



# Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts  
www.stmichaelorthodox.com

December 2020



## LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

### **Saturday**

10:00am Divine Liturgy  
11:00am Memorial Service  
5:00pm Vespers

### **Sunday**

9:00am Matins  
10:00am Divine Liturgy

### **Wednesday**

6:00pm Paraklesis

## Feast days

**Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>** – St. Porphyrios

**Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>** – St. Nicholas the  
Wonderworker

**Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>** – St. Filofteia of  
Romania

**Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>** – St. Spyridon the  
Wonderworker

**Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>** – Bishop Ignatius the  
Godbearer of Antioch & St. John  
of Kronsadt

**Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> – Nativity of Our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ**

**Dec. 26<sup>th</sup>** – Synaxis of the Most-  
Holy Theotokos

**Dec. 27<sup>th</sup>** – St. Stephen the First  
Martyr

## **The Nativity Sermon of St. John Chrysostom**

Behold a new and wondrous mystery.

My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn. The Angels sing. The Archangels blend their voice in harmony. The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

Nature here rested, while the Will of God labored. O ineffable grace! The Only Begotten, Who is before all ages, Who cannot be touched or be perceived, Who is simple, without body, has now put on my body, that is visible and liable to corruption. For what reason? That coming amongst us he may teach us, and teaching, lead us by the hand to the things that men cannot see. For since men believe that the eyes are more trustworthy than the ears, they doubt of that which they do not see, and so He has deigned to show Himself in bodily presence, that He may remove all doubt.

For this He assumed my body, that I may become capable of His Word; taking my flesh, He gives me His spirit; and so He bestowing and I receiving, He prepares for me the treasure of Life. He takes my flesh, to sanctify me; He gives me His Spirit that He may save me.

Come, then, let us observe the Feast. Truly wondrous is the whole chronicle of the Nativity. For this day the ancient slavery is ended, the devil confounded, the demons take to flight, the power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is removed from us, error driven out, truth has been brought back, the speech of kindness diffused, and spreads on every side, a heavenly way of life has been planted on the earth, angels communicate with men without fear, and men now hold speech with angels.

Why is this? Because God is now on earth, and man in heaven; on every side all things commingle. He became Flesh. He did not become God. He was God. Wherefore He became flesh, so that He Whom heaven did not contain, a manger would this day receive. He was placed in a manger, so that He, by whom all things are nourished, may receive an infant's food from His Virgin Mother. So, the Father of all ages, as an infant at the breast, nestles in the virginal arms, that the Magi may more easily see Him. Since this day the Magi too have come, and made a beginning of withstanding tyranny; and the heavens give glory, as the Lord is revealed by a star. To Him, then, Who out of confusion has wrought a clear path, to Christ, to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, we offer all praise, now and forever. Amen.

**Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church**  
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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**

**Happy Birthday!!**

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

**December 4<sup>th</sup>** – Maria Rapsomanikis

**December 7<sup>th</sup>** – Maria Mironidis

**December 10<sup>th</sup>** – Matthew Dowling

**December 14<sup>th</sup>** – Carol Porra

**December 16<sup>th</sup>** – Michael Pitsillides

**December 18<sup>th</sup>** – Thomas Richard

Burren

**December 20<sup>th</sup>** – Scott Burren

**December 23<sup>rd</sup>** – Luke Yanka and Eva  
Pitsillides

**December 31<sup>st</sup>** – Anthony Rapsomanikis

**Happy Name Day**

**Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>** – St. Savvas – Savvia  
Pitsillides

**Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>** – St. Nicholas – Nick  
Thomo, Nicholas Goulas, Niki  
Goulas

**Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>** – St. Spyridon – Spiro  
Thomo, Spiro Kelly, Spiro Kelly

**Dec. 27<sup>th</sup>** – St. Stephen – Stephen  
Giavara

**Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>** – St. Melania Romana –  
Melania Collazo

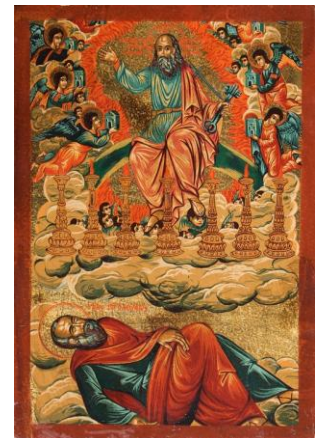
**School Snack  
Drive**

Please bring  
individually  
wrapped snacks for  
our local schools.  
(No fruits, nuts, or  
cheeses, please).

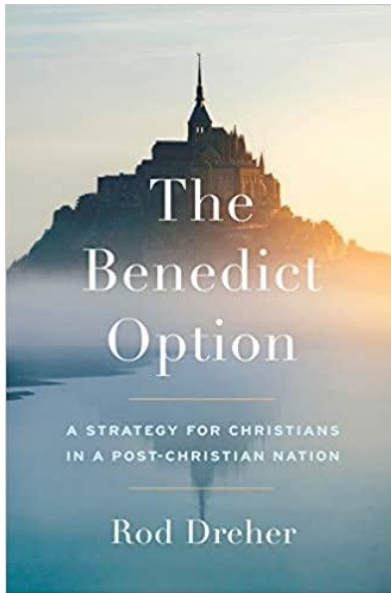


**Bible Study on the  
Book of Revelation**

Thursdays at 7pm in  
the chapel or on  
Zoom. Please contact  
Fr. John for the link.



~ Book Corner ~



**Book: *The Benedict Option***

*The Benedict Option* is both manifesto and rallying cry for Christians who, if they are not to be conquered, must learn how to fight on culture war battlefields like none the West has seen for fifteen hundred years. It's for all mere Christians who can read the signs of the times. Neither false optimism nor fatalistic despair will do. Only faith, hope, and love, embodied in a renewed church, can sustain believers in the dark age that has overtaken us. These are the days for building strong arks for the long journey across a sea of night.

**Pictures from the Baptism of Mihai Stefan Sipitca (Sunday, November 8, 2020)**



Godparents: George and Joy  
Rapsomanikis  
Parents: Nicolae and Grace Sipitca

## Contemporary Miracles of St. Nicholas From Mystagogy Resource Center

Before Communists came to power in China, there was an icon of St. Nicholas in the Harbin train station, as many Russian immigrants had settled there. The icon was respected by non-Christian Chinese as well as the Russian Orthodox immigrants.

One day a Chinese man, dripping wet, ran into the station, throwing himself down in front of the icon. He was speaking Chinese and it is said he was thanking the saint for saving his life.

During the winter, when the Sungari river that flows through Harbin, China, is frozen solid it becomes a short-cut to from one side to the other.

The ice breaks up in the spring and chunks flow down the river. On that day this man was in a great hurry to get to the other side of the river. Even though the ice was breaking up and floating in the water, he ran across, jumping from floe to floe. Then he slipped and went down under the ice.

As he was beginning to drown, he remembered the train station icon and cried out, "Old man from the train station, help me!"

Then he became unconscious, slipping completely under the ice where he would surely perish.

The very next thing he knew, he was on the riverbank! Freezing water soaked him to the skin, but he alive and well! As fast as he could, the man ran the long distance to the train station. He stopped in front of the icon, throwing himself down, thanking the great hierarch Saint

Nicholas for such an amazing miracle of his mercy and love.

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A Muslim woman from the Russian Republic of Bashkortostan, who for 4 years underwent tests and treatments to become pregnant, achieved her desire after praying before an icon of St. Nicholas.

"I am a Muslim, but for some reason I believe that the icon helped me", testified the happy mother to *Komsomolskaya Pravda*.

Her friends advised her to go to church: Her marriage had failed though her diagnosis was like a knife stab to her family; her illness should not have allowed her to become pregnant. It was her first time she went to a church. She was a little scared and did not know

how to pray. The parishioners told her to pray from her heart.

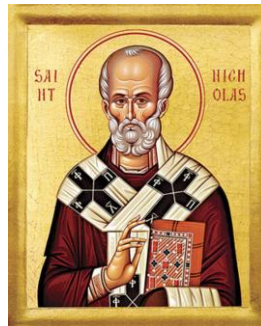
She then prayed saying: "Wonderworker Nicholas, help me to acquire a son", and she left a golden chain next to the icon.

After a month she became pregnant and eventually gave birth to a healthy baby.

\*\*\*

During the eighth year of the abbacy of Elder Athanasios, a wonderful event gave great spiritual joy to the fathers, and revived their devotion to the Bishop of Myra. How can one not break forth in praise when one sees the tangible assistance of a Saint!

There were two brothers, Fr. Michael and Fr. Chrysanthos, who worked in the



Monastery's bakery. One day, just as on many others, they were preparing the wheat that was to be ground in the mill. They passed it through a special machine to clean it of dirt and chaff. They were not very happy, however, because the wheat was almost used up and it was difficult to procure more.

Suddenly a little old man came up to their work area. He was short, bald, and poorly dressed, and he held a Gospel in his hand.

"How are you, Fathers? How is it going?"

"Well, glory be to God!"

"Do you have all the wheat you need?"

"What you see is all we have, Grandfather. It is only enough for one baking, and we have to do two bakings a week."

"Don't worry, Fathers. God is great." Shortly afterwards he blessed the wheat and left.

A little while later the two monks said: "We didn't do right to let the old man leave. Let's call him back and give him something to eat."

They ran after him to catch him, but he was nowhere to be found. A strange thing! - One would think he were a young man with wings on his feet to disappear so fast. They asked the other monks, but no one had seen him or knew anything about him.

Little by little they came to realize that the little old man might have been St. Nicholas. There was some doubt, of course, but time took care of that, for they beheld a wonder: the wheat that the old man had blessed lasted for six whole months! It was an obvious miracle.

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The following was written by Sylvia Leonidou - Onesiphorou:

My mother Chrystalla Andrew died on 2/3/1992. She was a very quiet and faithful wife and grew up there in the old homes of the Church of St. Nicholas.

One summer afternoon in 1985 while sitting on the porch with my father Andreas Leonidou and my little sister Angela Leonidou and all spoke together, suddenly my mother got up from her chair, opened her arms and shouted: "Welcome, welcome! Pass through." Her face glowed a little strange and seemed too happy. Others who saw and watched her movements and heard her words said they did not understand, but neither could explain why she did what she did.

After a few minutes she sat quietly in her chair. Concerned the others asked her what was wrong and what happened. Then my mother said naturally: "Didn't you see the three bishops who came to our house? Here with us was St. Nicholas, the Apostle Luke and the third I did not understand who it was. All three were dressed in the garments of a hierarch. I told them to pass through, but St. Nicholas told me that they were all in a hurry. Just at that moment St. Nicholas blessed our house and told me not to fear and that all will go well. All three smiled at me, they left from the yard and proceeded toward the Church of St. Nicholas. You did not see that they were here? Why are you asking me?"

My mother at this time was awake and had her senses. Also my mother was a very positive and honest woman, and said with confidence and enthusiasm that which occurred that summer afternoon in 1985.

**The Antichrist: An Orthodox Perspective  
from the Church Fathers (Part 5)  
Fr. Andrew J. Anderson**

**The Dragon inside the Antichrist reveals himself and desires worship**

Having rebuilt the temple of the Jews in Jerusalem, and having been crowned king of the world, **a great change in the countenance and actions** of this global leader will be seen. The Antichrist will now openly display his real, evil, inner character, which he had been concealing. And, he will reveal his true desire. Like the pagan Roman emperors of old, the **Antichrist (and the Devil living inside of him) wants worship**, not merely political leadership. The famous kings in history who also sought worship from their subjects—such as Nero and Nebuchadnezzar—are just historical prototypes of the Antichrist.

Then will be the time when St. Paul's words will be fulfilled: "The man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:3-4). This will be the "abomination of desolation" in the Temple of which the Lord Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24:15.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386AD) in his *Catechetical Lectures* describes the Antichrist's sudden "change" of character, once he has been enthroned as

a global king, sitting and demanding worship:

Having beguiled the Jews by lying signs and wonders of his magical deceit, until they believe he is the expected Christ, *he shall afterwards be*

*characterized* by all manner of wicked deeds of inhumanity and lawlessness, as if to outdo all the unjust and impious men who have gone before him. He shall display against all men, and especially

***"The Antichrist will want the whole world to worship him because the Devil living inside him wants the worship that belongs to God."***

against us Christians, a spirit that is **murderous** and most cruel,

merciless and wily. For three years and six months only shall he be the perpetrator of such things; and then he shall be destroyed by the glorious Second Coming from heaven of the only-begotten Son of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus, the true Christ, who shall destroy him with the breath of His mouth, and shall deliver him over to the fire of Gehenna.

St. Ephraim (fourth century) writes of the Antichrist's desire to be worshipped:

He will herald himself as the precursors heralded him; he will call himself the preacher and re-

establisher of true knowledge of God. Those not comprehending Christianity will see in him a representative and champion of the true religion and will join with him. He will herald himself, calling himself the promised messiah and the children of worldly wisdom will hail his presentation. Because of his renown, might, genial capabilities and his widest development of the elements of the world, they will proclaim him a god and will make themselves his accomplices.

The Antichrist will want the whole world to worship him because the Devil living inside him wants the worship that belongs to God. **Like the ancient emperors Nero and Nebuchadnezzar, he will demand—and try to force—people to worship him.**

According to Revelation chapter 13, an assistant to the Antichrist known as the “False Prophet” will set up a talking image (*in Greek, “icon”*) of the Antichrist (“the Beast”). Anyone who refuses to worship this image/icon will be killed (Rev. 13:15).

### **St. Irenaeus on Nebuchadnezzar as a prototype of the future Antichrist**

St. Irenaeus, in the second century, perceived in the story of the ancient King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Book of Daniel, Chp.3) a prefigurement of the coming future ultimate wicked king, the

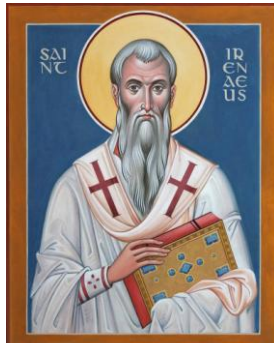
Antichrist. King Nebuchadnezzar himself was a tyrant ruling an empire. He sought all peoples, nations, and tongues to worship his golden image of himself that he had set up. If they refused to worship the image, they would die by being thrown into the fiery furnace. St. Irenaeus foresaw that similarly the Antichrist “beast” in the book of Revelation would also use the threat of death to force the nations into worshipping his image. He wrote:

And there is therefore in this beast [*i.e. the Antichrist*], when he comes, a recapitulation made of all sorts of iniquity and of every

deceit... For that image which was set up by Nebuchadnezzar had indeed a height of sixty cubits, while the breadth was six cubits; on account of which Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, when they did not worship it, were cast

into a furnace of fire, pointing out prophetically, by what happened to them, the wrath against the righteous which shall arise towards the [time of the] end. For that image, taken as a whole, was a prefiguring of this man's coming, decreeing that he should undoubtedly himself alone be worshipped by all men.”

*To be continued.*



## Excerpts from *The Path to Confession*

Now it is time to repent of our sins of anger and irritability. You all know how captivating this passion is. It begins with small things, like the loss of affection and attentiveness, and little by little we become less tenderhearted, thoughtful and amiable toward others.

Just watch, scarcely has cold indifference taken up residence in our soul, than we begin to see other uninvited guests: hard-heartedness, secret hostility, a feeling of vexation, displeasure, neglect...

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

If you have never repented of this, if you haven't accused yourself of it before God, if you haven't admitted it in confession to a priest, your soul is already oppressed by irritability. In such a state we easily say sharp, thoughtless words. We sting our neighbors and then try to offend them even more deeply...evil is ready to celebrate its forthcoming victory over us!

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

It is terrifying, my friends, to forget even for a moment that each man is a highly valued creature of God, for whose sake the Saviour shed His Blood on the Cross. If we remembered this, would sarcastic and biting remarks drop from our lips? Would we be able – like filthy flies on a dung heap – to carry unchecked rumors about our neighbors, to slander and even smear them...

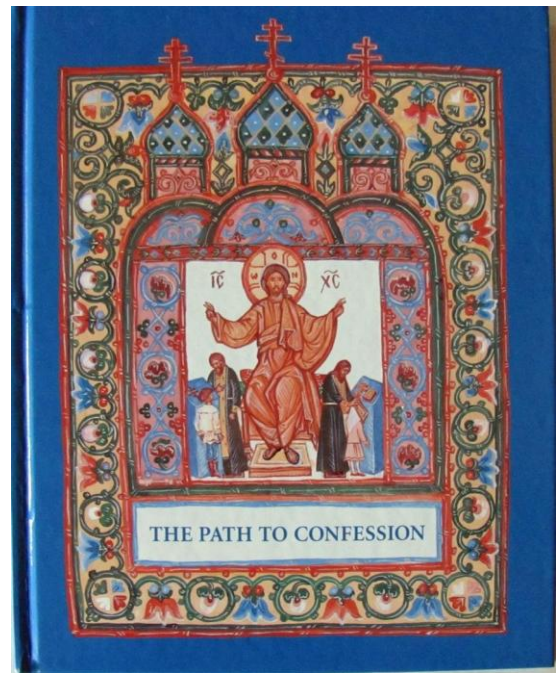
*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

And now let's turn to those who quarrel. Even wolf and bear cubs don't do the things done by children who are bitten with irritability! How their faces change, how their expressions become hideous and deformed! Where, in the wink of an eye do that jolly smile and the happy childish laughter vanish? Why do the eyes become dark and glimmer strangely with malicious fire, the face distorted, the lips pale, the chin trembling? This is how the passion of anger outwardly defiles a person...

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

...Probably the most terrible sin is when we take malicious delight in evil: the dismal, unnatural joy we feel when we hear about the misfortune of someone who has offended us.

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*





## Nativity Fast Recipe: Turlou Turlou/Briam

### Ingredients

- 2 cups sliced eggplant (approx 2 medium eggplants)
- 2 cups sliced zucchini squash /green or yellow or combination of both (approx 2 medium squash)
- 3 cups sliced potatoes (2 large baking potatoes)
- 1 1/2 cups thinly sliced onions (1 medium sweet white onion)
- 6 large cloves garlic (sliced very thinly)
- 3 cups sliced tomatoes (approx 4 large ripe tomatoes)
- 3 tbsp sliced fresh basil
- 1 cup olive oil
- 1 tsp salt/ 1 tsp fresh ground black pepper
- 2 cups peeled, crushed tomatoes (approx 3 large tomatoes)
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 tsp sugar

### Instructions

1. Peel and crush tomatoes. Add water/pinch of sugar, mix well to combine and set aside.
2. Start with 1/2 cup oil on bottom of casserole dish and layer vegetables in the following order
3. All potato slices, 1/2 tomato slices, 1/2 garlic slices, 1/2 onion slices, 1/2 tsp salt/pepper, 1/3 basil
4. All eggplant slices, 1/4 cup oil, 1/4 garlic slices/ 1/4 onion slices, 1/2 tsp salt/pepper, 1/3 basil
5. All zucchini slices, remaining garlic, onion, basil, tomato slices and salt /pepper

6. Drizzle top generously with remaining olive oil and pour peeled, crushed tomatoes over the top.
7. Bake uncovered in 400 degree oven for approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes.
8. To test for doneness – check that potatoes are fork tender. You may need to leave dish in the oven another 15 minutes or so depending on the thickness of your slices.

\*\*Increase baking time by approx 20-30 minutes if using chunky cut vegetables instead of sliced.



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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 St. Porphyrios  Paraklesis 6:00pm	3	4 St. Barbara	5 St. Savvas the Sanctified  Divine Liturgy 10:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 11:00am)  Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
6 St. Nicholas  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am  Vespers 7:00pm	7 St. Filofteia	8	9 Conception by St. Anna of the Most-Holy Theotokos  Paraklesis 6:00pm	10	11 Vespers 6:00pm	12 St. Spyridon  Divine Liturgy 10:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 11:00am)  Vespers 5:00pm
13  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	14	15	16  Paraklesis 6:00pm	17	18	19  Divine Liturgy 10:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 11:00am)  Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
20 St. Ignatius the Godbearer and St. John of Kronstadt  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	21	22	23  Paraklesis 6:00pm	24 Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great 3:30pm	25 <u>Nativity of Our Lord</u>  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am  Vespers, Litia 6:00pm	26 Synaxis of the Most-Holy Theotokos  Matins 9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 11:00am)  Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
27 Archdeacon Stephen  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	28	29	30  Paraklesis 6:00pm	31 Vespers, Litia 10:30pm  Thanksgiving Service for New Year! 12:00am	Jan. 1 St. Basil & Circumcision of Our Lord  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	