



Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts
www.stmichaelorthodox.com

October 2017



Liturgical Schedule

Sunday

9:00am Matins

10:00am Divine Liturgy

Wednesday

6:00pm Paraklesis

Saturday

8:30am Divine Liturgy

6:00pm Vespers

**Look at calendar at end for
full schedule of services for
this month**

Feast Days

October 1st Protection of
Theotokos

October 14th St. Parascheva from
Iasi, Romania

October 26th St. Great Martyr
Demetrios from Thessaloniki

October 27th St. Demetrios of
Basarabov, protector of
Bucharest

Great Martyr St. Dimitrios

The Great Martyr Demetrius the Myrrh-gusher of Thessalonica was the son of a Roman proconsul in Thessalonica. The parents of Saint Demetrius were secretly Christians, and he was baptized and raised in the Christian Faith in a secret church in his father's home.

By the time Demetrius had reached maturity and his father had died, the emperor Galerius Maximian had ascended the throne (305). Maximian, confident in Demetrius' education as well as his administrative and military abilities, appointed him to his father's position as proconsul of the Thessalonica district. The main tasks of this young commander were to defend the city from barbarians and to eradicate Christianity. The emperor's policy regarding Christians was expressed simply, "Put to death anyone who calls on the name of Christ." The emperor did not suspect that by appointing Demetrius he had provided a way for him to lead many people to Christ. Accepting the appointment, Demetrius returned to Thessalonica and immediately confessed and glorified our Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of persecuting and executing Christians, he began to teach the Christian Faith openly to the inhabitants of the city and to overthrow pagan customs and idolatry.

When Maximian learned that the newly-appointed proconsul was a Christian, and that he had converted many Roman subjects to Christianity, the rage of the emperor knew no bounds.

Meanwhile the emperor amused himself by staging games in the circus. His champion was a German by the name of Lyaeos. He challenged Christians to wrestle with him on a platform built over the upturned spears of the victorious soldiers. A brave Christian named Nestor went to the prison to his advisor Demetrius and requested a blessing to fight the barbarian. With the blessing and prayers of Demetrius, Nestor prevailed over the fierce German and hurled him from the platform onto the spears of the soldiers, just as the murderous pagan would have done with the Christian. The enraged commander ordered the execution of the holy Martyr Nestor (October 27) and sent a guard to the prison to kill Saint Demetrius.

At dawn on October 26, 306 soldiers appeared in the saint's underground prison and ran him through with lances. His faithful servant, Saint Lupus, gathered up the blood-soaked garment of Saint Demetrius, and he took the imperial ring from his finger, a symbol of his high status, and dipped it in the blood. With the ring and other holy things sanctified by the blood of Saint Demetrius, Saint Lupus began to heal the infirm. The emperor issued orders to arrest and kill him.

Saint Demetrius is regarded as a protector of the young, and is also invoked by those struggling with lustful temptations.



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2017 Parish Council

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

2017 Ladies Society Committee

President: Alexandra Nasto
Vice President: Louise Boilard
Secretary: Debbie Thomo
Treasurer: Mary Andrea

Clergy

Fr. John Downie fr.john_downie71@yahoo.com

Parish News & Events

Ongoing Church Beautification Projects

We still need help with:

- Painting church leak stains
- Help cleaning church for Bishop's visit (last Sat. of October between 11am-3pm)

Happy Name Day

October 18th St. Luke –
Loukas Mironidis, Luke Yanka

October 26-27th St. Dimitri
– Dimitry Mironidis, Dimitry Downie

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

Oct. 11th Amanda Thomo
Oct. 12th Richard Marcian
Oct. 15th - Loukas Mironidis
Oct. 21st – Dimitri Downie
Oct. 22nd - Katie Mironidis

**Please Pray for our
Parish Members**

Alexandra Malisory
Matthew Dowling
Vasilios Nahn
Nancy Collazo
Peter & Laureen Smith

Autumn Chicken BBQ



Saturday, October 7, 2017

4pm - 6pm

\$10.00



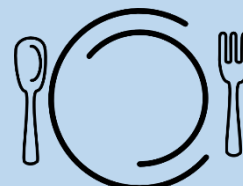
Annual Banquet

Sunday Nov. 5th

Following Church
Service

Catered Dinner

\$25 (children eat FREE)



Saint Michael's Feast Day

November 5th

His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae Condrea will be visiting us for our church's feast day vespers and liturgy Nov. 4th –5th.

Please mark it down on your calendars to attend both vespers and liturgy!



Thank You to everyone who put together the Golf Tournament and also to everyone who donated!



The Elevation of The Holy Cross

This was a holy day of fasting and repentance. On that day the faithful made dedication to the crucified Lord and pledged their faithfulness to him by making prostrations at the Lords feet on the life creating Cross.

On the day of the Feast at the conclusion of the Matins a special service was held. The Cross was placed on a tray surrounded by branches of basil and was taken in solemn procession through the church to the chanting of the Hymn of the Feast. The tray was placed on a table, and the priest took the Cross, kept it above his head and offered petitions from each side of the table, the four directions of the compass. This represents the universal nature of the offering of Christ upon the Cross. As the choir responded by chanting "Lord have mercy", the priest raised and lowered the cross, a commemoration of its finding and exaltation. At the conclusion of the service, the people come and venerated the cross and received the basil from the priest. The basil is used and offered, as it was the fragrant flower growing where the Cross was found.



Ladies Society Adopted Two Southbridge Public Schools

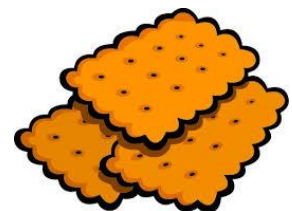
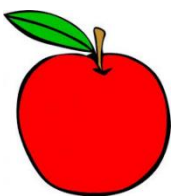
Charlton Street School & West Street School

We donate healthy snacks for foster care children who often missed their snacks during school.

We alternate each school every month.

Everyone is welcomed to donate either money to buy healthy snacks or you can bring healthy snacks (fruit, crackers, goldfish etc.) Any help is greatly appreciated!!

Contact Sandra Nasto for more information.



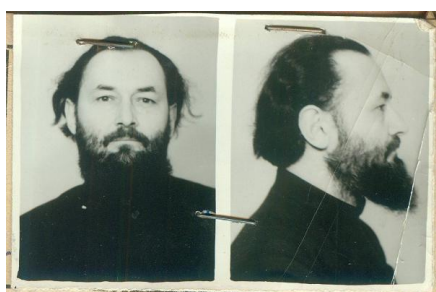
Did you know that this year is the 100 years from the Bolshevik Revolution?

By Fr. John Downie

The Communist Revolution was a tragedy of biblical proportions, which still marks the current world we live in. In the light of demonic forces unleashed in 1917, over 100 million people lost their lives. An entire nation of men, women and children. The Black Book of Communism, an attempt at a comprehensive history of the brutal age, proclaimed that the very least possible number anyone could propose for deaths in the Soviet Bloc countries is 20 million victims. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the amazing Russian dissident who helped tip the scales toward freedom and peaceful revolution, states in the Gulag Archipelago that the number of fallen in the Soviet Bloc at 66 million. The terrible Holodomor in the Ukraine alone claimed anywhere from six to ten million through man made famine. China was, by all accounts, hit the hardest with a loss of at the very least 65 million. In Orthodox countries, the faithful and clergy found themselves precisely in the crosshairs of a political regime which was intent on overturning everything that traditional cultures found sacred and beautiful. Churches were turned into stables for cows and pigs, destroyed. Monasteries were turned into prisons.

Anyone who still believes in the myth that the communist ideal was simply applied incorrectly and that it might still be tenable is either uneducated or diabolical. The hammer and sickle should appall everyone as much as the swastika. We should honor those that died fighting against communism. We should honor those who died because they did not collude with communism. We should especially honor the saints who died because they begged to differ with the violently atheistic regime by maintaining and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to venerate them that loved those who persecuted them and became Holy; who worked miracles, healed incurable diseases, were shrouded in Holy Light and saved waning souls. These new martyrs of the communist yoke number in the hundreds of thousands if not millions. Let us get to know about them, ask them to intercede for us, for it is not impossible for us to suffer their glorious fate. Their number is too great for us know each and every one, but we owe it to Christ to know His latest outpouring of love through the blood of His martyrs, crying out "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Rev 6:10 NKJ)

Photos of Romanian Orthodox prisoners during the Communist era



Fr. Grigorie Babusi



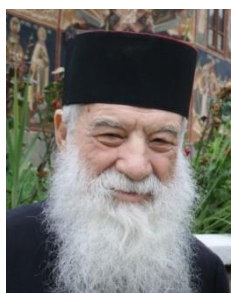
Maica Mihaela Iordache



Fr. Dimitrie Bejan



Fr. Arsenie Boca



Fr. Gheorghe Calciu



Elder Cleopa



Princess Ileana of Romania



Nicoleta Valeria Grossu

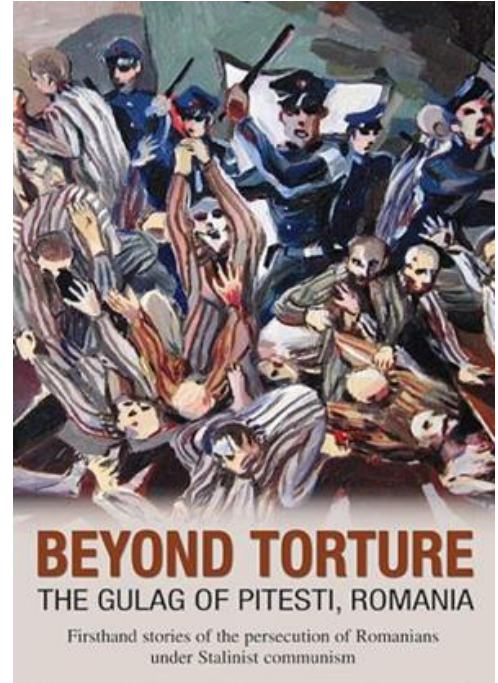
~ Movie & Book Corner ~

Movie: Beyond Torture – The Gulag of Pitesti Romania

A very good documentary about Pitesti, that included interviews with Fr. Gheorghe Calciu and Fr. Roman Braga. Pitesti was a prison labeled as the reeducation center, that applied the most outrageous torture methods against Romanian people who fought the communism. Most of them were students, priests, intellectuals but also peasants and workers.

Link to Movie:

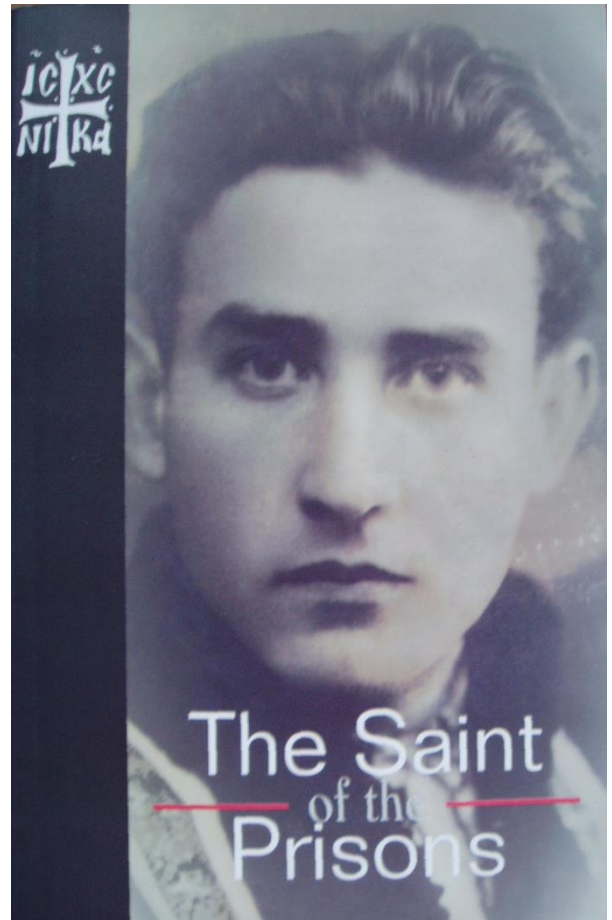
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QGUTBXgz3g>



Book: The Saint of The Prisons

Among the many portraits of the confessors, one will be found in particular that is recalled with reverence by all and is considered a saint: Valeriu Gafencu. Nicknamed “the saint of the prisons” by Father Nicolae Steinhardt in a truly inspired moment, Valeriu Gafencu was one of the more impressive figures who lived an admirable spiritual life amidst prison conditions. Through his sacrificial love springing from a perfect dedication of his life to Christ, he remains painted in the most luminous of colors in the hearts of those who knew him. Father Gheorghe Calciu wrote, “I have no doubt that he is a saint. He lived the word of God to such a level that it was incomprehensible for us.” Another companion in suffering, Father Constantin Voicescu, is convinced that “Sooner or later, the Orthodox Church will canonize him.”

Although Valeriu Gafencu is often mentioned in testimonies of those who passed through the Communist prisons, articles about him have been published, a documentary has been shown on national television, all of these serving to make him the most publicized of all those who passed through these prisons, his life is nevertheless still too little known among the ranks of the faithful.



An excerpt from the book:

“When God Is Not There”

By: Metropolitan Nikolaos of Mesogaia

Very moving story of a paralyzed young man.

Why?

Why pain? Why injustice? Why children? Why so prematurely? Why in this way? Why should the indescribable joy of their innocent presence be succeeded by unbearable pain? Why? And if it is for our own good, which is “unknown” to us, why does it have such a bitter taste?

Why to me?

What wrong did I do? Should I search inside myself to find the cause? And if I am to blame, why can't I do something to reverse the situation? Why should my innocent child suffer because of me? This is more difficult to bear. I risk losing my feeble faith.

The blessing of pain

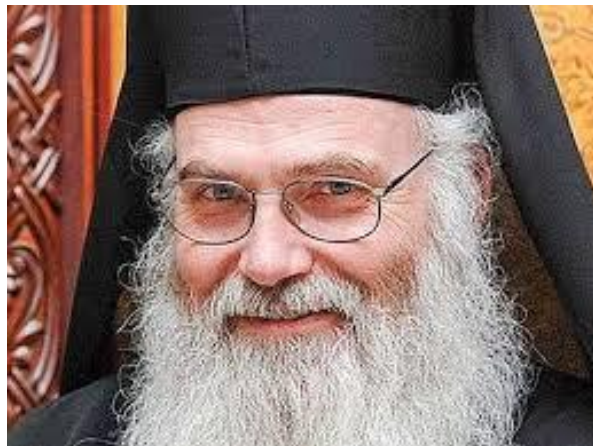
Blessed “why's”! Christ Himself sanctified them on the Cross: “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? My God, why did you do this to me? What have I done? Am I not your Son? The same question as mine. And that too remained unanswered. It remained unanswered to all appearances at that moment; however, subsequent events revealed the reply.

...We address this question to God, to ourselves; we repeat it to those whom we feel love us dearly. We say it mainly to express our inner feelings, but we also say it in anticipation of a soothing reply. But who can give an answer? Even if it is known, who can utter it?

Saint Basil the Great tells a grieving father that suffering makes a person so sensitive that he becomes like an eye which cannot bear even the touch of a feather. Even the most tender movement increases the pain of the suffering person...A word expressed as a rational argument cannot be tolerated. Only tears, sharing the question, silence, and inner prayer are able to relieve the suffering, illuminate the darkness or give rise to a glimmer of hope.

Sufferings takes us beyond human measures

Ultimately, the answer to these “whys” are not of the kind that our weak and inadequate self expects. Within the limits of our human logic, they usually remain unanswered. This is why Christ uttered only a very few words about His death. He Himself chose it, and His suffering was unparalleled. When He rose from the dead almost no words came out of His mouth- just His living breath. He said nothing of life and



death – He merely prophesied Peter's martyrdom. Suffering cannot be responded to with arguments. Nor can injustice and death be met with reasoning. These problems are resolved only by receiving the divine breath of God. They are resolved through the Holy Spirit. They are

overcome through a humble acceptance of God's will which is so true, but at the same time usually so incomprehensible.

While the trial is going on, it is accompanied by the pounding of unanswered questions. We, fixed to the “maybes”, “whys” and “ifs”, maintain our hopes and endure our existence in this world, anticipating a definite or secure answer. This is not normally found in the solution we propose, but in divine consolation which is unexpected and transcends reasons. Every attempt to replace it with human substitutes is an injustice to ourselves. Every self-restriction within the stifling noose of our rationalistic answers traps us more deeply in our tragedy. In our dialogue with suffering, injustice and death we are obliged to exceed human measures. This is not only a way of overcoming our trial but it is also a blessing.

A unique opportunity

Ultimately, we can pose the question but we must await the response. Either God does not exist or He allows a trial in order to give us a unique opportunity. If the Crucifixion had not occurred, there would have been no Resurrection. Christ would have been a good teacher, but not God. God gives the opportunity. It remains for us to recognize it and make use of it. The joy and the depth of potential of this opportunity are far greater than the intensity and plain of the trial.

Death, suffering and injustice are mysteries to which there can be no “answer”. In such cases, truth is not expressed as an opinion or an argument, but offered as humility and shared suffering. The journey to the frontiers of life and death, of belief and unbelief, of miracles and injustice presents twists and hidden turns where the truth is ensured. If one resists the temptation to give in, then truth is encountered in ways one had never even conceived of. Embracing our suffering will give rise to newly discovered sensitivities and will unfold realities which cannot otherwise be seen. The challenge is not the events and revelations themselves these exist. The challenge is for us to open our eyes in order to be able to see them truly.

..Certainly, pain and injustice cannot abolish God’s love. God exists. He is love and life;

perfect love and the fullness of life. And the greatest miracles of His existence is that He co-exist with pain, injustice and death.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for each of us is to coexist with our personal suffering, to hold tight these deeper “whys” in a hopeful embrace, and to humbly abandon ourselves into hands of God precisely through the “injustice” we believe He does to us.

A few days ago, I was approached by a young girl; the oil-lamp of her life seemed to be flickering out. Within her unbearable suffering, I discerned hope. In her tearful eyes, I came face to face with joy, strength and wisdom.

“I want to live| she told me. “But I did not come here for you to confirm this for me. I came so that you could help me depart this world prepared.”

“I am a priest of life and not of death, | I replied. “That’s why I want you to live. But let me ask you something: in your trial, do you ever ask, “Why me, God?”

“I don’t understand you father”, she replied. “I ask, “Why not me, God?” I do not wait for my death but I hope for my illumination!”

From undeserved suffering to salvation

Some time ago, some friends of mine asked me to visit a young man who was paralyzed. They did not give me any details. He had heard something about me, and wanted us to meet. He was very interested in science, they told me. When he was just five years old, he had been diagnosed with Duchenne’s muscular dystrophy.

I went to visit him. In the courtyard of the house both parents were waiting for us.... I could not detect any sign of suffering, or, of course, any suggestion of misery. The prevailing atmosphere conveyed a subtle sense of grandeur.

“Go on into Stavros’s room. That’s where our fine young man is, our joy and our blessing.” They said in a very natural way; there was nothing false or hypocritical about it.

I went in and caught sight of their “joy and blessing”! A young man of about thirty, lying

Donated Icons from Monastery

We have received donations for 7 of the following Icons and have placed the order for the Icons from Holy Protection Monasteries they will be hand painted. They are large Icons (47in X 37in).

St. Parashevi – Genni, Vasi’s niece, in memory of her parents

St. Dimitrios – Vasi Tanko in memory of her parents

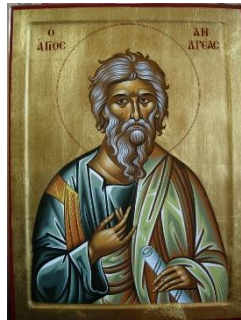
St. Katherine – Katie Mironidis

St. Andrew – Sam and Debra Yanka

Jesus Pantocrator – George and Joy Rapsomanikis

Holy Mother – Joy Rapsomanikis’s Mother Elpiniki

St. John the Theologian (the Evangelist) – Joy’s Brother Spiro and Kristina Kelly



Father Ilarion Felea (March 21, 1903 – September 18, 1961)

How I love Your law, O Lord; It is my meditation all day long. (Psalm 118:97)

The son of a priest from Hunedoara, Father Ilarion Felea was a profound theologian and a practitioner of incessant prayer. Through a life of hardship, he climbed the road to Tabor, where he found the bright and uncreated light of Christ.

Father Ilarion held undergraduate degrees in theology from the University of Sibiu and in literature and philosophy from Cluj, and a Ph.D. in theology from Bucharest. He diligently put his talents to use as a teacher of dogmatic and apologetics, as a rector of the Theological Academy of Arad, and as a father confessor at the cathedral from Arad, which he turned into a real center of religious culture and practice.

His scholastic activity was impressive – he authored hundreds of articles, theological studies, and homiletic and hagiographic writings, as well as the series Towards Tabor, which are veritable Philokalia.

Hundreds of faithful, especially young people with a hunger for the treasures of Orthodoxy, were drawn by the Father’s love for others, by his living example of faith and sacrifice, and by his eloquence – all of which also made him a target for the Security. He was first arrested in 1949 and locked up for a year in Aiud Prison. When he was released and came back among the faithful, he resumed his missionary work with the same passion, confessing the true faith in sermons and articles.

In September 1958, he was arrested once again and subjected to a violent investigation. He was sentenced to twenty years of forced labor for “activities against the working class” and was imprisoned first in Gherla Prison and then again in Aiud. Here, together with Father Dumitru Stăniloae, he kept the fire of prayer burning, secretly serving the Divine Liturgy in his cell, whenever possible, for the convicts.

In fact, prayer was his greatest support throughout the trials of his life, the only way to be closer to Christ. Father Ilarion wrote that “sin is what separates us from God and stains our souls; prayer is what cleanses us, sanctifies us, and re-opens the way to God’s love and light. Whoever progresses in prayer gets closer to God. A man who sits among flowers for a long time will bear their fragrance. The same thing happens with the man who spends a lot of time praying: his soul will bear the fragrance of divine life.”

As is the case with all who follow Christ, Father Ilarion Felea did not fear those who kill the body, but he took care to keep the hands of the unfaithful away from his blameless soul. Refusing any sort of compromise with the atheist regime, he carried his cross with dignity, remaining an apostle of Christ behind the prison bars until the end.

The cold, the hunger, and all the tortures to which he was subjected hastened his death, a death that shone with the halo of martyrdom. Without a cross and a name, his body was thrown in Râpa Robilor (The Slaves’ Ravine) at Aiud, the resting place of the spiritual elite of post-war Romania.

Saint Dimitri the New, Basarabov

October 27th

Saint Dimitri the New (Basarabov) lived in the 13th century and little is known about his life. He was born in the village of Basarabov, located on the banks of the River Lom, near the town of Russe. A shepherd in his early years, it is said that St Dimitri had later become a monk, dedicating himself to fasting, prayers and vigils. For his humble life, God entrusted him with the power to work miracles. The pious Dimitri knew the moment of his death beforehand, and choose the place of his final rest between two stones that were gradually covered by the river. The place of his rest was unknown until a sick child had a revelation when the pious Dimitri appeared in her dream and said: "If your parents would take me out of the water, I will heal you!"

A ray of light had appeared for quite some time at the site where the holy relics were found, leading people to initially believe that a treasure was hidden in that place.



The Monastery St. Dimitri Basarabov

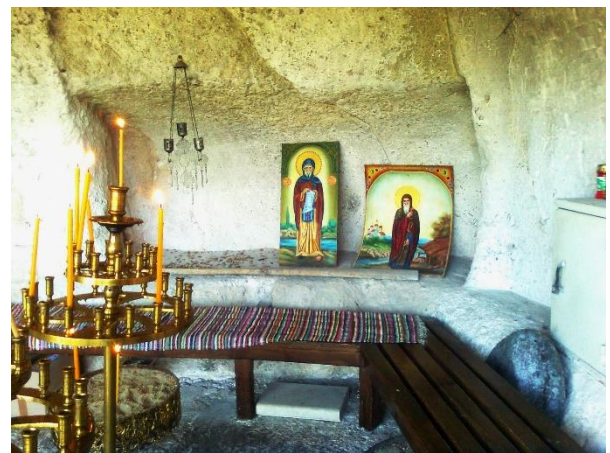
Acting at the girl's advice, they searched the place and found the relics of pious Dimitri, glittering as gold. The saint's body was taken to the village of Basarabov. Between 1769 and 1774, during the Russian-Turkish war, the

relics were brought to Romania with the intention of being sent to Russia.

However, Metropolitan Grigorie (Gregory) of Walachia, insisted that they should be given to the Romanian people as a gift for the sufferance they endured during the war. The relics were taken in great procession to the Patriarchal Cathedral of Bucharest.

The saint's right hand was sent to Kiev, where it has been preserved to this day. The Synod of the Romanian Orthodox

Church, had great devotion to Saint Dimitri the New and starting with 1950, the saint was venerated nationwide and recognized as the patron saint of Romania's capital city.



The Cave of St. Dimitri Basarabov

October 2017

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Protection of Theotokos Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	2	3	4 Paraklesis 6:00pm	5	6	7 Divine Liturgy 8:30am Vespers 6:00pm
8 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	9	10	11 Paraklesis 6:00pm	12	13	14 St. Parascheva from Iasi, Romania Divine Liturgy 8:30am Vespers 6:00pm
15 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	16	17	18 St. Luke Paraklesis 6:00pm	19	20	21 Divine Liturgy 8:30am Vespers 6:00pm
22 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	23	24	25 Vespers, Litia, Matins 6:00pm	26 St. Demetrios The Great Martyr Matins 8:00am Divine Liturgy 9:00am	27 St. Demetrious of Basarabov Divine Liturgy 9:00am <u>Movie Night</u> <u>7:00pm</u>	28 Divine Liturgy 8:30am Vespers 6:00pm
29 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	30	31				