



Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts
www.stmichaelorthodox.com
September 2017



Liturgical Schedule

Winter Hours
(Starts after Labor Day)

Sunday

9:00am Matins

10:00am Divine Liturgy

Saturday

8:30am Divine Liturgy

6:00pm Vespers

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

Feast Days

September 1st Church New Year

September 8th Nativity of the
Theotokos

September 9th St. Joachim and
Anna

September 14th Elevation of the
Holy Cross

September 24th Saint Siluan

September 26th St. John the
Theologian

The Nativity of The Theotokos

The Feast of the Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is celebrated on September 8 each year. The Feast commemorates the birth of the Mother of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

According to the story found in this book, Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, were childless for many years. They remained faithful to God, but their prayers for a child were unanswered. One day, when Joachim came to the temple to make an offering, he was turned away by the High Priest who chastised him for his lack of children. To hide his shame, Joachim retreated to the hill country to live among the shepherds and their flocks.

As Joachim was praying, his wife Anna was praying at the same time at their house in Jerusalem. An angel appeared to both of them and announced that Anna would have a child whose name would be known throughout the world. Anna promised to offer her child as a gift to the Lord. Joachim returned home, and in due time Anna bore a daughter, Mary.



Visit the website and subscribe
to have the monthly bulletin
emailed to you!

Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church
16 Romanian Avenue, Southbridge Massachusetts 01550

Telephone: (508) 765-5276

Website: www.StmichaelOrthodox.com

Email: stmichaelromanianorthodox@gmail.com

Facebook: St. Michael Orthodox Christian Church

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 Bishop's marble chair
- Ordering/ "Donation" of new large icons for church from Holy Protection Monastery PA. You can donate for a special Saint's icon in memory of loved one. Please contact Preoteasa Camelia
- Buying new carpet for both sides of church.

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

- Sept. 3rd Debby Thomo
Sept. 6th Jose Collazo
Sept. 11th Brayden Gardecki
Sept. 15th Paul Porra
Sept. 27th Susan Bellerose

**Please Pray for our
Parish Members**

- Alexandra Malisory
Henrietta Panu
Vasilios Nanh
Nancy Collazo
Laureen Smith
Louise Boillard

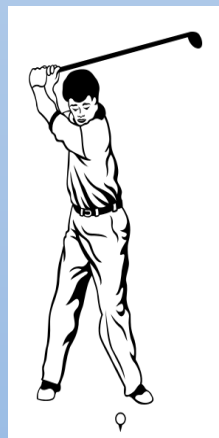
**10th Annual Romanian Golf
Tournament
In Memory of George Nasto**

Saturday September 23rd , 2017

12pm Shotgun Start

Cohasse Country Club in Southbridge

- 18 Hole 4 Man Scramble
\$100/golfer (dinner/drinks included)
\$400/foursome
Hole Sponsorship \$100/hole
Dinner only (if not playing) \$25/ person



Happy Name Day

- Sept. 1st** - St. Simeon - Symeon Downie
Sept. 8th - St. Mary - Mary Dowling, Mary Andreea, Maria Naddad, Mary Grabosky, Maria Mironidis
Sept. 9th - St. Anna - Anna Tanca and Nancy Anna Collazo
Sept. 17th - St. Sophia - Sophia Penna
Sept. 26th - St. John the Evangelist - Fr. John, Yannis Mironidis, Yannis Penna
Sept. 30th - St. Gregory the Apostle of Armenia - Gregory Downie

REGISTER QUICK SPOTS FILL UP FAST!!

For more information, to register your team or to donate:

Luke Yanka @ 508-958-4144 or lsyanka@yahoo.com

Saint Michael's Feast Day November 5th

Our Romanian Metropolitan will be visiting us. Please mark it down on your calendars!



Church Donations Feast Day Flowers, Olive Oil, Sweet Wine

We would like to thank everyone who has donated previously for the feast day flowers, olive oil for the lamps, flour for Holy Bread and sweet wine after Holy Communion.

We are looking for people to donate or purchase the items for church services and the feast days. There will be an envelope in the church for donations or you can purchase the items and drop them off at the church.

Donations would be greatly appreciated, and you can donate the items in memory of a loved one.

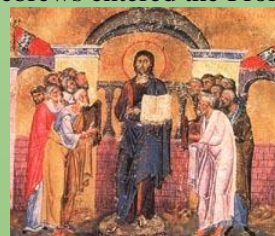


Did you know Orthodox Christian should say Happy New Year on September 1st ?

The first day of the Church New Year is also called the beginning of the Indiction. The term Indiction comes from a Latin word meaning, "to impose." It was originally applied to the imposition of taxes in Egypt. The first worldwide Indiction was in 312 when the Emperor Constantine (May 21) saw a miraculous vision of the Cross in the sky. Before the introduction of the Julian calendar, Rome began the New Year on September 1.

According to Holy Tradition, Christ entered the synagogue on September 1 to announce His mission to mankind (Luke 4:16-22). Quoting Isaiah 61:1-2), the Savior proclaimed, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me; because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to proclaim release to captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord..." This scene is depicted in a Vatican manuscript (Vatican, Biblioteca. Cod. Gr. 1613, p.1).

Tradition says that the Hebrews entered the Promised Land in September.



GREEK FESTIVAL LABOR DAY WEEKEND

Sts. Anargyroi Greek Orthodox Church
9 Central Street, Marlborough, MA



Saturday, September 2nd 12:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M.
Sunday, September 3rd 12:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M.
Monday, September 4th 12:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Greek Food & Pastries • Live Greek Music & Dancing • Greek Souvenirs and More!

www.stsanargyroi.org
508-485-2575

FREE ADMISSION! *Rain or Shine*



Let's support our local churches by attending their festival and bazaar!!

Saint Nicholas Orthodox Church Bazaar

September 9, 2017 9AM- 4PM
343 N Maple St. Enfield, CT

There will be many gift items: jewelry, pottery, shawls and doilies, Christmas ornaments, cards, baby gifts, plants and seeds, baked goods, and much more

Please join them!

Coffee Hour Volunteers Needed



We have coffee hour sponsors for September 3rd, 10th and Oct. 8th. We need more volunteers for each Sunday. If you volunteer you are able donate the coffee hour to the memory of a loved one. Any help would be greatly appreciated!

Please contact Deb Thomo to sign up.

~ Movie & Book Corner ~

Movie: Miracles from Heaven

Miracles from Heaven is a 2016 American Christian drama film directed by Patricia Riggen and written by Randy Brown. It is based on *Miracles from Heaven* by Christy Beam, which recounts the true story of her young daughter who had a near-death experience and was later cured of an incurable disease.

Set in Burleson, Texas, between 2008 and 2012, the film centers on a 10-year-old girl named Annabel Beam, daughter of Christy Beam. One day, Anna starts to vomit, and when examined by her doctor, he does not find anything abnormal. On March 20, 2008, Anna wakes up her family at midnight because of an intense stomach pain severe enough that her parents decide to take her to the hospital. Doctors find no signs of illness, except to say it could be either acid reflux, or lactose intolerance, but Christy is not convinced by this. The following morning, Christy finally finds a pediatrician in the hospital that is able to diagnose Anna with an abdominal obstruction, and he tells them he must operate immediately or she will die. After emergency surgery is performed, the doctor explains that Anna has been left with pseudo-obstruction motility disorder and she is unable to eat, so feeding tubes are needed for her nutrition. The doctor then tells the Beams' about America's foremost pediatric gastroenterologist, Dr. Nurko, who practices in Boston, but explains it could take months for them to be seen. In January 2009, Christy and Anna travel to Boston despite not having an appointment with the doctor...

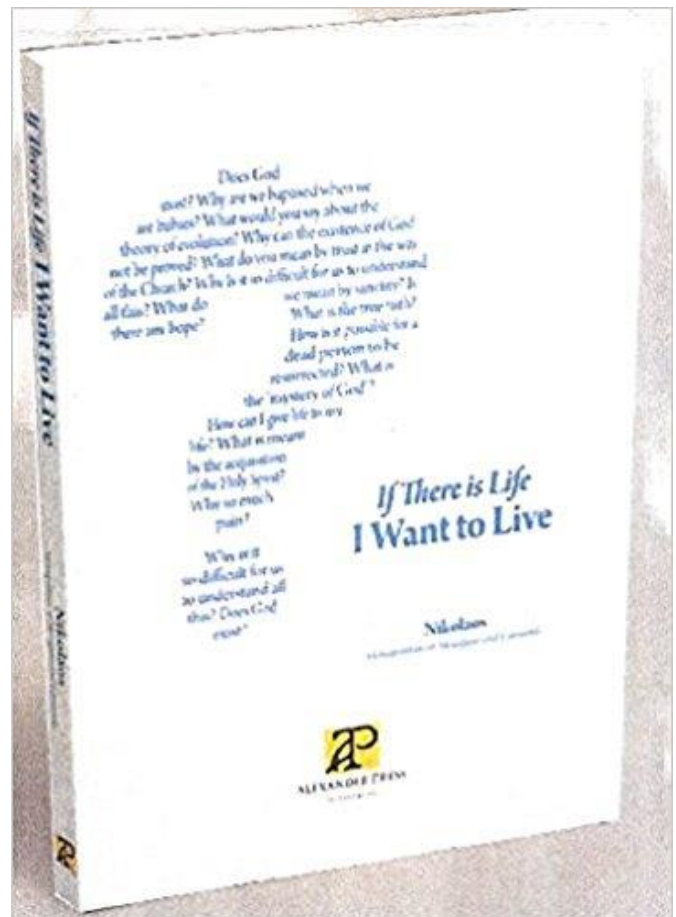
See the rest.



Book: If There is Life I want to Live By Nikolaos Metropolitan of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki

The world we live has been called a 'vale of tears', a 'place of weeping' - perhaps with good reason. Wherever you turn you see pain, sorrow, undeserved suffering, death, and sin. The 'ruler of this world' (Jn 12:31), the 'world ruler' (Eph. 6:12) is the devil. He is constantly to be seen. God, who is named 'He who is', meaning the One from whom everything comes into being, is nowhere to be seen. 'No one has seen God at any time' (John 1:18). That is why his very existence is a matter of dispute. He has, however, 'revealed himself' (John 21:1), and he promises to manifest himself to whomsoever keeps his commandments and loves him: 'I will manifest myself to him' (John 14:21). This book records simple events and conversations, all the while grappling with difficult questions. We see the human struggle to discover the person of God when he is veiled by the logic of this world, our limited understanding, and the arrogant pretensions of human littleness. The book engages intensely with complex and difficult issues...but which leave us confused and at times scandalized. What it does not do is give any direct answers, or try to persuade the reader through logic or impressive arguments. Its aim is to convey the sense of the discreet yet persuasive presence of the true God precisely in situations where He is not visible: in pain, in disability, in the tragedies of life, in inexorable death, as this comes across in true events and is reflected in the lives of real people.

Excerpt from book below.



If There is Life I want to Live,
By Nikolaos Metropolitan of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki

100 questions and answers on matter of faith

I began to write it all down when I WAS ON Mount Athos, during a period of complete solitude, while staying at the *kathisma* or monastic dwelling of St. John the Theologian, near the small harbor of Simonopetra Monastery. I completed it later when I was staying on the island of the same St. John, on Patmos, in Kouvari. Both, places of quietude and spiritual seclusion. Places of prayer. In all I only needed a few days. My sole companion was the noble disciple of love, St. John. The one who truly loved and was indeed loved by Christ. The text would only be the fruit of love and quietude; it is a fruit of the desert. I would say the fruit of prayer, but I fear that this might be considered an exaggeration.

The questions – I chose one hundred to make a round number – and the dialogues are all authentic. The people are also real, although of course the names have been changed. On the other hand I have not recorded the whole discussion, but I have selected certain questions. All this is not important. What really matters is for human nature and the person of the true God to be revealed clearly and truly through the whole discussion. Nothing else in this life matters more.

Question 20: Why can the existence of God not be proved? Why should we live constantly in the ocean of vagueness and doubt?

Answer: Because if that were possible, God would be compulsory, and we would be slaves of his divinity. Neither he nor we would be free. He does not give us a lesser freedom in order to grant us a greater one. Think of when his crucifiers mocked Him to come down from

the Cross in order that they might believe, and imagine if he had done it. Neither would they have believed Him, nor would He have given us the greater thing – the Resurrection. He would have revealed His human power, and not His divinity. God gives us so many signs, that whoever wants to can believe in Him. Both His divinity is preserved as a mystery and our freedom remains a gift. He does not give us understanding of Him but rather He offers us his mystery.

Question 21: Can you tell us why it is so difficult for us to understand all this? I am not even sure that we want these things.

They all sound very wonderful but distant and obscure.

Answer: If it all sounds distant, that is probably your doing: if it all sounds obscure then that is likely my doing. How can it not seem difficult to you when education is completely alienated from it all? Nowadays we are fixated in the here and now, the harsh reality of facts and phenomena, not truth. We do not care about the truth. What interests us is our everyday life, our health, our worldly success, our financial situation

worldly recognition and so on.

We have been persuaded that we are animals – slightly more evolved perhaps – that death is the end, that we are lying forgotten, and most likely all on our own, on a planet in the middle of the universe, destined to function as biological machines for a few years and then to return to nothing, to the darkness of complete non-existence. We have believed all this. Just as we are taught that science confirms it all. So any kind of existential search has gone. We do not care about the truth. We have been



persuaded that either it does not exist or that we cannot know the truth.

We have settled for harsh reality, which is the only thing we can see. The absence of the need for God has driven out the search for Him. So what I am saying to you seems like a foreign language. Not Ancient Greek, which, since we speak Modern Greek, we can just about understand, but something more like Swahili, which we do not know at all. You should know that the greatest harm that we have suffered is that the need for God has been uprooted from us. We have been persuaded that our natural environment is darkness, and that light exists only as a concept and not as a destiny or way of life.

...A careful study of the Psalms, the Prophets, or the Biblical wisdom literature, shows how the sinful human soul can rise to inconceivable noetic heights. Have you heard of these texts?

Question 23: No. We just know about Old Testament from the school and what we have picked up here and there. I think we probably know more about the Christian tradition and the New Testament.

Answer: Don't you see how we are molded by our age? We are made to reject something confidently without either knowing it or having any idea about it. This represents an injustice against us. Even the internal quest is denied us. And our knowledge of even the Christian tradition is limited. We find faults in Orthodox people too, but these stains cannot hide the brightness of the sun.....

Question 76: You said many things and I didn't quite follow you. What I find more difficult of all is that we wait to be defeated but in the end we are victorious. I think you said something like that.

Answer: No, I didn't say that. I said that we are waiting for the victory even if outwardly we are defeated. We can discern victory behind the defeat: a true victory after an empty defeat. Christ logically was defeated, He was crucified: they killed Him and sealed the tomb.

But He was victorious through His Resurrection.

The martyrs were defeated, they were eaten by wild beasts, beheaded, but they were victorious through the signs revealed in their lives, their martyrdom and relics. Christians throughout history have been constantly persecuted. But the Church journeys on. The martyrs in the end are justified, not the persecutors and torturers. We see the same in the Book of revelation: the Anti-Christ is at first dominant everywhere, he imposed over the whole world. The amazing thing is that God allows him to do this. John writes: "It (the Beast) was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them" (Rev 13:7). This means that the power was given to the Anti-Christ to war against the Christians, that is the Church, and to overcome them. True victory is not a victory of egoism, a victory of worldly power, but it is a spiritual victory, that is revealed in the world. Christ said:" Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (Matt 10:28).

What we are struggling for is not the body but the soul: not what is temporal but what is eternal: not the everyday and corruptible world but the eternal God and our communion with Him. If something is of value in this life, it is not its pleasant transience, nor our struggle to make it better, but the opportunity to discern and confess the true God. This world is a launch pad for us to acquire an eternal orbit in the Kingdom of God. Only then is it of any value. Otherwise it is a lost opportunity, or worse still a punishment.

Question 89: So is rationalism the product of the modern world, something that can put our conscience at ease, or it is an innate element of fallen human nature?

Answer: What does it matter where it comes from? What matters is that it is there. Of course in the dialogue of Adam and Eve with the devil, as this is presented on the Old Testament, it seems that rational thinking was the final straw in their fall, and so it is innate to our nature.

It is true, however, that the modern world has invested a great deal in rational thought, and

has blown it out of proportion. Our minds are full of information, and we are constantly increasing our intellectual understanding. In this way the expectation of the revelation of the mystery is lost: the quietude of the divine visitation is lost. That is our problem. Our age produces scientists, economists, philosophers, but it finds it difficult to produce saints or to recognize them. And that is why the Kingdom of God and His presence are not apparent. His traces are difficult to discern.

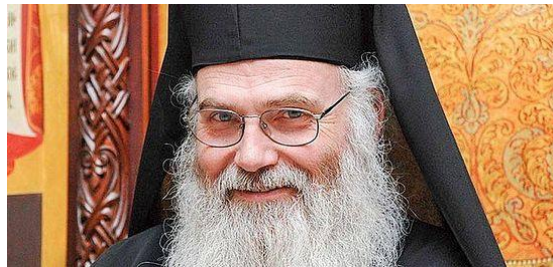
Question 94: The Church's tradition, practices and rules wear me out. Why does it matter if I believe but don't go to church? Of if I do not accept the rituals, the priests and so on? Why do we have to get married in church? Is not mutual respect and interpersonal commitment enough? Why should we baptize babies and think that they will go to hell if we don't? What is all this? Religion, father, is very human too. It is narrow-minded, marked by misery and human flaws, it serves political aims, it wears one out and is totally unconvincing.

Answer: Look, an overemphasis on outward forms in the absence of the essence is not something anyone would agree with. Furthermore, the regionalization of faith usually corrupts it and imbues it with exceptionally human characteristics. What relation can all this have with what I described to you earlier? The outward form is like the glass that holds the water. If it breaks, then the contents are scattered. The outward forms are not a bad thing, as long as they underline and do not cover the essence or become isolated from it. When we are at a good play, concert, or talk, we applaud at the end. We could express our enthusiasm differently. Despite this, without thinking we all express ourselves in this way. What is the problem? Perhaps applauding is a bad thing and so we should ban it?

I will say something else- I have a beard and wear a cassock. What these symbolize I neither

know nor care. I ask myself, if I were clean-shaven and wore a suit, what would prevent me from celebrating the sacrament? Nothing at all. Despite that, I cannot tell you how much I love them, not as outward forms, but as expressions of a hidden inner mindset. I sometimes kiss my cassock. I never take it off. It gives me an outward to in this world. I am unworldly: I am a priest, who has been talking you for such a long time, and whom you have been finding it difficult to understand, because I am pointing towards another life, another world, other concepts. When you understand the otherness of the message, then you will understand the otherness of the appearance. That is how it is with outward symbols and rubrics. Those who have no knowledge of the Church may suspect the spiritual meaning that lies behind outward forms, while to the initiated, if I can use this word, that is to those who have experiences of faith, they are fine expressions of the richness of the faith.

The same is true of ritual in the sacraments. What a wonderful thing to express the mystery of the sacrament in perceptible ways, through



symbolism, movements, and words. What is the problem with taking communion, or experiencing the commitment and joy of marriage within a

framework of prayer and ritual? Rejecting all this means that there is something missing, one's life is without sacramental reality, without signs, without communion, without the experience of sanctity and grace. A civil wedding is an earthly contract. A church wedding abolishes the human element and opens up the way of God in our life, and places him among us. If you have faith, not only do you not reject God but you desire Him: if you don't have faith, then you doubt Him. Therein lies the problem. Only when you love something do you understand it, only when you love it do you learn its ways. That is how it is with the Church. Love the Church and you will understand everything.

Donations Needed for Icons from Monastery

We got the quotation for the Icons from Holy Protection Monasteries. The **cost is \$300 for each** Icon. Here is the list of icons and also where they will be placed in the church once they have arrived. Below are some icons for reference; they will not be the same.

WE STILL NEED DONATIONS FOR THE ICONS

On the left side

St. Parascheva

St. Ecaterina

On the right side

St. Andrew

St. Minas

And for the upper side

Jesus Christ Pantocrator.



Monastery Pilgrimage

Possible Dates In October Sunday - Tuesday 8th -10th

We are looking to organize a three-day pilgrimage to Monasteries in New York and Pennsylvania. The accommodations and food will be provided by the monasteries.

Trip Objective:

- Sunday Night **St. Dimitrios Romanian monastery**- there will be a memorial Monday Morning at Fr. Vasile Vasilache' tomb.
- Monday Day Visit with lunch and talk at bookstore. **St. Nectarios Greek monastery NA**- vespers and staying over. Early morning Divine Liturgy at 3:00am for those who would like to attend.
- Monday Night Vespers 4pm **Holy Protection Greek monastery PA**– staying the night, early Divine Liturgy at 4:00am to those who would like to attend. Tuesday Morning after breakfast Fr. Mark, the spiritual father of Holy Protection will be meeting with us and giving a talk with our group.
- Tuesday later in day **St. Tihons monastery**- St. Alexios Toth relics (we have a piece of his relics in our church)

Please contact either Fr. John or Preoteasa Camelia for more info and to sign up.



Saint Silouan Athonite

September 24th

He was born Simeon Ivanovich Antonov, of Russian Orthodox parents who came from the village of Sovsk in Imperial Russia's Tambov Governorate. At the age of twenty-seven, after a period of military service, he left his native Russia and came to the monastic state of Mt. Athos (an autonomous peninsula in Greece) where he became a monk at the Monastery of St. Panteleimon, known as "Rossikon", an Orthodox monastery that houses Russian monks yet is, as all the Athonite monasteries, under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople, and was given the name Silouan (the Russian version of the Biblical name Silvanus.)

An ardent ascetic, he received the grace of unceasing prayer and saw Christ in a vision. Keep your mind in hell and do not despair, said to be a teaching God gave him through a voice from above.

After long years of spiritual trial, he acquired great humility and inner stillness. He prayed and wept for the whole world as for himself, and he put the highest value on love for enemies. He became widely known as an elder. The writer and mystic Thomas Merton has described Silouan as "the most authentic monk of the twentieth century. St Silouan died on September 24, 1938. His memory is celebrated on September 24. Though barely literate, he was sought out by pilgrims for his wise counsel. His writings were edited by his disciple and pupil, Archimandrite Sophrony (the founder of Saint John the Baptist Monastery from Essex, England). Father Sophrony has written the life of the saint along with a record of St. Silouan's teachings in the book *Saint Silouan the Athonite*.

Starets Silouan was canonized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1987.

On the Will of God by Saint Silouan

It is a great good to give oneself up to the will of God. Then the Lord alone is in the soul. No other thought can enter in, and the soul feels God's love, even though the body be suffering.

When the soul is entirely given over to the will of God, the Lord Himself takes her in hand and the soul

learns directly from God. Whereas, before, she turned to teachers and to the Scriptures for instruction. But it rarely happens that the soul's teacher is the Lord Himself through the grace of the Holy Spirit, and few there are that know of this, save only those who live according to God's will.

The proud man does not want to live according to God's will: he likes to be his own master and does not see that man has not wisdom enough to guide himself without God. And I, when I lived in the world, knew not the Lord and His Holy Spirit, nor how the Lord loves us—I relied on my own understanding; but when by the Holy Spirit I came to know our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, my soul submitted to God, and now I accept every affliction that befalls me, and

say: "The Lord looks down on me. What is there to fear?" But before, I could not live in this manner.

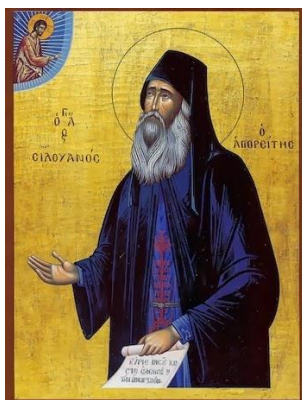
Life is much easier for the man who is given over to the will of God, since in illness, in poverty, in persecution he reflects thus: "Such is God's pleasure, and I must endure on account of my sins."

Thus for many years have I suffered violent headaches, which are hard to bear but salutary because the soul is humbled through sickness. My soul longs to pray and keep vigil, but sickness hinders me

because of my body's demand for rest and quiet; and I besought the Lord to heal me, and the Lord hearkened not unto me. So, therefore, it would not have been salutary for me to have been cured.*

Here is another case which happened to me, wherein the Lord made haste to hearken unto me and save me. We were given fish one feast—day in the refectory, and, while I was eating, a fish—bone found its way deep down my throat and stuck in my chest. I called to the holy martyr St. Panteleimon, begging him to help me, as the doctor could not extract the bone. And when I spoke the word 'heal,' my soul received this answer: 'Leave the refectory, take a deep breath, fill out your cheeks with air, and then cough; and you will

bring the bone up together with some blood.' This I did. I went out, exhaled, coughed, and a big bone came up with some blood. And I understood that if the Lord does not cure me of my headaches it is because they are good for my soul.



The Feast of The Holy Cross

September 14, the Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of “The Elevation of the Honorable and Life-giving Cross. This is one of the great feasts of the Church year, and one which has an important historical background.

When Heraclius was crowned Emperor on October 5, 610, after the overthrow of the unworthy Phocas, the provinces on all sides were overrun by the Persians, Avars, and Slavs. He started on a series of internal reforms, such as canceling the dole of grain, which enabled a great many able-bodied loafers in Constantinople to spend their time attending the circus and games instead of doing something useful, and in trying to improve the finances of the government. He embarked on a series of campaigns in due course of time to re-establish Byzantine rule in the neighboring parts of the Empire. The Persians had for some years been harassing Syria and Asia Minor, and in 613 they attacked the city of Damascus. The next year they took Jerusalem, and left a garrison in charge of the city. The population revolted as soon as the main body of the invading army left, and slaughtered the garrison. This brought back the conquerors, who are said to have killed 90,000 of the inhabitants, sparing only the Jews who aided them in the conquest. They took the Patriarch Zacharias and the case containing the relics of the cross back to Persia with them.



This event was regarded by all the Christians as the greatest possible disaster, since they regarded the sacred relics as the palladium of the city. Added to this was the insolence of Chosroes, King of the Persians, who taunted the Christians with their religion and their Lord, who so obviously had failed to deliver them. For the next eight years Heraclius was busy with the Avars, and was not able to go out against the Persians until 622. He waged six campaigns between 622 and 627, and finally defeated Chosroes and his generals decisively, but at great cost. The Empire was in great danger: in 626 the Persians were in Asia Minor right across the Bosphorus from the City, while their barbarian allies were encamped on the north in Thrace. But Heraclius managed to fight them all off, and restore some control. He brought back to Jerusalem the Patriarch and the relics

of the cross, which had not been molested. The populace demanded to see and venerate the relics, and accordingly they were solemnly elevated for all to see and reverence. The Emperor took a part of the sacred wood back to Constantinople with him. From the time of the finding of the cross by the Empress Helena, small bits of the wood were sent all over the world as most sacred relics, and the part which remained, although large, was still portable.

The hard-won peace of 626 left both the Persian and Byzantine empires exhausted. At this very time a new danger appeared on the horizon: both Chosroes and Heraclius received letters from the Arab Mohammed, who invited them to adopt Islam, his newly founded faith. They both declined, but their contacts with the Moslems were to be many and difficult. In 629 Arab attacks on the empires began, and in 635 Damascus was taken, and Jerusalem in 637. Heraclius went back to Jerusalem and removed the sacred relics to Constantinople for safe keeping, but the Patriarch remained behind to greet the new rulers.

The ceremony of Elevation as performed in Church is actually a patriotic one, with prayers for the Rulers and their people, for Church and State, and for their establishment and preservation. The key to the observance is to be found in the Hymn for the Feast, the Troparion, which runs as follows:

“O Lord, save thy people and bless thine inheritance:

**To our Rulers grant victories over the barbarians,
And by thy Cross protect thine own Estate.”**

To the Byzantines, their Empire was the civilized world, the Oikoumene, the habitation of law and order; outside the pale were the barbarians, the people who spoke some other language that no one could understand, and whose ways were violent and strange. The Christian religion was a part of this, the vehicle of salvation and civilization. This is the heritage that was transmitted down through the ages by the Byzantine Empire, the struggle for civilization against the power of the destroyers. When we celebrate the feast today, we should have this in mind; it is apt that the Feast of the Cross is always a Fast. This paradox is striking, but accentuates the understanding our ancestors had that victory comes hard, and that nothing good is achieved without sacrifice.

~ Parish Events ~

Congratulations Mary (Margaret) Graboski on becoming Orthodox.



September 2017

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Church New Year	2 Divine Liturgy 8:30am Vespers 6:00pm
3 Matins 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am	4	5	6 Paraklesis of Theotokos 6:00pm	7 Vespers, Litia 6:00pm	8 Birth of Theotokos Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	9 Divine Liturgy 8:30am Vespers 6:00pm
10 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	11	12	13 Vespers, Litia, Matins 6:00pm	14 Elevation of The Holy Cross Akathist 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:00am	15	16
17 Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	18	19	20 Paraklesis of Theotokos 6:00pm	21	22 Movie Night 7:00pm	23 Vespers, Litia 6:00pm
24 St. Siluan Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	25	26 St. John the Theologian Divine Liturgy 9:00am	27 Paraklesis of Theotokos 6:00pm	28	29	30 Divine Liturgy 8:30am Vespers 6:00pm