morning and one at night. I am not scolding you, I am giving you advice. Look here, when you get up in the morning, make three signs of the cross and say, "Glory to you our God, glory to You, that You did not lose me this night but You have awoken me!"

Through cold water over your eyes and begin the Morning Prayers and the Annunciation Akathist of the Mother of God and don't let a day go by without doing that.

Let us take the Mother of God as assistance throughout our lives, at the judgment day and in the afterlife. Again in the evening do the evening

prayers and the Paraklesis to the Mother of God. And whoever can to do the Midnight Hours! Payer in the middle of the night is like gold before the Savior.

77. Go every Sunday to the Holy Church, don't ever be absent. If you are absent three Holy Days in a row from the Holy Liturgy, you go directly to hell with your soul!

79. Do Holy Confession pure, according to the protocol! Take a little notebook, go into a room and begin to write all the sins since you were little. Do you know when children begin to sin? From when they have perception of things. From then they have also perceived sin!

We should note everything we have done since childhood. We shouldn't expect the priest to ask us about them, but we should tell them. And we should go to our Spiritual Father when he is not so busy. Do you know what a correct confession means? It is like a second baptism. I feel like we have been reborn for a second time!

78. Do you know what you should do if you want to be wise? Go to the cemetery with a little candle and put it on your grave, on your brother's [grave] at least once a week, Sunday or Saturday.

Listen to what the divine Father John Chrysostom says, "Go frequently to the graves, o Christians, to the cemetery. Because if you go there often, you will get more wisdom than

all of the philosophical schools of the world could teach you!"

The cemetery brings us so much use. Because we see that what they are today, we are tomorrow. Don't you see that they are silent? But they always speak, "Well, brothers! What we are today, you will be tomorrow! And what you are today, we were yesterday. Look, you are coming here. You are coming to us, we are not coming to you."

All of us are going to eternity. If it is not today, it is tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, but we are going to the grave. Moment by moment. I had a clock, somewhere, where I used to live. It had an alarm that sounded like this, "The grave, the grave, the grave - the grave, the grave, the grave, the grave - the grave, the grave the grave, the grave. That's what its alarm was. And it always reminded me of the grave. I had a different clock, I don't know after how many years later. That didn't say 'grave' it said something different, "Soon-soon, soon-soon, soon-soon...And that clock taught me that I will leave soon. The other one said 'the grave-the grave.' If you would make yourselves such a clock to have at home that would say, the grave, the grave, the grave, the grave - the grave, the grave, the grave, the grave... you would not need another philosopher.



**Romanian Sisterhood Church Project**  
**Donations for poor children of Micsunesti Parish, Romania**  
**Letter from fr. Caesar Cranta and pictures**  
**(this year donation almost \$1,400)**

Dear Father John and our beloved presbytera Camelia,

I am writing you this message of joy and gratitude for everything that we accomplished together.

This year, like no other year before, many of your members from Southbridge, and also from Ilfov county, Romania, gathered together in the Love of our Lord, Jesus Christ in order to help those in great needs.

I am writing from a small village of Romania, Micsunesti, with no more than 500 souls. A significant percent of this village consists in widows and poor families.

As our Lord came to this world in a stable with pure earth as a floor and walls of solid mud, also in my village there are still houses built in this way, where humble families live a modest existence and are fighting to survive with dignity. There are also normal families, with normal houses, but the small incomes, that don't permit them always to have proper things to raise and educate their kids.

Therefore, our love and care for them really make a difference!

This Christmas, we prepare them first of all, food! To help them to stop worry about what to eat, when others fill out all the garbage cans with steaks, with cheese, with all those goodies they can only dream of!

So we prepared them packages with all kind of meat, salami, ham, Kaiser and other meats, cheese of two types, flour and sugar for cakes, rice and corn flour – for our traditional polenta. They got also oil, chocolate, cookies, juice, all of good quality.

We also prepared packages for children with toys, decorations, puzzles, educational games, bicycles, and others. All of them received cozy and warm sweaters, for the cold season.

For some of them we bought paint in order to sanitize molded walls.

A few families with great needs, with money spent on chemotherapy for parents, and no money for anything else like food and warm in the house, received more of our attention. We bought them firewood, Christmas trees and decorations for the kids.

I will not tell anything about their feedback, you only have to look at the pictures and to read the obvious joy and happiness in their look. That fulfills our hearts more than anything, more than temporary achievements. That is a little window to eternity; it is a stairway to Heaven!

I must confess that my schedule was terrible these days and I still have money and good deeds to do: I bought boots for every child; many of them still wear summer or autumn shoes and it is getting cold.

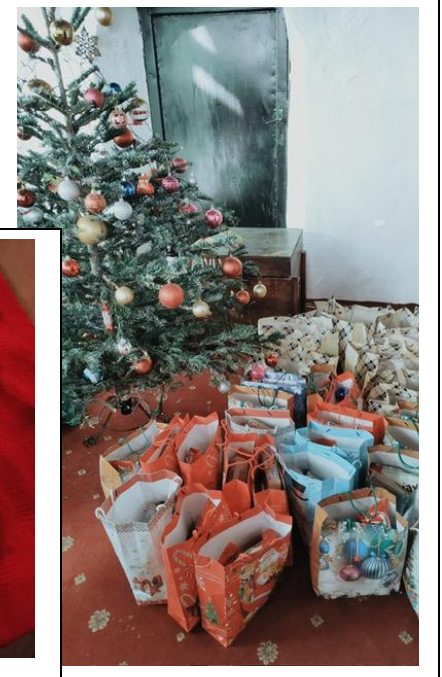
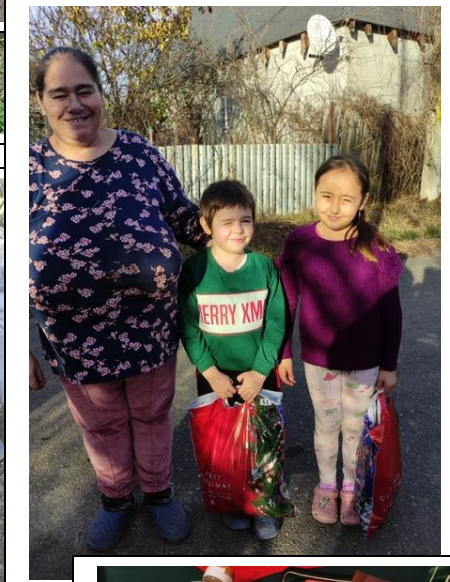
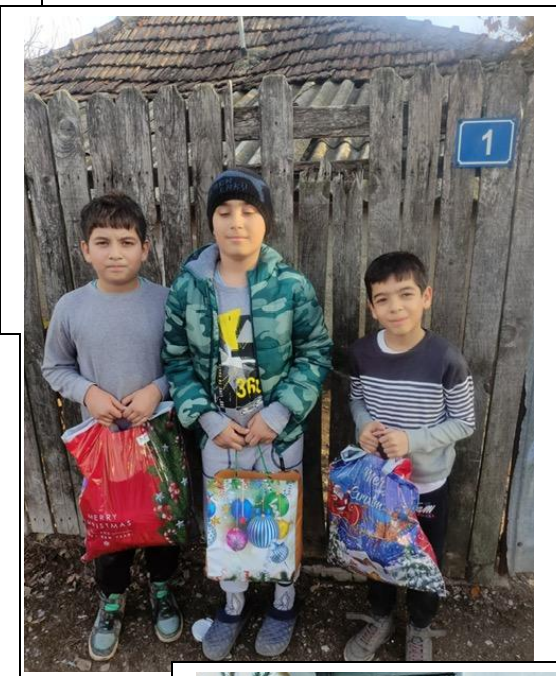
We want to buy some appliances for some families with children, who are still washing clothes like in the last centuries. They are also glad that cold weather came and the food stays fresh longer with no fridge available. We must think of them also, it is a Christian duty, as long as we consider ourselves Christians!

I will send you pictures with everything that we accomplished and I thank You, and all your beloved people of good deed, who donated for our cause.

Let God rejoice them all with his eternal blessings! Amen!

Father Caesar Cranta,  
Parohia Micunestii Mari  
(Facebook – Parohia Micsunesti)





# January 2024

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts

[www.stmichaelorthodox.com](http://www.stmichaelorthodox.com)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1.</b> <b>St. Basil and Circumcision of Our Lord</b>  <b>Matins 9:00am</b> <b>Divine Liturgy 10:00am</b>	<b>2.</b> <b>St. Seraphim of Sarov</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>  <b>Bible Study 7:00 pm</b>	<b>5</b>  <b>Vespers - Epiphany 6:00pm</b>	<b>6</b> <b>Epiphany</b>  <b>matins 9:00 am</b> <b>Divine Liturgy 10:00 am</b> <b>11:30 Blessing of the Great Holy Water and Procession to the river</b>
<b>7</b> <b>St. John the Baptist</b>  <b>Matins 9:00am</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy 10:00am</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>  <b>St. Gregory of Nyssa</b>  <b>Paraklesis 6:00 pm</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> <b>Divine Liturgy 9:00am</b>  <b>Vespers 5:00pm</b>
<b>14</b> <b>Matins 9:00am</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy 10:00am</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>  <b>St. Anthony the Great</b> <b>Paraklesis 6:00 pm</b>	<b>18</b>  <b>Sts. Athanasios and Cyril of Alexandria</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> <b>Divine Liturgy 9:00am</b>
<b>21</b> <b>St. Maximos the Confessor</b>  <b>Matins 9:00am</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy 10:00am</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>  <b>St. Xenia of St. Petersburg</b>  <b>Vespers, Litia 6:00 pm</b>	<b>25</b>  <b>St. Gregory the Theologian</b>  <b>8:00am Divine Liturgy</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> <b>Divine Liturgy 9:00am</b>  <b>Vespers 5:00pm</b>
<b>28</b>  <b>Matins 9:00am</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy 10:00am</b>	<b>29</b>  <b>Vespers and Matins 6:00 pm</b>	<b>30</b>  <b>Holy Three Hierarchs</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy 10:00am</b>	<b>31</b>			