



# Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts

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

January 2020



## LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

### **Saturday**

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

### **Sunday**

9:00am Matins  
10:00am Divine Liturgy

### **Wednesday**

6:00pm Paraklesis

## 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).*

**Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church**  
16 Romanian Avenue, Southbridge Massachusetts 01550  
Telephone: (508) 765-5276

Website: [www.StmichaelOrthodox.com](http://www.StmichaelOrthodox.com)

Email: [stmichaelromanianorthodox@gmail.com](mailto:stmichaelromanianorthodox@gmail.com)

Facebook: St. Michael Orthodox Christian Church

### 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](mailto:fr.john_downie71@yahoo.com)

## Parish News & Events

### 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.**

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

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

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

January 29<sup>th</sup> – Mary Andrea & Mary Haddad

January 31<sup>th</sup> – Natalie Collazo

### 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, John DeAngeli, Yannis Mironidis, Yannis Pena, & Ioanna Pitsillides

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

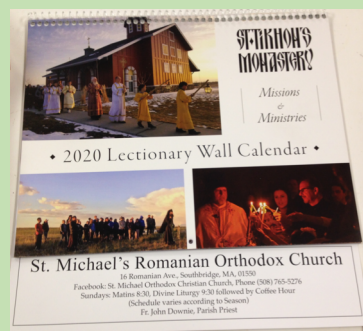
Jan. 25<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> – St. Gregory – Gregory Downie

### *Schedule a Time for a House Blessing*

It is important that our homes receive the blessing of Holy Water. You can contact Father by telephone, e-mail, or in person to arrange a time that is best for your family.



### 2020 Calendars are Available in the Church



### Please Pray for:

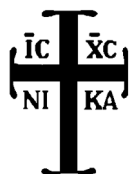
Preoteasa  
Camelia

Carol Porra

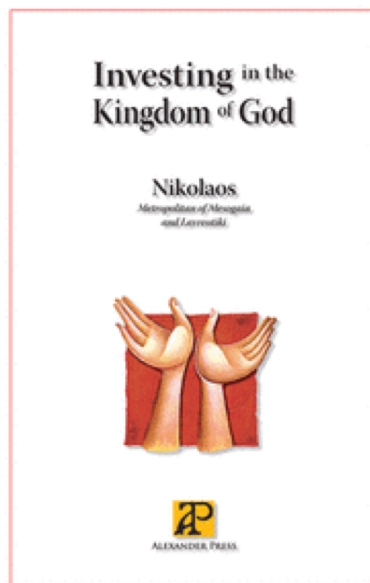
Bill & Lauren  
Smith

Mary Grabosky

Henrietta Panu



## ~ Movie & Book Corner ~



### **Book: *Investing in the Kingdom of God***

By inspiring us to act, words can be paths that lead us towards the "other discourse", the ethos of the eighth day, the beauty that will save the world . . . Such are Metropolitan Nikolaos's words (his previous book in English, Mount Athos, the Highest Place on Earth, was greeted as a "spiritual gem . . . of eternal value"). Metropolitan Nikolaos's insights have substance and wisdom. He deals in an accessible manner with questions that weigh down our human souls. His pastoral counsel is considerate and discerning, focused on the moment, all-the-while with an eye on the path up The Mountain. They are words for our time.



### **Book: *Eternity in the Moment***

Elder Arsenie (Papacioc) of Romania (1914–2011) was a witness of the eternal truth of Christ, given by God to contemporary man. A man of deep prayer, he also possessed experiential knowledge of the ways of the world. Before going to the monastery, he had been a gifted athlete, a talented sculptor, a soldier, a mayor, and a prisoner of the Romanian Communist regime. Prison became a spiritual academy for him, and after his release he dedicated his life to God as a monastic. For the next six decades he would labor as a monk—in prison and out of prison. He became a beloved spiritual father, counseling the nuns of the Techirghiol Monastery and the multitude of faithful who flocked to his monastic cell. Drawing on his knowledge of the spiritual life and the workings of the world, he was able to guide people to a life in Christ, marked by activity, not philosophizing and speculation.

This comprehensive biography, compiled from the elder's own words, the recollections of his spiritual children, and the 3,500 pages of files kept by the Romanian secret police, includes many of Fr. Arsenie's counsels and spiritual maxims.



# Parish Life

## Ladies Society Luncheon and Parish Christmas Party



### *Do you know the difference between Lesser Holy Water and Great Holy Water?*

The Lesser Blessing of Holy Water is celebrated at the beginning of each month, as well as on any other occasion, whenever the faithful request it. Both are equal and sacred as they are sanctified by the same Holy Spirit.

**The Great Blessing of Holy Water is celebrated on the eve of Theophany and/or on the day of Theophany - January 6.**

It is a tradition starting January 6th until January 14th to drink Great Holy Water in the morning on an empty stomach. During the rest of the year Great Holy Water is only taken in times of illness or after a strict fast until noon.

The Great Blessing of Waters under no circumstances replaces Holy Communion, but is offered as comfort to people who cannot receive Holy Communion, to strengthen them in their spiritual struggle for true repentance.

The Great Blessing of Waters is kept throughout the year at the homes of Christians for their sanctification by sprinkling and partaking of it, as well as for the sanctification of their homes, gardens, businesses, crops, animals, cars, etc. It is used also for our protection from all evil and satanic forces. At home, we keep it at the Iconostasion (icon corner), with a lit oil lamp. This reminds us that we should avoid any type of sin, which alienates us from the Divine Grace.



## **Elder Ephraim of Arizona has Reposed**

### **From Mystagogy Resource Center**

[On] December 7th 2019, the much-beloved Elder Ephraim of Arizona reposed in the Lord after being ill for many years. According to reports, Elder Ephraim was aware of his impending death some days before, and despite this he would still daily go out and give his blessing to the people. His personal doctor told him to not go out Saturday evening, the day of his repose, to bless the people. Elder Ephraim was lucid on the day of his repose and partook of the Immaculate Mysteries. Then at 9:00pm (Mountain Standard Time), as he was upright occupied with something, he suddenly tilted slightly to the side and died. Nurses found him practically upright, having delivered his spirit to the Lord.

### **Short Biography**

Elder Ephraim (Moraitis) was born on June 24, 1927 in Volos, Greece. Having been born on the feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Forerunner and Baptist, he was given the name John. He grew up in poverty and helped his father at work, but always tried to emulate the pious life of his mother Victoria (whom he later tonsured a nun with the name of Theophano). Desiring the monastic life around 14 years of age, he did not get a blessing from his spiritual father to leave and become a monk until he was 19.

Once, just a month before he left the world, his friends decided to visit Elder Joseph the Hesychast. John did not have any valuable gift to send with them, so he sent a small pouch of vermicelli and wrote

a note. When unpacking gifts, Elder Joseph said: "This child will become a monk here." When the friends of John returned and told him these words, he just forgot about it - he had no idea about his future monastic life and had no blessing from the spiritual father.

When John was a little baby, his mother had a vision and understood that he will become a monk at Mount Athos. So she was preparing him all his life, having this vision in her mind, and when he was 19, she finally decided to send him to Elder Joseph. And now his spiritual father did not object as well.

On September 26, 1947, John arrived at Mount Athos to the Saint Anna's Skete. Elder Joseph got to know about his arrival from the patron saint of both John and of the cells of Elder Joseph - Saint John the Baptist. As Elder Ephraim recalls in his book, at the pier he met Elder Arsenios who said: "Are you Yannakis from Volos?" - "Yes, how do you know me?" - "Elder Joseph knows that from the Fair Forerunner. He appeared to him today and said: 'I brought to you a sheep. Place it in your fence.'"

So John became a disciple of Elder Joseph the Hesychast who tonsured him in 1948 and gave him the name Ephraim. Ephraim was subsequently ordained a deacon, and then a priest. The life in the brotherhood under Elder Joseph was very austere and ascetical, and Ephraim made great spiritual progress under his holy Elder. Particular focus was paid to noetic prayer and the practice of hesychasm.

***“Elder Ephraim developed a reputation of being a grace-filled confessor, a true Athonite elder, and had thousands of spiritual children around the world...”***

In his book, Elder Ephraim thanks Elder Joseph for his severe but very proficient teaching. Only after leaving the world, Ephraim understood his very strong pride. In the world, he lived a chaste and pious life and was thinking high of himself. Only with Elder Joseph he began to see it, especially when the Elder made comments about his behavior. During 12 years, Ephraim heard his name from the Elder only twice - all other times he used only abusive nicknames. But behind his back, the Elder constantly blessed him - Ephraim got to know this later from other people. Also during confession of thoughts, Elder Joseph never spoke sharply. He described in detail the origin of thoughts and mistakes, so Ephraim thought that the Elder knows him better than he knows himself.

After Elder Joseph's repose in 1959, Elder Ephraim continued to live in asceticism for many years until he became the abbot of the Holy Monastery of Philotheou in 1973, where he was able to revive the spiritual life in a short time. Due to the reputation of Elder Ephraim, the monastery's brotherhood grew rapidly. Elder Ephraim was asked by the sacred synod of Mount Athos to revive and expand several other monasteries on Mount Athos which had a dwindling number of monks. These monasteries were Xeropotamou, Konstamonitou, and Karakallou. He was also asked to repopulate the Great Lavra but declined. These monasteries would remain under his spiritual guidance.



Along with the monasteries on Mount Athos, there were several other monasteries in Greece under Elder Ephraim's spiritual guidance, including the Monastery of Saint John the Forerunner in Serres, that of Panagia the Directress in Portaria (Volos), and that of the Archangel Michael, a formal Metochion of Philotheou on the island of Thasos.

In 1979, Elder Ephraim became ill and needed a surgery. Then his spiritual children from Canada offered to do the

surgery in Canada. The Elder agreed, and the operation was successful. For more than a month Elder Ephraim stayed in America and met representatives of the Greek community. He got to know that the spiritual life in the Greek circles had been disrupted, people stayed for a long time without confession

with grave sins were partaking of Holy Communion totally unprepared, and did not keep the holy canons of the Church. They forget the pious Orthodox life, Greek national traditions and were accustomed to secular life.

Father Ephraim decided to go to America more and more often. He first visited Canada: Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, and then he was invited to the United States. In the end, the synod of the Holy Mountain warned him that he cannot continue this way and must choose: either the Holy Mountain or America. The Elder began to pray and it

was revealed that his place is in America. He decided to move to the U.S. - for the spiritual care of his flock and the revival of spiritual life in the Greek communities of North America.

At first, the Synod of the Archdiocese of America resisted and Elder Ephraim had to seek help from ROCOR. As Elder Ephraim recalls: "I was received here with great love and genuine understanding." A year later, under personal patronage of the Patriarch of Constantinople, the problem of jurisdiction was resolved. Elder Ephraim honorably returned to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and was given the right to establish monasteries in Canada and the United States. He then proceeded to establish 17 monasteries throughout North America, always after receiving permission from each Greek bishop of the area.

The first monastery that was established by Elder Ephraim was that of Nativity of the Mother of God in Pennsylvania, near the city of Pittsburgh. His main monastery was dedicated to Saint Anthony the Great and is located in the middle of the Sonoran Desert in Arizona. Here Archimandrite Ephraim resided most of the time. He arrived in this desert in 1995 with 5 monks. There was no electricity, no water, no building materials. But the Elder was not afraid of difficulties and urged the brethren not to despair and believe in God. He said: "We came to build the temple and the monastery and, for our diligence, God will bless our work." Soon people began to donate money and materials, and the main church was built in just 4 months. The whole territory was planted with olive and citrus gardens.

Elder Ephraim developed a reputation of being a grace-filled confessor, a true Athonite elder, and had thousands of spiritual children around the world: monastics, clergy, and laity. He is considered by many to be the first to establish an authentic Athonite monastery on American soil. In his life, Elder Ephraim founded seventeen monasteries in the United States and Canada for women and men alike, as well as a nursing home.

On December 7th, 2019 at 10pm (Mountain Standard Time), Elder Ephraim fell asleep in the Lord.

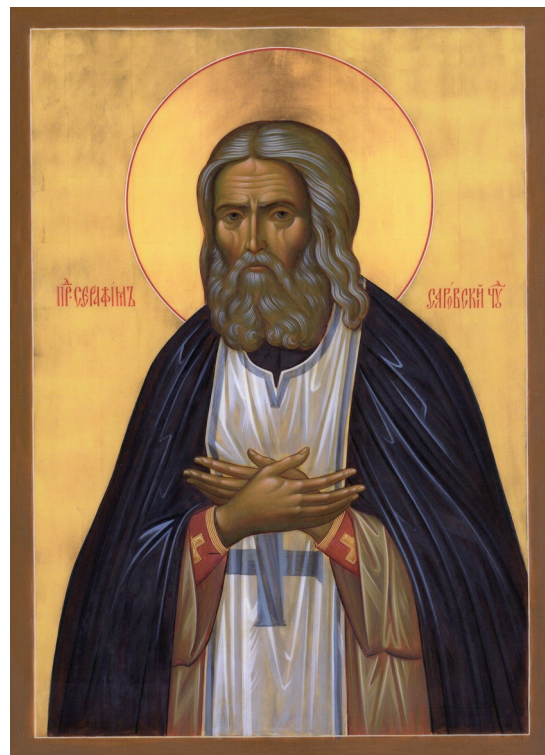




## St. Seraphim of Sarov (Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup>) on the Parable of the Ten Virgins From Mystagogy Resource Center

Some say that the shortage of oil of the foolish virgins signifies their shortage of good works in their lives. Such understanding is not exactly correct. How can they be short of good works if they, though foolish, are still called virgins? Chastity is a supreme virtue, the state of being equal to angels, and could itself serve as a substitute for all other virtues. I humbly think that they were actually short of the grace of God's All-Holy Spirit. These virgins did good, and out of their spiritual foolishness supposed that doing good was exactly the point of Christianity. They did good works and by this obeyed God, but they did not care in the least beforehand whether they had received or reached the grace of God's Spirit. This very gaining of the Holy Spirit is that oil which the foolish virgins lacked. They were called foolish because they forgot about the necessary fruit of virtue, the grace of the Holy Spirit, without which no one is saved and no one can be saved, for: 'it is by the Holy Spirit that any soul is vitalized and exalted in chastity, and any soul is lit by the Trinitarian unity in holy mysteries'. The Holy Spirit moves into our souls, and this installation of the All-Mighty into our souls, and co-existence of His Trinitarian Unity with our spirit is given only through the gaining by all means, the Holy Spirit, which prepares in our soul and body the throne for God's creative co-existence with our spirit in strict accordance with the word of God: 'I will dwell among them and will be their God, and they will be my people'. This is the oil in the lamps of wise virgins, oil that burnt bright and long, so that the virgins with the burning lamps could wait until the Bridegroom

who came at midnight, and enter with Him into the house of joy. But the foolish virgins, seeing that their lamps were going out, went to the marketplace to buy oil but would not come back in time, for the doors were already shut. The marketplace is our life; the door of the house of marriage (that was shut and did not lead to the Bridegroom) is our human death; wise and foolish virgins are Christian souls; the oil is not works but the grace of the All-Holy Spirit of God which is received through these works, and which converts things perishable into things imperishable, transforms spiritual death into spiritual life, darkness into light, the manger of our being, with passions tied like cattle and beasts, into the Divine Temple, into the glorious palace of never-ending rejoicing in Christ Jesus.



# January 2020

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts

www.stmichaelorthodox.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<b>1</b> <b>Circumcision of Our Lord and St. Basil the Great</b>  <b>Matins</b> <b>9:00am</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <b>10:00am</b>  <b>Paraklesis</b> <b>6:00pm</b>	<b>2</b> <b>St. Seraphim of Sarov and St. Sylvester</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> <b>Vespers</b> <b>5:00pm</b>
<b>5</b> <b>Matins</b> <b>9:00am</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <b>10:00am</b>  <b>Vespers, Litia - Epiphany</b> <b>7:00pm</b>	<b>6</b> <b>Epiphany</b>  <b>Matins</b> <b>9:00am</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <b>10:00am</b>  <b>Vespers, Litia – St. John the Baptist</b> <b>6:00pm</b>	<b>7</b> <b>Synaxis of St. John the Baptist</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <b>10:00am</b>	<b>8</b> <b>Paraklesis</b> <b>6:00pm</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> <b>St. Gregory of Nyssa</b>	<b>11</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <b>9:00am</b> <b>(Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am)</b>  <b>Vespers</b> <b>5:00pm</b>
<b>12</b> <b>Matins</b> <b>9:00am</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <b>10:00am</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> <b>Paraklesis</b> <b>6:00pm</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> <b>St. Anthony the Great</b>	<b>18</b> <b>Sts. Athanasios the Great and Cyril of Alexandria</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <b>9:00am</b> <b>(Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am)</b>  <b>Vespers</b> <b>5:00pm</b>
<b>19</b> <b>St. Macarius the Great of Egypt</b>  <b>Matins</b> <b>9:00am</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <b>10:00am</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> <b>St. Maximus the Confessor</b>	<b>22</b> <b>Paraklesis</b> <b>6:00pm</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> <b>St. Xenia of St. Petersburg</b>	<b>25</b> <b>St. Gregory the Theologian</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <b>9:00am</b> <b>(Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am)</b>  <b>Vespers</b> <b>5:00pm</b>
<b>26</b> <b>Matins</b> <b>9:00am</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <b>10:00am</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> <b>St. Ephraim the Syrian</b>	<b>29</b> <b>Vespers, Litia, Matins – Holy Three Hierarchs</b> <b>6:00pm</b>	<b>30</b> <b>Holy Three Hierarchs</b>  <b>Divine Liturgy</b> <b>10:00am</b>	<b>31</b>	